



fiction

The End of a Romantic Legacy

by A S M Nurunnabi

In youth, one is filled with many romantic ideas centreing round a girl if she happens to be endowed with attractive beauty. In the case of Sumon, a hand-some young man, this actually happened. Since both the young man and the girl live in the same locality within visible short distance, the possibility of romance between the two got all the more buttressed. Though such possibility was not believed to have eventual fruition, it created a sort of pleasant illusion permeating the whole mind of the young man.

There were some characteristic aspects of the illusion. Though living in the same locality, Sumon was never on

talking terms with the girl. Yet both felt the pull of a silent attraction. The silent drama consisted in watching each other for long spells, facilitated by the nearness of the houses of the two.

During this period of growing silent romance, there were many stray incidents, some of which survived in the memory of the young man casting a sort of pleasurable spell on him. For examples, the girl would be seen waiting on her verandah for the return of Sumon from his college. Sometimes, the girl would also be seen drying her long hairs on the roof of her house which created an ecstatic sight for Sumon. The latter would sometime try to reciprocate

silent feelings by an ingenuous way. His younger brother was a great enthusiast for kite-flying. When the wind direction was favourable, he would ask his younger brother to let him fly his kite for sometime. During such times, Sumon would deliberately down the kite on the roof of the girl's house. When the younger brother would shout for help in retrieving his kite, the girl would go up to the roof and release the kite. This would provide an opportunity for encounter, though visually, with Sumon. On such occasions, Sumon felt a strong desire to inscribe message on the kite. But he dared not do so, least his younger brother, who is a school student, would read it and spread the information to others in the household.

There were other memories too. Sumon had seen, while preparing for any examination by studying late into the night, the light in the girl's room continued to burn, keeping vigil throughout the time. The indication that the girl was also awake with him till late hours in the night created a peculiar feeling of empathy.

These stray memories of the silent romanticism lived on in Sumon's mind through exorable passage of time for about four decades. He never dreamt that he would ever encounter her in the twilight years.

The dream actually became a reality at the late stage of their lives. The meeting with the girl, now a widow with two grown-up children, took place in the house of a mutual relative. Now, for the first time in about forty years, Sumon could speak to the woman, who, as a girl, once was the object of attraction.

What Sumon saw now as a shocking anti-climax. The image of the girl that he built over the years was shattered to pieces at the sight of the changed persons. He wondered: Where are the beautiful tresses that adorned her while young? Is there any trace of the slim figure in the stout woman standing be-

fore him with her scanty grey hairs? The woman talked at random about her widowhood and the trials of bringing up her children who are now well-placed life. But the manner in which she told her story was felt by Sumon as rather casual without any depth or direction.

The sad disillusion was a serious blow to Sumon's conception of her and he kept asking himself why life was cruel in depriving a girl of her beauty as she became aged. Sumon thus came face to face with a sight that completely devastated the image of her in her early years.

That was the end of Sumon's romantic legacy.

poems

Poems by Fazal Shahabuddin

Towards The Earth

Why did you all send me to the outer space
towards these innumerable stars,
towards this cluster of planets?
Why did you send me away from the earth
into this aimlessness weightlessness
soundlessness odourlessness
touchlessness void?
Where did you send me to?
Into what kind of an emptiness?
What land is this,
What kind of a world,
What nature
Where there is no sunrise
no sunset,
Where there is no moonlight
no darkness
Where there is no dawn no dusk?
What is this place that I have come to?
Where did you all send me to,
into what emptiness.

Where there is no day no night no month
no year no century
no sea-shore
no valley at the foot of the hill
no rains no clouds
no woods no shades
no leaves no flowers no birds?

Where have I come to?
Into what land, what emptiness,
towards what planet what stars
what galaxy?
What an intolerable expanse of light is this?
What an unthinkable shriek of silence?
What terrible opacity
of invisible colorlessness,
What an incredible atmosphere of
directionlessness?
What is this place that I have come to,
giving up water giving up air
giving up smell giving up touch
giving up the million-year-old
reverberation of the sea and the wind?

I do not want to go to the stars.
I do not want to descend into the body
of a strange planet.
Why did you all send me
to the outer space,
to the endless expanse of this
huge heartlessness?

I shall go back to the earth,
go back to a river to a tree
to a flower to a bird
to a kiss to an embrace
to a youthfulness to an old age
to a life to a death.

I shall go back
to the wonderful music of winter and summer
the rains and the spring.
I shall go not towards the stars
but towards the earth.

Our Ageless World

Hungry like a huge ugly beast
with its amazingly wide gaping mouth,
and yet how smooth is its
seductive invitation
as if a festering whore
hidden behind her glittering make-up,
sparkles for an unearthly rendezvous.
Bubbling whirling sharply penetrating
like the overwhelming desire
for sexual union
revealing itself in certain cruel flashing
gestures
a hug hungry beast lies sprawled
with its wide gaping mouth,
full of sound and smell.
How smooth is its seductive call,
alas, how smoothly lies this ageless world
at the altar of our twentieth century civilisation.

Your Eyes

Never look at me again
in this fashion.
What huge valley of sunlight is this
in your eyes.
Only light light and light.
Never extend to me again
the flame of this light.
I shall see nothing,
won't be able to see anything,
not even you.

What is this ancient radiance,
of what age,

this fiery flame full of blood
and flesh,
of what bygone days?
Don't you even look at me again
in this fashion.
And yet, since long long ago,
I don't know since when,
I have wanted to drown myself
in your eyes.
What is there in this universe
save the radiance of your eyes?
What is there in blood and flesh
except the amorous game
of your eyes?
What is there in the sky and the sea
except the long shadow
of your eyelashes?
Since long long long ago,
I don't know since when,
I have only wanted to drown myself
in the depth of your eyes.
I know well that the universe
is just another name for your eyes,
know that your glance means
green leaves and grey hills,
torrential rains, happy gurgling waters
all-devouring silence,
know that your very glance
means poetry music painting
the flow of the wind
and the total fall
if all my being.
What is there in the universe
save the radiance of your eyes?
What else is there?

Why can't I look at your eyes?
Are your eyes your body,
your amorous movements,
your sly approach
the endless love game
of your god?
Why can't I look at your eyes?
When I look at them
Why do you turn into
a vast flaming sunny valley?
Why does only light light and light
engulf your whole existence?
Why this scorching fire?
You must never look at me again
in this fashion.
Come, bring at the beginning
and end of your glance,
at the opening and at the finale
some darkness,
some closing of the day,
some small hours of the night,
some dark clouds.

Renouncing everything I only want
to drown myself in your eyes,
only into the depth of your eyes
for all eternity.
What is there in the universe
save the radiance of your eyes?

Whenever I Look At The Sea

Whenever I look at the deep blue sea
I seem to see a lonely strange bird.
The fluttering of its huge wings raises
an echo on the distant shore
and brings into the dark woods
the blast of a stormy gale.
In the depth of my blood rings out
the wind of the sea
blowing from horizon to horizon,
and from the sound of the woods
issues a cry engulfing my consciousness.
In the womb of the night
tremble the darkness and the light
of the hour of dawn.
While my darkness fills up
with a music, full-bodied and strange.

Whenever I look at the melancholy sea
with a flock of birds flying over it,
a complete symphony emerges
from its vague confused sound.
My barren garden fills with green leaves,
and in the voice of the enchanted wind
dances the primordial sea.
And in the longing sky
I notice the vast body of the sea,
while the strains of a strange full-bodied
amorous music raise a
ripple along the distance shore.

In Life And In Death

There are waves in life,
Death alone is quite, still.
We call movement and speed life
Staying immobile is another name for death

In my existence lie life and death,
resonant, intertwined.
Today I give you all,
my music of every kind.
In death and in life,
I live in the solitude of death.
From every death is born a pointed life.
And all ending is only a passionate
search for life
Always you, vibrant,
in winter and in spring,
in life and in death.
Sometimes, life, you are a shimmering
physical radiance,
the body of a storm
swaying in the sound
of churned blood.
Sometimes you are a melancholy sigh,
surrendered to death,
enveloping the amazed earth,
and darkness of the sea wind.
Another name for life coming to a stop
life whose essence is movement,
is death,
Today I give you everything
in life and in death

To The Sea

Come close to me O sea
Come vast watery expanse,
Come close to me, O deep,
Come turbulent roar.
Come close to me, O steeped-in mediation,
Come the wildly restless one,
Come close to me, O swelling sound.
Come, the huge sprawling one.
Graft yourself into my soul
an ancient prayer full of words.
In your waters, nature, only a shadowy body
full of tears.
Descend on my blood particles
in the tattered sounds of a deluge.
Come, O thirsty sea,
Come to my intellect,
Come to me.
Come close to me, O blue blue
enchanted intimate dialogue,
Bring to my consciousness
a whirlpool
spanning all horizon,
overwhelming and impatient.
Bring width without boundaries,
without frontiers.
Bring birds and trees,
Graft yourself into my soul
a heaving cluster of sounds,
mysterious,
drunken.
Come close to me, O sea,
Come vast watery expanse,
Graft yourself into my soul
an ancient prayer full of words.

My Doors

It has been long since I closed my doors
Nothing will ever be seen again through my windows.
No one will ever stand again at my door-step.
No sky studded with stars will shine again
through my windows.
My doors are closed,
There is nothing beyond my windows.

All the words that my river harboured
had vanished long ago
My mountain is no longer clothed
in clusters of heavy clouds.
My river is now like the blood of a corpse
still, cold, soundless.

Now my mountain range is nothing
but a vast expanse of inert stone.

I have barred all my ways.
I have put a stop to all sojourns.
For a long time now I have fixed my eyes
only on a dark impenetrable wall.
Into my vision now will begin
continuously to sink
Sun-rise, torrential rains, moon-rays and kisses.

Now don't you come forward
towards my closed doors,
don't you ever stand before my windows.

Said He

Better stop writing and give up the world of poesy,
Said he. How long will you continue to cheat
Like this-make poetry out of cheap love
Women nature glow-worms-how long more?
If you can present something in a new light,
Please do so, or give up meddling with poetry.
Don't try our patience anymore, forget that

The skies, the woods or the moon beyond the hills
Can still be the subject matter of today's poetry.
For life today is shattered into fragments
Wounded by a brutal reality, You and I
Are strangers each day and the world
Is lacerated by squabbles over profit and loss.

Frothing at the lips man desperately
fights night and day
Only to keep alive — Said he,
Stop writing and give up this world of poesy.

He thought himself
When moonlight streamed down
over his writing desk.

All The Eternities

I have told someone
that I would be waiting for her
all day tomorrow.
Tomorrow came and went;
she didn't come.
I waited the following day, too, and she didn't come.
And the next day and the day after,
yet she didn't come.
She thought that she would keep me
waiting thus
all eternity.

She didn't know that I could wait for her
thousands of eternities.
She didn't know that all those millions
of eternities
were but a moment to me.
She didn't know that I was drowned
in a galestorm of love,
with no past, no present no future,
where all eternities stood still,
spellbound.

Windows

In the deep darkness of the night,
all my windows are open.
A desire flames into shape and a lamp starts burning.
The stars get into the frame,
The windows, want to look beyond the last point.

But sometimes the lamps do not burn,
The stars disappear from all visions
My windows remain no more open.
The earth, the sky and the galaxies dissolve
into a sound of silence.

A solitude moans like a dying confession
inside the windows, inside me.

Nature, Of Flesh And Blood

1. Is a body essential
for the fulfilment of love?
Must one have blood and flesh,
desire and thirst,
an intimate touch and a passionate
embrace?
Is that flaming sword
of sexuality an absolute must,
the sword that pierces all restlessness
with the easy intimacy
of an old gale?
Is love really a physical cry,
a bodily madness,
a nature full of flesh and blood?
Must one have a body for love,
mine and my woman's?
Is love limited to man's physical whirlpool,
circumscribed by woman's passionate shrieks
confined to birds and beasts,
submerged in the colourful antics
of insects and worms?

2. If I lay sprawled
spanning the length and breadth of the earth
like millions and millions of dead fallen
leaves
along the edge of a forest,
wouldn't then love rise up murmuring
within me?
If I were the incredible radiance
of billions and billions of stars,
the radiance that had not
reached the earth yet
or if I were those stars
that had died millions billions trillions
of years ago,

If I were the ashes from their bodies
scattered in the endless void
floating between this world and the next,
Wouldn't then love blossom in my
existence?
If I were the words
that owed their birth to the swaying

of the tree,
to the loneliness of the vast ocean,
to intense to all numbing kisses,
to the limitless
stretching through a million light years,
wouldn't there be any love
in those words.

3. If I were the foam of water and wind,
of the sea and the shore,
of the man and the woman,
the foam that was continuously
created and wiped out,
wiped out and created,
wouldn't then love grow in my soul
in all its glory?

If I were the intimate lines
in those ancient books
which harboured in them philosophy, history,
poetry and sexual passion,
where one could find thoughts and images,
the mind and the heart,
intoxication and enchantment,
where there was an effort to discover
through words that quintessence beyond
words,
a desire to imbue the letters
with a new sharpness hitherto unexplored,
and yet which volumes were lost forever,
whose authors names we would never know,
those novelists, poets, philosophers,
if I were the intimate lines
of those ancient books,
wouldn't then love be discovered
in a new light
in the pages of those priceless manuscripts?

If I were those darkness
which had no shape,
those lights which had no radiance,
no form,
the endless current of those winds
with no body or shape,
the pursuing cries of their desires,
wouldn't then love ring out in my deep
reverie
like an ancient prayer?
Is love confined only to the existence
of woman, sensitive to sound
and touch?
Must one love a body for love,
mine and my woman's?
If I were a creature from that other planet,
who had existence but no feelings
who had water in his thoughts
but heard no murmur there,
who had life but no heart,

who had light and darkness but no twilight,
If I were that creature from the other
planet
who had sight but could see no dreams
no visionary image,
who had the sun and the moon
but which never rose or set,
who had no dawn or dusk,
who was deathless but who knew
no hunger or thirst,
no anger or desire,
If I were a creature from that other
planet,
wouldn't then love come to me
in my lawless duskiness
earnest longings?

4. I know that love don'ts lie
only in the woman's body,
that desire is not simply the churned product
of the woman's will,
that sex is not to be found
only in the groans of the male and the
female,
emitted drop by drop.

Love rests on the body of the fallen leaves
desire lies in the radiant expanse of the stars,
sex has its abode in the lonely body of the sea
stretching from horizon to horizon.
Love and sex lie in the foam
which belongs to water and the seashore,
they belong to those disembodied elements
which exist in the vastness of light
and in the shattered spots of darkness,
in the endless current of the wind,
and in the pursuing cries of their desires.

I know that love does not lie
only in the body of the woman,
or in the core of the sexual act;
for love lies at the beginning of all desire,
and at the end of all sex stands love,
love's nature, full of flesh and blood,
its bodily warmth and physical cry.