

# The End of a Romantic Legacy

by A S M Nurunnabi

In youth, one is filled with many romantic ideas centring 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 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 stu-

dent, 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 sent 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 an 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.

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

#### 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 de'uge. 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 water 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 benumbing 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 pursing 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 down 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 dawnless duskiness earnest longings?

4. I know that love don'ts lie only in the woman's body, that desire is not simply the churning 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.