

essay

Alauddin Al Azad, one of our most fecund writers, turned 67 last Saturday. Star Literature takes this opportunity to pay tributes to this veritable genius and wishes his pen flow as spontaneously as has been all these years.

Alauddin-Al-Azad's Love Poems

by AZM Haider

ALTHOUGH Alauddin-Al-Azad is basically a left-oriented poet who has viewed life in its stern realities and painted it in his poetry in vivid details, he is not entirely prosaic and bereft of romantic vision, imaginative ideas and erotic passion. If one notices in his poetry man's grim battle for sheer survival and his inexorable class struggle, one can as well trace to it his passionate longing for his lady-love.

In the lines that are to follow I propose to deliberate at some details on the characteristic features of Azad's love poetry.

Alauddin-Al-Azad's love poems mark a deflection, if not a total departure, from those of his predecessors like Kazi Nazrul Islam, Syed Ali Ahsan, Abul Hossain as well as his contemporaries like Shamsur Rahman, Fazal Shahabuddin, Al-Mahmud etc who are irresistibly drawn to the maddening physical charm of women. Their poems, imbued with erotic passion, express intensely joys and pangs of love. In their outpourings of lyrical agony they delineated their women with materials which constituted an admixture of dream and reality. Azad is perhaps less romantic than his precursors as well as contemporaries. His concept of love has a link with Freudian theory of subconscious as well as young's doctrine of premordial unconsciousness.

Without dilating on the theories of Freud and Yong, it can be stated without any fear of contradiction that man has no control over his amorous predilection which is predetermined by his birth. A man cannot adequately explain why he is attracted to a particular woman. Love, which stems from subconsciousness of man, can be related to his Oedipus complex lying dormant in all men in some degree or the other.

Without trying to trace out elements of Oedipus complex from Azad's love poetry it can be stated that he did rarely luxuriate with love or romanticise it to him love is an inescapable reality and a source of strength in life. He wants his lady-love to stand by him in his struggle to build a blessed abode of peace on earth based on love, equality, justice and fairplay. It will be far from fair assessment of his love poems if it is said that they are completely shorn of romantic emotion and erotic passion. He has written more than 200 sonnets too deeply steeped in romantic and amorous passion to escape attention of his readers. The exquisite diction and the undying melody of his sonnets give one an insight into the depth of poets romantic soul. But despite emotion causing flutter deep down his heart, Azad's approach to love is essentially intellectual. He hardly apostrophizes his lady-love as Tagore has done in his famous poem "Bijoyini", for example. In emotional exuberance

Azad's love poetry reflects a conflict between dream and reality — dream of conjugation with his beloved and reality raising a wall of separation in the way of his union with his lady-love. The cruelty of class-ridden society is the cause of this conflict, to the acute mental and emotional suffering of the poet. The conflict between dream and reality as reflected in Azad's love poetry, reminds one of the famous lines of TS Eliot.

Tagore elevated his "Bijoyini" to the level of Aphrodite. Azad is reluctant to do that notwithstanding his fascination for the seductive charm of his beloved, Azad, on the contrary, wants her to be his partner in his struggle in life to build a new world order and civilization. The longing to associate her with his battle in life finds a clear manifestation in the concluding lines of his famous poem entitled "Profile", for example.

You told very easily
You informed me in a firm
voice at the end.
I don't need what I am getting today in
parts
Fleeting moments of union in
piecemeal
And after that
moaning and dismay
sleepless nights
songs of estrangement
As I have my fulfilment in you
I want you in full
As long as I live, my only pledge
is to transform this body into
an invincible fortress of resistance
I shall not rest content
before peace is established
throughout the world.

(English rendering by the present writer)

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Between the desire
and the spasm
Between the potency
and the existence
Between the essence
and the descent
fall the shadow

The wall of separation drawing the poet apart from his beloved has caused a sense of deep despair in his heart and that frustration generates a sense of renunciation in him. But that renunciation does not by any means give rise to pessimism in the poet.

On the contrary, it helps him to hold firm to his resolve to get back his beloved more closely and intimately. Thus the yearning for union with his beloved finds expression in Azad's

love poem entitled "The still life"

With dreams in eyes and heartbeats
for the bed
adorned with paper flowers
If I knew it, I would have become the
darkness of starless night
And snatching you from the array of
illuminations suddenly
I would have run like a wanted fugitive
on to the longest distance
And then holding you on my bosom
listened to the drums of impending
doom

In him the longing for union with his lady-love is so keen that even in moments of frustrating abnegation, the poet turns conscious of her presence in a realm which lies far beyond the world, perceptible to our naked eyes. This is Azad's surrealist approach. He visualizes his lady-love in multi-dimensional images in a world which is an enigma to a man of average perception. But to Azad that is a reality stretching out far beyond the world of ours we behold by our naked eyes. If one wishes to comprehend the surrealist vision of his beloved, one must go through his fascinating sonnet entitled "The girl beside the Black Sea"

You have laid yourself bare
As if I shall never be able to
comprehend you
Although you hold something in hand
You will remain in the unfathomable
depth of darkness, darling
It is better if you are transformed in
The image of a woman in alabaster
I shall become a tireless Eros
cuddling your marbled image closely
in Arcadia.

Thus in his flight of surrealism Azad conceives his beloved as a woman who transcends all body forms and dissolves into a dream in which he finds solace when he falls on the thorns of life and bleeds. Hence his love poems reflect a dichotomy between his dream and his vision of reality. While he visualizes his beloved as a woman of flesh and blood standing by him in his struggle in life, he at next breath conceives her as a woman melting into a dream.

Interestingly enough, there is a striking analogy between Jibanananda Das' Banalata Sen and Azad's dream girl. Tired of long trudge in the Sahara of life, Jibanananda Das finally falls back on his Banalata Sen for peace, mental comfort and consolation. Dante's Beatrice, who takes him by hand to help him out of

hell, purgatory and finally enables him to reach heaven is also akin to Azad's dream girl. Banalata Sen and Beatrice do not exist in reality. They are phantoms of delight envisioned by their creators. So is Azad's dream girl who is the quintessence of his poetic imagination. With colour never seen on land or sea, Azad has painted her on the canvas of his mind, invested in her undying beauty, grace and youth and sublimates her into an all-pervading elegance and loveliness which constitute truth-truth that regulates him and inspires him to heights of creation.

Azad's dream girl appears and reappears in diverse shades, divergent strains and in different names. Sometimes she occurs in the name of Shyamoli and again she recurs in the names of Laboni, Ranjana and Malati. In his long trajectory from earth to heaven and across the milky way studded with millions of planets, the poet continues his endless quest for that woman of his dream who casts her spell on his mind and finds expression in exquisite lines of his poem entitled "Baikhakhi Stabak". The poet says

You are a malati of morning
and Rajanigandha of evening
You have laid bare your heart
darkness, light and shadow which
are your own
Your desire, dreams and hopes
I also give you my heart filled with
love
Azad concludes this poem by saying
You will appear in diverse forms
I shall take you down even if you are
lost
I shall keep adoring you till eternity
(translated by the writer)

Azad's girl is not a stuff made of dream only. She is a reality made of flesh and blood. She came upon Azad's life like fragrance of spring blossoms to cause flutter and quiver in his early youth. But she left him in the lurch before long. The poet suffered excruciating pang due to betrayal of his love by his beloved. At one stage his entire heart and soul revolted against the injustice done to him. But by and by he transformed this loss into strength. The poet's passion for his beloved is so intense that even in separation he feels her presence in his mind. She melted into an ever-lasting dream which penetrated his eyes and pervaded his entire being. That is why the poet cries out in ecstatic pain

You will appear in diverse forms
I will find out even if you are lost
I shall keep adoring you for genera-



Alauddin Al Azad

tions
(translated by the writers)
Thus long after he lost his lady-love physically, he got her more intimately and more intensely.
In fact, separation has strengthened his bond of love because she now dwells in his mind. She has assumed a bodiless form of an exquisite dream, which, gliding into his eyes, has curved out a permanent place for herself deep down the depth of his mind and soul. What has now metamorphosed into a dream to the poet often transcends all human experiences to take and ethereal form called muse or goddess of poetry. Having assumed this form, she fires his imagination and stirs him creative activity. Thus she serves as the fountain-head of inspiration for his poetry. In serene and quieter moments when emotional flurry fails to take precedence over cold logic he recognizes his deep indebtedness to her invisible but everlasting presence in his life. One can discover his beloved's imperceptible presence serving as inspiration for his creative activities in the following lines.
I shall not commit any more mistake
Your are a red red rose of love and
The queen of my heart
You are the dream girl of my poetry
Your breathing shed images and

Dismond-studded words
When you, Laboni, took quietly with
Half-open eyes
I am a poet, I am a king
Why should I be afraid of
(translated by this writer)

The ancient fables of Radha-Krishna, Laili-Majnu and Shiree-Farhad are reminiscent of Azad's love poems with a slight variation. These fables represent selfless sacrifice and total surrender of lovers to their lady-love.

The Supreme Being finds manifestation in Radha-Krishna's love. But Alauddin Al Azad, having physically lost his beloved, does not give himself up to immolation like Majnu and Farhad. He, on the contrary, draws his supreme satisfaction and joy from ceaseless quest for her which transcends this evanescent world and cover the whole cosmic system. In one of his sonnets Azad gives vent to this emotion when he says

If you don't like, throw me aside
I shall keep searching you in this
green fertile earth
Even if you don't forgive me
I shall make you astir with emotion
for eternity

The finale of Azad's love, in his endless search for his beloved, assumes and abstract bodiless form.

With the advancing years of his life rapturous romantic thrill and excitement of his early youth have given way to maturer thoughts and emotions. He no longer chases butterfly on the wings of romance. The Malaties and the Ranjanas, who used to haunt his dreams in the spring times of his life have dissolved into body forms of a woman who like mother earth nurtures and nourishes life in this planet. Azad's loved one now procreates and preserves life. Thus his love now transcends the desire of flesh and reaches a sublime height of creation which is all pervasive and eternal. Thus love to Azad is the fountain-head of strength life on earth.

In maturer years Azad has come to realize that love attains its fulfillment in separation and not in union. In union there is sweetness but not consummation. In his transcendental flight Azad reaches sublime height, far beyond human experience and emotion. But he never remains lost in that world. His desire for love knows no satiety. His unfulfilled longing for love drives him back to earth to seek love of his beloved.

Expressing his unsatiated longing for love Azad stated in his sonnets without end-rhyme

I never can remember who said love
is nothing but an anguish, a torment

Which paves the way only to death.
But I see

love is more than that. It has no extinction

Millions of years roll underneath —
it's a burning fire

Not magic — I shall show excess!
come back.

poems

Two poems by Alauddin AL Azad

The day after

I have tasted the honey of
Hiroshima
When I was a boy of thirteen
Chasing a white-hare through
the ripen cornfield
on to Patenga, an uncertain
beach of the Bay Bengal;

On the way, a multi-coloured
tortoise crawled over the dry grasses
like a historical anachronism.

Suddenly, the hare disappeared
But who stares left and right or
at the back?

Instead, I looked up in the sky
where I saw it had become
the broken moon
deep inside the gathering clouds
shedding drops of unknown blood!

The day after, my bones
before being petrified, will
form, a wind-instrument
stranded in the desert-sand

Which, some years ago, has been
but a sea-basin:
The only wonder that will linger
in the dingle a repeating sound
as though a part of my
recorded song-
Ding dong, Ding dong.

The Magnum Aquarium

A fierce splinter from the crossfire
of the street
Didn't pass by the earphone hurling
a whirl inside the cerebellum of my brain:
Neither a day-dream nor hallucination
A phantasmagoria? Not at all.
I see rather calmly
that I am, though settled in a chair
beside my writing table to finish a
page of my diary, but a strange creature —
and have been
floating floating and floating
and in intervals swimming, swimming
and diving too deep into eternal waters —
What's the idea? - to sense immense diverge stream!
This world is the world
This world is heaven
This world is Hades
This world is the Universe:
The Magnum Aquarium—

A symbol of tragedy
with no beginning and no end
though throws arrows of poetry
In my throbbing morbid heart!
There is not number enough to measure
the vastness, the void and the unknown,
whatsoever —
Still not dismayed — rather a finer fancy
when making my mind a voyager
pushed me forward.
I rejoiced moving to and fro
amidst galaxies starts and moon
Sometimes in ultramarine
curvature, wavelength
as though a Zebra fish or an uprooted
plant: pity I don't know my origin
only the people say I was born
And one day, shall die — no wonder if suddenly
by another Big Bang or the Black Hole
swallowing
all like a waken great whale from slumber!
A sea-nymph you are,
on a half-submerged rock
near the roaring shore
Why you uttered the word 'love'!
No doubt a Beauty under the sun — I
But how could protect your pearl
ring when in flock the hungry
sharks have been chasing me fast?
OK give me your hand and a harpoon.

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