



POETRY

THREE SONGS

Kazi Nazrul Islam

TRANSLATED BY MOHAMMAD SHAFIQU L ISLAM

A wounded bird

Like a wounded bird, my songs
tumble down at your feet, my love.
Hold in your heart this songbird
wounded with an arrow of love.
At your feet shall I embrace death,
O the peerless beauty, my love.
On lyrical wings, he was flying in the
sky,
why did you pierce him with an arrow
in the eye?
From his dying voice,
such a tender tune gushes forth!
In the midst of intense agonies,
ambrosia dribbles from my
melancholic notes.

ACROSS PATHWAYS

In a trice if we ever meet across
pathways,
lay your eyes on mine
as you'd do in the past—
across pathways, my love.
That moment if you feel to weep,
don't pretend to hide your tears.
Once more call me with summer
name
that you'd do with in the past, my
love.
Your loved one beside you

will be my friend too—don't worry.
I'll implore him to love you
more than I do, my love.
If you get hurt, losing your love,
the distressed and forlorn me,
quietly shall I depart.
A thorn on the way I won't stand—
so forsake me and be happy, my
love.
In a trice if we ever meet across
pathways...

The strange bird

In what tune do you sing, O strange
bird!
It's sweet wine, not tune—
O Saki strewing a mellow strain.
Sitting by the window,
why, with this agonizing melancholy,
do you wake me every day
calling out so dolefully?
At your tune weeps the dawn,
embracing the sinking moon.
Dews as if tears roll down
soaking the descending dawn sky.
I cannot stay home
for my heart's restlessness.
I cannot keep my mind on work,
with the eyes rife in tears.

Mohammad Shafiqu l Islam is a poet, translator, and academic, and Professor of English literature at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh. Email: msislam_eng@sust.edu.

POETRY

Embracing WHOLE-NESS

SHEIKH SHADMAN MOKADDES RAHMAN

Mental health is really a fragile thing,
That should be cared for, like a delicate wing.
It's easy to overlook, to push aside,
But it's crucial for living a fulfilling life.

Thoughts and emotions that we can't control,
Can lead us to a dark, a spiral, lonely hole.
But you should remember that you're not alone,
There is always help, and a path to a happier
home.

Don't be afraid to speak up and share,
Your struggles and fears, with someone who
cares.
It's not a sign of weakness, to ask for aid,
Rather it takes strength to seek help, to not be
afraid.

Mental health is just as important as physical,
It's time to break the stigma, be vocal and
critical.
It's time to take care of ourselves, both mind and
soul,
To live a life that is complete and whole.

So let's start today, to be kind to ourselves,
Get help when needed, to improve our mental
health.
And believe that it's real, that it is also there
That is just as necessary as our physical health
care.

Sheikh Shadman Mokaddes Rahman is a
student of 12th grade at Dhaka College.



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

FICTION

The story of an ancient silence

ABDULLAH RAYHAN

The pleasing melancholia of Friday morning hovers through the window as a heavy gloom and sways within the fake plastic daisies lying on Marium's table while the smell of burning spices filled her entire house. Marium's mother couldn't care less about the condition of the kitchen now. Her husband has just collapsed to the floor.
Rahmat Ali's heart is older than he is. This was fated to happen one day. He had been preparing to take a shower and get ready for the Jummah prayer when his chest muscles suddenly felt like they were ripping apart. The next thing he knew was an impenetrable abyss. No, he isn't dead yet. Marium checks for his pulse and immediately calls an ambulance. The 'hee-woo' of the siren coming from the ambulance merges into the "Hayya 'alas-salah" of the azaan.
The weather is too hot today. Marium's mothers' sweat and tears are inseparable behind her niqab. Both she and Marium are rubbing her father's chilled palms while an attendant in the ambulance checks Rahmat Ali's pulse. He is still with them, and he will survive this blow if they

Marium feels a strong urge to burst into tears while her helplessness chokes her throat and eats away her voice. She slowly absorbs all the anguish and remains silent. She has to. What can she possibly say? What can she possibly do? Ask the devoted souls to stop their prayers and make way for her dying father?



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

reach the hospital in time.
The ambulance is rushing past the buildings and walls like a lonely butterfly. Thanks to the weekly holiday, there aren't many vehicles on the road. They are moving pretty fast. Unfortunately, the nearest hospital isn't that close. They are taking a long route to reach their destination.
But, with their speed, it shouldn't have been a problem. They would've arrived at the hospital before the sun reached the top of the sky, but something stood in their way. Suddenly, a line of traffic arrives in front of the ambulance like a perching angel of death.

Marium starts to panic. They can't afford to lose time. She silently pants, "Is the jam long?"
"Don't know", the driver says while scrolling on his phone.
"Can you please go and check how long the traffic is?" Marium's request sounded like a desperate appeal.
The driver gets out of the car, making his annoyance apparent with a loud grunt.
After a moment, the driver returns. "It will take a while. They have stood for the Jummah prayer. The mosque is overloaded. So, they had to come out onto the road", said the driver while entering

the car.
Marium can feel her throat parching. An abrupt panic spreads throughout her body while her heart restlessly squirms like a storm trapped boat behind her rib-cage. Her trembling voice reeks of desperation. "Can we take another lane? Is that possible?"
"No. This is a one-way road. If we want to go through a different lane, we will have to take a U-turn and go back the way we came from."
"So what? Turn the car around", Marium insists with the last drop of energy left in her heart.

"That wouldn't be a good idea. There are tons of mosques behind us too. That road is probably blocked as well."
A monotonous murmur vibrates in the air. The mild rattling of the small fan in the ambulance rhymes with the whisper, "Allahu laaa ilaaha illaa huwal kaiyum", of Marium's mother.
Marium feels a strong urge to burst into tears while her helplessness chokes her throat and eats away her voice. She slowly absorbs all the anguish and remains silent. She has to. What can she possibly say? What can she possibly do? Ask the devoted souls to stop their prayers and make way for her dying father? Interrupt the sacred ritual of rescuing the gutted spirits just because her father, an individual among millions, is being ripped apart from the bosom of earth? Should she do that? Is she even allowed to do that? Has anyone ever broken the silence of the man's invisible encounter with God without being endowed with sin?
A few minutes pass. No one is reciting Ayatul Kursi anymore. The monotonous rattle of the fan effortlessly tries to freeze the ebb of time in futile attempts. Outside, in the scorching heat, muffled echoes are passing the ambulance. Vague silhouettes of conversations and laughter calmly crawl inside the silent and warm vehicle where Marium sits with her head buried in her hands. The atmosphere here is completely still with the serenity of a grave. The silence from before remains constant behind a new mirror. It is the same silence echoing through an old ocean of dried up sweat and tears without a sailor breaking through the waves.
It is nothing new. A thousand epochs of ancient silence have once again paused a heart for the rest of eternity, and for the rest of eternity it will continue to do so.

Abdullah Rayhan is studying English Literature at Jahangirnagar University.