

Poems



by

Anna Molka

Anna Molka

Born 13 August 1917, London, England.
Became Muslim at the age of 18 years.
Qualified from the Royal College of Art,
London, in 1939.

Married Sheikh Ahmed qualified from Central
School of Arts and Crafts, London in September
1939 and sailed for India.

Reached Amritsar October 1939.

Joined University of the Punjab, Lahore in June
1940 to start Department of Fine Arts.

Introduced Intermediate, B.A, M.A Fine Arts as
Elective subjects. Started B.F.A and M.F.A.

Professional subjects in Graphic Design and
Painting.

Organised Annual exhibitions till retirement in
1977. Extended to 1979.

Started Pakistan Art Council in December 1948.

Tamgha-e-Imtiaz 1963

President's Medal for Pride of Performance 1969

Quaid-i-Azam Award 1982

Khudeja-Tul Kubra Medal 1983

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Poetry 1992.



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Anna Molka

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Memory

Close the door
Turn the key
Yet still the strains of melody
Drift through to touch the memory
Of youth, ambition and desire.
The beating heart drums to aspire
To reach the crescendo
 then expire
The melody wails, the memory wanes ...

Only dreams
Close the door
Turn the key.



A-4719

Pain

Pain!
Can you leave me?
Will you drive me insane?

Prayer!
Can you help me?
Let me not cry for God's care in vain!

How can I rest?
How can I work with zest?

He gave us night for sleep
Useless to count sheep.

He gave us day for work
But my sleepless shadows lurk

And I wait for the Dawn!



Grief

Grief does not weep and wail,
It cuts ice fragments from our hearts
And we quail.
It burns our being and our mind
Till peace we can never find.
Grief with Memory dwells
Too late to regret
We can never forget

Only live in Hell!



A Dream

I dreamed
There was a figure wrapped in white
Walking slowly away from me, surrounded by light.

I yearned to be near him
I followed fast
But he floated yet further
The distance was vast.
 I needed his comfort
 I needed his care
My yearning spanned the increasing space
And although he did not slacken his pace
A warmth seeped gently through my cold lonely heart.

Allah Almighty the Judge
Is Merciful and Forgiving
Do to others as you wish them to do to you.

His Throne is High!
Even so He is nigh!



Sleep

Sleep!
Why do you allude me?
I woo you
 I close my eyes
 Soften my sighs
I lie still
But my thoughts I cannot kill.
One pillow
Two pillows
Three pillows
or none.
 This side
 That side
 Straight
Have done!



But the call comes again
This time I am on the rolling main
The sea-gulls are calling
So the shore must be near
Sounds of collecting gear
Normal for landing.

But when I open my eyes
It is still night
And I listen for the call
But I cannot hear it at all.

It is a mystery
This call that wakes me at night
But now it no longer gives me a fright
I murmur soon!
I am coming soon!



The Call

In the stillness of the night
I suddenly awake
As if I am called.
I quake
And am appalled!
The world is sleeping
But my nerves are leaping!
I listen to the silence
Terrified of violence!
 No dogs bark
 No creak of a cart
 No song of a lark
The impenetrable darkness
Wraps round me to comfort
And I am calmed
No more alarmed,
But still puzzled.
I recite two nuffils¹.
Then try to sleep

I could not believe
I felt deceived.
When he took me away from you
He'd promised I'd see you again
He could not condole my pain!

When baby could toddle and eat
I took the two children by sea.
But the old home was gone
And all were scattered.
I travelled by train to find you.

It was a nightmare town
Avenues and streets of cement and marble
With short grass between.
There were no trees or flowers
No shady bowers in which to sit and mourn,
No urn in which to put
The sweet scented tall red roses
And the pink and white carnations you loved.
I sat at the foot of your grave
And read prayers from my Quran
And wept.
I left the flowers beside you
In the wind and the sun.

Till We Meet Again

Blue-grey eyes
'Neath drooping lids
Sad yet steadfast
The peach soft blush
On your velvety cheek
I still feel your loving kiss
Mother dear
As we bade farewell
Decades ago.

I never meant to stay away so long
But Fate was cruel.
A stranger wrote condolence!
The shock is still with me!
For Mother dear
I always felt you near.
I wrote a piteous denial of the news
And requested their views.
My brother wrote at last
That he had been given the task
But he could not write
For he knew my plight.

My Prayer for Pakistan

I came to help your birth
Oh Pakistan!
I was seven years too early.
I did not realise it would be a bloody Caesarian!

Allah grant you strength
To grow with a blessed halo!
Paak may you be Clean Good and Holy!
Especially to the lowly.
Prayer and Charity must go hand in hand
By the Great Allah's Command!

Fasting you have arranged only for the poor and needy,
Your politicians are so greedy!
Allah sees all from his Throne so high,
They should beware not to fall into their own snare.

Haj² Pilgrimage, the time has arrived
Lucky those who have fulfilled all pledges
And can afford to travel far to the Holy Kaabah³!
In Pakistan, the Budget has arranged for our sacrifices lean!
May our souls rest in peace.

Ameen!



I returned by train and sea
With my two little ones
And here I feel you near.

Now your grandchildren
Have my grandchildren
And I fain would join you
And forget the tears and years between
And in your loving arms
Prepare to meet our Maker.



They found him in blood
The cancer advanced
They brought him by plane and ambulance.

I had sent them to save him
The operation they said was successful
But he died on the X-ray table!

I saw him at peace, so paled
And wept for our dreams that had failed.

We prayed
And they took him away
To his grave.

He is nearer now and here to stay
And when Allah commands
I'll join him if I may.



A Short Story

My love lies sleeping in the cold earth
Which is not the land of my birth,
And I am alone!
He brought me from far away
Yet in the heat I was glad to stay.
But the cold climes from which I came
Were not as cold as his heart
And so eventually we had to part.

Many long years and so many miles between
There was scarce information I could glean.
 For my struggles brave
 A medal they gave.
But the years took their toll
I heard the bells knoll.

As I lay on my sickbed
From far away a message came
From strangers an old man and his dame!
 Your husband is dying alone
 We can hear his moan.
 There is no one to care
 And we are too old to bear.

The Red Rose

A miracle of creation!
Hail it!
Give it an ovation!

Amidst the pollution of smoke and fume,
The breeze wafts gently its perfume.
Its head raises proudly ... Red ...!
Superb!

But hark! says Khyam⁴
'A flower that once has blown forever dies.'
No! No!
Such sayings must be lies!
For the Creator
Promises that later
There will be Resurrection!
So there can be no question!

The velvety flower,
As all creation,
Droops and dies,
And in the warm earth it lies
Sleeping quietly till the seed
Is called forth and grows and blooms once again
To gladden our hearts and delight our eyes!



Friends

Friends!

When youth is lost and gone
And sickness prevails

They comfort the soul

Till night fails

Soothe the frantic fright

Speak on the phone at night

Give courage to live

Their time they give

Calm the drumming heart

Promise never to part

Just a word

A few kind phrases

God bless them for their care

For their kind hearts so rare.

Dawn comes at last!

The shadows depart!

Welcome courage born of care

From my friends so rare.



A friend in need
Is a friend indeed
But when trust and confidence are broken
Friendship ends
And bitterness descends
Like black clouds on a dark night
There is no light.

Better no friend than a false one.



Family Ties and Friends

Family Ties

Family ties by blood are made
Suchlike ties can never fade.
Land and oceans between
Time and trials unforeseen,
Misunderstandings may ensue
Estrangements we may rue.
Partings and sorrows
Yet still we dream of meetings and tomorrows.

Friends

Families are born you have no voice
But with friendships you have a choice.
Acquaintances are two a penny
But real friends cannot be many.
Like minds you speak as to yourself
Relaxed in confidence you confer
As painter on canvas expresses
And singer and poet in song and verse confesses.

Tahira

From the day you were born Tahira
 Your little fingers curled round my heart
 And I knew we never could part.
 Your huge dark, long-lashed eyes
 Expressed your every thought
 Even before you could talk!
 Your merry mouth curves in ready laughter
 Your thoughtful kindness brings you never ending friends
 And the birds and animals know your tread
 And chirp and bark to welcome you as you come and go.
 Your little nose
 And your twiddling toes
 Express your boundless energy
 And your thick dark hair
 Curls in profusion round your shoulders.
 A pretty picture you make
 Causing many a heart to ache!

Tara means 'A Star'
 And Tahira means 'very religious'.
 Both express your personality.
 Many blessings you've earned
 For you CARE, That is very rare!

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Silent Vision

Mysterious beautiful vision
Who are you?
You are not fair Helen beloved of Paris
You are not Brunnhilde beloved of Siegfried.
Their blonde tresses
And blue-eyed caresses
Are cold compared to your slightest glance.
Beneath your dark arched brows
Your violet eyes veiled with curling lashes
Are startling in your cream-white face
While your rose-bud mouth wears a whisper of smile.
So inviting is the warmth
Emanating from your graceful slim curves
Reclining sinuously and languidly.
Yet I feel a feline litherness beneath the languor
Ready to spring if I dare speak
And break the magic spell of silence.
The only movement that makes me tremble
Is the slow flaring of your nostrils
As you draw breath through your classic nose.

I am mesmerised and dare not move
Hardly breathe
Release me or let me die
For even my spirit cannot depart
Without your leave.



My Darling Grandchildren!

The house is lonely without you three
 Omi's toys are waiting
 His cars, guns and bricks are debating
 As to when they'll feel your eager hands
 Your feathers and Red Indian bands.
 Your brushes, paints, paper and palette
 Are sadly collecting dust
 Come soon you MUST!
 Your paper aeroplanes, books and toys that you modelled
 With paste and scotch tape
 Are waiting for you to colour them
 And play
 Yet you are still away!

Gittoo where are you?
 Dominoes, Scrabble and Cards
 Must be played by two!
 Rummy, Kaseeno and Bluff
 You play with me
 But Clock, Patience and Solitaire
 You can play there.

Life has not been a bed of roses for you
You've had it hard
And come up smiling.
You are most beguiling!
Wise beyond your years
Your three lovely children obey your commands
Then twine themselves all over you
Caressing your soft arms.
And cajole you for ice-creams and jellies and kheer⁵
And you give them for you hold them most dear.

You love cars and fast driving
To loud music with drums
You love travelling to far countries
And laughter and fun.
Yet through my long illnesses you tendered me with care
Night and day you were beside me
Listening for a wish, comforting a tear.

May Allah Almighty bless you
And your three loving children
For you have made these dwindling days of my strength
Bearable and comfortable and given me confidence
To bear the inevitable with fortitude and gratitude
To the end. Amen!



Your sleek long plait in beaded and shining paranda⁶
Sways at your hips gracefully
Your eyebrows like butterfly wings
Up and down swings.
Dark steady eyes and smiling mouth
You are a most attractive granddaughter!

I can hear Omi's high laughter
And Gittoo's voice breaking
And you singing
As I pass your rooms
I miss you my dear ones
Come back SOON!



All your video games and tapes await you
I miss your giving me my medicine at night
Alone I never get it right!
I fell asleep with the T.V. on last night
And my spectacles were still on this morning
And I am yawning!
Have you grown even taller?
You make me feel smaller!

Zeri I miss your singing
In memory my ears are ringing!
But the house is quiet
Mama still keeps her diet!
My milk and 7 UP overflow
The adjustment only you know.
Mama enjoys her coffee when you make it.
I miss falling over your shoes around the house,
Since you've been away we killed the mouse!
Congratulations on your first class result
You are now an adult!
You'll be a college girl soon
Slim and fashionable, a boon!
But don't forget your judo karate
Pretty girls must protect themselves with martial arts
To keep intact their hearts.

The Noise of Silence

The rush of life goes on
Everyone with clockwork precision
Has an individual mission.

Up at dawn, prayers, read the Quran⁷,
Pray Allah⁸ to spare
Relatives gone and relatives here
Friends and loved ones so dear.

Breakfast a snack!
We'll eat when we get back!
Dash for the bus!
Crank up the car!
Push the choke
It still has some life, although it's a joke!

Chugged off or dashed away
Echoes of the children
Rushed to bathe, dress and eat
And the warnings 'You'll be late.'
Quiver away to the gate.

Brother's Protest

Why should sisters wear their brother's jeans?
We don't wear their shalwar qamise!
My sister Zeri took my new jeans
And my new T shirt
And practiced her Judo Karate!
And now my jeans and T shirt are tattered and torn!
I protest!
Yet brothers can't retaliate.
How would we look dressed in their long skirts
And colourful dopattas?
If I wore her fashionable colourful dopatta round my head
I'd look like a pirate from some ancient frigate.
And request her to walk the plank.
But brothers must always gentle be
To their dear sisters what ever their pranks.
Yet I appeal to other brothers
Apart from reporting the matter to our mothers
What can we do?



Come My Love

Oh my love
If we had wings of a dove
We could fly far away
And keep the world at bay.
In the wilderness nest
Where we could rest.
We would sigh for a past
Gone at last!
Forget the yesterdays and sorrows
And welcome the tomorrows.
Meditation and prayers
Soothed by Nature who cares,
While our nest in the branches swings
With the soft caressing winds.
Leaves give us shade
In the melodious glade
And shelter from soft rain
That sings its own refrain.

Education and earning a must
Parents have a responsibility a trust.

But the one who stays at home
Never again to roam
Hears the house become quiet
It ceases to breathe
And then the NOISE OF SILENCE
Descends and resounds with violence!

The blood pounds in her ears
Her heart drums in its despair to join the fair,
Quietly she begins her household chores,
Quietly she closes all the doors.
Every clink of glass or spoons
Echoes through the quiet rooms.

The generation gap
I must sit quietly
With my hands in my lap.
One day I shall cease to breathe
And the NOISE OF SILENCE will be back!



Depression

Mind befogged

Action bogged.

Lost in a maze

Wild gaze.

Uncontrolled fears

Dried tears.

Control!

Lie still as a doll!

Let time pass

Count blades of grass

Count fallen leaves

Count threads in intricate weaves!

Don't panic!

Tick --- Tick --- Tick ---

The clock hands move slowly

From Dawn to Dusk

Night, velvet black Night

To hide this husk

Hopes to crush.

The luxury of the unconscious,

Come!

I'll greet you and be dumb!



Love let us up and away!
Do not stay!
Let us make our dreams come true
For life is short and we shall rue
If we do not escape
While we are young
And our wings are strong.

Old age is a cage
With prison bars!

Old age is a cage
With prison bars!
It is the end page
Of Life's outrage!

Come my love, let us away!



Fluffy and Denver

Omi Darling

Where is Fluffy?

Mother dear he is so stuffy!

He lies under the bed all day

And refuses to come out and play.

He growls if he's disturbed

He is really getting old

And is no longer bold.

Once Fluffy was a sweet white ball with a curly tail

Cuddly and soft with bright black eyes and wet black nose.

Now he is grumpy and dumpy

And really a bore

And I don't like him any more.

He barks loudly and runs after cycles and rickshaws

And even little donkeys

Who come with bricks.

He needs a bath and comb every day

For now his white tail is curling and fluffy again.

He is getting proud of his looks

And asks for biscuits from the cooks.

Hate

Burning ... both simmering and violent
Consuming mind and body
Corrosive as acid
Till naught is left but a shriek on the air
The shriek of hate beyond compare!
The piercing, cutting vibration
Paralysing ... shocking
The shriek of hatred
Is a shriek born of desperation!
The desperation of the strong, the mighty,
One born to conquer, to succeed
But Fate's sharp final blow of failure
Turns the shout of conquest to despair
Sours and shrivels the extrovert bombastic spirit
To an introvert screaming, snarling
Specimen of hatred and despair.



The Toys Complaint

Little Girl
When you are at school
What shall I do?

Little Boy
I am not just a Toy
While you have fun I sit here glum!

We sit and wait and wait
To know our fate!

You learn to read and write
Play See-saw and Swing and Sing
Then you come home
And wash and eat
And even lie down to sleep.

When you wake up
Please have tea with us.
We'll sit with you
As good as gold
And do everything we're told.

Omi darling what have you there?
I'm playing with my new doggie under the chair.
Omi dear, what is his name?
His name is Denver and it's really a shame
For he's not grown like Denver the Dinosaur
He is brown and so long legged and really a bore
For he lies around feeling hot all day
And eats and eats at night and then feels gay.
He has a pointed long nose
And ears that stand up in quite a pose.
If he hears someone enter the gate
He growls wuff wuff and then it's too late.

Now he and Fluffy together run and bark and bark
And frighten everyone but they enjoy the lark!



Adolescent Hero

My hero was Oh so tall
Black waving locks fell over his forehead fair
As he drew his bow over the violin strings,
Sometimes so gently did the music draw my heart
Sometimes so violently his body and arms swung the bow
To make the music loud and menacing
To warn the adolescent that dreams evaporate
And harsh reality sweeps away
The scenes through rose-coloured spectacles.

I never met my adolescent dream
For he belonged to northern ice-bound climes
Where my refugee forebears had wandered.
Instead I fled to the warmer climes
Nearer my roots.

Where can wanderers rest?
Oh venerable Ibraheem
Even you fled the idol worshippers of Ur of the Chaldees
And our Great Prophet left Holy Mecca for Medina.

You can eat our biscuits too
For it's love we want from you.
Cuddle us and tell us all your news!
Please invite your school friends and their toys
To come and have a picnic lunch
On the next holiday under the tree
And we'll have tea
And play see-saw and swing
And dress up as kings and queens.

And when you go to school
Sit us at desks too!



The Camera Eye and The Artist's Eye

Camera Eye strode proudly to the dias
'We work scientifically
In tune with the 20th century!
We fix our distance and our time
And our results are 100% correct.
And we can repeat it over and over again
And it will always be the same!
You may rely on us to win you fame!'

The Artist's Eye ambled gently to replace the
Proud first speaker on the dias.
There was a twinkle in his eye
But his honest look could not lie.
'This morning,' he said,
'The graceful lady had spent a sleepless night
She was tired and out of sorts.'
But the scientific camera fixed her forever
Tired and spent.
But the Artist's Eye sees beyond the present.

So must we refugees wander throughout the earth
For none of us belong to the soil in which we live.
For a while we shall sojourn in a plot of earth where we are buried,
And then the wind will blow
And upheavals come and our fine dust will blow
In all directions over the earth
Never to rest
Like the sounds of the bow on the violin strings
Quivering on the air
Beyond this earth to the High Heavens.



Say Inshallah

Now-a-days Newspapers, Radio and Television
Sound like descriptions of Qiamat⁹!

War, Strife and Pestilence!
Wind storms and rain,
Floods, mud-slides and volcanoes
Parched lands and Starvation,
Torture, greed and injustice,
Man's inhumanity to man!

No Faith, No Unity and No Discipline.

It is Allah Almighty Who plans for all!
The sunrises and sets by His Command!
And the Winds bring clouds and rain by His Command!
Seeds are planted, grow and are harvested by His Command!
We are created and die by His Command!
The place and time are ordained by His Command!

The Artist's Eye sees into the heart and mind
And is more kind.
The gentle lady seen with the Artist's Eye
Is always gentle
For the Artist shows the sum total of the personality
Not a temporary Reality!



Poetry for Speech with God

Poetry is not meant for lies,
Poetry is meant for sighs,
Prayers to God to hear our cries,
Beg that He lighten our hearts,
Remove all the hurts and darts.
He created us
Minute and weak
We had no choice
And could not speak.
 We grow
 Bearing blow after blow.
Poetry conveys our complaints
That sorrows and burning are for saints
That joys and ease in life
Come to those without strife
Who bribe and cheat and grasp
Never relenting to the last.

So say Inshallah¹⁰!
See you!
Be seeing you!
See you soon!
Only a month!
Only six months!
Just a couple of years!
Just a walk around the block before turning in!

Say Inshallah we shall meet again
Before Qiamat!



The Dopatta¹¹

A drape of cloth
 Fluttering, light as a moth.
 Yet how expressive!
 Trembling in the early breeze
 Or violently whipped when seized
 By stormy winds!
 Covering the glory of God's gift to women,
 Her flowing silken tresses,
 Her eyes lowered
 Her nape bent in humble adoration
 Of Allah's Glory
 Of His Great Mercy
 The Mankind Story!

Soft folds frame the profile
 Of the loving Madonna for her babe,
 Soft folds wipe the tears
 Sorrowing by the grave.
 Every poet ... every painter ... every actor
 Uses the expressive folds
 To help convey his poignant feelings
 Express his deepest meanings.

You teach us that all men are brothers
But we do not choose our mothers
You make us black, brown, yellow and white,
So no colour should be better than the others,
So why some in palaces and some in hovels?

Poetry wells from the heart and mind
Expressions of the deepest kind.

Adoration of God Almighty

Love of Nature,

Love of Kindness,

Love of Beauty,

And the prayer that we do our duty.

Whatever is God's Plan for us
We submit we really must!



The Love Marriage

What is this feeling called love?
Is it ordained from above?

A curious restlessness,
A tension,
A longing to be near,
Walk together
Talk together
The sky is bluer
The birds sing more sweetly
A soft breeze blows
Pray that times slows.
Parting is no sorrow
For there is always tomorrow.

Soon comes the joyful time
They are joined in their prime.
And life a joyful rose-strewn path
Along which the lovers laugh and dance.

Fairy stories always end here
The Prince marries the Princess
And they live happily ever after.

In every phase of life
The dopatta plays its part.
Rocking baby to sleep as
A hammock or charpai¹²,
Lifting the cook-pot off the fire
Youngsters playing in the sun
Knotting the dopatta and having fun
Fighting to see who won!

A light drape covering
Protects and comforts
Keeping at bay fretting and worries
Soothing troubled brows
Lulling and calming
Till harmony prevails
And the spirit rests from travails.
Even when the end is nigh
And the soul leaves the body with a sigh
The pure white drape
Is the symbol of Prayer.
Rest in Peace
God is there!



He is happy with his work and friends
And she is happy with hers
While the baby in Grandma's lap purrs.
This part-time husband and father
This part-time wife and mother
Grow further apart.

What is this feeling called love?
Is it ordained from above?
End the story as you wish
Because now-a-days
Divorce is the fashion
And love only passion!



It is the 'after' that is contact with life
The contact that is full of strife!
The rose-coloured spectacles
Grow dim
As adjustments of personality
Grow grim.

When baby arrives
A truce is called.
The curly-headed boy
Brings everyone joy!
But papa soon gets bored
'It is for women these chores'
Man the provider needs his friends after work
To relax and drink tea with and on politics talk.

The twentieth century woman
Has no taste to be stranded.
She states her qualifications
Lands a Job, and expects congratulations!

No mending no patching
No sealing no camouflage
No calm flowing of waterways
Of Spring Hope Care
No sunlight sparkling
Playful ripples
But the Finality of the River of No Return.
Silence
Suspension
No time
Then Freezing
Shaking Cold
Physical and Mental
Freezing Ice Cold So cold!

The shutters of the eyes opened abruptly
Revealing the hospital room
Horried, they stared at doom
Recollections of emotions, attack and pain
A world gone insane!
A Catastrophe!
And it happened to me!



Catastrophe

I heard the roar
Of an animal in pain
A scream a groan
A grunt of anguish
Impossible to describe.
I imagined, felt or heard
The Crunch of the mashing bone.
Then the screams held in the air
Anguish echoed and reechoed
Louder and Softer
Finality the break a sundering
A thundering
Echoed thru thunderous waterfalls of tears never ending
Rushing waters torrents
Tossed in swirling currents
Going under surfacing
Going under.
Pain ends in unconscious rest
But the tearing sinews torn
This was knowledge
Reality the Reality of No Return.

He observes
 The loyalty of the dog,
 The independence of the cat,
 The timidity of the mouse,
 The deviousness of the rat,
 The daring of the crow,
 The majesty of the eagle,
 The brave lioness defending her cubs,
 The slinking hyena lurking in the shrubs.
 The strong oak steadfast in the storm
 While the gentle sapling bows and sways to keep its form.

In the Spring he sees the green leaves
 Dancing and laughing in the breeze,
 In Autumn they are yellow, red and brown on the trees,
 And in Winter they decay and are swept away!
 Likewise he sees merry Childhood, Challenging Youth,
 Calm Middle Age and Weak Tired Old Age
 Like the leaves dropping one by one
 In never ending line
 Till they are gone!

So many observations!
 So many experiences!
 So forms the inner strength
 So forms the fire
 To reach out and desire
 Not to fall in the mire!

The Cycle of Life

Happy the baby encircled by love
Chuckling and cooing like a dove.
Clasping trustfully his father's finger,
Sucking joyfully with mother to linger.
Entering the adventure of being
His eyes focus, he is seeing!
From the cocoon he emerges,
The wonder of life within him surges!
He crawls! He stands! He falls!
He walks! He talks!
He laughs! He cries!
But Why?
So many Whys!

Every day a new experience!
His will is forming,
Weak or storming?
Sturdy and affectionate?
Or hating and defiant?
What are the experiences that cause the characteristics?
What are the statistics?

This ego, this brain, this creative spark,
Like Computer
Cannot aspire higher
Cannot tune in to the Infinite!
No more knowledge is ceded
The current of life is switched off
The cycle starts again from babyhood ,....

To strive to seek to find
But no matter Ulysses
We have to yield!



To face life!

This ego, like computer
Reacts, for it is not neuter.
Reacts to everything on earth
Till he himself gives birth
To continue the cycle
Of birth to death!
Then he also asks Why?
Why this creation
That ends in naught?
The scientific brain reaches heights
Establishes satellites
And observation in Space
But like Leonardo da Vinci his creative brain
Not only creates positively
But also negatively
Armaments, weapons of War and Destruction and Mass annihilation!

So to what end the creative Painting, Music,
Poetry Drama and Song,
The Archeologists find the writings and architectural ruins
Swept away like the leaves
In the end
To lie deep
In the earth to die!

Orphans from war zones
Where they left their parents' bones.
What crime did these orphans commit?
Too young to fend for themselves
Will they be collected by slave gangs?
With bellies swollen from starvation
And fragile thin sticks for arms and legs,
A sorry progeny!
They will never hear the hymns of praise
Nor in mosques bow in your praise.
Their childhood spent full of woe
Not even knowing their foe.

Only hunger and despair
Chained in a sorry lair.

So while Lahore sleeps
I pray for the children
The future generations
That make up all nations.
They are innocent Oh Allah!
Hope, love, happiness and peace is their due,
Merciful Allah make it come true!



*"Call On Me: I
Will Answer Your (Prayer)"
(Sura XL) Al-Mumin (The Believer) (60)*

Lahore sleeps!
But rest evades me
I hear the groans and moans
I hear the sighs and cries
Of folk in travail and pain,
Of those weeping for the dying and the slain.

Your Creation of Nature Oh Allah is so wonderful!
Yet floods, disasters, wars and starvation deface it
Your Creation of Man is superb!
Yet instead of the Brotherhood of Mankind,
There is callousness, anger, rape and murder,
Racism and ethnic violence,
And brother fights brother!

Night and Day we recite our prayers
Telling You our cares,
Begging for Your Mercy, Forgiveness and Blessings.
Oh Allah! Bless Your Creations
With Peace and Plenty
So that they cultivate desert wastes
Cultivate food for the hungry
Build homes for the homeless.

Madam Nayan agreed to take the carriage
 And work hard for their daughter's marriage.
 But first she explained
 That some details had to be made plain
 Were they Punjabi, Sindhi, Balochi or Pathan¹⁴?
 Or Kashmiri or Moghal or Quraish?
 Were they Sunni or Shia or Wahabi¹⁵?
 Aghakhani, Noorani, Duobandi or Madoodi or Brelvi?
 For Moghal Mirzas and Baigs and Ranas
 Do not marry Kashmiri Khwajas
 Nor Butts nor Mirs nor Dars,
 And Saiyyads marry Saiyyads.
 And Rajahs marry Rajahs
 And Araians marry Wynes.
 As you know, said Madam Nayan
 The cast must be 'quite'
 Like the primitive rite.
 The Brahmin¹⁶ marries Brahmin,
 The Kashatri joins Kashatri,
 The Vashiya marries Vashiya
 And the Shudra marries Shudra.
 The Hindani cannot inherit
 So gets a dowry as merit.
 But although Muslim women
 Have inheritance rights
 Yet the dowry system we cannot fight!
 I do hope the dowry won't put you in a plight!
 The Zamindars¹⁷ marry in their landowning class
 And keep their land and their money fast.

The Arranged Marriage

The time had come in our daughter's life
To arrange that soon she'd become a wife!
So according to custom we called Madam Nayan¹³.

'Oh Madam Nayan please arrange a good marriage
We'll be so thankful and lend you our carriage!'
'Please get her a mother-in-law
Who is a paragon not a harridan
And a comfortable home with servants and a car.
Please try to arrange that she lives not too far.
If she's near I can hear
If the paragon is a harridan
And protect my dear one from the tartar.
You see she's been to college and hasn't learned to cook,
But she can read it all up in a book.
She knows all the fashions
In fact it is her passion,
She knows how to shop and drive a good bargain.
And she loves organising parties and decorating the home.
The husband you'll find her
She'll soon learn to love,
Then you'll be blessed from above.'

Madam Nayan went forth to the fray,
 She was honest and always had her say.
 'The graceful girl is fair and lovely,
 Educated and of a cultured family,
 As a life companion
 She'll be a winner!'
 The answer came in dry response
 Grace and fairness fade fast
 A house, car and money last
 We also have daughters to espouse
 So she'll need furniture in her house.
 She'll need jewelry and clothes galore
 Before we think of marriage for the son we adore!

Madam Nayan returned sadly to make her report.
 She was not happy with the news she brought.

'Parents,' she sighed
 'I have never lied,
 But the fashion now-a-days
 Is Education PLUS Dowry
 And the Jaats though Muslim
 Do not give women inheritance
 Like the Hindus, they give dowry.'

The Industrialists marry money
And keep their own too.
So the traders, craftsmen and clerks
Must keep to their own mediocre marks.
Education comes last
The worst paid profession
A sorry confession!
Farmers have their pride
But the Zamindar derides
And uses them for political asides.
Only the great Allah looks after freelancers
Be they painters, poets, actors,
Musicians, journalists or dancers!

Pray parents let me know
To which cast you belong
Otherwise I may go wrong.
Also please tell me the dowry
You can afford
For the future lord?
'We spent our income on Education
That is our dowry for our new relation.
Madam Nayan sighed
'I can only try,' she cried.

Lahore

Lahore is so delightfully difficult to describe
Wherever you roam, it is so alive!
London has the Thames and Lahore has the Ravi,
Its waters once so crystal clear
Descended from the mountains of Kashmir.
Once ancient walled Lo-awar
Surrounded by most beautiful gardens,
Had thirteen gates of varying dates
Lohari, Mochi and Mori,
Shahalum and Kashmiri,
Bhatti and Khiseri,
Delhi and Musjidi,
Yakki or Zakki,
Sheranwallah and Taxali,
And one in the Fort wall leading to Bagh Hazoori.

Now many of the gates are gone
Although their names live on.
Gone with the elephants and camels
And the cavalries of horses,
But the carts still jostle each other through the arches.
The fabulous bazaars are still full of people
Who live in the narrow lanes with carved doors and lattices.

The obvious conclusion of this research
Is not to leave women in the lurch!
Although more profitable to be born a boy
Without a wife there'd be no joy!
Without a mother there'd be no son
A Muslim girl cannot become a nun!

Oh Madam Nayan who never tells lies
Tell them that we must COMPROMISE!

Madam Nayan is always busy
To hear her stories will make you dizzy!
Let us pray her pairs are happily mated
So that mankind continues
And more sons are created!!!



Landscape Painting

They ask me How many paintings have you done?
 How can I remember? Ask the Sun!
 He shone so brightly here in the East
 That colour became a veritable feast!
 Contrasting colours!
 Reflected lights!
 Cast Purple and Blue shadows!
 Nothing else matters!
 The Sun burned me
 Till I forgot the world
 In a blur of colour.
 The texture of the sky, you can go through it!
 The texture of the growing golden wheat waving in the breeze,
 The shady distant village with people and animals,
 The lively Persian Wheel with ever moving oxen or camel,
 They seem mechanical robots walking round and round
 To make the sparkling water run in the Sun.
 Turbaned red-brown men in gleaming white shirts
 Stately women covered with their dopattas,
 Carrying a basket on their heads and a baby on their hips.

There are still odours from the meal-shops,
The butter, oil and scent shops
The vegetable and fruit shops.
While Lohari is full of flower shops.
The erstwhile gardens
Are now unauthorised habitations
Only worthy of lamentations!
It is a place of contrast!
The richest and the poorest!
It is the core!
It is Lahore!



Random Thoughts

In the very beginning
 There was no sinning.
 Adam and Eve lived happily in the beautiful Garden of Eden,
 They needed none to lead them.
 But when Satan began to intervene
 His politics they did not glean.
 They were banished
 And would have famished
 Had they not learned to sow the seed
 Themselves to feed.
 Then politician Satan intervened between two brothers
 Cain and Abel.
 This is not a fable.
 For it is the first murder recorded
 Not to be lauded.

All through Bible history
 There is the prevalent mystery
 Of politician Satan
 Urging the refractory tribes
 To worship idols with bribes,
 To have a king instead of the Almighty Guide.

A boy on a donkey
Buffaloes blue-black wallowing in a pool,
A hay-cart over loaded till the oxen disappear
Haystacks orange in the Sun.
Even the sheep become colourful
Gleaning in the cut fields in the Mughrib light.

In the vast space of flat plains
And distant horizons,
Man and his man-sized habitations
Seem to shrink to nursery-size toys
That are put away in their boxes at night
While the Sun sleeps!



But Satan did not despair
He taught them rigging and everything unfair.
They trampled Marx, hunted Trotsky, broke down Lenin,
Murdered Kennedys and Martin Luther King

Satan and his henchmen
Turned Black against White
And White against Black!
With the slant-eyed races
Pandemonium paces!

While Cain and Abel are resurrected
When brother fights brother!



With the king came advisers
Satan was happy to multiply the politicians in his own image.
He taught the divine right of kings
Hereditary kings even if fools and knaves
To blind people with their pomp and raves.

But God Almighty, Merciful and Forgiving,
Chose David and Solomon
To help his misguided creation.
And later to guide the hereditary kings
He sent prophets to warn
Against the politicians who fawn
For it was a time to mourn.
But the kings and the people did not care
Satan tempted them with temple fare.

So the Great God dispersed His creation throughout the world
Till a time when they could learn to choose
The best and the ablest to rule,
Not a hereditary fool.
Democracy and choice
Became the universal voice.

The sky dwarfed the village,
 And the brilliant light
 Made silhouettes of the huts and people.
 The red dopattaed forms in white
 That lay out dung-cakes in rows
 On the dry tilled furrows.
 Some arrived basket on head
 Then squatted to pat the round forms.

Returning to the foreground
 White forms half-hidden in the grass
 Shared a hooker¹⁸
 The pipe they passed.

The young artists trouped back
 To collect easels and paints
 Fired with inspiration
 Each had selected their composition.
 They were delighted to have found the villagers so friendly.
 Some had been invited into intricate lanes
 And some into home courtyards
 Where there were stores of grain.
 There were buffaloes and goats,
 Babies, children and swarthy strong parents
 And brightly dressed maidens
 To inspire their creations.
 They bade me join them
 And I said I'd come when they were settled.
 And they left me alone
 With the vast space and the sun.

Painting in a Village

So many eager eyes pleading,
How could we refuse?
In the college bus with our easels, canvases and paints,
Lahore College and University Fine Arts
Sang in unison with happy hearts!

Over a hundred miles out of Lahore.
Then we saw it!
Such a village I had yearned to find,
It seemed the reality issued from my mind!
From the road, the flat Panjab plain
Met the vast arc of the sky
Met Chota Dergail
The village hid the horizon
It extended so
All eyes were aglow!
And within minutes, students and staff were gone.
But I was rooted to the road,
Mesmerised by the vast space.

In the foreground the swaying green corn grew with grace
Stretching far, to join golden haystacks
And even further, earthen huts and Persian Wheel
Made up the composition triangle.
The dazzling sun was white
Nearly blinding my sight.
The wind swept sky
Encircled it on high!

I squeezed the colours from the tubes
Straight onto the canvas
And painted with my hand
My arm sweeping over the sky
And around the white sun.
The following days I painted with my knives.
It was exhausting for the lads to battle with the wind
But they were intrigued with the thick impasto
And my painting with gusto!

I had yet to complete the foreground of corn
When my staff and students came to warn
'You must not come to the village tomorrow
You must stay back ... Alack! Alack!'
'But why?' I cried in dismay!
'The baby you painted the first day
Has fallen ill and the simple folk
Might feel you took its spirit away!'

So I completed the painting in my studio
And it hangs in the Islamabad Gallery!
And the Mother and Child painting
Is in an English home far away.

The village baby recovered
It came to no harm
'Twas only a false alarm!'



But only a large canvas
Could have expressed my feelings
But I had only a small one alas!
So I joined them in the village,
They were really inspired
Not even tired!
I painted a mother and child
My effort was mild.
And when the light changed, we left,
Promising to return on the morrow.

Next day my huge canvas
Was tied to the roof of the bus,
And when we arrived
It caused quite a fuss.
Though I tied it to my easel
With string and rope
The driver and peon could not cope.
For out on the plains the wind was strong
So six village lads came to help
The driver and peon steadied the easel
While three lads on each side held my canvas!
Buffaloes passed and raised dust!
All this but paint I MUST!

As the sun sets
 A fresh palette needs be
 For Orange and Red and Crimson mix
 The blue with carmine becomes Mauve and Purple,
 How glorious!
 How superb!
 The delicate tints of mauve evening,
 Deepening to majestic purple tones of night.
 The Sun of Mughrib¹⁹ paints every cloud with a border of red,
 Orange, Orange-red, Red, Vermilion, Scarlet and Crimson.
 Deepening Blue becomes Purple,
 Then on the other side
 The sky is sometimes still light
 Cerulean and Cobalt near the still bright sky
 But again they too darken and are submerged in the night.

This kaleidoscopic exhibition
 Leaves one exalted and exhausted!
 Allah is the Greatest Sculptor of Forms!
 And the Greatest Painter of Colours!
 Let not the fools prate
 That Islam is against Art,
 Let them pray 'neath Allah's Monsoon Sky
 From Dawn till Dusk.
 And then if they still lie
 Let them die!



Monsoon Clouds

Monsoon clouds ever changing
Giants of the sky
Beneath which I lie
To enjoy the continuous exhibition
Of Allah's Art,
Any time of day to start.
A different variety of tints,
A different combination of forms,
In the wind or the storms.
Dark silhouettes of rain-filled clouds,
Outlined with silver or gold,
Or light clouds sailing twixt dark forms
Slowly moving with the breeze
Breaking and reforming,
But never the same.
Then the wind sweeps by
And the blue, grey and white
Streaks across ----
Leaving diagonals bordered by flecks
Dark against light and light against dark,
Blue-grey, grey-blue, white-grey, grey-white,
So transparent, so light!

'The Brotherhood of Mankind'
 A sincere wish from the mind
 A faith preached through the centuries,
 But countless saints and prophets
 Were killed and tortured, the aftermath
 Of endeavoring to turn their sheep
 To the right path.

Refugees where can they settle?
 Their sinews are not made of metal?
 They will do their best
 But where can they rest?
 Unwanted ... goaded to leave
 They have no one to whom they can cleave.
 Queuing for food
 Queuing for clothes
 Queuing for water
 Better to queue for the slaughter!
 The rich do not care
 How the poor fare!
 So the refugees
 Line after line
 Trudge through desert and slime
 Miles follow miles
 They leave their bodies in piles
 For the jackal and the vulture
 This is our CULTURE!



Our Culture

Refugees

Of one generation

Two generations

Three!

Even more!

Our ancestors far in the distant past soar.

Miles they trudged to find peace and freedom,

Dragged tired bones with no one to lead them.

No relatives or friends have we

Language is another barrier for me.

Refugees from oppression!

Refugees from War!

Refugees from Depression!

Refugees out they pour!

Fleeing volcanic eruption

Fleeing devastating flood

Fleeing ethnic feuds and racism

Oh God! The flow of blood!

To find Utopia?

Only a dream!

For ever jealousy reigns supreme.

Even brothers Cain and Abel fought

A really terrible thought!

They in turn have banished and uprooted
Their blood brothers, the Arabs,
From the land they erstwhile shared
From the Bible times declared.

Have they forgotten the ghettos and programs?
The misery of centuries?
The degradation and hatred
Of which Shakespeare has written for posterity?

How can they spurn their blood brothers?
Ishmael and Isaac?
Esau and Jacob?

But the Jews so clever
Have become dupes!
They are pawns in the Western Crusade!
Have they forgotten the holocaust
That left the world aghast?

To the Dupes of The Western Crusade

War!

Pestilence!

Starvation!

Death!

Why four?

Surely War causes the other three?

Peace an ideal? a dream? never to be?

Salaam Sholom

Even the word is at war.

A five pointed star

A six pointed star

The same father Abraham (Ibrahim)

Brothers at war!

How happy was the Jew

Helped by the Balfour Plan

To take what they felt their due

And return to their mother-land.

They ran from torture and death

To find the haven

The British gave them.

They who have been uprooted, raped and enslaved,

A hated minority in every land they craved;

The Sick Artist

Orange and Blue!
 Yellow and Mauve!
 Green and Red!

But I am in bed!

The sun blazes the colours through my window
 A Glory!

But I lie inert with a broken thigh
 And no matter how I sigh
 I cannot be mobile
 I have to be docile!

Oh! to stride
 Beneath Cerulean skies!
 And hear the birds sing
 As they swoop and glide.

The corn is yellow
 The shadows are mellow
 And the earth is Ochre with
 Shadows Cobalt, Cerulean and Mauve

The drummer is bronzed by the sun
 His smiling face under white turban
 Beams and lights shine on his cheeks and his drumming arms.

Those that were sinned against
Are now sinning!
They must beware
Of the poison they have imbibed
In their sojourn abroad!
For in spite of rape and intermarriage
They are still Semitic
Still the hated minority.

Let them be proud of the great geniuses they have given the world
In science, law, politics, music and art.
Where is their heart?
Let love come between the brothers
Both greet 'Peace'
Cannot war cease?



The Violin's Expression

The Artist is as sensitive as the Violin.
A quiet Dawn
A glorious Sunrise!
Birds waking the Day!
The bow touches the strings
Gentle chords ----
Sensitive harmony
Then glorious sound!

The tempo of life and its variety of duties
Quickens the bow and presses the strings
Faster it flies
Louder it cries!
The crashing crescendo
Complains of the discord of traffic
Horns blaring
Aeroplanes roaring
Sirens screaming
Tyres screeching
Crashing chords for discordant life!
Wails and cries for so many hearts in strife.
Cries of despair from beggars, lame or blind
From the hopeless and homeless
Who will care?

They have started cutting the wheat so fast
Do they work that my painting knife keeps to their rhythm
The strokes quick as their arms, and violent as their scythes

That was so fast!
I have painted a picture at last!

But I am still in bed
The painting is in my head!



Dreams sail gently through the mind
Echoing in softer key the days cares
Echoing in softer key the days despairs
Quietly we surrender
The violin calls us
Come to quieter climes
Come to views sublime
Come to sleep in peace.

Our heart slows
We are no longer bound
The bow gently leaves the strings
And our soul gently sails away
To silence profound.



Workers once proud and strong
Happily ploughing in the sun
Now droop without work, conscious of their children starving in rags
Their troubles woes and cares

Who cares?

The tempo slows
The day is tired
Birds call their young to nest
Workers trudge home to rest
Yet still the violin wails for the frustrated
The homeless, the jails,
For those in pain
For the insane

Once again the violin wails for the hopeless and lost
Every chord, every staccato, harmonises with
The heart of man and strife of life!

Then slowly, so gently the bow slows
Some time for romance
Sweet strains in the twilight
As the light fades, the nesting and resting.
Even slower the bow caresses the strings
Sleep or its elder sister Death!
Eyes close

The music calms the tired heart
The music quietens the tormented soul

Haj and Lament

Haj

The majestic Black Velveted Kaaba,
 Against the azure skies of Arabia,
 Is the symbol of Allah's promise grand,
 To Abraham and Ishmael that their progeny
 Would be as numerous as grains of sand.
 Through the ages the Zamzama still gives water.
 To sustain the descendants of Hajra and Ishmael,
 It will never fail!

From thousands of throats rise praises to Allah Almighty!
 From thousands of throats rise prayers for Mercy!
 The ecstasy of prayer chanted in Arabic
 From throats black, brown, yellow and white,
 No more barbaric.
 The Jumma²⁰ Prayer for the Nationals
 The Haj Prayers for the Internationals,
 From many far flung countries of the world
 They come at Your Command
 All united in Islam!

Lament

But Oh Great Allah so many devout Muslims
 Are praying to You
 Your Mercy to woo,
 From their painful sick-beds
 Riddled with Cancer, Aids and T.B.
 Dying in agony!
 Alone or surrounded by wailing children and family,
 They die on Haj Day midst their pain and agony!

While the ecstasy of prayer at the Kaabah
 Rises to Heaven to please You!
 To please You and beg for Mercy!
 Oh Rahman! Oh Merciful One!
 How to comfort those devotees?
 How to comfort those children?
 What sin did they commit?
 That they were not at the Kaaba
 'Neath the azure skies of Arabia?
 In agony they too with dying breath say
 'La Illah Illallah Mohammad a Rasul Illah!'

In the First Book of Moses, in the Torat²⁵,
 The Scriptures in verse 27 say
 'So God created man in His own image, in
 The image of God He created him;
 Male and female He created them.
 And God blessed them,'

Oh Allah! You have indeed blessed those who have
come for Umrah²¹ and Haj!

The great wish of their whole life!

They have finished their responsibilities and strife!

Prayer, Fasting, Charity, the Law,

Believing in the One Almighty Allah,

The Qiyamat²² and the Seal of the Prophets²³.

Oh Allah! the ecstasy of prayer of the fulfillment of a life-time is great

The nasha²⁴ of self-fulfillment is never late.

In tune with the Infinite Allah Almighty!

Thy Commands Oh Allah have been obeyed!

By even those who have had to wait to the end of their days,

Bent and aged

They are happy to chant Your Praises!

Encircling the Great Kaaba

And if they die of exhaustion in the heat and the sun

What greater blessing?

For they will be buried in the land of Islam

The land of the Great Prophet Muhammad,

All Blessings Upon Him!

The Arts

Song, Poetry and Dance
Are instantaneous expressions.
Rain-laden clouds,
Glittering leaves after showers!
The glorious blue sky
Under which I lie.
Golden grain in the sun
It will be harvest-time anon.
The wind blows
The saplings bow
Sadly a petal drops
And leaves are swept away.
Sundown and birds call their young to nest and rest,
Sunset and colours riot!
Orange ... orange-red ... red,
Cerulean, cobalt and turquoise,
Mauve, then purple getting deeper
And red changes to crimson.
Then the Queen of the Night
The silver moon rises
Trailing her veil of stars.
Night comes, calm and quiet
And in the gloaming
Dreams of love and roaming.

Amongst us Oh Allah, are those who care for the weak
 With our incomplete knowledge and poor facilities
 To please You we seek.
 But with Your Infinite Mercy and Wisdom
 Will You not eliminate grief, sorrow and pain?
 The whole world will gain!
 And we will not have prayed in vain!
 Others among us Oh Allah, are selfish, hard-hearted,
 Thieves, torturers and unbelievers,
 Are they also in Your Image?

It was Abraham who broke the idols of old
 He was so bold,
 He proclaimed You the Great Unseen Allah!
 Did You Oh Great Allah make us in Your Image?
 Or did Abraham conclude that a Great Creative Force
 Made the wonderful scientific Timing of Nature?
 Did he wishfully envisage an Immortal Comforter
 To look after we frail mortals, accidents of Nature?

We are sincere
 Please make things clear
 So that at Qiyamat we meet
 With a clean sheet!



Katakali's²⁶ rhythmic mime
 Makes poetry of life's routine....
 Or as Queen of the Fairies or Queen of the Night
 The lissom torso so supple
 Expression so light.

The world is a stage
 For the Actor alone,
 In mime or in rhyme or in prose.
 He interprets
 The past, present or future
 Alone in a world of his own.
 But on the stage interpreting a story
 He is bathed in glory.
 For he harmonizes
 The expressions of the writer, musician and stage designer,
 The lights, costume and set designer.

The Author, Musician and Painter inspired
 Must sustain their fires.
 The Author pen in hand
 Writes reams about all lands.
 His characters noble or bad
 Strong, brave, weak or sad,
 Act out his fables and stories
 Against backgrounds of failures or glories.

Sometimes he writes of ancient times and climes,
 Sometimes of the future.
 History and science, nature and mankind in relation,
 Are all puppets for his manipulation.

The musician seats himself gracefully
 And caresses his sitar as a beloved.
 Gently his fingers trill the strings
 And finds the taat²⁷
 In which to express his heart.
 To morning at dawn some are drawn,
 Some have a feeling for evening,
 Some will play
 For the joy of the day
 It is life they are expressing
 Accompanied by the nimble fingers
 Of the tablawalla²⁸.
 The music of orchestra swells to crescendos
 With Violin, Chello
 With Oboe, Flute and Piano.
 The world for musicians
 Is translated with rhythmic notes
 All life he denotes
 Whether slow and low
 Or by jazz hi fi.

The Painter impatient to start
 To express his Art
 Squeezes colours on his palette

And sometimes in his frenzy
He'll squeeze his colours on the canvas
And instead of brush, use his hands or knife.
It is the light and atmosphere he wants to capture
And the light changes every second to his rapture.
A cloud passes or evening draws on
So Monet the Impressionist
Changed his canvas every half hour.
But the painter of today
Paints the sum total of his observations
The sum total of his feelings
Be it sunny landscape or winter storm
Be it Still-life or Life
Youth or Age
Volcanoes or Wars
Love or Hatred or Woes
Some outdoor painters get sunstroke
Some indoor painters get depression
But over all is Expression.

Though expressing in isolation
Every artist needs an Audience
And it is his consolation
That there are publishers and printers and book shops
And Theaters and Stages
And Exhibition Halls and Promoters not vultures
To preserve our Artists and Culture.



Prayer

Oh Great and Glorious Allah!
Oh Omnipotent, Mighty One!
Have mercy on Your faithful!
Help them in trouble and sorrow!
The cries from Kashmir,
Can You not hear?
The cries from Bosnia and their tears?
The whole Muslim World
With flags unfurled
Await Your command!
One Faith whether Iraq or Kuwait
One Allah whether Turkey or Iran.
One to Whom we prostrate
Kneel and bow for our fate.
Only One loved by Pathan and Afghan
Only One loved by Pakistan!
Gather the minorities and refugees
From where so e'er they be
Protect them from the enemy!

There is no racism in Islam
Cannot You bless us with peace and calm?
Our greeting is Salaam!
Even the Israelites say Shalom!
Yet everywhere there is war and strife
Corruption and jealousy is rife!
Instead of equality and brotherhood
The rich become richer
And the poor become poorer.
Please do not let the gap widen.
All our prayers for world happiness, peace and plenty for all.
Bestow on us Your Mercy and Forgiveness for we are Your creatures.
Help us Oh Lord for we crave Your Grace!



The Pakistani Art Critic

I asked the Art Critic
Where are the geniuses?
The wry reply uttered
Was 'Dying in the gutters!'
Here only the rich can afford education
And their qualifications
Need recommendations
To procure them occupations!

I asked the Art Critic
Then where is the talent?
Again the reply was dry
The illiterate craftsmen through the ages
Have produced Folk Arts
With the same designs year after year.
Now-a-days some paint pictures on trucks
And some produce film posters for extra bucks!

How now Art Critic why so glum?
I've seen paintings all over the place.
I've seen portraits and still-lives and flowers
In so many techniques
With so many gimmicks
There are no limits.
There is realism, abstraction
And residues of the Bengal and Moghal Schools.

There must be facilities of study!
I repeat Tell me Art Critic
Where are the geniuses?

You must know, said the Critic seriously
That God gives to each Child, the gift of Creativity.
Then the Critic became angry not mild,
There are no School Arts to nurture Creativity in the Child!
In the dreadful school curriculum the gift soon dies!
I am not telling lies!
You can see for yourself
All the students are mediocre.
They are studying every subject without creative bias.
Can geniuses only come from the pious?
Creativity killed in schools
Cannot be resurrected in the colleges!
Even if they have education
They need creative facilities of study

So I repeat I do not mutter
Geniuses even if born, are dying in the gutter!



The Giving Love and The Taking Love

The Giving Love

The Giving Love is inspired from above.
 Allah loves His Creation
 For Mankind He has made the whole world
 With its Sun, Moon and Stars, its Seasons and Seas
 Its Tides and Winds and Rain,
 Serene Night for rest
 And bright Day for work and Play,
 Gardens and fountains, fruit, milk and honey
 Beautiful birds and beasts.
 We must emulate the giving
 For His glorious gifts of Peace, Happiness and Harmony
 Simple living
 Loving family and neighbours
 And wishing well for all Mankind.
 Mothers protect their young
 Feed, clothe and serve them
 The yearning, giving love
 Shows from their eloquent eyes
 The loving wife clings to her mate
 And he adores her
 The mother of his child.

Together in harmony
 The home is blessed
 Heads bow in thanks to Almighty Allah.

The Taking Love

Laughter and the happy murmur of voices
 Danced down the sun-dappled lane,
 Harmonized by the rippling lake
 Gurgled through the foliage of the trees
 As eager hands grasped the mature fruit
 And bright eyes sparkled with the enjoyment of the moment.
 Youth partaking of the Spring of Life
 Has no memories of yesterdays
 No fear of tomorrows.
 Days of Laughter
 Enjoyment of the Moment
 No memories of yesterdays
 No thought of the morrows.
 The pursuit of Happiness
 A fond kiss a caress
 A smile a ripple of carefree laughter
 Light mellows gradually
 And youthful forms recline 'neath the dappled shade.
 A smile of youthful tenderness plays round lips in repose
 A pursed rose
 'Neath curling lashes resting on blushed cheeks.



Lust and Love

Lust

He sat alone.
A predator with sensuous desire
Scenting the prey
That would come his way.
Vibrations emanated from that virile male
Muscles tensed, hands clenched.
Tendons swelled at his neck
When he clenched his jaws
His thighs writhed on the chair
His legs moved spasmodically
And even though his nostrils flared
Yet his eyes were steady.
His primitive desire
Conjured a reality.
She swam into his vision
And animal lustfulness exuded from her sinuous curves.
Battle, conquest, enjoyment, indulgence burned from her eyes.
Like to like.
The lascivious passion fused.
He stood up and she came to him
There was no need for words.

Love

No painter can capture that elusive affectionate devotion.
Three generations of benovolent fondness
Sweethearts the loving grandparents
Sweethearts the loving parents
And the love and admiration from the adoring eyes of happy children
Paternal benevolence, mother love
Sisterly and brotherly devotion
Warm affection, Attachments
Devotees, the Suitor, the Admirer
All fused in the warm attachment called LOVE
The family unit
And the greater family of Mankind.



Hunger

Oh Lord, Thou hast given plenty
The sun and rain You send
Vast lands and rolling hills
Rich soil to till and tend.
Plenteous is the harvest.
In Your Beneficence You bestow
Enough the world to feed
Yet Why Oh Lord do You permit
Those with sinful greed
To throw their surplus in the sea?
Why not to store and give without fee
To those in need
As did Joseph in times of old,
With Pharaoh's grace
'Twas Egypt that set the pace.

Must the rich be so base
As to ignore the cries of those in pain?
Lands dried without rain,
People weeping children wailing,
Hope and all life failing

Hunger stalking
A living death
Human skeletons
Mothers with dried breasts
Rock their babies to ever lasting rest.

The beggar's bowl
Eats men's soul
Human nobility disgraced
Humanity debased
Hunger!
The skeletons cry from the ground
Can you not hear the sound?



The Minstrel

The wandering minstrel
Was always a welcome guest,
Arriving at the castle at the owner's behest.
Everyone at court listened to his lay
For in musical song he gave the news of the day.

At banquets he played his lyre,
Surrounded by interest, he did not tire.
In villages he often played the flute
So that the lassies and lads
Danced on the green
With Mums and Dads.
A birth of a baby, a betrothal, a wedding
The flute for the dancing
The lyre for the love song
The sun for dancing
The moon for romancing.

The minstrel was welcome in towns and countryside,
As free as a bird
He slept 'neath roof or sky.

Pity today's bard
For his life is hard.
Today he does not sing his news
Nor is he asked for his views.
The journalist's news
Is gleaned from clues.
In town he visits hospitals, asylums and the police,
Gleans news of murders, rapes and torture horrors,
Travels to war zones and under fires
Often his life expires.
The news he finds
Is sorted and censored
And printed in newspapers
Or reported on radio and television
By those with faces and voices
But not with mission.

The song of the bard
Is no longer news
The songster sings
Of other things.
He delights to express
His feelings of Nature and Life
Or his voice sings what others write.

The poet is the most isolated of all
In seclusion he hears the call.
His sensitive soul he expresses at eve or night,
But few are there to hear him recite.
The editors and journalists
Spurn his verses
No space! he hears their curses!
Poetry is no profession
Let this be a lesson!

The wandering minstrel was newsman, songster and poet,
Now he has disintegrated
Will posterity rue it?



I Sat At the Feet of the Sage
He Said Describe Nothing

I sat at the feet of the Sage
 He said Describe NOTHING

I saw the worn skin of his well travelled feet
 I saw the spreading roots of the Banyan tree where we sat in the shade.
 He noted my eyes pass from feet to roots and he repeated
 Describe NOTHING!

My head sunk twixt my shoulders in defeat
 I can describe Something Anything but Nothing?
 Emptiness Eternity Space
 Eons of light years
 No sound the quiet of the tomb
 Even the flames burning bodies
 Even ash falling a log
 A half-burnt body splashing in the river
 To go on with the waves to Eternity
 Everything has a sound a murmur
 The hoot of an owl
 The squeak of a mouse
 The wind in the deserted forest
 Ants following each other over logs to unknown destination

Everything is something
But Nothing?
What is Nothing?
How do we know we exist?
PAIN? Yes Pain is human
But Nothing is not human.
It is absence of Pain.
Nothing No Thing
Void Not the ceasing of being
Not a gradual emptying
But the LOUD NOISE of SILENCE
After the loudest most violent crashing sound ever experienced!



Courage

When Tension stalks
Tension mounts.
Fear of the unknown
Vibrates in every bone.
But with knowledge and awareness
The paralyzed mind relaxes
Ready to meet whatever it is taxed with.
Daylight after Night.
Spring when birds sing.
Sunshine after rain.
So with Life's pain.
Confidence does not wain
And Courage sustains.



- Page 10 The Call
 1 "Nuffils" Besides the 5 daily prescribed prayers for Muslims --- extra prayers are called "nuffils".
- Page 15 My Prayer for Pakistan
 2 "Haj" Pilgrimage to the Holy City of Mecca to the Kaabah. Prescribed for Muslims once in a lifetime. Comes after Ramzan month of Fasting and in memory of Sacrifice of Arbraham.
 3 "Kaabah" In Mecca; Cubic shape house built by Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. Later defiled by Arabs who filled it with idols. Later cleansed by Prophet Muhammad and his followers who threw out the idols.
- Page 19 The Red Rose
 4 "Khyam" Omar Khyam, Persian poet died 1123 (Fitzgerald translation)
- Page 24 Tahira
 5 "Kheer" Sweet milk rice pudding.
- Page 27 My Darling Grandchildren
 6 "Paranda" Black threads woven into long plait of hair ending with decorative bead work, tassels-gold and colourful.
- Page 29 The Noise of Silence
 7 "Quran" Inspired Book of Muslims. Prophet Muhammad.
 8 "Allah" Almighty God (Arabic).

- Page 43 Say Inshallah
9 "Qiamat" (Arabic) End of World. Resurrection.
- Page 44 10 "Inshallah" God willing
- Page 47 The Dopatta
11 "Dopatta" Veil worn to cover head and breasts. With gamise (shirt) and shalwar (full trousers) national dress of Pakistan.
- Page 48 12 "Charpai" Wooden bed woven with string.
- Page 60 The Arranged Marriage
13 "Nayan" Wife of barbar who arranges marriages. (Match-maker)
- Page 61 14 "Sindh, Panjab, Balochistan, N.W.F.P." Four provinces of Pakistan and different races.
15 Various sects of Muslims
16 "Hindu casts" Brahimin -- priests
Kashetri -- warriors
Vashiya -- tradesmen and farmers
Shudra -- sweepers or lowest cast
17 "Zamindars" Landowners.
- Page 73 Painting in a Village
18 "Hooker" Eastern pipe. Smoke drawn through water held in decorative glazed pottery.
- Page 77 19 "Mughrib" Evening Prayer just before Sundown.
- Page 89 Haj and Lament
20 "Jumma" Friday.

Page 90	21 "Umrah"	Pilgrimage to Kaaba any time.
	22 "Qiyamat"	Resurrection. End of world.
	23 "Seal of the Prophets"	Prophet Muhammad, the last prophet.
	24 "Nasha"	Ecstasy.
Page 91	25 "Torat"	Book of Laws.
Page 95	The Arts	
	26 "Katakali"	Pakistan and Indian Dance that tells a story.
Page 96	27 "Taata"	Scale (Music)
	28 "Tablawallah"	Player on oriental drum with fingers on stretched skin.

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