

KITAB MAHAL
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Lays and Laments

Razi Abedi



Revised & Updated Edition
Authentic Edition



❧ RAZI ABEDI ❧

Lays and Laments



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Lays and Laments



(TRANSLATIONS FROM MY URDU POEMS)

Written & Thoroughly Revised
by
Razi Abedi



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Due care has been taken about the exactitude of the information provided in the book, sanctification of the religion and national interests. The publisher, please, be informed if something is found against religion and national interests, to be rectified without any delay, with due regard.

The readers are requested to give their opinions & suggestions for the improvement of this book.

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SECTION – I

Prose Poems



 Poem 01 **New Year 1987**

The year has passed
But perhaps it has not

We did not celebrate Nouroz
Nor did we pour the previous year
into the old wine.

It is the new year that announces
The passing of the old year -

But the new year has not come for years.
It seems that the same old year

Keeps coming over and over again
As if the dead is not properly interned

Its wandering soul becomes an evil spirit.
The new year will not come

Until the old is interned
If the dead are not buried

They turn into bad spirits.
Until the old year is interned

The new will never come
Philistines do not intern their dead

Nor do they raise altars
The message of the last year is
that now

We will have to learn
to live with ghosts and witches



 Poem 02 **Fear!**

The shrill cry of the kite
in the scorching noon

The fear of the new
Ever new tribulations

The frustration of rejection in love
Man is threatened with fear from all sides

But
Fear!

If it restricts progress
It is also an incentive to do something

All fear is not the same
There is fear in the graveyard and there is fear in the
battlefield too.

 Poem 03 

Ideology



Neither are my clothes my own
Nor does my house belong to me

Nor even does my country belong to me
My clothes have been bought from Landa

My house is an evacuee property
And to talk of one's country is a sin

My ancestors were virile people
They never hesitated to shed their own and others' blood.

For that they were called noble and respectable
But their blood does not run in my veins

In them runs petrol, petro dollar
Along with Arab bigotry runs Zionist avarice in my
arteries

I live on interest
And pay Zakat

(1983)

 Poem 04 **My Shadow**

Under the lamp pest
I saw my shadow wriggling between my feet

It's not only darkness that terrifies man
Even under the strong light

If you stay still
Your head will remain imprisoned

Between the bars of your legs
I moved a step

My head got free of the feet
And with each step that I took

My stature grew

(1991)

 Poem 05 

Chastity



There are two principles of life
One is love, the other is force

And love is a great force
When men struggled together

They dug canals through hills
And turned deserts into gardens

And when they developed thirst for each others blood
Flourishing towns turned into ruins

Man was made human
by love, by sympathy

Brutes understand only the language of force
This is their sense of honour

Asses are led by the rod
He who responds to love, he too works
But with love, with honour

(1991)

 Poem 06 

The Cap



The cap is out of fashion these days
But there were times

When the cap symbolized honour
It was a sign of excellence

It was the pride of kings
People embellished their heads

With turbans, crests, Turkish caps
Jinnah caps, solar hats

The cap stood for one's honour and respect for others.
It was the pride of the soldier

It was part of rituals and ceremonies
Caps are still worn
But these are magic caps

No more the old ones
Which made the wearer invisible

Present day caps are not seen on heads
These glitter in the eyes

Appear in the gesture
These are still smart

There is a royal tilt in them
Now too the length of turban's

Scarf is a measure of status
People wear big impressive caps

But they forget
That if the cap is bigger than the head the man appears to
be a clown

(1991)



 Poem 07 **Genesis**

Adam approached the forbidden tree
And this world came into being

When from the states of Europe
Thieves, marauders and murderers were externed

They settled in America, Australia and other colonies
And the new world came into existence

Perhaps one day some criminals will be thrown out of this
globe
They will inhabit other planets in space

And so new worlds will be born
O God

Is this the only way the worlds are created?

(1991)

 Poem 08 

The School



When knowledge deserts the schools
And the scholars lose the power of speech

The young, full of vigour,
Deprived of the wisdom of age and experience

Go wayward
In such a state

When no guidance is at hand
Life itself becomes the school

But this school gives little knowledge
Though it teaches bitter lessons

(1991)

 Poem 09 **O My God!**

Thou art beneficent,
Thou art kind.

But in Thy name
Thy worshippers

Shed each other's blood
Thou shalt surely punish them

Because thou art just and Omniscient.
But I am scared of those

Who claim to be Thy servants.
Because
Though much good has been done
in Thy name
There have been much more persecutions.

(1991)

 Poem 10 **Vacuum**

Sometimes it seems rather hollow in life
As if, perhaps something has been left undone

Or something is left unsaid
There is a sense of loss which is very confusing

As if from some distant land
A cry seems to rise from the heart

What could have been done, was not done.
What should have been said is not said.

(1991)



 Poem 11 

Honour



When norms are disregarded
When laws are scorned

Honour is violated
Germany invaded Austria

Historians called it a rape
That led to the horrors of war

And all that followed it
Once force become the code

That is the rape
It does not matter

Whether you know
Who the victim is

(1991)

 Poem 12 

The New World Order



Hopes are shattered
But are soon reinforced

Life cannot be lived in despair
Excitements and ambitions are part of life.

Peace, rest, happiness.....
This is the strife, this is the goal

Life always triumphs
Failures are personal; so meaningless.

Flowers wither away everyday
But blossom again.

(1991)



 Poem 13 **Au Revoir**

I never looked back
But life kept looking back to me

And today
When a phase of life is coming to an end
I recall the associations of thirty years

Smiling faces, glowing curious and excited
Big rushing eyes full of mischief

An aggression, a wish to surrender to what not
Faces glowing with passion

Which kindle a thousand flames in the eyes of the
beholder
I have seen all this

And see them today as well
It seems that distances have disappeared

The calendar changes every year
But these faces have not changed

Nor have I changed
Every year brings a new excitement

A new passion
It seems the time has stopped

I am still there where I was
The chariot of time is flying

But here two
The new are still the

Same as those who have departed
There is no today, no tomorrow to my life

But these new faces look more mature
They have seen the ebb and tide of time

These hearts are full of hope but anxious at the same time
These are the people
Who have seen life in the making, in the ruin
scattered and reformed

But they have also seen that rivalries are turning into new associations

It so appears that persecution is touching its zenith
And fraternal affections are warming up

Dark shadows are receding
There is a new glow on the horizon
But this is not the flash
of missiles or the atomic bombs
But the light of that confidence of man
which is not shaken even in worst calamities

May these faces keep smiling
these eyes flashing
No one will go anywhere
only the time will keep going

Time will keep going

(1992)

 Poem 14 

Hail Cambridge



Cambridge – a rejuvenation, an exploration
One discovers oneself

And one discovers the world
It's a fertile soil

Talents are discovered here, nourished here
Great scholars, whom you knew only, through the books

Inspiring teachers, affectionate friends
Plays, music concerts, Oxbridge races, cricket, boxing

And all sorts of gossips beside
It's the whole world in a capsule

The peoples of the world
British, French, German, Chinese, Japanese and Indians

You meet them all
One feels there are no conflicts in the world

There are no rivalries
You mix with them

Go to their homes
You live there, know them

See beauty in diversity
Hail-Cambridge
Salute-Cambridge

(2016)





SECTION – II

Juvenilia



 Poem 01 **Beauty**

Beauty is magic
Beauty is addiction

The lotus of beauty attracts the heart
Beauty makes everything shine

Beauty is the jewel of the world
We too had gathered colours

We were lost in dreams.
But the eyes that shone with love

Shed the drops of poison
Inhabitants of the world of beauty

It's only an illusion
Do not seek beauty in features

Kindle the flame of the heart, O damned
Do not be cheated by smiles

Do not be deceived by the eyes
Beauty is not in the colour of the skin

Beauty is the purity of the heart.

(1951)

 Poem 02 

Anxiety



Do not ask me of the pains of living
Leave that. It's too bitter

I thank you for your concern
Spare me this favour

I am ready to say it a thousand time
But there must be something to say.

In the gloomy paths of life
In these dark alleys must be some light

Some sign of life.
Some monotonous meaningless cries

Some worthless sighs
In this game of life, my friend,

There are such dark and narrow paths
Why then to grope here

My love! Let's go, beyond into the labyrinths of life
And seek in the silent music of the heart

A new world where the new morning may not be just an
illusion
And today's spring is not withered away by vague
anxiety (1951)

❧ Poem 03 ❧

The Stars



A beautiful reflection of passion
A cup full of the wine of emotion

A flickering flame in the clay lamp
playing on the anxious eyes

(1950)



 Poem 04 **Message**

In the small hours when the twinkling stars
find the secret of this fleeting life

The tears flowing out of my eyes
Suddenly drown in the universal gloom

(1950)





SECTION – III

Alma Mater



 Poem 01 **Alma Mater¹**

These are the days of the cap and the gown
God forbid! Is the dooms day near?

Let's see who fall the victims
This is the reign of terror

The teachers have abandoned their classes
It's all fun and festivity

There are chariots with slits in them
And also those who are mad after them

The whole knowledge is squeezed
in a few slogans
Ignorance has triumphed over scholarship

The game of the students is over
These are the days of drudgery for the teachers

Reviews and criticism are things of the past
Repartee and pleasantries are the order of the day

(1983)



1. Punjab University celebrated its centenary in 1982 with a rally from the old campus to Iqbal Park. Lady teachers and girl students travelled in the buses. Others walked in a procession.

 Poem 02 

Decline



(Celebrating the Punjab University Centenary 1982)

I

The soft rays of the afternoon sun
are descending on the Mall
And the long shadows of the turrets
of the Museum¹ are extending towards
the University of the Punjab

This is the Museum¹,
and here the story of
the past centuries is lying
frozen, secured and sealed.
Now the long shadows of its small turrets
are advancing towards the Punjab University.
The university clock is about to strike 4.

II

Are you our student?
It appears that you have been studying here
for some years not too long ago.
Perhaps you are Nazli?

Or, if not, then surely Asifa?
"No! She was my senior.

1. Lahore Museum is situated across the road opposite to the Punjab University building.

"Sir, you will surely forget us
"As soon as we leave;
"You cannot even remember our names."

Bibi,
ours is a fellowship of learning;
it will last _____
Strangely, it has been so for some years;
people come and go,
but it appears as if
neither anyone comes nor anyone goes.

Only names change,
from year to year.
The shadows from the turrets of the Museum
have now started falling
upon the Punjab University.
The University clock is about to strike 4.

III

These are the robes of the Mughals;
Here are some masterpieces of art.
There you see fine jewellery and utensils.

In this hall the images of Buddha
are sitting in their fixed postures,
the same for centuries.

All these are the capsules of history
Fossils, that have been placed there
for the pleasure of our
young, old, and the tourists.

And now
the long shadows of the small turrets
of this Museum
are striding upon the Punjab University

IV

If you try to stop the time,
you can ____
There are a hundred ways of doing that.
The thrilling wires inside the veins,

The arms that are charged with vigour;
The glitter of the eye, the glow of the
cheeks and the flowing tresses-----
all these can be put in capsules.

But life, how long can it be checked;
how long will time be kept frozen?
This is the Museum.
Here there is no life; only gestures are left.

But under the long shadows of its small
turrets, life still throbs, the flame
still shakes.
Its pale brow may any time grow scowls.
When arrested like this,
How threatening does life appear.
The university clock tower is about to strike 4.
If it does strike 4 in the next moment;
if the hands of the clock move on -----
The long shadows of the small turrets of
the Museum will start receding by themselves,
and will return to their transparent glass houses -----
These long shadows of the small turrets of the Museum

(1989)



SECTION – IV

Free Verse



 Poem 01 

Light



It was light
All light and He

For whom there is no is or was
A serenity

A bliss
As a soft smile on the lips of a sleeping child

Life, death
No worries, no hope

A morning that had no evening
There was no free mind

Unconcern arrested vision
An unconcern a paradise of dreams

All of a sudden
There was the first creation!

A passion awoke
As if a breeze touched the still waters

The wish to be known
Created devotees

There was the urge to see oneself
And now God must be thinking

What he sought and what he got
Tranquillity

Happiness
Were unacceptable to ego

Crawling, hissing snakes
Started running in the veins

And were dragging into dark unfamiliar paths
The curiosity to know the secret

Made him a curiosity himself
Now

There was no peace, no delight
No angels, no houris no paradise and no trance

There is a being
A mere blot on being

But the progeny of Adam is still wondering
What it lost and what gained

These concerns of the ages
Entangled with this

Clashed with that
Have traversed a long distance with unsteady steps

Still

It appears

As if man is moving in circles
To probe his destiny

But there is nothing to probe here
It's a journey

But there is nowhere to go,
We are going

But going nowhere
One wonders

What the search is
Tanks, guns, these exploding bombs

These are also looking for something
And if

They do find something
What they will find

Only wasteful efforts
There is excitement there is passion
There is a great stir
One is drowned in the darkness of deep eyes

The other is lost in the smoke from the chimneys
The lifelong cravings

Drops of sweat falling from his forehead
In the name of honour

Of commitment, of firm faith
His feelings are bleeding

Scared eyes
Perturbed lives

These stifled sighs
Whom are these looking for

Who knows
Is there anyone to console them

Death!
Though it looms all around

Is sought in vain
What is the quest?

Is it finding or losing
Many devotees of love, like Qais

Turned deserts into gardens
At the cost of their lives

How many Farhads bled?
Their heads with rocks

For times immemorial
This rising and setting sun

Has been shedding tears on the
Misery of man

And set with bleeding tears
This madness
This wild goose chase
All right!

But
Just look here
I am still seeking you

(1965)



 Poem 02 

Elegy



This light, this darkness, and this cluster of stars
The murky evening, as in a palace of memories

Far, in the distance the floating stars
Which appear sometime as quiet and same time speaking

As if people whispering to each other
From a distance appear to be walking in silence

Distant voices, choked emotions!
Are these laughters

Or suppressed sighs from quivering lips,
Who knows?

These passing moments which do not pass
These corpses in the cold morgue.

It's death, but what a living death
It's life, but frozen, statuesque life

All over
It is still and calm

This is no peace, but resounding silence
Which becomes still more formidable

And it appears
As if

The beginning and the end
Today and tomorrow

Have drowned in it
As if these never existed

No love
Neither any desire for love

No wish
No terror

No destination, no direction
We are where we were

Everything is as it was
But

The feet seem to move
And we think

That it is the caravan of day and night
In which

We, the wayfarers,
Obsessed with some familiar voice

Move on, hypnotized
Wait!

You called me!
Soften your tone

Let your eyes not show that passion
It needs only a spark to

Burn me; like dry leaves.
And this fire, once started

Will not be extinguished even by you
Each single word draws my heart to you

I seek you
Horrors pursue me

Destiny has played a trick with me
Well!

If you wish I dishevel me hair
Tear my clothes

And quite forget
What I am

What my obligations are
What my commitments are

What your love is
And what my concerns are

What the world expects of me.
On a slightest blink of your tearful eyes

Sacrifice every feeling
Well, let it be so

You should at least speak to me
It's fire all around

It's the fire of the jungle
The flames rise, in a minute

To singe each tree
Each branch and each leaf

But look! How cold this forest is
Just touch them

How cold these embers are!
Is it really fire,

Or only pictures of fire,
Or only something like Abraham's fire

Blossoming into a garden?
Do not try to charm me with flowers

I am so impatient to die
My love!

I swear to my love
I have really never loved you

Because
To me

There was no difference between flowers and flames
Smiles pleased me

I loved tears also
I had never known

What it is to seek and find
I was not aware of what

It means to lose after winning something
The very thought of losing is a torture

And now the sense of loss has reminded me
That my heart lost so much in its innocence

Even in the most familiar paths
I do not know how much

I have lost
And now these voices, calling

Me from the valley of death
These are inspired by your voice

Your eyes
Have lent them life

The life that they themselves were not conscious of
These dark days are lit by you

And if you are not there
Then all this is a dream,

All illusion, the sense
of which will be erased
if you are not there

(1972)

 Poem 03 **Moonlight in Small Hours**

The moonlight in the small hours
Kept tickling the deadly silence

Breaking the inertia of the dull hours
Quietly sneaked in the dawn

Murky and wriggling
Life smiled, rose with new longings

The breeze started playing with budding flowers
And delicate virgin bodies blossomed

Distracted passions
Started looking for an object

The devotion found the altar
The idols came to the house of God

Excitement blocked the vision
Only one feeling, only one hope

The eyes are heavy, the lips frozen
The heart is impatient –

Waiting, waiting, waiting
Sport and frolic

Sulky and reconciling
You made me cry

I made you cry
And then, as destined, we separated

The moonlight disappeared
Leaving no shade behind

Who now seeks whom -
No one, no one, no one

Memories intermittently flashing
These vicissitudes of life

These tensions
One can see them if there is light

But in the dark, nothing but memories
Being or not being, it is all you

Rest is
Illusion, illusion, illusion

I have again received tempting smiles
The budding flowers have

Themselves brought the messages
I am all in a suspense

There is a vacuum
And I wonder

These throbbing hearts
These quivering lips

And then -
Nothing, nothing, nothing

(1965)



SECTION – V

Humour & Satire



 Poem 01 

A Poetry Session¹



In a way every session has its own beauties
But there is nothing like a poetry session

There is no difference between the speaker and listener
here
All equally participate in the session

They are reciting verses and loud praises here
Here the passion, there the applause

These are amused by the flight of imagination
Those others are excited with the heat of verses

Some are writhing with the heat of passion
There are those too who cannot even stir

Fully satiated with the fun and the passion
Some came and left soon.

Poetry takes them to high flights
And they are in a trance with its music

Everyone is mad after poetry
It is so torturous to the sensitive hearts

1. *Mushaera* is a tradition of reciting poems to a highly responsive audience very popular among Urdu speaking people.

Some sway in ecstasy, some drowsing
While some seem to smell the verses

The audiences are so lost in the excellence of art
Some of them are trembling with passion

The praise of beauty makes her too self conscious
This is the show within the show

Each single verse, a whole story
Conveying one's message to the other

Here too, the irony is not so mild
The poet is spared no repartee

Though he craves for nothing more than an applause
But the applause is no less than a torture

The poet made his throat sore with singing
He is spared humiliation, but is killed with irony

There are the pretty ones sitting in front
Their faces blushing with poetic passion

The poet is intoxicated:
Absolutely lost in the excitement

"Have I inspired this beauty?
Am I the creator of this beauty?"

There is so much excitement in front
But at the back there are calculated remarks

Admiration is expected from them though they are the
rivals.

But they are also very discreet

They are whispering, "it is trash"
But shouting, "excellent".

But the poetry session is not all hullabaloo
There is a president of the session too

All authority, but no power
As if placed there in reverence

He seems to be under discipline
Rather than ordering the crowd

This whole story is all right
But where do I stand

Is there no place for me in this society?
I bled my heart for this small applause!

This is a big favour to the poor poet
Look at me, and take heed.

(1961)



 Poem 02 **Me**

I was so humiliated by an unfavourable luck
Blessed with neither PCS nor CSP

All my dreams were dashed to the ground
I was made a teacher of the youth of the nation

When they found no worth in me
They raised me to the chair of Socrates

This, too, was quite an honour to me
I had no doubt about my erudition

I tried to impress the class with my scholarship
Don't tell me! The impression was just the reverse

I then tried to save the situation
And served them with tea instead of a lecture

Still, if one's occupation is teaching
Even if no knowledge, there must be a parade of
knowledge

Any notes, any made-easy, anything will do
A spark is a holocaust.

A novel idea that struck the mind
Became a hot debate in the tea house

Mauspassant, Gorki, Socrates, Adlar
Goethe, Shakespeare, Mir, Homer

Huxley, Marx, Schopenhauer, Woolner
Moutse, Diem, Khrusschev, Mussolini, Hitler!

Word is truth, name a person
And meaning, a variant of time

This one is decadent, that frustrated
He is morbid and she is confused

One is classic, the other progressive and the next modern
In short, the critic has everything on his fingertip

When I found it was such an easy task
I started on critical ventures

There were literary meetings day and night
Great artists and intellectuals gathered

There was no dearth of lovers of poetry
I rounded up my students

The audiences were terribly moved
The magic tongue poured gems of genius

Josh was condemned and Faiz criticised
Called Eliot a hypocrite

Dissected the novel of Asmat
And highlighted all trends then in fashion

And when I sang praises of Iqbal
I got invitations from the radio too.

I was adored from all sides
Even the journalists saw great merit in me

Whatever I said was an authority
Don't ask me how I became a celebrity

I had virtues that lead one to courts
I was the lackey of the editor

Broadcasting houses, schools, or studios
All are unique in my dear country

A poetic session or the field of journalism
It's a land of wonders

I am so stuck and bewildered
There are so many corpses here to be redeemed

(1961)



 Poem 03 **The Morning Parade¹**

Once luck carried me to the height of glory
Fresh blood started running in dead veins

The wayward traveller got the message to proceed
That is, I was ordered to do the morning parade

The young stood in lines with great enthusiasm
The worms shot out of the books shouting with great excitement

This ordeal of left right, this declining youth
Widening angles and shrinking bodies

These virgin arms, these legs, never exposed before
No one had ever seen them before

Once the order of the parade proclaimed
The reality flashed before the eyes

Those who were keen started searching the shops
That is, hurried to buy the knickers

1. President Ayub hard ordered morning parade for all teachers

Some delicate ones sought an escape, went from door to door for a doctor¹

Some were rescued by a medical certificate

Luckily there was another way out
That is, those who were considered too old

They were given the option of avoiding the parade
Now the young were sorry to have been young

Their enthusiasm reflects a young spirit
The fervour of old age, the spring in autumn

The warriors jumped into the arena with great zeal
Look at the supple arms and the light girdle

Walking with steady measured steps
It's a hard time for the clan of Socrates

They stumbled when exerting their might
Realised on falling, they had eaten the grass²

There is no question of rhythm in this unique parade
If one is going north, the other is going south

He is walking like a proud elephant
While the other is moving like an overweight woman

How should I draw everyone's picture for him
It would be better to show them the mirror

-
1. some escaped it on health grounds, some on the excuse that the parade kit was un-Islamic
 2. Urdu idiom which means go mad

Lumbering out of the ground with heavy feet
Moving step by step, they came and fell on their seats

Covering up their naked bodies nervously
Exhausted, they collapsed and crashed on their chairs

The faces are blushed with such a dash
That they present a spectacle

Though all this account is a bit unpleasant
Still it showed the way to some desperate ones

Those senior people who had almost lost all hope
Suddenly, they got an inspiration and a confidence

Three cheers to the morning parade!
Some seniors enjoyed their nuptials.

(1962)



 Poem 04 

A Girls College



All of a sudden, the college bell rang
The crowds in the ground starting shrinking

The scene has been shifted to the classes
There is all noise, punctuated with calm

If they do not speak, they do not speak
But when they do, they do it all at once

The Miss has not yet arrived in the class
That's why there is so much noise

Shakila on this end, Jamila on that
They are very bitter on being separated

She is shouting to catch her attention
And the other is responding with gestures

There is the talk of mutual grievances
But quickly an attempt at reconciliation

Her brother and his sister are the subjects here
And there is discussion on general topics

All are lost in their own favourite themes
All talk; no one listens

But God knows, what has happened
That suddenly it is a hush all over

It has dawned upon students now
That the teacher is already in the chair

A picture of restraint, a model of beauty
This idol, the throb of every heart

This slight tilt of the eye
This posture, this gait

This confidence, this getup
It's enough to kill every heart

This blend of smartness and indifference
Very polite, very compassionate, but in limits

Now the lecture begins
There are no more diversions

Smallest quiver of the lips or swaying shawl
The eyes are following each motion

Every twist of limbs kills them
Every smile crushes them.

The eyes looked with a passion
That fell like a great intoxication

What confidence, what coquettish glance
What grace, and what vanity

Serene looks reflect maturity
And sharp eyes throwing a challenge to every one

These glances mesmerize minds
This attempt to vanquish every heart

The passion to teach them all one learnt
In short, to teach them

Nothing is difficult when there is the will
To teach them all, is the wish

Now trying to impress with terminology
Now a rebuke, now a smile

At times casting melodramatic looks
Using all the tested tricks

Using all the weapons at hand
Bring down students to talent's submission

This jugglery is now their destiny
But the fact is much more bitter

If the class is not kind to the teacher
There is respect neither in the class nor outside
When the nation doesn't care about the teacher
Her students are her only patrons

(1962)



 Poem 05 **A Teacher's Lament**

It's an unabated pain, a disgrace
This perennial punishment, that is, to have students

Apparently engaged with the books
But their hearts are stuck somewhere else

Those whom Akbar called victims of the college
They are now teasers at large

They seek the beauty of verses in "notes"
What a misfortune for Ghalib and Mir

Their interpretations are so exotic
Shelly is mad and Byron a flirt

Any poet, writer or novelist
Is introvert, extrovert, melancholy or mad

But if associated with Shakespeare
Any rubbish is intuition, a pearl of wisdom

And then, all the proud claims
That all that was taught by the teacher

All this nonsense is attributed to me
I am punished for the sins not my own

(1962)

 Poem 06 **To The Honourable Examiner**

I have learnt to quietly bear the brunt
You go on talking and I am all ears

Get lost in the lecture, oblivious of myself
Keep drinking of your bowl of knowledge

It is not a complaint, but an exercise in poetry
Sir examiner! With all due respect

Tell me, if ever I slackened in hanging around
Or spared beseeching your friends and relatives.

Did I fail to pray in the name of God and holy saints
Was I ever disobedient or turned a heathen

Still am I damned and worthless
I might have gone astray, but you too were not so kind.

The whole year went by in fun and pleasure
With least worry for the students

We gave heed neither to teachers not to elders
But the passion for knowledge was so great

Attempted the questions we never understood
And ventured into the unknown

If we were precise, there were no marks
If elaborate, that too did not please you

In short, we never got enough marks
Never more than two, four or six

Everything we wrote was irrelevant
Excuse me, you have been so unpredictable.

Now we are beyond ink and paper
We are intoxicated with your passion

Love cannot be bridled, said Ghalib
Why should the free heart submit to the writer

We gave answers irrespective of the questions.
We are too generous, we give more than asked.

You know we were never book worms
Our class fellows were bundles of knowledge

You used the same yard stick for both.
You put the dove against the hawk

See our boldness, we pounced on the papers
Has anyone ever fought without weapons?

We gave no ear to you, we confess
We wasted time, all right, did nothing

We know that we have dull minds
But you had to be a little kind to us

We do not deny you guided us, admonished us
But you had to be a little kind to us.

We know some of us have conditionally passed
Pity us; you know we deserve it

It would be great if papers were solved
But no one is to blame; it is bad luck

And still, if all this is not enough
We are prepared for another ordeal

(1961)



 Poem 07 **Iqbal's Protest**

Once I was damned by the pious
Religious verdicts were issued against me

And now, what an irony
The *Maulana* praises me from the pulpit

What a revolution it is!
Even the Mulla is mad in praise of me

Now I am mad and now a heathen
Some times what I say are gems of wisdom

Not only the Sheikh in the mosque
Even intellectuals are paying tributes to me

If these are calling me an existentialist
Others call me a committed communist

These believe that I am a fascist
Those consider me a democratic liberal

Matters of love and devotion so impressed some
That my poetry is sung in Qawwalis

May there be some sincerity in their passion
May it not be just affectation but a fact!

They are flattering me as if I am the only sane person
While all others are mere ignorant

I know that I do not fit in this world
People find my idealism too heavy for them

I doubt the sincerity of the cup bearer
My hand is shaking under the cup

No Razi, no Roomi, no Ghalib, no Mir
But my Urs is celebrated each year

I am afraid that in this noise and excitement
They may not suppress the cry of my heart.

I am afraid neither my ideas nor my poetry is safe
Because I have seen into the depth of reality

(1962)



 Poem 08 

Wah (Ordnance Factory)



What this name my friend, Wah!
Memories force a sigh from the heart

Once before too there was a factory of Wah
Items of poetry were created there

Its products were so popular
Each applause created a verse

That factory is now a matter of the past
It is said that weapon are now produced here

In a way, poetry is also weaponry
A poetry session is no less than a battle field

What ordeals the poet goes through while composing a
poem!
Framing of a verse is a battle with the words

There is the problem of matching content with cadence
Here is the struggle between rhyme and rhythm

A city in Pakistan known for its ordnance factory
The heroic gladiators in armour

The poetry session turned into a war theatre
Piercing words and murderous eyes

The lips of the poet burn with the fire of the cheeks
But this is not the only field of battle

This is a big world and there are a thousand war
There are so many war theatres for the poet

The poet may boldly confront the beloved
But one problem is to excel in the art

There is the urge to surpass others
All the rivals suffer humiliation

Strategic strikes and ironic slings
Batteries of metaphors and allusions

To be precise, honourable audiences
We are the product of a cold war

The challenge of a poet is no less than a worrier's call
Poetry is no less than an ordnance factory.

(1963)



 Poem 09 **A Teddy Girl¹**

The world is a story of change and innovation
This book unfolds leaf by leaf

The truths of yesterday are mere dreams now
Every morning pierces the veil of the night

The old are impatient of the young
There is balance, neither here nor there

They wonder what kind of dress is the jeans
Half of a trouser would have been as good

On the other hand, they ridicule the make up of the
sheikh
This is one note; that is another tone

The debate became so tense
That the dress got stuck to the body

If you talk to them about literature
They respond with big irritation

1. In late 50s and early 60s there was a fashion of tight dresses that made movement a torture

It's the limit, it's a fault to be young!
Respect is due, if there is some sense

It was the dress to begin with but,
Adamant, they became more furious.

This smart age, and these wayward activities
Challenges and clashes all over

These devoted lovers of beauty
Bold and stalking like big heroes

As if life is a running film
They feel themselves on the screen, not on the footpath

There is the progeny of Adam, the sons of Adam
But the daughters of Eve are not too far behind

The dresses are skin-tight, the tresses cut short
These angles widened and those squeezed

This attempt at stitching the body into the dress
Of packing the river in a vessel!

Just look at this tight fitting
That squeezes beauty into a small mould

They move one step when they make two.
It is a wonderful tight rope dancing

From four to two legs, raised the stature of man
Now it transpires that just one was enough

This is a wonderful spectacle to see
Look at the way they take their steps

On one side the mature, on the other the raw
But the entire blame falls to the sober ones

Should they support them or those
Both hold their grounds; there is no way out

They are the champions of old values
These are progressive and forward looking

They are for the new dawn
No one cares what their concerns are

Thinks everyone to go from better to best
Where will this lead to, no one knows

If you open your eyes in this admonishing world
It is risky to open your mouth

You may have your own standards of right and wrong
But give no ear to these advices

They now seem to be worried about my dress
I was an insult to humanity in any dress.

(1962)



SECTION – V

Ghazals



 Ghazal 01 

Some wounds inflicted in your love
Some in sustaining that love

These panels in your house of mirrors
The glitter of my blood is reflected in them

I don't have to build, not even a desire to build
Still would I wager all for you love

The wind is so strong that the candles are going out
And you are busy in decorating the darkness

For a whole life, taking it for the chain of justice
We have been shaking the chain on our feet

Even the labourers of the deserts waving their hands
Are bent upon bringing Farhad to Majnu

We are now trying to demolish the wall of oppression
Which we had ourselves raised by being too patient

How simple are we that we bend our heads
To teach mercy to the murderer

May be someday we carry burden of the trust
For now we are only carrying the coffins

(1989)

 Ghazal 02 

The princes of darkness, this night is a few minutes more
The world is glittering, and the blood is littered

You may call it the truth or a calamity
It is very painful to get instructions from fools.

You carry miseries only, but listen, you agents of death
We have life in our satchel, that is stronger than all
miseries

Look into our eyes and see
There is a challenge to cruelty and a tryst with destiny

There is a festivity all around, a dance of death
There are fireworks on the horizon as torrential rain

The eyes that cried blood are now throwing fire
Our world now seems to take a new turn

We have ascended to heights of glory, thanks to you.
Now, the cross you prepared for us is waiting for you.

(1989)

 Ghazal 03 

Bind the rays of the sun, arrest the glitter of the stars
You cannot save your skirt; arrest the flames

You arrested each single ray, but the cruelties have shown
up
This is a new fire play, see the new rainbow

This is all spontaneous, and will burst out all over;
Seal all windows or arrest every glimpse

We are time, not slaves of time, we are history, we are
destiny
Do not put us in chains, arrest the pace of the time

If you can't bear smiling eyes or blushing cheeks
Stop the blossoming of buds; arrest the odour of the
flowers.

Eyes tell a lot when mouths are sealed
Each glance is a threat, arrest each eye lash

The heart is Mansoor, seeking martyrdom - very weak but
very bold
See the fragrance of the flowers, when crushed.

(1980)

 Ghazal 04 

In a way, balloons also blossom and dance
But only those rooted in the earth are called flowers

The wounds you have suffered, have inflicted me too
O! The paradise of my dreams, the dreams are withering

The fragrant soil, how it smells!
We seek in dark streets and on metalled roads

No murderer, no victim; that's another tragedy
The word of truth is the gallows and we climb the gallows

I am neither a buyer, nor a seller, I should not matter
Still I am the soul of the market, they call me lunatic

Hearts no more throb with vintage breeze or tears in the
eyes
Heart beats are now measured with machines

It's no matter appeasing a god carved in stone
It's the devotees who are the real threat

(1983)

 Ghazal 05 

Neither love, now fear, now honour matters
We are mere robots remotely controlled

These who have suffered a life by neglect
How can they absorb the shock of a sudden affection!

Tragedy after tragedy is striking day and night
Are the dead waiting for the Trumpet to blow

They are others who carry storms in their hearts
We are not even the desert that raises whirlwinds

This is also a fact that when solid foundations give in
Ruins rise in their place

Those who are occupying ten chairs each
Let us rise but dethrone them first

On the one hand, are we whom no one gives ear
On the other, are those who raise storms in a teacup

(1991)



 Ghazal 07 

Out of sight, out of mind
I was never devoted to life

Open the eyes; light a candle,
It's the night, not the fall of tresses

There would have been no end to grievances
Thank God! You didn't explore.

(1978)



 Ghazal 08 

If you keep dreaming, you may have nightmares
We have repented, and you will repent

Wishes have not yet grown into sores
The wounds of tyranny will be more visible

What atrocities have we suffered so far!
We, who are shocked, will experience more shocks

Good luck will no more visit our cities
Now only darkness will show us our path

Delicate rosy checks are losing their glow
It's another thing the cities glow with lights

Empty of sympathy, hearts will be filled with tyranny
If gardens will not be gardens, these will become ruins

It has been decreed that no dove and nightingales will
sing
It's in the air that crows and vultures will hold a concert

Hot blood will spring from each wound
Such will be the spring in our ruins

Gallows, lashes and lock-ups
Such will be the titles of the stories of my age.

(1977)

 Ghazal 09 

Life has to be lived with awareness or in oblivion
Ambition and peace of mind are only illusions

Obsessions have been calmed but my life is a torture
I do not know whether to narrate your favour or not

My heart and the vision are saddened by your thought
Your memories are a big consolation to me

The moments whose memories pinch my heart
I wish to offer to you as a mark of my devotion

Neither I expect love from you nor am I disappointed
Nothing has been left in my life to worry about

Ask me not how helpless is love before passion
I couldn't detach myself from you, though tried a
thousand time

All that is left in my life is only this
I should keep your favours close to my heart

The complaints that I hear from every one
My dear, let me also hear those

(1957)



 Ghazal 10 

You have turned your eyes, but no blame to you
Even the smoke of last night's lamp has gone

He who wished to come, came; who had to go, went
O my heart, your passion could not bind anyone

This also happened in the company of strangers
That a familiar voice echoed in the ears

We were also deceived by the innocent eyes
You also kept encouraging distracted passions

Who else could perceive that in the whole company
Only my eyes got the message of your eyes

You promised; may it be another deception
Even that's enough for me, since the world is all
deception

Do not be worried on the scarcity of my tears
I have also a cup in my heart that keeps overflowing

I am again pestered with despondency
Betrayal of friends has broken my heart

Let not the sitar of my heart miss the plectrum of your eye
My love! Drown me in your passion

Miseries of life are striving against the pangs of love
As your coming is an embarrassment, your leaving is a
torture (1958)



 Ghazal 11 

Whether good or bad, friends are always a torture
Beyond love and devotion, they are a consolation

The world is a fraud, wealth illusion, and people are liars
We have so many excuses to delude ourselves

It's the heart that is not in our control, it is the enemy
No blame to others, they become so devoted

Laughing or crying, we are a spectacle
Entertaining, like flicking decoration bulbs

I can't even utter your name, because of the fear
That in these crowds, scandals may not be made

What I suffered, are the common sufferings
Whom do we deceive by making excuses

May be we met someone, but surely we lost many
In fact, we found only them, whom we lost

(1964)



 Ghazal 13 

So keen on exploring, we kept on exploring
Even tracing the sun with a lamp

It was not so difficult to find you
Only the circumstances were not favourable

We found you a hundred times, but still seek you
One wonders what we were after if not you
That was stupid, that was nonsense, still that was good

After that we lost the pleasure of the suffering of your
absence
The glitter of beauty became a sore in the heart

After that you kept looking for a single ray of hope in the
darkness
Since I had lost my self in your street

I kept looking for you in every street
Only shadows floated before the eyes
I kept waiting for some lamp to light

It was not easy to see through the chaos of life
I tried to look for you beyond the limits of consciousness

I was totally lost in seeking one
My senses kept looking for me (1962)

 **Ghazal 14** 

Some shadows prop up from the valleys of memories
Like soft music coming from distant lands

This twilight oozing through gray clouds
Brought to the mind so many proud faces

The glitter of your world is so enticing
That we enjoyed with love deception after deception

It is your favours that hurt and are desired
Though there was no dearth of sufferings you gave

Your indifference often gave great pleasure
It's a pain that tortures and still consoles

I felt like falling in love with the miseries of life
When I saw tears flowing out of your eyes

The heart is getting used to the pain
Now let the loving eye smile on me

I have been talking of my worries to every Tom, Dick and
Harry

While these pains should be confined to one's own self

(1961)



 Ghazal 15 

Gone are those who could appreciate our pain
And people are asking us why we are desperate

All festivities now look so sad to us
We who have lost so sweet and so loving friends

Now we are scattered like the pearls of the dew
Once we ran like a stream in the valley of flowers

That too was a world where people cared about each
other
This too is a world people are neither friends nor foes

The world is an illusion, love a fraud and everything is a
deception
Why then should only lovers be branded as fools

Reason is often deluded by the confusions of the heart
Though all sorts of people come to advise us

We rejected the whole world and opted for the heart
But people scattered thorns in the way of the heart.

Man is too secluded in the stellar world
What sweet ones drowned in a sinister silence

A madness carried us through the labyrinths of life
Otherwise many sane people came to chastise us
The desire of the heart tempted us to embrace deceptions

Though many sane persons crossed our path
Only we welcomed deception with pleasure
There were those too who ran to deserts with a little pinch

These thieves of the heart, they can neither be resisted nor
arrested

These simple people, talking so innocently

(1960)



 Ghazal 16 

Drooping eyes, deserted looks, dull mood
My heart! Is it the pursuit or the end?

Neither the exciting blossoming rose, nor the scare of
thunder
The imprisonment is new, and new appears the spring

It was a small thing that turned into a big tale
My mischievous eyes, and your drowsy glance

Those tortured by life have just gone to sleep
Wake them not up, thou morning breeze

Pains of life, pinch of desire, pangs of love
There were so many consolations for the poor heart

It was your memory that gave me strength
Otherwise life is impossible in seclusion

All the spectacles are lost under your glow
The world was full of light when your eyes fell on me

Neither the hope for the morning nor the promise of the
evening
It's all hollow when you are not there

Don't ask me how desolate and dreary is life
The flame of rose burns the passion of the heart.

(1959)

 Ghazal 17 

Though a galaxy of beauty has been around
But when tied with one, it was a torture

A whole would hankers for love
But I found this path of love too hard for me

No wish, no hope, no demands, no favours
It was only waiting, waiting that consumed life

It also happened that we forgot the one we sought
Such calamity also befell us at times
The whole life passed in great tortures

But now it seems that all that was a dream
The pangs of the heart could not come to the tongue
Though apparently it was all so pleasant and nice

I have no complaint against my stars
I enjoyed my life through the labyrinth of pains

Everyone tried to instruct us, we gave no ear
All sense was frustrated in the face of passion

(2000)

 Ghazal 18 

It was not the time of justice or compassion
It was the time of the political godfathers

It is strange that the buds started blossoming
It was the time of the withering of flowers

Just see when the devotees got ensnared
It was actually the end of the tether

What a meeting it was that sent an alarm to the heart
Was it a welcome or a farewell?

The stream of tears could not be held back
It was a time neither for rest nor reconciliation

Your smile was another torture
The departing soul deserved consolation

No expectations, no frustration, no wish
It was time of walking on thorns with sore feet

(2011)

Ghazal 19

Gone are those exciting parties
Now it's only out of one clinic into the other

There is no help, the hands have lost their grip
The wine is bubbling, but I can't hold the cup

Now the only pastime is talking of drugs and doctors
No more tales of the coquetry and charms of the beautiful

(2012)

Notes

Razi Abedi



Razi Abedi, born in Sonapat in the East Punjab, India, had his early schooling in Delhi.

After independence, his family settled in Lahore, where he graduated with science and did MA English from the Punjab University. He also did Tripos from Cambridge.

Razi Abedi has written critical articles on the literatures of the east and the west. His particular interest is the study of Urdu literature in the context of the third world literature and the literature now being produced in the west.

He started his teaching career from cadet college Hassan Abdal and after three years in Government Degree College Rawalpindi he taught for 30 years in the Punjab University. He has been a visiting professor at various institutions in and outside Lahore.

His publications include:

- * The Tragic Vision
- * Search For Medium
- * Educational Chaos
- * Lays and Lyrics
- * Man of the Streets
- * Teesri Dunya Ka Adab (Urdu)
- * Acchut Logon Ka Adab (Urdu)
- * Maghribi Drama Aur Jadeed Adabi Tehrikain (Urdu)
- * Teen Novel Nigar (Urdu)
- * Kuch Ghazlain Kuch Nazmain (Urdu Poetry)
- * Bazar ki Raunaq (Urdu)
- * Jeevan Dhara Author Dr. Taha Hussain (Translation)
- * Aik Naujawan Shair kay Naam Khatoot Author: Rilke (Translation)
- * Anar Kay Sai Author: Tariq Ali (Translation)

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