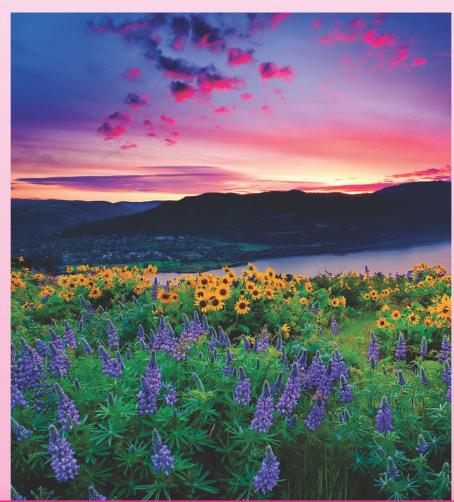
KITAB MAHAL
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Lays and Laments

Razi Abedi



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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.

I am highly indebted to Syed Ali Abedi, who took pains in typing and composing the book. He had made corrections after corrections with great patience.

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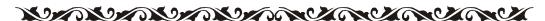
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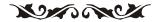
SECTION-I

Prose Poems





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 NOW

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!

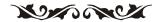
If it restricts progress
It is also an incentive to do something

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

WAYAWAKM(PYT)LTDAWAWAWA

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

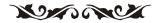
In them runs petrol, petro dollar Along with Arab bigotry runs Zionist avarice in my arteries

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



Poem 05 NOW

Chastity



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

And love is a great force When men struggled together

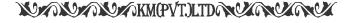
They dug canals through hills And turned deserts into gardens

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

Man was made human by love, by sympathy

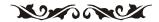
Brutes understand only the language of force This is their sense of honour

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



Poem 06 NOW

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



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)

NAME OF THE PARTY OF THE PARTY

Poem 08 NOW

The School



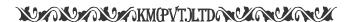
When knowledge deserts the schools And the scholars lose the power of speech

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



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)

NAME OF THE PARTY OF THE PARTY

Poem 10 NOW

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.



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



Poem 12 NOW

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.



Poem 13 Poem

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 NOW

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)

WAYAWAKM(PYT)LTDAWAWAWA

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 NOW

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 pleasantry are the order of the day

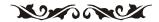
(1983)

WANDAWAKM(PVT.)LTDAWAWAWA

^{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 NOW

Decline



(Celebrating the Punjab University Centenary 1982)

T

The soft rays of the afternoon sun are descending on the Mall And the long shadows of the turrets of the Museumi 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)

WAYAWAKM(PYT.)LTDAWAWAWA

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

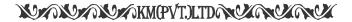
For times immemorial This rising and setting sun

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 NOW

Elegy

MARCH

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,

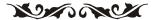
All illusion, the sense of which will be erased if you are not there

(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

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

(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!

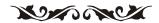
This is a big favour to the poor poet Look at me, and take heed.

(1961)



Poem 02 NOW

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 ayes

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

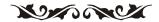
Three cheers to the morning parade! Some seniors enjoyed their nuptials.

(1962)



Poem 04 NOW

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 NOW

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

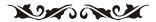
All this nonsense is attributed to me I am punished for the sins not my own

(1962)



Poem 06 Poem

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 NOW

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

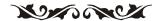
The challenge of a poet is no less than a worrier's call Poetry is no less than an ordnance factory.

(1963)



Poem 09 NOW

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



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)



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)



Bind the rays of the run, 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)



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 calls 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)



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 deseat 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)



It was not that I had laid down my life And had succumbed to a blink of the eye

Now it seems that only pains are holding me Had there been no worries, I would have been scattered

Neither the day passed, now the stones chiselled We would have gone home, if the evening had fallen

The ideals have fallen into ruins
We had not been so humiliated otherwise

We had not prayed for the showers of the summer Just a few drops would have quenched our thirst

The world chiselled us in so many ways We could be shaped well if we were stone

Wild shrieks arrested the steps in the deserts of pain We had otherwise drowned in the deep eyes

The pale face had the dust of the past happiness on it A small drop of love could have washed it

You may not invite us, but the party could be arranged We would have emerged on the screen of passion like a pain.

(1981)



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)



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)



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 C

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)

WAYAWAKM(PVT.)LTDAWAWAWA

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 12 Comments

I am stunned with the treachery of the world Otherwise I can also put on so many masks

When had we come into being is not known But we have not yet learnt how to live

We cannot even strike our head against the stones The path is no more the old rocky path

It's a flood of worries wherever the heart is This prince needs no particular throne

I have grievances only against the whims of the dearest friends

I am not much worried about the ways of the world.

(1962)



Ghazal 13 Comments

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 MM

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 Car

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)



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 MM

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)



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)



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 Notes

Razi Abedi

Razi Abedi, born in Sonepat 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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