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*Shabdaguchha* accepts submission throughout the whole year. Poetry, written in Bengali, English or translated from any language to these two languages, is always welcome. Book review and news on poets and poetry could also be sent. Each submission should accompany with a short bio of the author. E-mail submissions are more appreciated, but Bengali written in English alphabet is not acceptable.

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**Nine Latin American Poets  
An Interview with Gregory Rabassa  
A House on the Green  
And Many More . . .**

**Editor: Hassanal Abdullah**

Issue 57/58

**Editorial:**

*Shabdaguchha* is thrilled to present a group of Latin American Poets in this issue. Needless to mention that over the past century, poets of this region have been of great focus to world readers. Many poets of the world are also influenced by such a giant figure as Pablo Neruda. We are happy to start this issue with his poems. Though we regret we could not present Octavia Paz and Nicanor Parra for not having the translation rights, the nine poets presented here are still a significant representation.

The interview with Gregory Rabassa is also an important addition that we managed to include with the help of Stanley H. Barkan and Maria Bennett. Rabassa has been translating Latin American Literatures for more than half a century which are widely appreciated throughout the world. The American PEN and ALTA offer translation awards to translators in his name, the PEN Rabassa Award and the ALTA Translation Award. *Shabdaguchha* is privileged to have him as a good friend and well wisher of the magazine since the beginning of its publication. And it is a rare opportunity for the readers to have a full-length interview of his life-long experience.

As always, each issue of the magazine presents emerging poets of Bengal and elsewhere from different parts of the world. The process is continued in this issue. Blending poets from East and West is always our main mission, and we are happy to announce that we have been maintaining this for more than a decade. The next issue of the magazine will be the fifteen-year anniversary issue. We are going to celebrate our achievement in Dhaka, Kolkata, and New York with poetry festivals and literary activities including the large number of contributors who have participated to enrich our mission these past fifteen years.

Thanks to Cross-Cultural Communications for making this particular issue a book format and for putting it on the various bookshelves of stores and libraries nationally and internationally, which, in turn, will definitely boost our hard work and dedication.

**Pablo Neruda**

[from Chile]

**HEAVEN STONES I**

The mission of the stones  
was to harden the earth:  
quickly  
they had wings:  
the stones that took to the heavens:  
those that survived  
raised  
lightning,  
loosed a nocturnal cry,  
a water sign, a violet sword,  
a meteor.

The succulent  
sky  
not only had clouds,  
not only space with its oxygen smell,  
but terrestrial rock  
here and there, gleaming,  
made a dove,  
made a bell,  
with greatness in the penetrating  
wind:  
becoming a phosphorescent arrow,  
becoming salt of the sky.

**HEAVEN STONES XXX**

There I go, there I go, stones, wait!

In some time or voice or weather,  
we can be together or bond permanently,

to live, to die in this great hard  
silence, mother of fire.

Sometimes running  
through volcanic flame or river grapes,  
or the true propaganda of freshness,  
or a still promenade in snow,  
or the pulverized dust of desert provinces  
sprinkled with metals,  
or even beyond, in polar regions,  
the stony homeland  
of the frozen sapphire,  
Antarctica,  
at this point or door or birth or death  
we will be stone, night without banners,  
steadfast love, infinite shine,  
eternity's love, subterranean fire,  
pride condemned to its own energies,  
the only star that belongs to us.

*Translated from the Spanish by Maria Jacketti*

**Luis Alberto Ambroggio**

[from Argentina]

**POEM 39**

I have been searching for a dawn  
to build my happiness  
moment by moment;  
to live my eternity  
smile by smile  
in an infinite alliance  
with the placid hours;  
so that everything arrives with day  
when trills sprout from the trees  
harmonizing the alphabet  
of innocence.

My house will be made  
of an eternal landscape.

**POEM 51**

Sometimes we awaken without a weather forecast;  
we feel neither sunny nor sad,  
just starting anew.

*Translated from the Spanish by Yvette Neisser Moreno*

**Francisco Arriví**

[from Puerto Rico]

**CANTICLE FOR A MEMORY I**

In this waste land  
of stubbled cane  
there dreamed a house  
with a balcony always in the shade

I lived its miracle  
in the sunshine, water, and evening dew,  
deep in innocence  
when fantasy is at its best

on the balcony  
I played with friends  
pretending to be what we had read,  
a pirate, a musketeer

upon the branches  
I would think by myself  
that my chest was growing  
to the limits of the sky

it really was  
the miracle  
root and dream  
and one day I lost it  
without understanding why

**MAY MY CHILDREN LIVE**

May my children live  
inside the heart of a ceiba tree  
to be nurtured by the forces of their land.

May they drink the sap  
of deep roots  
set within ancestral soil.

May they breathe oxygen  
in the spreading branches  
of a solid cross in the current of the air.

May they be forged with me  
in one common breast  
bringing to light our homeland interred.

*Translated from the Spanish by Clementine Rabassa*

**Juan Cameron**

[from Chile]

**MOSQUITO**

My clumsy flight  
 pauses  
 silently  
 searching for light  
 My flight  
 swollen with blood.

**CIRCUS DOG**

No circus dog will wag its tail  
 if the major-domo orders keep it straight  
 The buffoons will come on stage  
 The high priestess will fly on the trapeze  
 as through a castle in the movies  
 with no safety net for her prosthesis  
 The pitchman on duty will open the sluiceways of laughter  
 The street will vomit out hundreds of clowns  
 into this bloodless vessel  
 into this vessel of sand  
 The truth is mandrakes no longer exist  
 nor dragons not unicorns  
 No dog will bay at the moon  
 Dogs no longer believe in the moon.

*Translated from the Spanish by Cola Franzen*

**Carlos Ernesto García**

[from El Salvador]

**AT DAYBREAK**

In a corner of the brothel  
 a man with a sad expression  
 tenderly kisses  
 the face of the woman  
 who heartily thrusts  
 a broken bottle  
 deep into his back  
 there just below his ribs.

**THE WARRIOR'S REST**

Fed up with all the battles  
 the warrior took his sword  
 and drove it into the sand  
 and he thought:  
 This is a good place  
 for death

The afternoon went by  
 indifferently  
 No one asked about the warrior  
 No one cared about the place  
 Chosen for his rest

A sandstorm took the time  
 to bury him  
 He wasn't fertilizer for the land  
 but forage for the wilderness.

*Translated from the Spanish by Elizabeth Gamble Miller*

**Isaac Goldemberg**

[from Peru]

**HOUSES**

All the houses are still in the city.  
 But my father's is the one that remains least.  
 He said he would guard his house until the last day of his days.  
 Much later, a time much later,  
 he came back from exile to lock it up.  
 And he left his son, whose house it wasn't, with the key.  
 Time long ago sold the house to oblivion.  
 Today oblivion holds its key just like my father's memory.  
 This will be his crosspiece—he said—my memory.  
 Much later, a time much later, he moved his house.  
 Put it over here—he said—where the house used to be.

**6. CHRONICLES I**

Father:  
 Your rambling story cries out for  
 The ashes of my corpse.  
 The oblivion that cradles your time  
 Demands the excavation of my roots,  
 Delivers up your interminable absence.  
 I am a man facing your image.  
 Your story walks all over my  
 footprints of rambling suicide.  
 The mirage of your prophecy  
 Removes me from myself:  
 Promise of eternal rest.

*Translated from the Spanish by Stephen A. Sadow & J. Kates*

**Vinícius de Moraes**

[from Brazil]

**THE GIRL FROM IPANÊMA**

Look at her, see her, a beauty who passes, so full of grace.  
 See her, a girl going past here, a soft swinging pace,  
 A sweet side-to-side,  
 On her way to the sea.

Girl, with your body all golden, all gilded by sunlight  
 At Ipanêma, with rhythm that's more than a poem, your sight  
 Is the prettiest thing that I'll ever see go by.

Oh, just because I'm so lonely,  
 Oh, how it all makes me weary,  
 Oh, if such beauty will make me teary,  
 It's because it's not for me only,  
 Passing by all alone.

Oh, if she only knew that each step in her pace  
 Makes the whole world all over swell up full of grace  
 And spread out with beauty in favor of love.

**ROSE OF HIROSHIMA**

Think of the children,  
 Telepathic, mute,  
 Think of the girls,  
 Unsteady, blind,  
 Think of the women,  
 Broken, changed,  
 Think of the wounds  
 Like a rose in flames,  
 But, oh, don't forget  
 The rose of the rose

Of the rose of Hiroshima,  
 Hereditary rose,  
 Radioactive rose,  
 Stupid and invalid,  
 Cirrhosis rose,  
 Atomic anti-rose,  
 No color, no perfume,  
 No rose, no nothing.

*Translated from the Portuguese by Gregory Rabassa*

**Carilda Oliver Labra**

[from Cuba]

**CARILDA**

I bring blond hair; it curls at night.  
 I kiss the thirst of water; I paint the trembling lotus.  
 I keep a useless ribbon and a broken fan.  
 I discover filthy angels coming out of the ashes.

Any music wells up from my throat.  
 I'm almost a bourgeois lady—with a little luck:  
 as I gaze at the sun, it becomes for me  
 a celestial burst of light singing . . .

I make use of my serene forehead colored like pure milk,  
 I make use, too, of a vast hope and a pencil that lasts,  
 and I have a sad lover as far away as the sea.

In this house, there are flowers, birds, eggs,  
 and even an encyclopedia and two new dresses,  
 and still, still . . . I feel like crying!

**I WILL ERASE YOU**

I'll erase you with a vinegar sponge,  
 and a little repugnance.  
 I'll erase you with an important tear  
 or a nasty gesture.

I'll erase you by reading metaphysics,  
 by a telephone call, or salutations  
 offered to ashes,  
 with a cough and a rash moment.

I'll erase you with the wine of the insane,

gouging out my eyes  
while taking a strange man into the tomb of my body.

I'll erase you with innocent games,  
with life and death,  
even if I have to be a nun or a prostitute.

*Translated from the Spanish by Daniela Gioseffi & Enildo A. García*

[from Peru]

**Julio Ortega**

## **EMOTIONS I**

These wanderings of desire  
begin in the street, after the movie  
when we pick  
a small restaurant to try  
the onion soup.  
We laughed at ourselves  
after giving life to the street gods  
in vain.  
But there is no forgetting when  
there's desire, the memory of  
relaxed happiness.  
Afterwards along the short Olympus  
where I bought you a pink rose,  
a popular novel  
and some apples.  
Only time followed at a distance  
as we returned  
to the metro station  
under the triumphal echo of the Opera.  
Slender the clouds  
of the emotive decoration  
of these roles.

## **EMOTIONS XXI**

But they're not the same geraniums,  
intense behind the lattice, not  
even the grass is identical  
now that they are redoing the garden  
in this exchange  
of history for decoration.  
Only the stone pavement of the portico



is true to the steps and voices  
of the secret, that promise  
of the very young,  
with no time in oblivion.  
But nothing is the same,  
and almost everything is the imprint  
of something else.  
May this sentence never end.

*Translated from the Spanish by Clementine Rabassa*

## “The Past Is Prologue” An Interview with Gregory Rabassa

by **Maria Bennett**

*(Conducted under the auspices of Cross-Cultural Communications,  
Stanley H. Barkan, Publisher)*

The poet Muriel Rukeyser once said that the universe is made of stories, not of atoms. For world-famous translator Gregory Rabassa, life and work have formed an interconnected net of stories, jewels in Indra's web, which he and his wife Clem graciously spread before us recently on a sunny afternoon in September. Born in Yonkers, New York in 1922 (not far from Ella Fitzgerald's home, where a bronze statue of the jazz legend stands today), the former OSS cryptographer rose to literary fame with his translation of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez, winning the PEN Translation Prize in 1977 for his work, which García Márquez cites as being even better than the original novel in Spanish. The list of writers he's worked with over the years sounds like a Who's Who of Spanish and Portuguese-language superstars: Cortázar, Lezama Lima, Vargas Llosa, Machado de Assis, Lispector. He's got lots to say about them in his memoir of the translating life, *If This Be Treason*, which won the PEN Art of Memoir Award in 2006, but his best stories, I think, haven't quite been set into print yet on the turquoise Olympia manual typewriter which sits aside a stack of books in his Upper East Side living room. Although it must be tough to supply a steady stream of ribbons to the antiquated gem, Rabassa prefers it to a computer, and it's a delight to imagine him in the future pecking out the story of dancing with Marlene Dietrich at an OSS party in Algiers or hitchhiking from Dartmouth, his alma mater, down to New York City to the Onyx jazz club, where he'd enjoy the likes of Leadbelly, sax man Brew Moore, and Charlie Parker. And there's always the story of how he wooed his darling Clementine, a wonderful artist and co-conspirator in his crime of translational treason (it was Clem who came up with the brilliant notion of rendering the *Guaracha* of *La Guaracha del Macho Camacho* by Luis Rafael Sánchez as *Macho Camacho's Beat*, keeping intact the music and dance reference which would have stymied other translators). But today, he's content to settle back into a comfy armchair, with the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* (on the short list of favorites) at hand, and share his views on the role of translation, or, as he puts it, the work of the “journeyman.”

**Maria Bennett:** We'd like to ask you about your long and extraordinary career as a translator; some questions you may have been asked before, but they come from writers very much interested in your work. I've

always wondered, given the enormity of the number of pieces you've translated, which of them posed the greatest challenge?

**Gregory Rabassa:** Actually, the most challenging work I've done was to decode and translate messages during World War II about the surrender of the Germans in Italy. Some were in German, which was a stretch. My work as a cryptographer at that time was experience in translation as well. In terms of literary translations, however, the most challenging or difficult work was Lezama Lima's *Paradiso*. It was a difficult book to read, too, so the sheer complexity of the novel was certainly an issue in its successful translation into English. It was like translating Joyce. I've read more difficult books, but never had to translate them. It was fun, though. Books are like a puzzle sometimes; the difficult ones are more fun to translate.

**Beverly Matherne:** "Does someone who doesn't know a language really have the right to work as a translator of the work of a writer in that language? Or perhaps with a "partner in crime" who does?"

**GR:** Only in a sense; technically, no, but, actually, yes. I don't pay much interest to the technocrats of translation. They don't make much sense; it's like they're driving a car when the real translator is riding a horse; nit-pickers can turn out some awful stuff.

**BM:** Can a person be considered a translator if not a native speaker?

**GR:** I guess to a degree, as it's not a good example by holding a word to a narrow meaning. Maybe we should use another term for that person. Or maybe translators could be graded into first-class, second-class, and so on. The translator in question must know something of the land in addition, and realize there's poetry in every word you use, and certain favorite words we have, as well.

**Stanley Barkan:** Why haven't you worked on poetry? You stay away from it by working on novels.

**GR:** It's more difficult, I believe. It takes more thought. Besides, I like my old-fashioned poetry. I couldn't have ever translated Shakespeare into Spanish; it's not just words. And when you see contemporary poetry, it would be a hell of a job. Now, if you took a book and broke it up into stanzas, it might work.

**MB:** You tell others you don't read an entire work first when you begin your process of translation. How is that a method as such? Others would read the whole book first.

**GR:** It works quite well because it's not a method, it's an act. You get tied down in a method. For one thing, think of the past, present, and future. When you translate a book, it's entirely in the present, because you haven't read it entirely yet. If I go back and read it, the present is no longer the present, it's past. It's hard to describe the difference, but it's more like old Latin courses when you had to just translate pieces to learn the language. You go along, but you don't know what the future is. It's more of a mystery; it's a challenge because you're reconstructing something. Yes, it calls for more attention, too, working with the words themselves rather than a system. How do you arrange those words? That's the question.

**SB:** Why have you focused exclusively on Spanish and Portuguese?

**GR:** They were there. And I was teaching them. I had never worked in French, but had studied it a lot. If I had taken my Ph.D. in French, then, yes, I could have done work in French and in other languages. The only reason I worked in Spanish and Portuguese was they were handy. I always studied Latin, which is a complex language. And I learned Russian, which folks said was so hard, but I thought it was easier than Latin. With Latin, I felt boxed in by grammar. But the early training was helpful, since we had to translate a chunk of text into good English. They don't do translation in language classes anymore; we also had to order a cup of coffee as part of our studies, but that came later.

**MB:** What languages do you wish you had studied?

**GR:** Definitely, Middle Kingdom! (Pointing to the copy of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead* that sits at his side) I could have worked with Proust, I think. I always liked him very much; it was too late when I thought about dabbling in his work. I'm rereading him now and enjoying it.

**MB:** Are there any other "books that got away" or authors you look back on and say, "I really should have worked with him or her?"

**GR:** I thought about *Guimarães Rosa* a lot, the *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (translated by Harriet de Onís as *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*). It's a lot like *Finnegans Wake*.

**MB:** Has the *Wake* been translated?

**GR:** Someone said *Finnegans Wake* is itself a translation! I know that *Ulysses* was done by the Brazilian Antonio Houaiss, who put together a dictionary and who was actually a linguist. He's great with wordplay, but some of the poetry is missing. There's only so far you can go with works like that, since the gap between languages is always there.

**SB:** Which award, of the more than fifty you've received, means the most to you?

**GR:** In prestige, the National Medal of Arts was most important to me; the other was the PEN translation medal given by my peers. I feel as if I've come full circle; I got the first of these awards, but in May I got to present the latest to Margaret Sayers Peden, a great honor to a friend and colleague I've known for years, so I think it's the one I like the best.

**MB:** A writer in the *New York Times* a few years ago said, "If Rabassa had become a brain surgeon, we'd never have readable translations of the best works of Latin American Literature. Could that have been on your playlist of career choices?"

**GR:** No, if I'd gone into medicine, it would have been a fairly good job, but not the one for me. I probably could have done it, but I don't know how good I'd have been.

**MB:** Lucky for us you didn't!

**Kyung-Nyun Kim Richards:** What advice do you have for aspiring translators who are just starting out?

**GR:** Be a brain surgeon! You'll make a whole lot more money! Oh, brother! (laughter all around)

**MB:** *The Times* writer also says, "He has a head of white hair that he wears like a crown." If so, are you the king of Latin American literary translation?

**GR:** The crown is worn, that's for sure! Maybe that's what he meant, a crowned head.

**SB:** Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown!

**MB:** But in many ways, it's true. Think of Cortázar's *Rayuela* (*Hopscotch*, Rabassa's first foray into book translation), García Márquez and the whole Boom in the Sixties. If you hadn't done those seminal translations, America wouldn't have known that genre. You were in the right place at the right time.

**GR:** Yes, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* got a very broad reception. But folks have forgotten it a bit these days. If they hadn't, they would have noticed that the well which exploded in the Gulf was called "Macondo." And where did the oil go? It drifted to Baratería, which was Sancho's island. The whole Gulf oil mess was literary!

**SB:** I've been wondering if you prefer to work in Brazilian literature or mainland Portuguese?

**GR:** I prefer Brazilian. I'm like an adopted Brazilian, so I make fun of the Portuguese. Their language is very tight because Portugal is a little country; they have little room to branch out and address others. Brazil is huge, however.

**MB:** I know you enjoyed sharing recordings of jazz with Julio Cortázar, and that you both loved the innovative work of Charlie Parker. I was thinking you might have some thoughts on the link between music and the translator's art.

**GR:** There may be a relation between notes and ideas. But I suppose you'd have to choose an instrument. In the old days, I used to hitchhike from Dartmouth to 52nd Street to hear jazz. With truck drivers, it was safer in those days. I'd go to The Three Deuces and Kelly's Stable, and later to the Village to The Open Door, which is now part of NYU Law School. I also remember seeing Leadbelly at The Village Vanguard, and Brew Moore, the tenor sax player. I had a white piano in my first apartment, but never learned to play it.

**MB:** What was your biggest mistake, if any, as a translator?

**GR:** I probably made lots of little ones, but nobody has found them yet. I can't think of any book I shouldn't have done because I like them all, even the turkeys! And with Asturias, the only thing wrong was he didn't have Maxwell Perkins around to cut his work up a bit. I was a bit unhappy with the translation they came up with of the title of *Bras Cubas* as *Epitaph of a Small Winner*; they also changed *Quincas Borba*, too.

**MB:** Why did they change *Bras Cubas* so much?

**GR:** They felt they were looking down on this inferior cultural place in Latin America in those days, I think.

**MB:** I often wondered how you ever came up with the title of *Macho Camacho's Beat* from *La guaracha del Macho Camacho* by Luis Rafael Sánchez from Puerto Rico. It's perfect, as it's got the beat of the musical *guaracha* right there.

**GR:** Well, the translator is sitting right over there! (Pointing to his wife, Clementine) And the beat has two meanings, the cops' beat, too.

**Clementine Rabassa:** We were sitting on Luquillo beach in Puerto Rico discussing it with the author, and we couldn't resist it. I loved to dance

to Latin music during the era of Tito Puente, and it's so much a part of the culture that it was important to keep the music in the title of the book.

**MB:** Clem, how much have you helped your spouse in his work?

**CR:** Some, but not much. Since 1966, I've kept him off the streets. (She laughs)

**MB:** And I imagine his work as a professor at CUNY has, too. I can remember in the Eighties when I was a student at the CUNY Graduate Center in the Comparative Literature Program; the first thing other students told me was that I should register for Prof. Rabassa's class in Translation because it was so popular that enrollment closed quickly. It was, I did, and it was the most engrossing weekly session I can remember. You were adored by your students, you know. Your stories really shed light on the weaving of the translator's web. How did you ever find the time to teach and do your work in translation?

**GR:** I'm not a researcher. I'd first sit down and do my translations, and since I'd read the books I was teaching, I could just go into class and talk. You know, when they asked me to write a book about translation (*If This Be Treason*), I thought I did, but they called it a memoir instead, since there were so many stories. I believe someone called me a garrulous old coot! (Laughter)

**Hassanal Abdullah:** Can you tell us how the teaching of translation has changed?

**GR:** My intent was to talk about it, because I believe that you can't really teach it. The physical part is the active editing of a translated text. I can't say how to do it, but I can help a student to reframe it. And you know, Hassanal, I love your alphabet.

**HA:** My language is something for which students were killed in 1952 when the Pakistanis wanted us to use Urdu.

**GR:** García Márquez has a beautiful description of the Sanskrit alphabet in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. He says, "The letters are strung together like clothes to dry."

**HA:** *One Hundred Years of Solitude*—was it the first book of his? How did you come to this book?

**GR:** At the Center for Inter-American Relations, they ran a cultural division to get translations of Latin American books into English. García Márquez had become very big, so they said, "Let's get this into English."

They wrote to different publishers, and Harper and Row, with Cass Canfield Jr., got involved. Since I'd done some translations already, they asked me if I wanted to handle the English version of the book.

**HA:** My wife and I both said that the translation of this book is almost richer than the original.

**GR:** García Márquez said that, too; I said, in my modesty, that the praise goes to the English language. It's a book that should've been written in English. It's like Shakespeare's sonnets; they were there and Shakespeare came along and put them down in a way no Frenchman could have.

**SB:** I remember that the question for you was always, "Do you have enough Spanish?" But you retorted, the question is "Do I have enough *English*?"

**GR:** The past is prologue, I guess.

**HA:** You also write in English. Were you raised in a bilingual home?

**GR:** Not really. My dad came to NY in his 20s and became a New Yorker. Cubans are quick to pick up on the culture they're in. When he cut his finger, he'd curse in Spanish, but he was pretty good in English, too. I can still hear his voice say "God dem!" sometimes.

**HA:** Would a bilingual home have made a difference to your work?

**GR:** Yes, it would've been different. The psychology of cultures made me feel like more of an outsider. My father was a double exile, and my mother a single one, because he was exiled from Cuba, then became a New Yorker and finally moved to New England. My mom was a New Yorker and looked at the way people did things up there and thought it was a bit strange; so we kids felt exiled, too.

**HA:** Can you talk about translation in a literal manner versus translation to make a richer version of a piece?

**GR:** I don't know that there's that much difference, but I'd say that literal translation is bad translation; something is always left out. It's spiritual or instinctive; you think it may be only in English, but it is in other languages, too.

**SB:** Like the *taam* (taste/ flavor).

**GR:** Literal translation is more like a dictionary, but I love to read dictionaries. If we looked at what happened to the Tower of Babel, we'd never get anywhere.

**HA:** Do you think that translators are honored as they're supposed to be all over the world?

**GR:** As they deserve? No. They are journeymen, people who fill a need but don't do anything more.

**SB:** If there were a Nobel Prize for translation, you'd be the first to receive it.

**GR:** I won't get it because they don't give it *posthumously*!

**HA:** Stan has been doing publications all over the world in 53 languages (*But who's counting?*), and you have been involved with him for quite a while. Can you say a little about this?

**GR:** That would take a long discussion, because when Stan comes out with a book, my first inner impression is to shake my head and say, "How can one person do this?" Then I see him and see how there are those who would deny it, but I see a very relaxed person, although he may huff and puff. I wish that somehow his publications would make a bigger impact on the mainstream, but that's the problem of translating works that are not "common" enough. Mediocre stuff sells. The foreign book that sells the most is *The Alchemist*, a potboiler.

**Bill Wolak:** Tell us about World War II.

**GR:** It's classified. (Laughter) I'm only teasing; one of my comrades was Jim Black. They gave us all instructions to give name rank and serial number if captured. Jim pondered that and said, "I'll tell them everything I know, but I'll bore them with the details." I was in Italy and North Africa. I handled the surrender in Italy, dealing with Karl Wolff, the SOB who was head of SS in Italy. We went to Yugoslavia to bring out downed pilots who were bombing Romanian oilfields. The partisans would get them and gather them together and we would go in and try to get them to Italy.

**BW:** Did decoding help you in translation? I teach poetry and tell students to decode it; once you get past the code as simile and metaphor, it's OK.

**GR:** The first step was translating English into English; if you got a message from the field, the codes were so damn simple and primitive

that any German could've gotten them and broken them. In case clear text got out of the message center, you had to change it, so every message had to be paraphrased. It was tough; you had to work it in such a way that if they got it, it would take 'em longer. Things like "order of battle"—it was hard to make it complex, so we used ciphers and had to be good with synonyms.

**BW:** Do you still enjoy the work of translation?

**GR:** I don't know I ever enjoyed it. I did it, but got stuck in it and got drafted into it.

**BW:** What gets you to this tiny manual typewriter?

**GR:** I get the urge and go to it when conscience gets to me. There's an Eça de Queiroz story of Saint Christopher there right now. I often do my own writing in longhand, but for me, translation is easier with the typewriter. This one has been to Brazil several times; when I get to one end I have to pause, take the spool and rewind it. There's still a place on Third Avenue where you can get a ribbon. I usually buy a couple because I don't want to learn to use the computer. It's a distraction.

**BW:** What's your daily routine like these days?

**GR:** I may work in the daytime, but at night, we like to watch old movies on *TCM*. I watch news on Channel 21, usually the *NewsHour* with McNeil. The beauty of *TCM* is they don't advertise anything except their own stuff.

**HA:** You know, the Indians, mostly Hindus, believe in reincarnation. What would you be in your next incarnation?

**SB:** A brain surgeon!

**GR:** If I had anything to do with it, I'd be reincarnated as God. Then I wouldn't have anything to worry about. Better than Medicare! Or maybe a creature in the universe far beyond the telescope.

**SB:** You have taken us on a journey of past and present. Obrigado! Many thanks!

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Also Present: Clementine Rabassa (Rabassa's poet/translator wife)  
 Participating Interviewers: Maria Bennett (Poet/Principal Interviewer)  
 Hassanal Abdullah (Bengali Poet/Editor of *Shabdaguchha*)  
 Stanley Barkan (Poet/Editor/Publisher of Cross-Cultural Communications)  
 Bill Wolak (Poet/Photographer)  
 Not Present (but having sent questions to be asked by Maria Bennett):  
 Beverly Matherne (Cajun Poet/Translator)  
 Kyung-Nyun Kim Richards (Korean Poet/Translator)

**Stanley H. Barkan**

**METAMORPHOSIS**

*for Stanley Kunitz*

Having emerged  
from the chrysalis,  
a butterfly  
(not a moth),  
all the colors  
of the morning,  
          afternoon,  
          evening  
in his movements,  
passing through  
the winding paths  
of his wild braid garden,  
he seems reborn,  
yet another  
          change,  
another  
          transformation.  
He has become  
not just a word  
but a living  
breathing poem.

**JUST TO REMEMBER**

I am not the explorer  
I once was,  
climbing the Huachuca Mountains,  
because they were there,  
not the seeker in a red shirt,  
fearful of any bull longhorns  
I might meet on the hitch-hiking

way to Nogales, Arizona,  
and across the border  
to the sun-blinding white Canal Street  
I sought and found,  
where a beautiful woman  
sat leaning against a red-brick building  
reading a comic book.

I said, “¿Cómo está?”

After a long silence, when  
with a sign, I sat down next to her,  
leaning against that same building,  
she said, “¿Qué quiere?”

I said, “Usted.”

She smiled, then said, in English,  
“Where’re you from?”

I told her, from Brooklyn,  
my first day assigned to Fort Huachuca,  
before assignment to my company.

She told me that it was not working hours,  
but took me inside to her room.

After kissing and caressing her,  
I, a virgin, asked, “What do I do now?”

She laughed, said, “¿Chichito!  
You one big liar.”

But I wasn’t. She was my first.

Now, lying in my well-covered bed

in my Mexican-style stucco house  
 in Merrick, Long Island,  
 I am content just to recall,  
 no longer to seek such sagas,  
 just to remember  
 in the comfort and closeness  
 and security of a 73-year-old  
 with wife at my side,  
 children and grandchildren  
 near and not so far,  
 in retirement,

. . . but still dreaming of the past.

### SO WHAT'S TO SING ABOUT?

Gourmet grasshoppers  
 are cleaning out  
 beds of basil, sage, and mint,  
 and the katydids and cicadas  
 are, as usual, stridulating more than ever.  
 So reports *The New York Times*  
 in "A Bumper Year for Bugs."  
 The song they hum  
 they have been singing  
 for millions of years before  
 we evolved out of the trees.  
 There's a comet out there  
 with Earth's name on it.  
 So what's for bugs or us to sing about?

*New York*

### Hassanal Abdullah

#### A HOUSE ON THE GREEN

2

It does not matter if they know it.  
 Let them know whatever happened—  
 let them know that the boy sharpened  
 love's pollen sprinkled on the edge of a dream.  
 The colorful raft danced over the cloud.  
 Tamarisk leaves quivered to welcome it.  
 Keeping eye on eye, we passed our time,  
 as if we waved the flag of love in our heart.

Hold on to my hand so that we can step  
 on fears accumulated, here and there—  
 we have to crush the horror of this path  
 while walking firm and strong.  
 Look, nature still blinks with joy,  
 birds still set their beautiful wings in the sky.

3

Here, on the soft grass, sprinkles  
 the golden touch of morning dew  
 as your footprints stretch out  
 toward the horizon. Listen to the wind  
 swimming in the name of the village boy—  
 birds sing, jackfruit branches shiver;  
 as if, love, Spring's smile—lingering between  
 two hearts—is drawing the dawn of happiness.

Modhumoti, flowing beyond the village,  
 murmurs all day long. Carefully, I listen  
 to its well-balanced attractive *arati*;  
 and begin cheering and weaving hope  
 to build a hut with bamboo and hay  
 where we would spend hours and days.

*arati*: Prayer.

5

If you move your face aside in despair,  
 how can I draw the Mona Lisa figure!  
 Look, on the telephone wires, doves singing  
 melodies as the sun slides into the afternoon.

The drawing might sparkle like the daybreak,  
as the brush adding colors onto the canvas,  
if a strand or two of hair sticks to your cheeks.  
Love keeps breathing if it's bestowed in the air!

When the afternoon light becomes still,  
and a few clouds stretch colorful wings,  
and *sandhya-malati* sprays sweet scent—  
penetrating the white *kash* field,  
wrapping dusk's light all over the body,  
we will come closer to hear *modhumoti*.

*sandhya-malati*: A kind of evening flower.  
*Kash*: Long grass with white flowers.  
*modhumoti*: a river.

7

Rattan flowers return on the stem as words;  
thorns of the golden vine kiss the leaves.  
Garlands of talk raise their charm in the air—  
no, not a mistake staying up through the night.  
Mount of mystery from the body of the moon  
comes down on the green as happiness does;  
the cuckoo jumps around the branches, as  
another miraculous morning smiles on the earth.

Fog slips away holding the hands of fogs;  
look, what clears its face in retrieving reflection—  
it's hope, entangles on the edge of mind's window.  
Spread your hands towards the spanning time,  
press your heart's torch onto the word's heart,  
let the thorn burn, burn, and burn forever.

11

Frogs choir all over in the *Asher* rain,  
run around the muddy water and play.  
The ground water-wave rushes its way  
keeping traces at the soft edge of the wind.  
Thrills that come down through the tree trunk  
weave a gentle afternoon on the crystalline green;  
to place you at the close range of my sight,  
my heart is ready at the highest stage.

The love that deposited its dew in clusters,  
sparkling, rains down on the fingertips  
to find another realm of imaginary world.

Darkness stands still in praying for light,  
as the forest swings in extended ecstasy—  
love winds through the vital vine of desire.

*Asher*: the 3rd month of the Bengali calendar.

13

The spring-deer roams around the clouds,  
breasts, full of milk, eyes blink in surprise—  
the crafted mind dances all around, while  
the sweet aroma of rose sets in yellow saraca.  
As pure math refreshes the lungs of a master,  
the bell twinkles at the entrance of the house.  
To know how wet is the dew when the dawn breaks,  
poetry instantly vibrates in my chest pocket.

You walk with me to hear me close, as the granary  
of the green draws kisses on both my cheeks.  
How short is a banyan tree next to a eucalyptus?  
How high is the sweet dome of my mind?  
Emotion swings its veil on banana branches,  
as your eyes fall on my eyes surfing up the tide.

17

You open your breast-button at my fingertips;  
the autumn wind rolls through the narrowing lane,  
and the cultivated grass joins in its natural course—  
two names written in blue ink, lay side by side,  
ten fingers search for the other ten in them,  
an earthly studio is embedded with wild music.  
The rage of love speeds up in twist and turn  
as the boat trembles in the middle of a roaring sea.

Moonlight picks through the window gutter,  
witnessing the instance as if the stem-head  
of a creeper slowly penetrates—love has  
never been ordinary—it exposes the aroma  
of lime-leaves. The village, its song and images,  
increase the nerve-reckoning at the highest level.

19

Go, go on to offer the golden touch.  
Love is quietly seated in life's storehouse.  
Leaves and grass bestow their debt for soil,  
rivers begin to giggle in stars' reflection.  
Paddy, arum, jasmine, and pond water call



stretching their arms in the morning and in  
the evening. I, too, have spread my sari's end  
to welcome whatever satisfies my mind's emptiness.

The words swim across the land.  
Grasshoppers shrug off their wings at dusk,  
flocks of pigeons and winter birds push  
their deep love into the pockets of the sky.  
White rows of cloud—jubilant and bold—  
swimming at ease, offering cold air as gift.

**23**

Finally, I've started walking towards Hell.  
The shelves of the century are broken one by one.  
In the hottest day of *Baishak*, unbearable drought  
and famine made me listening to the tiresome voices.  
My body is engulfed in the distorted scripts,  
as I see the dirty tides waving in the sea.  
While seagulls wipe their tears, the villains  
of our time chain them with crimson cruelty.

Doubt fastened the mighty hollow of hesitation.  
Peeling off the skin, sharp dreadful greedy knives  
smashed civilization angrily beneath the feet.  
The ornament of fame is hanged on jealousy's neck.  
In this neighborhood of cheetah, snake, and fox,  
will I be shrinking in fear of blazing Hell?

*Baishak*: the first month of the Bengali calendar.

**29**

Bring buckets full of water, please  
do sprinkle them all over up to your heart's content—  
if disasters ever come ringing the bell.  
The old tattered house, you wouldn't recognize,  
surrounded by mango and banana groves  
where my love and I used to reside,  
where flowers bloomed on the rose  
branches at the beckoning of the new sun,

where disheveled words brought an eternal  
sickness—love—on the wind's skin—  
please do pour the temptation of your heart  
and leave scratches of gesture on the ground.  
Deep from the ground, the devastating plants  
might, once again, rise to everlasting power.

**31**

In the transparent water of the pond,  
a tilapia raises its face to look at you.  
Trees, small and big, surrounding it  
eagerly await, impatient all the while  
to catch a slight glimpse of your face,  
to take a glance at you—the blue sky  
silently slides down under water, and the wind  
sits on the grass lazily stretching its legs.

How can I say, you, love of my life,  
have come to this house to live only with me?  
This green forest, every corner full of mirth,  
this widening variety of plants and trees,  
tilapia of the pond, and the bluest sky—  
are not all of them my competitors, dear?

**37**

Treading across the snow, the girl comes down again.  
I help her with her bags and say, "Please have a seat."  
Shaking the mound of snow off her hands and feet,  
she looks at me, and says, "How are you, dear?"  
Drawing a quick smile, I've add sugar to her tea.  
Standing by me, she hangs her coat in the closet.  
I plant a soft kiss, soundless but deep, on her eye—  
she stretches her hands to hold me tight.

In this city of tons of snow, thousands of miles  
away from the homeland, we find another life.  
Sometimes, it offers us fun; sometimes, it's rude.  
Sometimes, our minds swell in sorrow for home.  
Amidst all this, love stretches out its hands to us,  
crowd bursts with laughter for some leisure.

**41**

Taking all her dress off, the girl asks,  
"Tell me, my love, how do I look?"  
Pressing her tight to my chest, I say,  
"The world lights up in two; darkens in one."  
Then the girl bursts into laughter,  
then the bird dances with a sweet chirp,  
then the river runs in lovely murmur,  
as the heaven of happiness rushes in us.

The soft wind whistles, pushing on  
corners of the wall. The grass dances,

the pigeons dance, sitting in pairs on rooftops;  
 the flower, fruits, leaves of trees dance,  
 the daylight and the moon dance  
 where love entangles without limit.

**43**

As we walk down the street, the ice  
 silently melts on the salty ground—  
 the crystal water does not hesitate  
 to kiss our feet as it travels down the slope.  
 We left home holding our hands;  
 The cloud's whiteness firmly covers the sky,  
 a cold wind rushes like a saw on a log.  
 I draw onto your realm to dive in you.

As we walk, the cloud seems to unleash the sky,  
 gradually blunting the sharpness of the winter—  
 our feet get the strength to walk even faster.  
 The tender vine of love entwining our hearts  
 stirs spring freshness on to our cares and chores—  
 your smile defines my highest moment of joy.

*Translated from the Bengali by Purnima Ray and the author with Stanley H. Barkan*

*New York*

**Afzal Moolla****BLINK 2.0**

As you walk down the dusty street,  
 looking back to where,  
 yesterday and today meet,

try to keep your weary heart on fire,  
 dulled and numb,  
 though you may feel,

know that the petals of each blood-red rose,  
 fans the embers of desire,

a simple desire,  
 to feel again,  
 to laugh at the cold, lonely rain,

a simple desire,  
 to lose it all,  
 believing there still is,  
 a world of soft peace to gain,

Keep blinking through it all,

because all you need,  
 is a gentle hand,  
 to help you up,  
 if you should ever fall,

keep blinking at yourself,  
 and never regret all bygone days,  
 for your eyes have watered,  
 your ocean of tears,  
 for far too long,

that simple desire,  
to live, love, to feel,  
to cry all anguish till it departs,  
keep blinking,  
and believe,  
always believe,

that the most painful closures,  
herald bright, soft,  
comforting starts.

### **BLINK 3.0**

in a murmur,  
trapped inside a quiet corner,  
of your tranquil heart,  
a new dawn,  
will break,  
shredding the thorns,  
that once tore you apart,  
in a breath,  
of life,  
caressing the bruised kisses of your dreams,

nights of barren desolation,  
shall surely pass,  
while nourishing your being,  
as the pristine mountain streams,  
in a blink,  
from the corners,  
of your serene eyes,

a sliver of a thought,  
assures you, that time flies,  
and when,  
you feel,

your awakening,

your days in the sun,  
and in the placid night,  
shall surely be,  
resurrected,  
by hope's redeeming light,

and when awakened,  
your whole being feels enveloped,  
by feelings anew,

may your morning be as peaceful,  
as the flowers embraced,  
by the glistening dew.

*South Africa*

**Bishnupada Ray****BLACK BOX**

a black box of the inner chamber  
safe in the dark sea of nights  
where ripples break on the grey shores  
rough as the grains of white blood

the fallacy of that Lockean page  
seeks the comfort zone of mermaids  
where music of the uninspired waves  
records a rainbow of tremors

my ink spills all over again  
perpetuating my mortal weakness  
the crime I commit through ages  
needs a bonfire for regeneration

no light comes from my fire  
so I recreate myself from the darkness  
the sand traces the pink footprints  
approaching a soft crimson sun.

*Kolkata*

**William Wright Harris****GRADIVA**

dali sketched you  
                          almost in waves  
hips ebbing  
                          as a frothing tide  
navel an undertow  
                          dragging the eye  
deeper than a  
                          watery cemetery  
breasts estuaries  
                          hungry for salt  
and one foot  
                          bringing you closer

**TWO HANDS**

knuckles gnarled &  
calluses carved from  
a life of toil

one hand  
bent  
as if attempting a fist

the other  
open  
& stretched upwards

van gogh begging  
salvation from a god  
deaf or apathetic

*Tennessee*

**Seema Gupta**

**DESERT WOMAN**

She is born with the  
 silent language of desert and winds  
 engraved in her soul and  
 every night staring towards the sky  
 fighting with her own guesses  
 which she made to catch the star  
 her beloved was following  
 to reach his destination  
 she sends her whispers  
 along with tender kisses  
 placing on the wings of wind  
 believing the wind would surely  
 travel far and far away  
 to transfer her kisses  
 with her passionate message of  
 longingness to her beloved  
 she lives in fire of  
 endless waiting moments  
 with flood of storms in her eyes  
 and suffers moments of blazing coals  
 as horrible pain  
 with a desperate desire to  
 rest in his strong arms forever  
 she tries to gather dews of her  
 evaporating deep breaths  
 and creates imagery of being  
 beside him peeping in his eyes  
 she never knows  
 her wait would end or not  
 But she knows one thing  
 she is a desert woman

and with flux of stone body  
 she would be waiting till her last breath . . .

**ISOLATED MIND**

Isolated Mind being nomadic  
 with eruption of hidden pain  
 in the form of ice  
 always craves to wander  
 on the scattered street of old memories  
 where shadow of frozen wound  
 throws pearl of notion  
 in darkness of uncertainty  
 and dried up perplex moments  
 with some known odor  
 and diffused silence;  
 shed tears with consistency  
 on the paved path of destiny  
 and that moment heart bleeds  
 for aesthetic sense of togetherness

*India*

**Saptadeep Basu****A FEW WORDS**

A few words left unspoken yesterday,  
 A few words kept hidden from today,  
 A few promises that were broken to keep others alive,  
 And a few spare feelings, that were left buried deep inside.  
 The seconds ticked by in a gruesome pace,  
 Caught in a web of “could have been” moments;  
 Sometimes I whispered them; sometimes I had chosen to shout;  
 But my feelings had always been spoken to myself.  
 Couldn't tell you how beautiful you looked with your dimpled smile,  
 Couldn't hum the song that I had written for those mesmerising eyes,  
 Couldn't give you the letters, I had dumped below my lonely bed,  
 Where often I had expressed; and which only I had read.  
 I never cared for the flowers to bloom,  
 Never dreamt for the rainbow to peep through my door,  
 I had never wished for the violins to play for us,  
 All I waited for was a perfect start.  
 Today as you walk away with your steady steps,  
 Tramping those silly feelings that you never knew existed,  
 I wish I could stop you and pour out my heart,  
 And not fade away unnoticed, as my life slowly departs.  
 Few words will yet be left unspoken today,  
 Some promises buried with my soul,  
 Few spare feelings with no wings to fly,  
 And tell you all I had always wished for.

*India***রবিউল মানিক****সুবাসিত মৃত্যু**

অক্ষম বৃদ্ধেরা অতঃপর চায়ের দোকানে  
 অলস আড্ডায় মেতে ওঠে এবং নিশ্চিত ভাবেই  
 তাদের আলোচনায় উঠে আসে বিবস্ত্র যৌনতা  
 কাঠ-কয়লার গনগনে লালাভ আভার দিকে চোখ রেখে  
 আফ্রোদিসিয়াক, ভায়াগ্রা ও মৃগনাভী কস্তুরীর  
 ব্যবহার বিষয়ক সরস বিতর্ক

প্রদীপ্ত সূর্যের মতো ওদের যৌবন কেটে গেছে  
 কুঁচকানো চামড়ার ভাঁজে ভাঁজে বিঁধে আছে  
 অতীতের স্পর্ধিত পদচিহ্নের ছাপচিত্রের সময়ের চোরকাঁটা  
 নিরন্তর, কাল খুবলে নিয়েছে শরীরের যৌবনিক আন্তরণ  
 ভবিষ্যতের উজান শ্রোত ঠেলে ভেসে আসে মৃত্যুর সুবাস

**বরই গাছ**

রেল সড়কের খাদে  
 ডানকানা মাছেদের আবাস পেরিয়ে গেলে  
 সজনে, সুপুরি, জাম, বাঁকানো জামরুলের প্রাকৃতিক ছায়াঘেরা  
 বাড়ি তোমার; বাইরে বুনো তিৎপল্লার গাছের হলদে,  
 পলতে মাদার গাছের লালচে ফুলে ফুলে  
 ছাওয়া টোপাদানার দাম ভর্তি ব্যবহৃত পুকুরের শিয়রে দাঁড়ানো  
 একটি বরই গাছ ক্রমেই বাড়ছে আকাশের দিকে  
 আর আমিও পরিণত হচ্ছি অশীতিপর বৃদ্ধে।

**অনন্ত ঘুম**

আমি জেগে উঠলাম অনন্ত ঘুমের মধ্য থেকে  
 শূন্যতার গহীন গহ্বরে—  
 সুপ্ত ছিলাম নিশ্চিত, স্বপ্নময় কবরের প্রশান্তিতে

জ্বলজ্বলে নক্ষত্রের মতো কালো শব্দের কবিতাগুলো  
 প্রতিনিয়ত আমাকে জাগানোর গাঢ় অভিপ্রায়ে

কূলহীন সাগরে দুঃখের নৌকা বেয়ে  
বিক্ষুদ্ধ তরঙ্গমালা ঠেলে  
উপকূলে পৌঁছানোর চেষ্টা করে আসছিল  
এবং শেষাবধি সৈকতের তীরে আছড়ে পড়ল  
আর আমি জেগে উঠলাম অনন্ত ঘুমের মধ্য থেকে

### বিদীর্ণ নিঃশ্বাস

নৈঃশব্দের নিভৃত কান্নায়  
আমার বৃকের মধ্যে যে জল জমেছে  
তাতে অনায়াসে নিজেকে ভাসিয়ে নিতে পারো  
রাত্রি তার কদর্যতার প্রলেপে বলিরেখা আঁকে  
বিষণ্ন ব্যথার আর শ্রেত ছায়ার চাঁদের আলো  
ঝরে পড়ে মৃত্যুর অসহ মুখে

সুন্দর রাতের বিরান গ্রহের প্রার্থনায় অবসন্ন  
শীর্ণ হাত উঠে যায় বিক্ষুদ্ধ, নিঃসীম আকাশের দিকে  
আর নিব্বাঘ চোখের কোণ থেকে দু'ফোঁটা করুণ মেঘ  
ঝর্ণাধারা হয়ে নেমে আসে  
গাঢ় অন্ধকার শুষ্ক নেয় বিদীর্ণ নিঃশ্বাস

### নিভৃত গুহাবাসের কাল শেষ হয়ে এলো

সেই ভালো ছিল  
পশুচর্ম, গাছের বন্ধলে আচ্ছাদিত প্রাকৃত মানুষ  
তার নশ্বরতার সীমানা জেনে নিয়ে অশান্ত রাত্রিতে  
নিরাশ্রয়ের শরীরে মাথা পেতে দিতে শিখেছিল  
আর তখনই প্রমিথিউস অ্যাপোলোর অগ্নিরথ থেকে  
মুঠোভর্তি দু'হাতে আগুন আনলেন  
অতঃপর মনোহীনতার বিকারে আগুন জ্বলে  
গুহা পুড়িয়ে নির্মিত হল দৃষ্টি নন্দন নগর  
এবং এই নগরেই প্রতিদিন নিরাশ্রয়ী মানুষেরা  
আশ্রয়ের জন্যে পথে পথে ঘোরে

প্রমিথিউস আগুন কেন তুলে দিয়েছিল মানুষের হাতে!

ঢাকা

### রাসেল আহমেদ

#### জনক ও জাতক

তবে তাই—  
অন্ধকারে অমাবস্যায়, গুহা আর গুহাচিত্রে  
সভ্যতার যাতায়াত হোক;  
ঘাড়ের তন্ত্র ফুলে-ফেঁপে ওঠে  
বন্দুকের গুলির মতো মুখ ফসকে বলে দিই  
“আমি সেই  
অসংলগ্ন পুরাণের জনক ও জাতক!”

যোনির আড়ষ্ট ফুলে নেমে আসে শিশু  
ক্রুশবিদ্ধ কাঁটাতারে যন্ত্রণার তীব্র হলাহল  
জমা হয়;  
রক্তবর্ণ হয়ে ওঠে ক্রমশই আঙুরের থোক।  
নদীর গোপন অঙ্গ ভেঙে যায়  
সেতুর বিভাসে থাকে ঢেউয়ের ক্রন্দন  
মিছিলের মধ্যখানে চীৎকারে যেমে ওঠে  
অনাহত অন্ধকারে  
নির্লিপ্ত ও নির্বিষ, বারুদসর্বস্ব যুবক।

#### স্টেশন

তুই  
আমার  
দূরাগত ট্রেন—  
এই  
তথ্যটুকু জানি বলেই  
দেবতার  
কাছ থেকে  
ছিনিয়ে আনি প্রবাদ

স্টেশনে ট্রেনদের থামতেই হয়।

ঢাকা

## নাজমুল হাসান

## সবকিছুই কবিতা কবিতা মনে হয়

তোমার শান্ত স্নিগ্ধ অবয়ব, নিটোল হাসি, চোরা চাহনি, মান-অভিমান, চুম্বন-আলিঙ্গন, শাস্বত প্রেমের উদ্ভাসিত বাণী সবকিছুই কেনো যেনো কবিতা কবিতা মনে হয়। ধূসরতা-আলস্য, মগ্নতা, নাগরিক অস্থিরতা, বিষবাস্প হয়ে উড়ে যাওয়া বিষাদকেও কবিতা কবিতা মনে হয়। গলে যাওয়া, পচে যাওয়া, খুন হয়ে যাওয়া সহ সব কিছুকেই কবিতা কবিতা মনে হয়। বাস-ট্রাক, অটোরিকসা, মোবাইল ফোন, ইন্টারনেট, কম্পিউটার, বইপত্র সবকিছুই কবিতা কবিতা মনে হয়। পাখির কূজন, নদীর কলতান, রবীন্দ্র-নজরুল, লালন-হাছন, গীটার-বেহালা সবকিছুকেই কবিতার মতো লাগে—কবিতা কবিতা মনে হয়।

## মগ্নতার প্রতিভাস

জ্বলন্ত অগ্নিশিখায় চোখের সামনে আহত বকুল পুড়ে গেলেও কোমল হাত মুষ্টিবদ্ধ করে ফেরানো যাবে না। বুকের ভেতর একরাশ অভিমান মিছিল করে লালায়িত বাসনার ফুল ফোটাতে চাইলে তাকে ব্যারিকেড দিতে হবে হঠাৎ আগস্ককের মতো। শিশিরের শব্দকণার মতোও জানানো যাবে না—আমি ভালবাসি। ভালবাসি তোমার অধর। তোমার বুকের ঢেউ—বর্ণাধারার মতো তুমুল কাঙ্ক্ষিত হাসি। ভালবাসি মেঘ—ভালবাসি বৃষ্টি। শুধু ভালবাসি আর ভালবাসি, তোমাকে ভালবাসি। এই জ্যৈষ্ঠের উত্তপ্ত প্রহরে হৃদয়ে কী ভীষণ হাহাকার। শাকিরার উন্মাতাল নৃত্য আর সুরের যাদুতে পড়শীরা মোহাবিষ্ট হয়ে থাকার মুহূর্তে শুধুই মনে পড়ছে তোমার কথা। কী সুন্দর পরিযায়ী পাখির মতো দিনগুলি! উড়ে উড়ে, দূরে...বহুদূরে...এই সব বিবিধ স্বপ্নের নির্লজ্জ প্রকরণে বেঁচেবর্তে থাকি। স্বপ্নহীনতার মাঝেও তোমাকে নিয়ে স্বপ্ন দেখি।

## আলো-আঁধারি বাক্যালাপ

ভাসতে-ভাসতে দিগন্তপ্রসারী স্বপ্নগুলো ধূসরতার মাঝে লুটোপুটি খেতে খেতে ক্রমশই তলিয়ে যাচ্ছে, আর আমি যাবতীয় অন্ধকার সরিয়ে আলোতে আসার কী চেষ্টাটাই না করছি। আমি স্বপ্নশিকারে যাওয়ার আগে যে কিশোরী চোখে চোখ রেখে পথ আগলে দাঁড়িয়েছিল সেও এই অব্যক্ত বোবাকান্নার মুহূর্তে উধাও। নিতান্ত অসহায় হয়ে আমার মনে ঘুরপাক খাচ্ছে আবুল হাসানের সেই উক্তি—*অবশেষে জেনেছি মানুষ একা...* নক্ষত্রের চেয়েও প্রবসত্যকথাগুলো ঝংকারে ঝংকারে অদ্ভুত আলোড়ন তুলছে মননে। আমার ভাবনারা প্রতিক্ষণে মৃত্যুর দরজায় উঁকি মেরেও ফিরে আসছে। ফিরে আসছে দোকানে ঝুলে থাকা আঙুরের মতো থোকা থোকা স্বপ্ন নিয়ে।

নাটোর

## প্রবীর দাস

## এক একটা সকালে

এক একটা সকালে ঘোর লেগে থাকে—  
গত রাতে অযাচিত বৃষ্টি, তার আগে  
অলৌকিক সান্ধ্যভ্রমণ...ভ্রমণসঙ্গিনী তুমি-ই  
রাস্তার দু'ধারে সাজানো নির্বাক বৃক্ষের সারি  
শুভেচ্ছাপত্র উড়িয়েছে নিজের ইচ্ছায়  
এবং আমাদের শেষ না হওয়া গল্পে  
দু'জনকে উথালপাথাল অসীমের পথে...

এক একটা সকালে পাখিদের কনসার্ট  
দক্ষিণের সংলগ্ন বাগান থেকে পারিজাত  
স্কুলগামী উচ্ছল বালক-বালিকা দৃশ্য থেকে  
উড়ন্ত প্রজাপতি দেখি, খুঁজে পাই ভূমধ্যসাগর—  
মায়াজীবনের দু'হাত ভরে গচ্ছিত রাখি  
নান্দনিক ইশারায় কুঁড়ি থেকে ফোটা নো ফুল...

এক একটা সকালে হেমন্তের সান্দ্র বাতাসে  
মনে হয় দুঃখের স্তূপ কেউ  
ওলট-পালট করে গ্যাছে—

শান্তিনিকেতন



## নাজনীন সীমন

## অসমাপ্ত কবিতা

রাত একটার একটি চুমুর ভয়াবহতা সবাই  
জানে কম বেশী। অন্ধকারে দুই জোড়া  
ঠোঁটের সন্ত্রাস নিতান্ত অপরিণামদর্শী নয়  
কস্মিন কালেও; ইচ্ছেরা অবাধ্য হয়, পড়ে  
থাকে ইউ ও সুপার ইগো, উল্লসিত হয়  
আদিম পিপাসা, ঘেমে নেয়ে একাকার  
শরীরী আকাজক্ষা...

কেবল একটি চুমুর স্কুলিঙ্গে শুরু ভয়াবহ  
এ অগ্ন্যুৎপাত থেকে রক্ষাকারী কোনো মন্ত্র,  
প্রতিরোধক, প্রতিষেধক কিছু নেই, ছিলো  
না কখনো। বাঁচতে কি চায় আদৌ কেউ?  
যদিও কাজিত ঐ চুম্বন কারো কারো মিলে যায়,  
কেউ থাকে আজীবন প্রতীক্ষায় তীব্র হাহাকার  
আর পাললিক শিলার মতোন কঠিন যন্ত্রণা  
বুকে নিয়ে যদি কখনও কোনো এক মধ্যরাতে  
কারো জোড়া ঠোঁট উষ্ণতার খোঁজে নিখাদ প্রেমের  
সঘন চুম্বন আঁকে কেঁপে ওঠা বিদম্ব ভালবাসায়।

নিউইয়র্ক

## মুনীব রেজওয়ান

## অন্ধকার ভেঙে ভেঙে

অন্ধকার ভেঙে ভেঙে আলো খুঁজি  
ভিজে যায় রাতের প্রান্তর  
আকাশে মেঘের কোলে চাঁদ  
লোফালুফি খেলা—  
কারো বুকে নতুন আগুন জ্বলে  
হয়তো রাতের মতো নিভে গেছে তুমি

দিগ্ভ্রান্ত বালিকা কোমরে গুঁজে নিচ্ছে দেশলাই কাঠি  
চুরি হচ্ছে এই রাতে কারো কারো বাগানের ফুল।

অস্ট্রেলিয়া

রেজা নুর

এই জল নদী ছিল

ছোট জলস্রোত

বালুতে লুকানো মুখ,

দু'পাশে গাছপালা বন বোপঝাড়।

এর নাম ব্ল্যাক ব্রুক...কালো নদী।

যাবার সময় নাম ও জলের দিকে চোখ রাখি  
মনে হয়, এই জল নদী ছিলো কোনোকালে।

পিলগ্রিম এসেছিলো মিঠে জলের তৃষ্ণায়

সেই জল ক্লান্ত তরল এখন,

নদী আর নদী নেই, শুধু

ধু ধু সাদা চর। দুই ধারে উঁচু উঁচু বাতির পিলার।

ইতিহাস আর সময়ের সুপ্রাচীন চঞ্চলতা

নিমেষে আমিও দেখে নিই...

বহুক্ষণ দেখি, দেখি আবারও

সূর্য রঙ বদলায়

সকালের লালিমায় ভরা

বিকেলের বিষণ্ণ আবীরে।

হৃদয়ের নদী চলে তবুও মস্থর।

বস্টন

মনসুর আজিজ

স্যাঁতস্যাঁতে মাটির মাদুর

তুমিও ঘুমিয়ে আছো স্যাঁতস্যাঁতে মাটির মাদুরে  
কান পেতে শুনে যাই গ্রামোফোনে অবেলার গান  
বাঁশের রীডের স্পর্শে সুর হয় মাতাল মাদুরে  
সুবাসিত কাপড়ের ভাঁজে দেহ নিখর নিঃপ্রাণ

জীবন গিয়েছে কেটে হরফের বেচাকেনা করে  
কত যশ নাম ডাক উড়ে যায় কবুতর মন  
সেমিনারে শ্রোতা ফেরে হেমন্তের কলসকে ভরে  
গ্রন্থকীট খেতাবের মোহে কাটে সুফলা জীবন

গয়নার বাকশোও সযতনে রতির সিন্দুক  
মনকির নকিরের প্রশ্নে বিদ্ধ বাঁশের লকারে  
লা জবাব! মূর্খ নই; বলতেও পারেনি সিন্দুক  
নতুন প্রশ্নের জটে হতভম্ব করেছে বোকারে

গ্রন্থকীট তোমাকেও খায় মাটির পোকারা আজ  
দৃষ্টির পরত খুলে দেখে নাও কাফনের ভাঁজ।

ঢাকা

## হাসান সাক্বির

## মোমরঙ চিত্রকলা

প্রত্যক্ষ করি ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে অসংখ্য রঙের কৌটা আর পরিত্যক্ত তুলি...। বিশাল ক্যানভাসে একটা মৃত নদী ধরে রেখেছে ছোট বড় অথচ অনেক অনেক টেউ, স্থির টেউ। সেখানে ঘোড়ার কঙ্কালগুলো পড়ে আছে আর মৃতদেহগুলো খেয়ে ফেলেছে মাটি—দেখা যায়, একটা রেলগাড়ী চলে গেছে শ্মশানের ভেতর দিয়ে অন্ধকারের দিকে...। অগণিত মানুষের উত্তেজিত ছায়া কতকাল যেন নড়াচড়া করছে না একচুল। ঝড় শেষের বিধ্বস্ততার মতো একটা সবুজ রেখা চলে গেছে আকাশের দিকে এবং গর্তের মতো অসংখ্য ক্ষতচিহ্ন আকাশের গায়ে— একটা জলপ্রপাত অথচ জলপতনের শব্দ নেই, যেন একটা বেশ্যা গুয়ে আছে বেডের উপর আর আঙনের শিখাগুলো তুলোর মতো হালকা স্থির হয়ে আছে কমলা হাওয়ায়। মূর্তিগুলো ধ্যানে বসে আছে যদিও সেই ধ্যান ভাঙবে না কোনোদিন কারণ ধ্যানের ভেতর মৃত্যু হয়ে গেছে সেইসব শরীরের যাদের দেহকাঠামো গ্রানাইট পাথরে তৈরী—অস্পষ্ট নয় একটি মুহূর্তও।

আমরা কখনও কখনও এইসব চিত্রকর্মের ভেতর দিয়ে চলে যাই গভীর জঙ্গলে—রহস্যের জন্ম দেই—কেউ কেউ নিখোঁজ হয়ে যাই প্রাগৈতিহাসিক অন্ধকার মহলে।

## কখনও অচেনা রোদ্দুর কখনও কুয়াশা

ফিরিয়ে নাও বাহুল্য রাতে মধ্য—সাদা এক শূন্যতায় ভরে আছে সমকাল। কি যেন নেই—কে যেন নেই—হারিয়েছি সেই ইমেজ যার উপর ভর করে থাকতো এই অস্তিত্বের সাদা-কালো শরীর—রঙিন মুহূর্ত। জীবনের অনেক গল্প কল্পনায় মেঘ হয়ে ভাসে আবার কল্পনায় যে বৃষ্টি বাস্তবে তার রূপ চিনতে পারি না ঠিক! বোধ—ক্ষয়ে যাওয়া এক অস্তি! অজানার উদ্দেশ্যে উড়ে মরছি—পেছনে তাড়া করে ফিরছে ভীষণ এক প্রেতাত্মা! অলীক সে আর্তনাদ! যদি এই মুহূর্তটা হতো সুগন্ধিময়—রঙিন আলোর ফোয়ারায় ভরে থাকত সময়। কেনো হাত বাড়ালেই দূরে সরে যাও—কী এক রহস্যের মায়াজাল! মনে হয় চেনা খুব—কখনও অচেনা রোদ্দুর কখনও কুয়াশা।

মধ্যরাতের হাইওয়ে থেকে উঠে আসা শব্দগুলো কেমন ভৌতিক—অন্ধকারে বজ্র-বিদ্যুতের হলুদ বিস্ফোরণ—তারপর অনন্তকালের গভীরতা!

মাগুরা

## মেহেদী হাসান

## স্বপ্নহীন

বিশ্বাসের ভাঙা হাতুড়ি দিয়ে ওরা প্রতিনিয়ত আঘাত করে আমার শিল্পবোধে, ফেটে চৌচির হয় বিবেকের ফুলগুলো; যন্ত্রণায় কাতরাতে কাতরাতে হয়ে ওঠে অন্ধ, ফিরে আসে; হয়তো আবার মেলতে চায় পাখা নীলাকাশে।

গতরাত্রে গভীর মানবিকতায় ডুব দিয়েছিলাম—  
আচানক মাথায় আঘাত পেয়ে চোখ খুলে দেখি,  
মেছতা পড়া মুখে ডলছে বিবর্ণ তৈলাক্ত ক্রীম;  
আর রঙ্গিন কৌটার পারফিউমের গন্ধ শরীরে।  
পাশের বিশাল আলমারিটি মোহিত হতে থাকে—  
মরচেরা হয় আরো ঘন।

ফ্লোরোসেন্ট আলোয় বসে,  
বিজ্ঞানের মুখে, দল বেঁধে, অমাবস্যা মেখে দেয়:  
নুয়ে পড়তে পড়তে গাছের শুকনো ডালের মত বেমানান বোধ হয় নিজেকে।

কঠিন রক্ষতায় প্রশ্ন ছোঁড়ে,

আর কে আছে তোদের দলে—

নাকি তুই একা?

আমাদের আবার সংঘ!

চেপেচুপে কারো মুখই মনে আসেনি,

আমরা যে থাকতে পারিনা জোট বেঁধে

ভেড়ারা যেমন থাকে,

একাই বেড়াই ঘুরে—হঠাৎ হয়তো কারো সাথে দেখা হয় স্বপ্নের কিনারে।

মুখে মল্লয়া বন্ধিম হাসি, বেলের মতন গোল স্তন, সিগারেটের মতন সরু কটি;

ঘোড়ার লেজের মত রাশি রাশি চুল ক্লিপের অসংখ্য মার-প্যাঁচে বাঁধা—

রক্তের জারক কণাগুলোয় বাড়তে থাকে অস্থিরতা।

ধয়ে যাই—যদিও অনেক দিনের জমানো পচা গন্ধ!

চামড়া কঠিনতর স্বচ্ছ—ভেতরের নাড়ি-ভুঁড়ি, নগ্ন আনাগোনা—

খঁতলানো মুখ গোধূলির রক্তাভ বিচ্ছিন্ন আকাশে ফেরাই।

মাছের পোনার মত রক্ত দাপিয়ে বেড়ায় আঁটসাঁট সমস্ত শরীর জুড়ে;  
পিছনের দিকে ঘাড় ফুঁড়ে বের হয় আরেকটি মাথা  
সামনের দাঁত নেই—বাকীদের গায়ে রাশি রাশি ময়লার স্তর।  
সুন্দর, কুৎসিত মিলে-মিশে তৈরী করে ফ্যাকাসে পিচ্ছিল শ্যাওলা।

বড় ঘুম পায়, অনেক অনেক ঘুম—  
যেনো তরল পানীয়;  
সামান্য ঘৃণাও জাগে।  
তাড়া খেয়ে ফিরে যায় কষ্টার্জিত আমার স্বপ্নরা।

সিরাজগঞ্জ

## গ্রন্থালোচনা

### আগলে রাখি নদীর সন্ধ্যা

নব্বই দশকের কবি মতিন রায়হান। *আগলে রাখি নদীর সন্ধ্যা* তাঁর তৃতীয় কাব্যগ্রন্থ। প্রায় বিশ বছরের ব্যবধানে যখন ওই দশকের অন্যান্য অনেক কবির বইয়ের সংখ্যা দুই ডজন ছাড়িয়ে গেছে, তখনও মতিন তার ভাষাকে নিজস্ব রূপ দেবার জন্যে পরিশ্রম করে যাচ্ছেন অবিরাম। ফলত *আগলে রাখি নদীর সন্ধ্যা* শুকিয়ে যাওয়া নদী ও প্রকারান্তরে গ্লোবল ওয়ার্মিংয়ের মাধ্যমে নিয়ত উত্তপ্ত হয়ে ওঠা পৃথিবীর কথা বলতে সচেষ্ট হয়েছেন।

ঘর বলে কিছু নেই, তবু ঘরের টানেই ঘুরেফিরে আসা...  
প্রিয় বসতিকে টানে পাড়ভাঙা-নদী, বৃষ্টিসূত্রে ইলিশের ঢেউ  
কামড়ে ধরে তীর, মহান কৈবর্ত তবে মাছরাঙা পাখি!  
এমনই জলের নিয়ম, জলে ও অনলে লেখা ধীবর-কাহিনী...  
(ঘরবাড়ির কথা)

আসলে এক ধরনের শূন্যতার দিকেই আমাদের যাত্রা  
তুমুল ভিড়ের মধ্যেও ক্রমশ আমরা বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে পড়ি  
(যাত্রা)

একেকটি নদীকে বুকপকেটে পুরে আমি কতবার ছুটে গেছি  
সমুদ্রের কাছে; সমুদ্র আমাকে শুনিয়েছে  
পলাশ শিমুল আর বর্গমালার গান  
(নদী ও সমুদ্রের গান)

এইভাবে একে একে নিজস্ব ভাষা ভঙ্গি দিয়ে যেমন কবি তাঁর সময় ও পারিপার্শ্বিকতাকে আবিষ্কার করেন কবিতার পরতে পরতে, ঠিক তেমনি পাঠকও তাঁকে চিনে নেন আলাদা উপায়ে। কবির প্রতি আমাদের তাই থাকে অফুরন্ত প্রত্যাশা। “মানুষের মতো দীর্ঘ হতে পারে এমন সাধ্য সময়েরও নেই” সুদৃঢ় এই উচ্চারণ যে কবির তাঁর কাছে প্রত্যাশার মাত্রাটাও বেড়ে যেতে পারে।

### অক্ষরযোজনা

কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ইংরেজী বিভাগের অধ্যাপক কবি বিষ্ণুপদ রায় মূলত ইংরেজীতে কবিতা লেখেন। তবে আশার কথা যে তিনি বাংলা কবিতায়ও গতিশীল। *শব্দগুচ্ছ*’র পাঠক কিন্তু তার ইংরেজী কবিতার সাথেই বেশী পরিচিত। তবে কলকাতা, শান্তিনিকেতন সহ পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বেশ কিছু লিটল ম্যাগেও এই কবির বাংলা কবিতা প্রায়শই চোখে পড়ে। *অক্ষরযোজনা* বাংলায় লেখা তাঁর দ্বিতীয় কাব্যগ্রন্থ।

সুখের সেই দিনগুলির কোনও নাম ছিল না  
ছিল বৌদ্ধ স্থাপত্যের মতো নিষ্কলঙ্ক শান্তি  
ছিল শুদ্ধ নারীর এলোচুলে নীল ডাগর চোখ  
(সুখের সেই দিনগুলি)

এই কাঁটাতারের বেড়া  
সাপের মতো চলে গেছে যতদূর  
রাস্তার উপর বাতাস কাটে বালু  
(চার অধ্যায়)

তার উচ্চারণে আরো পাওয়া যায় “বড় রাস্তা ধরে ছুটে চলা এই জীবন” সম্পর্কিত নানা বিষয়াদি। ইংরেজীতে লিখতে লিখতে বাংলায় এই প্রবেশ আরো দীর্ঘ হয়ে উঠবে এই প্রত্যাশা অবশ্যই করা যায় বিষ্ণুপদ রায়ের কাছে। তবে, ভাষা যাই হোক না কেনো কবিতা কিন্তু সর্বদা জীবনের কথা বলে, সেই জীবনকে তিনি বুনে যাবেন, ভাষার শৈথিল্য উপড়ে ফেলে।

#### বাতাসের পায়ে পায়ে

গোলাম মঈনউদ্দিনের কবিতার বই *বাতাসের পায়ে পায়ে*। তিনি শব্দগুচ্ছ পত্রিকার সাথে যুক্ত হয়েছিলেন এর জন্মালগ্নে। বাংলা একাডেমির একজন পরিচালক হিসেবে এই পত্রিকাকে সাহসও যুগিয়েছিলেন। যদিও নিজেকে তিনি কখনো কবি দাবী করেননি, ইতিপূর্বে এক চিঠিতে এই কথা জানিয়েছেন, তারপরেও তাঁর মধ্যে একজন কবি অনবরত আঁকিবুকি করে। ফলতঃ গদ্যের ভুবনে বিচরণ ও বই বিপণনের তাত্ত্বিক কাজে যুক্ত থাকার পরেও তিনি কবিতায় ঘুরে ফিরে আসেন। এবং অনেকাংশেই নিজের জীবনের গল্প খুব সহজ ভাবে বলে যান। প্রাণের আনন্দগুলোকে ধরে রাখতে চান। এই চাওয়া সফলতা পাক।

কবিতাকে বলা হয় শ্রেষ্ঠতম শিল্প, কেউ কেউ এ-ও বলেন যে এখানে সফলতা পেতে জীবনকে এই শিল্পের পিছনে উৎসর্গ করার বিকল্প নেই। আজকের এই আলোচকেরও সেই মত। আলোচিত তিন গ্রন্থের লেখকও এই মতে বিশ্বাসী বলে ধারণা করি। এবং সাথে সাথে এই তিন কবিকেই কৃতজ্ঞতা জানাই বইগুলো আমার মতো একজন অধমকে উৎসর্গ করার জন্যে।

আগলে রাধি নদীর সন্ধ্যা, মতিন রায়হান, রায়মন পাবলিশার্স, ঢাকা, ২০১২  
অক্ষরযোজনা, বিষ্ণুপদ রায়, নবপত্র, কলকাতা, ২০১২  
বাতাসের পায়ে পায়ে, গোলাম মঈনউদ্দিন, আহমদ পাবলিশিং হাউস, ঢাকা, ২০১১

—হাআ

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

1.  
Take care. Take rest. Our literature claims you.

**Nirmalendu Goon**, Dhaka, Nov 6, 2012

2.  
Incidentally, my poem based around or launched from the Swatantra Sonnet form is just coming out in a book by editor Les Merton of *Poetry Cornwall* (another of Peter's friends!). I experimented with 18 syllables, then 12—which you suggested as a happy compromise—but found 10 made for a tighter poem in this particular instance. I must have another experiment, now that we are beginning to recover from our house move! 18 or 12 may work fine in a different piece. I gather my chapbook shared with John Dotson (*Seventh Quarry*/Cross-Cultural Communications) is just about to come out . . . P.S. Thank you for the mention on Facebook!

**Caroline Gill**, UK, July 3, 2012

3.  
“Who Are the Cajuns” by Beverly Matherne is a splendid write up to know Cajuns. Thanks for presenting six Cajun poets in your magazine. love.

**Abu Hasan Shahriar**, Dhaka, July 23, 2012

4.  
I have read through your book, [*Kobitar Chhanda*], several times. This book has inspired me to write a book on Poetry, “কবিতার কলাকৌশল ও কবিতার রকম সক্রম” (পরিশোধিত ও বর্ধিত সংস্করণ); আশা করছি সামনের বই মেলাতে প্রকাশিত হবে।

**Rokon Talukder**, Dhaka, Nov 9, 2012

5.  
Hassanal,  
I'm assuming that you would be happy with Darrell Bourque's idea, to air the poems on the radio. Please see his message below. Thanks again and great to see you in New York.

Best,

**Beverly Matherne**, Ph.D., Michigan, July 16, 2012

6.  
Dear Beverly,  
I received the copies of *Shabdaguchha* Saturday and I love what you and the editor did with the Cajun poems/poets. I loved your introduction, your choices of poets and poems; the cover art on the journal, the note from the editor. Nothing could be better I think, & I thank you for your efforts on our behalf.

I have a short poetry segment on KRV5, our public radio station; 88.7 FM; air time 320/330 (approx), on Thursday afternoons. I do another taping at the end of October and I will read two poems a segment from the Cajun Poets section of *Shabdaguchha* until I go through the whole batch. I am assuming that would be ok with the editor as it would give the journal exposure here in Louisiana, and beyond as we have an international audience. I would, of course, credit the journal, you, and the editor Hassanal Abdullah in each of the airings. Let me know if you think that's a good idea and give me a pronunciation of the title of the journal and the editor. I am thinking Shob-da-gootch-a with accents on the first and third syllable, & Ha-sa-nal with emphasis on the first syllable and lighter emphasis on the last syllable.  
best, always,

**Darrell Bourque**, Louisiana, July 16, 2012

7.  
Dear Beverly,  
Thanks for sending copies of *Shabdaguchha*. While I appreciate the work involved on your part and I thank you for requesting material from me, I am disappointed in the editing/proofreading in my poem, "Lai," the line that should read: "Then I returned to the city, to duty," as well as in your lovely poem, "The Blues Cryin'," with the [Stanza breaks] included, which I'm assuming were not meant to be printed. If there is anything that can be done to repair these things, I would much appreciate it. The magazine is interesting in its international content, which I think is really worth while.  
I hope that all goes well with you. My regards and best wishes.

**Clarisse Dugas**, July 16, 2012

8.  
Dear Sir/Madam,  
I am a student of Jadavpur University English department, currently in my second year. I have had a long standing passion for reading and writing poetry. I essentially try to understand the psychological motivation behind the creation of poetic art. My interest in the intense, emotional conflict arising out of an eternal wait as represented by Sunil Gangopadhyay in his poem, "Keu Kotha Rakheni" has made me write the poem on my own terms and in a new context with variations in language, tone and verse form, yet retaining a flavor of the original. I would like to publish my poem with you and would also like to get any kind of feedback or review. I have attached the file to this mail. I apologize because I have not been able to submit my poem in Bengali characters since I had a software failure. I shall be looking forward to your reply.  
Thanking you.

**Pooja Sanyal**, India, May 26, 2012

9.  
Dear Sir / Madam,

This is with reference to the website "www.Shabdaguchha.com", I am highly

impressed with the contents of the website and hence, would like to be a part of it. I would be highly obliged if you can dedicate some valuable time of yours in going through my 'Haiko kabita—Vishakha' and upload the same on the website.

Thanking you in advance for your co-operation.  
Sincerely,

**Sailendra Nath Bhattacharjee**, Oct 17, 2012

10.  
কবিতার জন্যে আপনার নিবেদন অসামান্য। অনেক শুভেচ্ছা।

**কামাল চৌধুরী**, ঢাকা, ৩০ জুন, ২০১২

11.  
হাসানআল ভাই, শব্দগুচ্ছের ৫৪তম সংখ্যা দেখলাম নেটে। ...আমি একটি থিওরি প্রমাণ করতে সচেষ্ট, তা হলো  $v(cm)=0$  অর্থাৎ কোন বস্তু (*Matter*) যখন মহাশূন্যে (*Cosmic bar/Velocity of light*) লীন হয়ে যায়, তখন তার অস্তিত্ব হল শূন্য (*Zero*)।  
বিষয়টি নিয়ে আমি নেভারল্যান্ড ফ্যানক্লাব ওয়ার্ল্ডকাপ ২০১২-তে যোগদান করতে চলেছি। আপনার শুভেচ্ছা কামনা করি।

**সুভাষ রবিদাস**, মুর্শিদাবাদ, ২৪ নভেম্বর, ২০১২

12.  
কবি, তুমি ধর্মবাজ ও ফতোয়াবাজদের সঠিক শিক্ষা দিয়েছো। ওইসব অন্ধের মেরুদণ্ড ভেঙে দিয়েছো বলে দাঁত কিড়মিড় করছে, গুরু। তোমার প্রতিটি কলমের খোঁচা অনির্বাণ।

**Tabrish Sarkar**, Dhaka, Dec 6, 2012

13.  
Surely a lyric [composed by Hassanal Abdullah] of significance blended with haunting, exotic, vibrant music. A double header!

**Stanley H. Barkan**, New York, August 1, 2012

14.  
I want to thank Hassanal Abdullah for introducing me to some of the greatest minds I've come into contact with. I definitely felt blessed with their energy and looking forward to this journey in the life of a poet. Thanks for inviting.

**Steven Diaz**, New York, July 1, 2012

15.  
Thank you Hasanal Abdullah for representing Bangladesh on abroad and congratulation for your nice poem which I have ever read. I have sent three of your poems, that you sent me for a proposed CD, to India for an anthology of 100 poets from India and Bangladesh. What about the next issue of *Shabdaguchha*?

**Mansur Aziz**, Dhaka, Oct 23, 2012

16.

Thank you very much for sharing such a nice piece of news with me. I am now compiling an anthology of translated poems of all living poets of Bangladesh. I have so far collected poems of 28 poets and translated those (five poems of each poet, not longer than 25 lines). I shall be grateful if you can help me compiling this great volume of collected poems and tell the poets you know and have contact with the poets of Bangladesh to send me at least 10 poems to be included in this book, Time range of the poets are from 1940 to 1990.

Have you visited my website: www.trulybangladesh.com—the ONLY literary website from Banglades. I shall be happy to know your remarks and criticisms and suggestions. Thank you.

**Siddique Rahman, Dhaka, Oct 22, 2012**

17.

হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ,  
তোমার ছন্দের প্রতিভার কথা জানা ছিলো, সুরের প্রতিভার কথাও জানলাম। ভালো লাগলো। রাহমান ভাই গানটি শুনে গেলে কী খুশিই না হতেন। তোমাকে তো বটেই, শিল্পীকেও ধন্যবাদ।

**আবু হাসান শাহরিয়ার, ঢাকা, ২ আগষ্ট, ২০১২**

18.

আপনার নামখানা দেখে যারপরনাই আনন্দিত। কবিতাখানি পড়েও। আর বাংলাদেশ, খুব একটা ভাবায় না। দেশটা যেনো হারিয়ে যাচ্ছে।

**স্বপন মাঝি, ফ্লোরিডা, ২৫ অক্টোবর, ২০১২**

19.

শ্রদ্ধেয় দাদা,  
প্রথমেই আমার ভক্তি নম্র নমস্কার। গত ১৯.৭.১২ তারিখে স্পর্শ করলাম আপনার পাঠানো বই ও শব্দগুচ্ছ জানুয়ারী-জুলাই '১২ সংখ্যা। ভারী সুন্দর ব্যবহারে আমি আপ্ত মুগ্ধ; মসৃণতাতে এবং চমৎকারিত্বে ভরপুর, নিটোল। বইগুলো হাতে পেয়ে আমি আনন্দে দিশাহারা ভীষণ, ভীষণ; ভীষণ ভাবে খুশি। আলগোছে এই সুন্দর সম্পর্ক মৃত্যু পর্যন্ত টেনে নিয়ে যেতে চাই। প্রত্যেকে ভালো থাকুন।

**পল্লব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, হাওড়া, ২০ জুলাই, ২০১২**

20.

আমেরিকা থেকে প্রকাশিত দ্বিভাষিক কবিতা ম্যাগাজিন শব্দগুচ্ছ'র সম্পাদক কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ'র [গানের] প্রথম প্রয়াসটি সুকণ্ঠী শিল্পী তাহমিনা শহীদের পরিবেশন হলেও খুব উৎসাহব্যঞ্জক মনে হয়নি আমার কাছে। গানটির গীতিকার সুরকার ও নির্মাতা কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহকে বলেও দিয়েছিলাম অকপটে। এতে না দমে হাসানআল দেখিয়ে দিলেন কবিতা ছাড়াও শিল্পের আরও শাখায় বিচরণ করতে তিনি কৃতসংকল্প। “এই গানখানা তোমার জন্যে লিখছি” শুনে মনে হলো হাসানআল ও তাহমিনা এই গানখানা সবার জন্যেই উপহার দিয়েছেন। কবি ও শিল্পীকে ধন্যবাদ এ জন্যে যে গানটি মন ছুঁয়েছে।

**বেলাল বেগ, নিউইয়র্ক, ২ আগষ্ট, ২০১২**

*Some of these letters have been reprinted from Facebook*

## Acknowledgments

“Poem 39” and “Poem 51” are reprinted from *Difficult Beauty: Selected Poems (1987-2006)* by Luis Alberto Ambroggio, translated from the Spanish by Yvette Neisser Moreno (Cross-Cultural Communications, 2009).

“Canticle for a Memory I” and “May My Children Live” are reprinted from *Canticle for a Memory* by Francisco Arriví, translated from the Spanish by Clementine Rabassa (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1993).

“Mosquito” and “Circus Dog” are reprinted from *Si regreso / If I Go Back* by Juan Cameron, translated from the Spanish by Cola Franzen (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1993).

“At Daybrak” and “The Warrior’s Rest” are reprinted from *Even Rage Will Rot* by Carlos Ernesto García, translated from the Spanish by Elizabeth Gamble Miller (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1994).

“Houses” and “6. Chronicles I” are reprinted from *Los autorretratos y las mascararas / Self-Portraits & Masks* by Isaac Goldemberg, translated from the Spanish by Stephen A. Sadow & J. Kates (Cross-Cultural Communications, 2002).

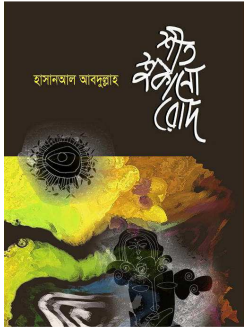
“Carilda” and “I Will Erase You” are reprinted from *Dust Disappears* by Carilda Oliver Labra, translated from the Spanish by Daniela Gioseffi & Enildo A. García (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1995).

“The Girl from Ipanêma” and “Rose of Hiroshima” are reprinted from *The Girl from Ipanêma* by Vinícius de Moraes, translated from the Portuguese by Gregory Rabassa (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1989).

“Heaven Stones I” and “Heaven Stones XXX” are reprinted from *Heaven Stones* by Pablo Neruda, translated from the Spanish by Maria Jacketti (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1993).

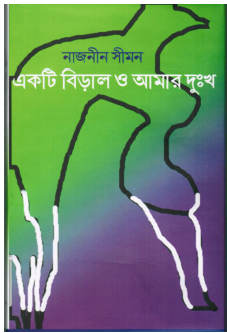
“Emotions I” and “Emotions XXI” are reprinted from *Emotions* by Julio Ortega, translated from the Spanish by Clementine Rabassa (Cross-Cultural Communications, 1999).

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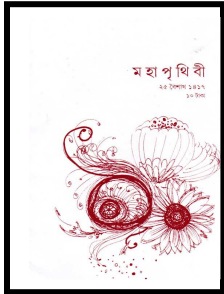
হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ'র  
নতুন কাব্যগ্রন্থ  
**শীত শুকানো রোদ**  
হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ'র বাৎসরিক তৃতীয় বই  
শক্তি—জ্যেষ্ঠাধিকারী দত্ত

প্রচ্ছদ: মমিনউদ্দিন খালেদ  
মূল্য: ১৫০ টাকা পৃষ্ঠা: ৯৬  
প্রকাশক: অনন্যা  
(২০১৩ বইমেলায় খোঁজ করুন)



নাজনীন সীমন-এর  
দ্বিতীয় কাব্যগ্রন্থ  
**একটি বিড়াল ও আমার দুঃখ**

শব্দগুচ্ছ প্রেস, বইমেলা, ২০১১  
মূল্য: ৫ ডলার  
প্রচ্ছদ: হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ



**মহাপৃথিবী**  
শব্দ রক্ষিত সম্পাদিত ত্রৈমাসিক এই কবিতার  
কাগজটি প্রকাশিত হচ্ছে ৪১ বছর ধরে  
কবিতা পাঠানোর ঠিকানা:

**Mahaprithivi**  
Birinchiberia, Purba Sreekrishnapur,  
Purba Midnapore 721635, W. B., INDIA

হালাল মাংশ, মাছ, মশলাপাতি ও তরতাজা সজির জন্যে

**পসরা**

আপনাদের নিকটতম গ্ৰোসারী, সুলভ মূল্যের নিশ্চয়তা দিচ্ছে  
আমরা সপ্তাহে সাতদিনই খোলা থাকি

ফ্রি ডেলিভারীর ব্যবস্থা আছে

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I don't pay much interest to the technocrats of translation. They don't make much sense; it's like they're driving a car when the real translator is riding a horse; nit-pickers can turn out some awful stuff.

—Gregory Rabassa

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