

PARTAW NADERI

POEMS TRANSLATED
BY
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AND
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THE POETRY TRANSLATION
CENTRE

Introduction

Born in 1952 in Badakhashan province a region bordering present-day Tajikistan, Partaw Naderi is widely regarded as one of the foremost modernist poets of Afghanistan. Like many of his educated, Dari - speaking compatriots, he is steeped in classical Persian literature and the depth of this knowledge has had a marked impact on his poetry, notably his mastery of free verse, which remains comparatively unusual in contemporary Afghan poetry. Partaw has argued that it is this familiarity with classical poetry and his meters' that has allowed him to risk writing free verse; and his metrical control, and the music of his poetry, is both daring and highly effective.

Outside observers of present-day Afghanistan, one of the most war-ravaged places on earth that is on the brink of becoming a failed state can have little awareness of the country's extraordinary cultural heritage, since so little has been left intact. Universities, libraries, bookshops, publishers, magazines have all been systematically destroyed. Until the advent of internet (to which very few Afghans have access since most remain without electricity) it was virtually impossible to read contemporary poetry - or indeed any poetry; for years, books could only be published and bought in Iran and Pakistan. Yet situated at the heart of the ancient silk Road, Afghanistan is the place where, over centuries, major civilizations met, exchanged ideas and flourished. The most famous poet in America' (according to the BBC World Service) Mawlana Jalal-ad-Din Mohammad Rumi, was born in Balkh, and it is Rumi who has had the most profound influence on Partaw's development as a poet.

It is unsurprising that partaw's life has partaken of the tragic events that have waylaid his country. His promising career as a poet was cut short when he was arrested and imprisoned in the notorious pul-e-Charkhi prison outside Kabul by the soviet-backed regime in 1975. Undeterred, he used his three years of imprisonment to read and write as much as he was able, and he emerged with a deepened sense of the significance of poetry, especially during times of extreme conflict. Apart from a few years during the worst excesses of the Taliban regime when he was forced to seek refuge in Pakistan, Partaw doggedly remained in his country and he continues, today, to play an active part, especially online, in stimulating his people to strengthen their culture against all odds. As he writes in *The Mirror*; this determination to fight for his culture is hard won: 'I come from the unending conflicts of wisdom / I have grasped the meaning of nothingness.

Those of us lucky enough to live in comfort in the west can often think that poetry is irrelevant and pointless, a minority pursuit for the educated

elite. Yet in many part of the world, including Afghanistan, poetry is the most important art form. Safe and cocooned in luxury, we forget how vital and essential the right to joy can be, how the first move of repressive regimes is to shut down its poets. Partaw once likened a poem to a spectrum formed by white light hitting a prism; the task of the poet being to fuse all the colours of the rainbow into a pure beam of light. Out of the darkness that is present-day Afghanistan, I hope that this small sample of Partaw's poems will reveal the precision and power of his imagery, and the clarity and startling colours of his prismatic poems.

Sarah Maguire

The Mirror

I have spent a lifetime in the mirrors of exile
busy absorbing my reflection
Listen –
I come from the unending conflicts of wisdom
I have grasped the meaning of nothingness

Kabul
1989

آئینه

عمریست در آئینه های غربت
سرگرم تماشای خویشم
های،
من از معرکه های دور معرفت م آیم
من مفهوم هیچ را دریافته ام

بهار 1368
شهر کابل

Lucky Men

When your star is unseen in this desolate sky,
your despair itself becomes a star.

My twin, the steadfast sun, and I
both grasp its far-flung brilliance.

* * * *

In a land where water is locked up
in the very depths of desiccated rocks,
the trees are ashamed of their wizened fruits.

The honest orchard is laid waste —
such a bloodied carpet
is spread before the future.

* * * *

Yesterday, leaning on my cane,
I returned from the trees' cremation.

Today, I search the ashes
for my lost, homeless phoenix.

Perhaps it was you who shadowed me,
perhaps it was only my shadow.

Even though the lucky men in my land
lack stars in the heavens, lack shadows on the earth

they welcome any stars
that grace their devastated sky.

O, my friend, my only friend,
turn your anguish into constellations!

Peshawar City
November, 2002

مردان خوشبخت

وقتی ستاره ات در این آسمان تنگ نمی تابد
دلتنگی تو خود ستاره بیست
که مفهوم بلند روشنایی اش را
من می دانم
و همزاد جاودانه ء من خورشید

*

در سر زمینی که آب را
در عمق صخره های تشنه گی زندانی کرده اند
درختان ، شرمسار میوه های بی آبی خودند
و باغ صمیمیت سبزش را
چنان پای انداز خون آلودی
گسترده در رهگذار حادثه هایی که شاید
هنوز پای در رکاب نکرده اند

*

دیروز با عصای نا توانی خویش
از مراسم فاتحه خوانی درختان بر می گشتم
و امروز در گورستان خاکستر
ققنوس بی سر پناهی خود را جستجو می کنم
شاید آن کی به دنبال من می آمد
تو بودی

شاید سایه ء من بود
هر چند مردان خوشبخت در سرزمین من
ستاره بی در آسمان
و سایه ء در زمین ندارند

مردان خوشبخت
در آسمان دلتنگی خویش
با ستاره های هم آغوش می شوند
که نام دیگر شان فریاد است

های !

ای یار ای یگانه ترین یار
دلتنگیت را آسمانی برافراز

Star Rise

I am the twin of light
I know the history of the sun

Stars
rise from the blisters on my hands

طلوع آبله

من همزاد روشنایی ام
از تاریخ آفتاب خبر دارم
ستاره گان
از آبلهء دستان من طلوع کرده اند

شهر کابل
حوت 1373 خورشید

Relative

I know the language of the mirror —

its perplexities and mine
spring from one race

our roots can be traced
to the ancient tribe of truth

Kabul
February, 1994

خویشاوند

من زبان آینه را می فهمم
حیرت من و حیرت آینه
از یک نژاد اند
و ریشه در قبیلهء دور حقیقت دارند

شهر کابل
حوت 1373 خورشید

The Bloody Epitaph

This palm tree has no hope of spring
This palm tree blossoms
with a hundred wounds
 – the daily wounds of a thousand tragedies
 – the nightly wounds of a thousand calamities
This palm tree is a bloody epitaph
at the crossroads of the century

*

Here, by the river,
 – a river of blood and tears –
the roots of this palm tree
are congealed with disaster
are knotted with the blind roots of time

*

Here, the sky
unwinds its bloody cloth
from barren red clouds
to shroud the shattered lid of a coffin
 – a broken mirror of rain
This palm tree has no hope of spring

*

This palm tree has no hope of spring
This palm tree is starred
with a hundred bruises
 from the whip of the north wind
My palm!
 My only tree!
 My spring!
Many years have passed
since the bird of blossoms
flew away from your desiccated branches

Butterflies abandon you
My heart is broken

Kabul
November, 1989

کتیبهء خونین

این نخل را هوای بهاران نمانده است
این نخل را تمامی اندام
بشگفته از شگوفته ء صد زخم
- زخم هزار فاجعه در روز -
- زخم هزاران حادثه در شب -

خونین کتیبه بیست
در چارسوی قرن

این جا کنار رود
- رودی ز اشک و خون -
این نخل ریشه هاش
در انجماد فاجعه
در انجماد خون
با ریشه های کور زمان می خورد گره

این جا که آسمان
از ابر های سرخ سترون
افکنده این قطیفهء خونین
بر سینهء شکسته ء تابوت
- تابوت آبگینهء باران -
این نخل را هوای بهاران نمانده است

این نخل را هوای بهاران نمانده است
این نخل تمامی اندام
شلاق باد های شب از دشت های قطب
صد جا شکسته است

ای نخل من !
یگانهء من !
ای بهار من !

بس سالها گذشت
مرغ شگوفه ها
از شاخه های زرد تو پرواز کرده اند

ای خاک بر سرم
پروانه گان زدور و برت کوچ می کنند

شهر کابل
قوس 1368

Earth

The earth opens her warm arms
to embrace me
The earth is my mother
She understands the sorrow
of my wandering

My wandering
is an old crow
that conquers
the very top of an aspen
a thousand times a day

Perhaps life is a crow
that each dawn
dips its blackened beak
in the holy well of the sun

Perhaps life is a crow
that takes flight with Satan's wings

Perhaps life is Satan himself
awakening a wicked man to murder

Perhaps life is the grief-stricken earth
who has opened up her bloodied arms to me

And here I give thanks
on the brink of 'victory'

Peshawar City
July, 2002

زمین

زمین آغوش گرم خویش را
به روی من گشوده است
زمین مادر من است
اندوه سرگردانی مرا می فهمد
سرگردانی من کلاغ پیریست

که شاخه های بلند سپیدار هیچ را
روزی هزار بار فتح کرده است

زنده گی شاید کلاغیست
که هر بامداد
منقار سیاه خویش را
در زمزم مقدس آفتاب می شوید
زنده گی شاید کلاغیست
که با بال شیطان پرواز می کند
زنده گی شاید خود شیطان‌یست
که معاویه را از خواب بیدار کرده است
زنده گی شاید
زمین زخم خوردهء غمناکیست
که آغوش خونینش را به روی من گشوده است
و من
در چند قدمی پیروزی بزرگ خویش
نماز شکرانه می گذارم

جولای دو هزار و دو
شهر پشاور

I Still Have Time

It's well past midnight
I should get up to pray
The mirrors of my honesty
have long been filmed with dust

I should get up
I still have time
My hands can yet discern
a jug of water from a jug of wine

as time's wheeled chariot
hurtles down the slope of my life

Perhaps tomorrow
the poisonous arrows aimed at me
will hunt down my eyes
two speckled birds startled into flight

Perhaps tomorrow
my children
will grow old
awaiting my return

Peshawar City
August, 2000

هنوز فرصتی دارم

شب از نیمه گذشته است
باید بر خیزم و نمازی ادا کنم
روزگاریست که آینه های خلوص من
غبار گرفته است

باید بر خیزم
هنوز فرصتی دارم
هنوز دستانم کوزه و شراب را تا کوزه آب می شناسد
و لحظه ها با گردونه و شتابناکی
در سراسیمگی هستی من می تازند

شاید فردا
تیر های زهر آگینی که برای من آماده شده است
کبوتران ابلق چشمانم را
در نخستین لحظه های پرواز
شکار کند

شاید فردا
کودکام در انتظار برگشت من
پیر شوند

اگست دوهزار
شهرپشاور

Desolation

In the lines on your palms
they have written the fate of the sun

Arise,
lift up your hand –

the long night is stifling me

Kabul
June, 1994

دل‌تنگی

بر خطوط قرمز دستانت
سرنوشت آفتاب را نوشته اند
بر خیز و دستی بر آفتابان
که حضور شب نفسم را تنگ ساخته است

شهر کابل
تابستان 1374

My Voice

I come from a distant land
with a foreign knapsack on my back
with a silenced song on my lips

As I travelled down the river of my life
I saw my voice
(like Jonah)
swallowed by a whale

And my very life lived in my voice

Kabul
December, 1989

صدا

من از سرزمین غریب می آیم
با کوله بار بیگانه گیم بر دوش
و سرود خاموشیم بر لب
من یونس صدایم را
آن گاه که از رود بار حادثه می گذشتم
دیدم،
در کام نهنگی فرو رفت
و تمام هستی من در صدایم بود

زمستان 1367
شهر کابل

Beauty

Your voice is like a girl
from the farthest green village

whose tall and graceful frame
is known to the pine trees on the mountains

Your voice is like a girl
who, at dusk,

will bathe in the clear springs of heaven
beneath the parasol of the moon

who, at dawn,
bears home a jar of pure light

who will drink sip by sip
from the river of the sun

Your voice is like a girl
from the farthest green village

who wears an anklet
forged from the songs of a brook

who wears an earring
spun from the whispering rain

who wears a necklace
woven from the silk of a waterfall

all of which grace the garden of the sun
with their many-coloured blossoms of love –

and you
are as beautiful as your voice

Kabul

1994

زیبایی

صدایت به دختری می ماند
در سبز ترین دهکده دور
که آزادی قامتش را
تنها کاجهای بلند کوه می دانند

صدایت به دختری می ماند
که شامگاهان
در زیر چتر ماه
در شفافترین چشمه بهشت
آب تنی می کند
و بامدان از دریچه های فلق
کوزه از نور خلوص به خانه می آورد
و از زمزم آفتاب جرعه جرعه می نوشد

صدایت به دختری می ماند
در سبز ترین دهکده دور
که از ترانه جویبار
پای زبیبی به پا می کند
و از نجوای باران گوشواره یی در گوش

و از رشته آبشار

گلوبندی بر گردن

تا گلخانهء خورشید را

با رنگینترین گلهای عشق بیاراید

و تو به اندازهء صدای خویش زیبایی

خزان 1373

شهر کابل

On a Colourful Morning

I kissed her –
her whole body shivered
Like a branch of almond blossom in the wind
Like the moon, like a star
trembling on the water
I kissed her –
her whole body shivered
Her cheeks showed one colour
her gaze revealed another
And the sun rose from her tender heart
And the thousand-and-one nights of waiting
ended
And on a colourful morning
I shared a bed
with the meaning of love

July 2002,
Peshawar City

در یک بادمداد رنگین

بوسیدمش

تمام اندامش لرزید

چنان شاخهء پرشگوفهء بادمداد در باد

چون ماه چون ستاره

که می لرزد در آب

بو سیدمش

تمام اندامش لرزید

گونه هایش رنگ دیگر یافتند

نگاهایش رنگ دیگر یافتند

و آفتاب ار گریبان مهربانی او طلوع کرد
و هزار و یک شب انتظار پایان یافت
و من دریک بامداد رنگین
با حقیقت عشق همخوابه می شدم

جولای دو هزار و دو

شهر پشاور

Original poems © Partaw Naderi

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