

Classic Poetry Series

Shamim Azad
- poems -

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Shamim Azad(11 November 1952)

Shamim Azad (Bengali: শামিম আজাদ) is a British bilingual poet, storyteller and writer of Bangladeshi origin.

 Background and Education

Shamim Azad was born in Mymensingh, Dhaka, Bangladesh, (the town where her father worked), her hometown was Sylhet. She passed her Metric from Jamalpur Girls High School in 1967 and passed her Intermediate from Tangail Kumudini College in 1969. She enrolled in Dhaka University and gained an Honours degree in 1972 and a Masters degree in 1973.

In 1990, Azad came to London. and currently resides in Ilford.

 Career

Azad's work ranges from Bangladeshi to European folktales. Her performance fuses the lines between education and entertainment and her workshops are rooted in Asian folk, oral traditions and heritage.

Azad has published books including novels, collections of short stories, essays and poems in both English and Bangla and has been included in various anthologies including British South Asian Poetry, My Birth Was Not In Vain, Velocity, Emlit Project and Mother Tongues. She wrote two plays for Half Moon Theatre.

She has performed at venues including the Museum of London, Cambridge Water Stone, Liberty Radio, Battersea Arts Centre, Lauderdale House, the Commonwealth Institute, British Library, British Council of Bangladesh, Takshila in Pakistan and New York.

She is a trustee of charity One World Action, a school Governor and Chairperson of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra (World Literature Centre) London.

 Awards

Azad received the Bangladesh Bichitra Award in 1994, Year of the Artist 2000 Award from London Arts, Sonjojon- A Rouf Award 2004 and UK Civic Award in 2005.

By Walking Towards The Tired Road Of The Earth

My taste of laugh ended to the nearest
Available turns of rivers of myths
Tearing apart the blanket of mist
Of the jealous woods.
I startled and tripped
On Autumn Crocus of Anguish.
There I went-
In there
My crushed soul went
But no new tears of surprise dropped
Over my freshly grown Viyella of hope.
Walking by the fatigued road of the Earth
Thought-dust covered
My thin shaky hanged arms.
Quiet marks of sleepless nights
Got filled with cups of opium
Transforming my mental ceramics
Into a sparkly tinsel stream.
Brushing past through the passive grass
My breath was coming back
To inhale the lovely smell
Lurking out of my newly wedded book
Restoring complete insanity
To acquire the evaporated
taste of this enduring journey again.

Shamim Azad

Dendorbar

Shamim Azad

I Want To Pierce With The Arrows Of My Voice

I wasn't born without complaints.
I announced with piercing shrieks
the first fault of this earth's seasonal wheel.
I've displayed on my skin
the pestilence and possibilities of all tinned milk.
And in this way I've learned
to identify time through my complaints.

Milestones identify and divide the road,
the moisture-rich air is measured
into brilliant balloons.
In the geography books, all the bodies
of water push this vast earth
into one-third of its expanse.
People are known by their eccentricities.

Here, without hunger, there are no gaping mouths,
no forest without thorny trees.
Without the sweat of slaves there's no society,
without huge stones no rushing stream
could take its rippling turns,
without the launching of missiles there is no war.

And I know—
without the burning of neglect
love cannot be measured.
The wayward embrace reveals
renunciation's all-absorbing root.
Rage exhausts itself in a cascade of sweat,
touch comes to climax in a sudden blow,
and in the gigantic build-up
of starvation on a massive scale
Ethiopia is announced to the world.
So I want to leave my mark
on every Namibia,
on 1971, through my complaints in the spring,
by piercing everyone with the arrows of my voice.

[Translated by Manzoorul Islam]

[Note: Spring (the original poem names the spring month of Phalgun, (Phalgun, mid-February to midMarch) was the season of the Language Movement of 1952, when Bengali students in Dhaka died in a demonstration protesting the imposition of Urdu as the national language of Pakistan. This protest movement culminated in the bloody Liberation War of 1971, when Bengali-speaking East Pakistan declared and won its independence from Pakistan as the nation of Bangladesh.]

Shamim Azad

Kampon

Shamim Azad

Ogniban

Shamim Azad

Shoron

Shamim Azad

Shotomulee Shas

Shamim Azad

Waiting For The Touch

I've tuned time to the wind,
In every season, famine's shadow.
With the changes in rules and regulations
The robin can't unfold its delicate wings.

The seedling grows in the courtyard in self-reproach
Sprayed by the water of new distress.
With the season's poison, poverty and flood
The dream-pitcher floats away again.

Even the sun can't give time's destination.
Every moments, confidence loses its track
With the onrush of tears in the sleep-shunned bed,
But that boy is never seen again.

The feathers keep falling after the hours.
How will the robin unfold its blossoming wings
And in the courtyard, on the seedling's dying stem
Will any new leaf ever again be seen?

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