

Classic Poetry Series

Ghalib Mirza Asadullah Khan

- poems -

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He was, when it was aught

Na thaa kuchh to Khudaa thaa, kuchh na hotaa to Khudaa hotaa
Duboyaa mujh ko hone ne, na hotaa mai.n to kyaa hotaa

huua jab Gam se yuu.N behis to Gam kyaa sar ke kaTane kaa
na hotaa gar judaa tan se to zaa.Nno.n par dharaa hotaa

huiu muddat ke 'Ghalib' mar gayaa par yaad aataa hai
wo har ek baat pe kahanaa ke yuu.N hotaa to kyaa hotaa

English Translation

He was, when it was aught
He would still be, even if it might have been naught
Drowned I am in my ego
What would have happened if "I" was not
Laden with distraught and feeling apathetic
do I have to worry about the head being severed
If it did not sever from the body
The head would have simply reposed on the lap
It has been ages that "Ghalib" died
Yet the memories linger on
His saying this on every occasion
If it was "like this" then what it would be!

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Heart it is, not a brick or stone

Dil Hi To Hai Na Sang-o-Khist
Dard Se Bhar Na Aaye Kyon?
Royenge Hum Hazaar Baar
Koyee Hamein Sataye Kyon?
Dair Nahin, Haram Nahin,
Dar Nahin, Aastan Nahin
Baithe Hain Reh-Guzar Pe Hum
Gair Hamein Uthaye Kyon?
Jab Veh Jamaal-e-Dilfaroze
Surte-Mehre Neem-Roze
Aap Hi Ho Nazaar-Soze
Parde Mein Munh Chuppaye Kyon?
Dashne-e-Gamaz Jaan-Sitan
Naavke-Naaz Bepanah
Tera Hi Akse-Rukh Sahi,
Saame Tere Aaye Kyon?
Kaide-Hayat-O-Band-e-Gam,
Asl Mein Dono Ek Hain
Maut Se Pehlre Aadmi
Gum Se Nijaat Paye Kyon?
Husn Aur Us Pe Husn-e-Zun
Reh Gayee Bulhavas Ki Sharm
Apne Pe Etmad Hai,
Gair Ko Aazmaye Kyon?
Van Veh Garure-Izz-o-Naaz
Yan Yeh Hijabe-Paase-Vazan
Raah Mein Hum Milen Kahan
Bazm Mein Veh Bulaye Kyon?
Han Voh Nahin Khuda Parasat
Jao Veh Bewafa Sahi
Jisko Ho Dino-Dil Aziz
Uski Gali Mein Jaye Kyon?
Ghalib-e-Khast Ke Bagair
Kaunse Kaam Band Hain?
Roeeye Zar-Zar Kaya?
Keejiye Haye-Haye Kyon?

English Translation

Heart it is, not a brick or stone
Why shouldn't it feel the pain?
Let none tyrannize this heart
Or I shall cry again and again
Neither the temple, nor the mosque
Nor on someone's door or porch
I await on the path where He will tread
Why others should compel me to go?
The illumined grace that lights up the heart
And glows like the midday sun
That Self that annihilates all sights
When then it hides in the mysterious net?
The amorous glance is the deadly dagger

And the arrows of emotions are fatal
Your image may be equally powerful
Why should it appear before you?
The rules of life and bonds of sorrow
In reality are the one manifestation
Before realizing the ultimate truth
How can then one attain liberation?
Love is laden with noble thoughts
Yet what remains is the carnal shame
Trust conscience the still little voice
Why do you want test the rival?
There the pride of modesty resides
Here dwells the social morality
How shall we meet, on which road
Why should he invite me to the abode?
True he is an atheist
Unfaithful and unchaste
Dear to who is faith and heart
Why should he then venture there?
Without the wretched "Ghalib"
Has any activity come to a halt?
What then is the need to cry?
What then is the need to brood?

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It is not Love it is Madness

Ishq Mujhko Nahin, Vehshat Hi Sahi
Meri Vehshat Teri Shohrat Hi Sahi
Katta Keeje Na Taalluk Hamse
Kutch Nahin Hai To Adavat Hi Sahi
Mere Hone Mein Hai Kya Rusvayee
Ae Veh Majlis Nahin Khallat Hi Sahi
Hum Bhi Dushman To Nahin Hain Apne
Gair Ko Tujhse Mohabbat Hi Sahi
Apni Hasti He Se Ho Jo Kutch Ho
Aagahi Gar Nahin Gaflat Hi Sahi
Umr Harchand Ki Hai Barke-Kharam
Dil Ke Khoon Ki Fursat Hi Sahi
Hum Koyee Tarqe-Vafa Karte Hain
Na Sahi Ishq Museebat Hi Sahi
Kutch To De Ae Falke-Na-Insaaf
Aaho Fariyad Ki Rukhsat Hi Sahi
Hum Bhi Tasleem Ki Khoo Dalenge
Benayazi Teri Aadat Hi Sahi
Yaar Se Chedh Chali Jaye 'Asad'
Gar Nahin Vasl To Hasrat Hi Sahi

English Translation

(You say) It is not love, it is madness
My madness may be the cause of your fame
Sever not my relationship with you
If nothing then be my enemy
What is the meaning of notoriety in meeting me
If not in public court meet me alone
I am not my own enemy
So what if the stranger is in love with you
Whatever you are, it is due to your own being
If this not known then it is ignorance
Life though fleets like a lightening flash
Yet it is abundant Time to be in love
I do not want debate on the sustenance of love
Be it not love but another dilemma
Give something O biased One
At least the sanction to cry and plea
I will perpetuate the rituals
Even if cruelty be your habit
Teasing and cajoling the beloved cannot leave 'Asad'
Even if there is no union and only the desire remains

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The World is a Playground

Baazi-cha-aie-Atfal Hai Dunia, Mere Aage
Hota Hai Shaboroze Tamasha Mere Aage
Ik Khel Hai Aurang-e-suleman, Mere Nazdeek
Ik Baat Hai Ajaaz-a-Maseehah, Mere Aage
Juz Naam, Nahin Surat-a-aalam Mujhe Manzoor
Juz Vaham, Nahin Hasti-e-ashiya, Mere Aage
Hota Hai Nihan Gard Mein Sahra, Mere Hote
Ghista Hai Jabin Khak Pe Dariya, Mere Aage
Mut Poochh, Ki Kya Haal Hai Mera, Tere Peeche
Tu Dekh Ki Kya Rung Hai Tera, Mere Aage
Sach Kehte Ho Khudbeen-o-Khuddara Hun, Kyon Na Hun?
Baitha Hai Butt-a-Aaeena-Seema, Mere Aage
Phir Dekhiye, Andaz-e-Gul-Afshani-e-Guftaar
Rakh De Koyee Paimana-o-Sahba Mere Aage
Nafrat Ka Guman Guzre Hai, Mein Rushk Se Guzra
Kyonkar Kahun, Lo Naam Na Unka Mere Aage
Iman Mujhe Roke Hai, To Khenche Hai Mujhe Kufra
Kaba Mere Peeche Hai, Kalisa Mere Aage
Aashiq Hun, Per Mashook-Farebi Hai Mera Kaam
Majnun Ko Bura Kehti Hai Laila Mere Aage
Khush Hote Hain, Pur, Vasl Mein Yon Mur Nahin Jaate
Aayee Shab-a-Hijran Ki Tamanna Mere Aage
Hai Moujzan Ik Kulzum-e-Khun, Kaash, Yahi Ho
Aata Hai, Abhi Dekhiye, Kya Kya, Mere Aage
Go Hath Mein Jumbish Nahin, Aankhon Mein To Dum Hai
Rahne Do Abhi Sagar-O-Meena, Mere Aage
Humpesh-O-Hummastrab-O-Humraaz Hai Mera
"Ghalib" to Bura Kyon Kaho, Accha Mere Aage

English Translation

I perceive the world as a playground
Where dawn and dusk appear in eternal rounds
In His Universal form is a plaything the throne of Solomon
The miracles of the Messiah seem so ordinary in my eyes
Without name I cannot comprehend any form
Illusionary but is the identity of all objects
My anguish envelopes the entire desert
Silently flows the river in front of my floods
Ask not what separation has done to me
Just see your poise when I come in front of you
Truly you say that I am egotistical and proud
It is the reflection, O friend, in your limited mirror
To appreciate the style and charm of conversation
Just bring in the goblet and wine
Hatred manifests due to my envious mind
Thus I say, don't take his name in front of me
Faith stops me while temptations attract
In spite of Kaaba behind and church ahead
I am the Lover, yet notorious is my charm
Thus Laila calls names to Majnu in front of me
"Dies" not one though the union is a delight

In premonition of the separation night
Alas, this be it, the bloody separation wave
I know not what else is in store ahead of me
Though the hands don't move, the eyes are alive
Wine and goblet, let them stay in front of me
Says "Ghalib"
Conscience is companion and trusted friend
Don't pass any judgments in front of me.

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