

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Al Mahmud  
- poems -**

**Publication Date:**

2012

**Publisher:**

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

# Al Mahmud(11 July 1936 -)

Mir Abdus Shukur Al Mahmud commonly known as Al Mahmud is a Bangladeshi Poet, novelist, short-story writer. He is considered as one of the greatest Bengali poets emerged in 20th century. His work in Bengali poetry is dominated by his copious use of regional dialects. In 1950s he was among those Bengali poets who were outspoken by writing about the events of Bengali Language Movement, nationalism, political and economical repression and struggle against West Pakistan Government.

## <b> Early Life and Career </b>

He was born in Morail Village, Brahmanbaria District, Bangladesh. Mahmud started his career as a journalist. He came into recognition after Lok Lokantor was published in 1963. In succession, he wrote Kaler Kalosh (1966), Sonali Kabin (1966) and Mayabi Porda Dule Otho (1976). In addition to writing poetry, he has written short stories, novels and essays such as Pankourir Rakta and Upamohadesh. He took part in the Liberation War of Bangladesh as a freedom fighter in 1971. After the war, he joined The Daily Ganakantha as the assistant editor. He was jailed for a year during the era of Awami League government. Later, Al Mahmud joined Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in 1975 and retired in 1993 as director of the academy.

## <b> Literary Works </b>

Al Mahmud is one of the most important poets in Bengali literature. In his early youth he entered Dhaka city having a broken suitcase under his armpit, from which, like a magician, he showed us all the rivers of Bangladesh. The conscious readers of poetry have watched his magic spellbound and become his fan. Al Mahmud is one of those new poets who have contributed a lot to the progress of modern Bengali poetry. He is a very popular poet in Bangladesh. He has innumerable admirers at home and abroad. But it is a matter of sorrow that very few of his poems have been translated into English, for which the non-Bengali readers are yet deprived of having the taste of his poetry.

A good number of poetry books of Al Mahmud have been published. Lok Lokantor, Kaler Kolos, Sonali Kabin, Mayabi Porda Duley Otho, Adristabadider annabanna, Bokhtiarer Ghora, Arabya Rojonir Rajhas, MithyabadRakhal,Doel o Doyita etc are remarkable ones. But the book which has been accepted by the Bengali poetryreaders as a classic piece is his

Sonali Kabin. The Golden Kabin is an English version of this very 8book. 'Kabin' means a matrimonial contract in Bengali Muslim society. Al Mahmud has picked up this very word ever-known to all but never allowed in poetry and used so successfully that it has got a symbolic meaning and has drawn the attention of scholars, both in Bangladesh and West Bengal.

Al Mahmud entered into the realm of poetry following the paths of Jasimuddin and Gibananando Das, his two preceding poets. Jasimuddin uniquely depicted the picture of rustic Bengal in his poems. People of the agro-based Bengali Muslim society first got their identity in literature. Their sorrow, sufferings, poverty, hunger and love, depicted vividly in his poems, attracted not only the Bengali educated society but also the whole world. Unlike Jasimuddin, Gibananando Das depicted the scenic and the spiritual beauty of Bangladesh. Another difference between them is that Jasimuddin followed the language of rustic people in poetry, whereas Gibananando Das was very sophisticated in using poetic dictions. Walking the paths of his two great forerunners, Al Mahmud had to struggle a lot to find out his own identity. At last he reached his goal; his distinction as a poet became obvious, in his third book the Sonali Kabin.

Philosopher Sibnarayan Ray commented:

"Al Mahmud has an extraordinary gift for telescopic discrete levels of experience; in his poems I find a marvelous fusion and wit which reminds me occasionally of Bishnu Dey. The complete secularism of his approach is also striking...he was born and brought up in a very conservative Muslim religious family; it is not a secularism forced by some ideology, but present naturally and ubiquitously in his metaphors, images and themes.☐"

**Awards**

Ekushey Padak, 1987; The highest literature award of Bangladesh

Bangla Academy Award, 1968

Chattagram Sangskriti Kendro Farrukh Memorial Award, 1995

Kabi Jasim Uddin Award

Philips Literary Award

Alakta Literary Award

Sufi Motaher Hossain Literary Gold Meda

# Abujher Someekoron

Al Mahmud

# Ami R Asbona Bole

Al Mahmud

# Batasher Fena

Al Mahmud

# Bent On The Ground

It's not mere turning off  
but keeping the genius of eyes closed  
from the attack of sight bent on the ground.  
Eyes touch severely the edge of deadly blood.  
Binding the Nature, it observes the depth both of  
women and rivers;  
absorbs all the contexts of fishes, birds, animals  
and insects ;  
penetrating all the correlative theories, brings out  
strong witness.

Not within my brain, actually my adolescence is  
sitting within my eyes  
as if it were a tired green boy having a big bow at  
his hand.

Yet in the boundary of my eye-sight,  
I see my son dressing his hair in front of a whirling mirror.  
Who knows whether it's myself or not?  
Perhaps it's I who am parting the hair and setting it on the palate.  
I have worn socks and rubbing the buttons of sleeve  
brushed the shirt. Perhaps the steady glasskid  
would uproot his father's age from the forty year.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Al Mahmud

# Borshamongol Nrityomukhor Borshon

Al Mahmud



# By Your Hand

I wish I ate the ancient koi of Kurulia  
fried especially by your own hand.  
I wish sitting like a crow in the veranda of Munsii House  
I enjoyed your scrubbing.

Would you say then, 'Who the bull there?'

Nobody realises more than me  
the beauty of waves of your black hair  
broken down on back.

Yet you waiving your hands  
showed me the way to the city.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar from Sonali Kabin]

Translator's note: Koi: A kind of fish

Al Mahmud

# Comes More Not

Keeping the stone of Paharpur on the left ,  
crossing the canal if anyone approaches the moat,  
never he comes back --- you knew it well,  
nevertheless why did you allow him  
to enter the heart of the hut?

They who used to dye your Shika;  
They who used to bring you cock-flowers  
if you once reject their hands, they won't return  
ever  
in the village -- you knew it well, nevertheless you  
made them float  
on the water of deluge.

They who used to call you witch;  
They who used to address you cobra;  
Seeing whom, the pitcher on your waist  
got broken into pieces; seeing whom,  
you used to hide your face  
why did you allow them, then, to laugh  
into the black clamour of the bank of your tank ?

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar from the book Sonali Kabin]

Al Mahmud

# Dhoyrjo

Al Mahmud

# Din Sheshe

Al Mahmud

# Ek Nodi

Al Mahmud

# Ekhusher Kobita

Al Mahmud

# Fugitive

People call me fugitive my heart aches .  
Still I want to be a fierce salmon-trout into the tank of life.  
Where will I flee when every night I feel  
my beloved wife's breath on my face and eyes?  
Where and how will I hurry away  
when I feel the wearied body of my baby on breast?

So I stand by the door all day long in favour of life.

When chickens coming out from henroost in the morning  
move to the mire crowing feebly, I quickly get up from my bed  
and cover the face of fire with my hands.

Didn't I fearlessly jump into the water of the Bay of Bengal  
when a tiny girl of the water-slaves suddenly got confined  
to the waves going to search for the golden conch?

When my better-half embittered by the oppression of cockroaches  
goes smashing the whole race of insects,  
don't I then make her delighted by praising her sari?

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Al Mahmud

# Harano Chheler Geet

Al Mahmud



# Hayre Manush

Al Mahmud

# Heart-Penetrating Sight

Last night Death drove its hand into my room.  
Through the gap of window  
that long hand, like the feeling-power of a blind man,  
advanced a bit towards my bed.  
My wife was pouring water on the head of our baby.  
Her eyes were winkless as if they had been two pieces of stone.  
Her two breasts were swinging in weight of milk  
as if they had been two ripe fruits.  
The shower of wate, like the sound of cascade,  
spread shivers within everything.  
The light of lantern started shivering just like the  
feathers of a peacock.

And that hand, I noticed, came near the pillow  
its pulse swollen, nails uncut and fur shaggy.  
I wished I had shouted.  
But in front of Death I can never make any sound.  
My anger tempted me to grasp that hand.  
But I knew well about the energy of Death.  
Would I then pray to Him? No.  
Death is deaf and fast like the horse of Chengiz  
Khan ..  
- Who ? Who ?

The shower of water suddenly stopped.  
My wife stared at it.  
There was only the waterless pot into her naked  
hands.  
Buttons of her blouse set free.  
In her tearless eyes, there was nothing  
but a heart-penetrating sight.  
I looked at Death and noticed  
it's retreating towards the window, rolled up like  
the tail of a dog  
its nails uncut, pulse swollen and fur shaggy.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]



# In The New Year

The smell of rice hurts my nostril.  
As soon as I get back my conscience,  
I notice all the doors closed.  
When I dare open them all,  
the capitalists frown at me addressing as blind.

Blood within by breast gets silently injured.

My eyes are full of dreams for rice.  
When I demand to have my dreams fulfilled,  
the capitalists shout saying, 'Wild ! Wild !'  
When I pick up scythe at hand to harvest paddy,  
they cry, 'it's the most vile work!'

Yet the sun rises in the sky in the new year.

A bird of eternal peace calls to me in my dreams.  
Getting up from bed, I now on the way  
to look for that blue bird.  
I don't know where and how far she is.  
I wish I were all day long a body-gourd of her .

Had I surrendered my body to her in a solitary  
place !

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Al Mahmud

# In The Valley Of Dreams

Once we went on a journey  
through a dense opaque fog.  
Suddenly our path became illuminated  
by the flash of light in horizon.  
The smell of paddy floated in wind.  
Forests got sonorous with the songs of birds.  
Our hearts started floating  
being altogether a wonderful picture of Nature.

River! River!

The clean flow of water, which our offspring showed us  
raising their fingers with joy, is our soul.  
It's the stream  
which design our women weave their saris in.  
It's the turn which inspires our sisters  
to envelope their bodies with tortuous lines.  
Behold the flow of holy water  
whose sweet murmur immerse us in songs.  
Lo and behold!

It's the picture of the valley where we will go .  
It has utterly devoured our hearts.  
Wind of fairy tale is blowing on our flag ;  
Future frequently oscillating our hope  
like a golden pendulum.  
Overflowed with joy, we have set out towards our dreams.  
Sorrow never fatigues us.  
On a stormy night we have turned our face  
towards a bright day.  
Troubles have not paralysed us.  
We will go out  
escaping the riddle of shout, cry and despair.  
May Death touch not us.

We will sow the grain seeds in the valley of dreams.  
The water of silver river will flow on the left .  
The sharp husky mountain will remain on the right.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Al Mahmud

## In This Fascination

Wandering over the whole world,  
I come back for you  
to knock at your door . For you  
I defeat the maddened sword of poverty.

You are mine in this fascination  
I go to unlock the darkness of death.  
With unbarred kissing and humming  
I embrace you and remain benumbed.

I stand as if I were a tree of green smell  
or a crystal house where in the glassy darkness  
black fishes take the golden stones  
into their mouth.

My household is clean, white and small  
like an aquarium;  
who are you the sweet fish getting enlightened  
into the blue water-house?

Lifting up the hungry mouth  
how many drops of wind are possible to be  
collected --  
would anyone ever protect these precious bubbles  
on the body of moss?

Such a motion of soundless bubbles  
turns into a flower of joy;  
Behold, how nicely a beautiful mermaid  
nibbles at my finger.

Al Mahmud

# Jel Gete Dekha

Al Mahmud



# Kaler Kolosh

Al Mahmud

# Kapuni

Al Mahmud

# Kobita Emon

Al Mahmud

# Kodom Fuler Etibirtto

Al Mahmud

# Loke Jake Prem Nam Kohe

Al Mahmud

# Matrichhaya

Al Mahmud

# Matsyonay

Al Mahmud

# Na Ghumanor Dol

Al Mahmud



# Namer Mohima

Al Mahmud

# Nature

How far Man has advanced!  
Hypnotised by ceaseless shower  
I am sitting on my own heels  
even today.

While planting the tender paddy seedlings  
into the soil, thick and soft like khir, I thought  
the soil to be my beloved wife who  
like a piece of boggy land, uncovers all her fertility  
with her pleasant watery shyness.

Fields getting wet in rain.  
I feel a hand soaked in water on my back.  
And losing all the feeling-marks of sense  
I've made my benumbed sight remain vigilant.

All day long it rains incessantly everywhere  
like the spell of khana. Silently I observe  
the water-snakes running after fishes  
fleeing away beside the edge of fields;  
the green grasshoppers leaping in fright on my  
arms.

It seems that the graph of fields tied with ridges  
having the touch of rain's fog has changed  
suddenly  
in trance of my dreams by an unbelievable magic spell;  
and the beautiful earth has been divided  
in the shape of a triangle.  
From that geometry  
the flocks of fishes, birds, animals and human  
beings  
come out successively  
and surrounding my sensation, start eating  
picking up the contradictory foods.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Translator's Note: Khir:.. Porridge-like food, sweet and tasty. Khana: Astrological

predictions.

Al Mahmud

# Pakhir Kothay Pakha Mellam

Al Mahmud

# Pakhir Moto

Al Mahmud

# Partition Of Heritage

Why don't forget if you can?

Forget our walking nights accompanied by the Moon.

Forget the dewy grasses in the Niaz field.

Setting cold fingers into my pocket

you used to say, 'Don't mind, dear, I can't help doing it.'

The nightingale on the bough of Bakul tree burst into laughter.

Why don't wipe off if you can ?

Wipe off the black marks of coal from the wall.

Once you used to redden my face with joke,

and suddenly got anxious thinking of my hidden rage;

your thin necklace used to tremble on your throat;

Is there allowed any partition, darling, in that happy game?

The full Moon rises now over your roof;

If you have courage enough, conceal the moonlight.

Behold, how the sports of ducks cause flood into  
the river!

Divide the water if there lies any sin.

O my Love, tear the blood-thirsty trap of light and shade;

why don't tear if you can?

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar from Sonali Kabin]

Translator's Note: Niaz: The name of a field. Bakul: A kind of flower.

Al Mahmud

# Poetry Such As

Poetry is nothing but the memory of adolescence;  
The melancholic face of my mother often remembered by me;  
Poetry, the yellow bird sitting alone on a bough of Nim tree;  
Poetry, my younger brothers and sisters, sitting sleeplessly  
surrounding the fire of leaves; and the return of our father,  
ringing bell of his bicycle and his call 'Rabeya! Rabeya! '  
Poetry is the southern door kept ajar which got unlocked  
by the name of my mother.

Poetry is nothing but going back crossing the foggy way  
across the knee-water river. Poetry, the Azan of dawn  
or the burning of stubble; it's the expanded smell of sesame  
on the belly of cake, the acute smell of fish,  
the net spread on the yard and the grassy grave of  
my grandfather  
in the cluster of bamboo.

Poetry, an unhappy teenager growing up in the  
forty six;  
Poetry, the meeting, freedom, procession and the  
flag of a truant school boy,  
and the plaintive description of the elder coming  
back  
losing all in the flame of tumult.

Poetry, the birds of pastureland, the collected eggs of  
ducks and the fragrant grass;  
Poetry, the lost calf belonging to the sad faced wife that  
fled away snapping the rope;  
Poetry, the decorated letters in a secret pad within  
a blue envelope;  
Poetry means Ayesha Akter, the girl of unfolded  
hair at a village Maktab.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Al Mahmud

# Prottlyabortoner Lojja

Al Mahmud



# Rabindranath

Al Mahmud

# Shonali Kabin - 1

Al Mahmud

# Shonali Kabin - 5

Al Mahmud

# Smritir Meghlabhore

Al Mahmud

# The Foam Of Wind

Nothing lasts, behold.

Behold how the leaves, the flowers, the old villagers,  
the pose of rivers' dancing, the brazen pitchers and  
the fire of hookah

and the flock of grown up girls gradually diminish  
like the monsoon of Hilsa fish !

The yellow leaves, sounding in the wind,  
fall down on the droughty desolate land.

The foreign ducks too,  
on whose bodies there are millions of bubbles, fly away  
into the shallow blue cup of the sky.

Why doesn't anything last long?

The corrugated iron sheet, the hay or the muddy walls  
and the undecaying banyan tree of village  
get uprooted by the terrible typhoon of Chittagong.

The plaster splits and in the long run the mosque of our village,  
like our Faith, collapses down with a heavy crash.

The nests of sparrows, the love, the twigs and tendrils  
and the covers of books fall off twisted.

By the water's bite of the Meghna,  
the crops' green scream of the horizon starts trembling.

The houses float, float the pitchers and the cowsheds.

Like the affection of my elder sister, the old  
embroidered pillow gets also sunk.

After the decay of dwelling-houses, nothing exists more.

Only the birds, fond of water, flying in the sky  
wipe off the foam of wind from their beaks.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar from Sonali Kabin]

Al Mahmud

# The Shame Of Return

To catch the last train I reached the station running.  
I noticed the signal of blue light on.  
The train, like Despair, suddenly left the station  
playing on its cruel whistle.  
They, with whom I was promised to go to city, got  
anxious  
and started staring at me through the windows.  
They only consoled me by shaking their hands.

While coming from home, I was goaded by my  
father  
into hurrying off lest I should miss the train.  
Mother said, 'Don't sleep tonight. Pass time  
by reading books as you often do .'  
But I fell asleep.  
In a dreamless sleep I remained dead  
on my bed.

But Jahanara never misses her train .  
Forhad always reaches station  
half an hour ago. Laily sends her servant  
with all her luggage to book ticket.  
Nahar never touches rice in excitement  
before going anywhere.  
But I'm one of their brothers, having walked seven  
miles at a stretch,  
trembling into fog at a dirty station at the late  
night.

I have to go back home penetrating the white  
curtain of fog.  
My trouser will get wet with dews.  
And suddenly the red sun, diminishing the winterdrops  
gathered on my eyelids, will rise in the sky.  
The sunrays will descend on my face and I, like a  
defeated man,  
will notice my ever known river in front of mine.  
I will notice the scattered houses of my village.  
The flock of cranes will fly away towards the bog.

Finally, like a horror, our old utchala will float  
into my view ,  
will float the small plantain garden .  
Long leaves of the trees  
will tremble saying, 'Come not! Come not!'

My father, having noticed me, will set his eyes at  
the holy Quran  
and will recite-- Fabi Aiyee Ala-ee-Rabbikuma Tukazziban.

Seeing me at the yard ,my mother will smile happily  
having unwashed plates in hands .  
She will say, 'It's fine you have come back.  
In your absence the whole house seems very lonely.  
Go to the pond and wash your face.  
Your breakfast ready.'

I will then, embracing my mother, wipe off  
the shame of my return, rubbing again and again,  
from my whole face.

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar]

Al Mahmud

# The Sound Of Bathing

I don't know how I, at this midnight, have become  
two eyes  
having all my existence within me, as if they were  
a pair of twin bees  
sitting abreast on the tepid flesh.

Darkness walks both on my consciousness and  
unconsciousness.  
Quick-shivering feelings of mine like the tongue of  
a snake  
run away touching the shed of my blood. It seems  
that  
melancholic parting moment of a boy has been  
attached to all my senses. Affection of my mother  
being the warm fragrant vapour  
of my last food-plate collides with my nose.

Adieu, O Sight .O the born blind Past, don't come  
near me.  
O the trees, my dwelling house and river, be dark  
forever  
and disappear like the songs of birds into the deep  
ever-bright green.

While walking ashore, suddenly I notice on the  
opposite bank  
the body of Day turning into a globe of light.  
Making sonorous sound of bathing at the staircase  
of wharf,  
someone says to her companion,'See yonder a little  
boy walking  
penetrating the deep can a mother send  
her child outside  
in a morning of Magha  
cold such as? Walking  
alone into fog---  
what a sight ! '

My observation of birds' flying and the day behind



the river  
turns to be something more than play. Sweat grows  
on my smooth forehead .Dust gathers on knees.  
By raising hands, it's not possible now to hide the  
light.  
Being lofty, the god of Day has ascended the  
flaming sky.  
The sound of water makes me realise that it's the  
sport of bathing.

The village girls, surrounding the wharf, say to one  
another  
showing me, `Who's that guy? Which vllage is he  
going to?  
To some beautiful lady perhaps!'  
When thirst dies, sweat becomes dry by the wind.  
At last the birds of pastureland, exchanging eyes  
with one another,  
fly away with their ruddy wings.

I feel tired. No sorrow, no solicitation, no thirst  
drives me more.  
Even I don't know which wharf I have reached  
now.  
Having eighteen pitchers on waists, the village  
wives go back home.  
Someone of them says in intense tune,  
'Who knows where this old passer-by will go  
crossing the dark bog?'

[Translated by Sayeed Abubakar from Sonali Kabin]

Al Mahmud

# Tyage Dukhe

Al Mahmud

# Unshottorer Chhora - 1

Al Mahmud

# Vor Dupure

Al Mahmud

# Voyer Chote

Al Mahmud