

Classic Poetry Series

**Nirmalendu Goon**  
**- poems -**

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# Nirmalendu Goon(21 June 1945 -)

Nirmalendu Goon (Bengali: নীর্মালেন্দু গুণ) is a Bangladeshi poet, and one of the most popular poets in Bangladesh, lauded by many for his accessible verse in an age where Bangla poetry has become increasingly complex.

## **Early Life**

Nirmalendu Goon was born in Barhatta in Netrokona, in undivided India, now in Bangladesh.

Goon was one of the few people who openly protested Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's assassination in 1975 in a period when even mentioning Mujib was considered dangerous.

## **Poetry**

His first book of poetry was published in 1970. Since then he has published forty-five collections of poetry and twenty collections of prose. Part of the generation of poets of 1960s, Goon's poetry contains stinging criticism of the nouveau riche and a touching description of the contrasting fate of the masses. A love of freedom and faith in the human spirit also permeates many of his poems. An avowed Marxist, Goon has also written poems urging an upheaval of the poor against the rich. He also has written a number of poems on important personalities, including Rabindranath, Sheikh Mujib, Lenin, Shakti Chattopadhyay and others.

## **Painting**

He drew the cover of his first book of poetry. In late years he started to paint on a regular basis. The first exhibition of his paintings was held in the seminar room of Public Library, Dhaka in July 2009.

## **Awards**

Bangla Academy Award (1982)

Ekushey Padak (2001)

## **Trivia**

Quote: "Poem is similar to the playing of cricket. A good batsman likes to wait for

a good ball to hit, so a good poet always waits for a good line to surface and be recorded."

Poet Sa'd Bin Ard is a great fan of Nirmalendu Goon.

In her recent autobiography, Taslima Nasrin, relates that Nirmalendu Goon acknowledged being a dacoit in his youth.

# Because A Poem Will Be Written

'Cause a poem will be written, with eager excitement  
Lacks and lacks of excited anxious eager rebellious audiences are waiting  
Till dawn on the beach of the park that turned into an ocean of crowd-  
'When is the poet arriving?' 'When is the poet arriving?'

This childrens' park was not there then,  
This tree, flower adorned park was not there then,  
This sleepy colourless afternoon was not there then |  
Then how was the afternoon then?  
Then how was, the childrens' park, bench-tree flower garden  
Covered, this field, the heart of Dhaka?  
I know, black hand was raised to erase the memory of that day |  
So I see today in this poetless desolate plain  
Poet against poet,  
Field against field,  
Afternoon against afternoon,  
Park against park,  
March against march .... |

O! unborn children, O! poet of future,  
While swinging on the colourful cradle of childrens' park  
You will know one day everything - I'm, for you  
Leaving the story of that great afternoon |  
Neither the park, nor the flower garden - nothing was there,  
Only as the sky still today touching the horizon  
Was there wide grass-filled field, green and greenish  
The green of our freedom-filled heart mingled with  
The green of this wide field |

Red-band around their head and wrist, they came rushing to this field,  
The iron labourer from factories,  
Plough and yoke on their shoulders, The naked farmers came in swarms,  
The fiery youths came snatching the arms of police,  
Death in their fist, dream in their eyes, the middle-class came,  
Lower middle-class, sad clerks, women, aged, prostitute, vagabond, and  
The children, as you are, the leaf collecting children, in groups |

A poem will be recited, is that the reason for anxious waiting by mass |  
'When is the poet arriving?' 'When is the poet arriving?'

After hundred struggles of hundred years, in a Rabindranath-like proud step  
The poet at last stood on the people's platform |  
Then in a twinkling, in a flush water flooded the boat,  
Swing in the heart,  
Tide in the crowd ocean, all doors are open -  
Who will stop his fiery speech?  
Trembling the platform of mass-fire, the poet recited the immortal poem:  
'The struggle this time is for freedom,  
The struggle this time is for independence |'

From then on the word 'independence' is ours |

[Translated by Dr. Masum Z. Hasan]

Nirmalendu Goon

# Firear

There is a big crowd at the Police Station.  
Suspicious soldiers in the city are taking away all firearms.  
Frightened citizens, in accordance with military  
    directives, are depositing their shotguns,  
    rifles, pistols and cartridges like promised offerings  
at some holy shrine. On the table  
lay the saint's hand like a flower.

Only I disobeying the military directive,  
turned a mild rebel. I am openly returning  
to my room, and yet with me rests  
a terrible firearm like the heart.  
I didn't surrender it.

[Translated by Kabir Chowdhury]

Nirmalendu Goon

# Maybe I'M No Human

Maybe I'm no human, humans are different;  
They can walk, they can sit, and they can wander room to room  
They are different; they are afraid of death, scared of snakes.  
Maybe I'm no human. Then how can snakes raise no fear within me?  
How can I go standing alone all day long like a tree?  
How can I sing no song watching a movie?  
How can I go without drinking wine with ice?  
How can I pass a night without closing my eyes?  
Indeed I feel strange when I think about  
The way I go alive from morning to eve.,  
From eve to night.  
When I'm alive,  
I feel strange.  
When I write,  
I feel strange.  
When I paint,  
I feel strange.

Maybe I'm no human;  
If I were a human,  
I'd have a pair of shoes of my own,  
I'd have a home of my own,  
I'd have a room of my own,  
I'd get warmed in the embrace of my wife at night.  
On the top of my belly my child would play,  
my child would paint.

Maybe I'm no human;  
Were I a human,  
Why do I laugh  
When I see the sky empty like my heart?

Maybe I'm no human  
Humans are different;  
They have hands, they have nose,  
They have eyes like yours  
Which can refract the reality  
The way prisms refract light.

Were I a human,  
I'd have scars of love on my thigh,  
I'd have the sign of anger on my eye,  
I'd have a mother,  
I'd have a father,  
I'd have a sister,  
I'd have a wife who'd love me,  
I'd have fear of accidents or a sudden death.

Maybe I'm no human; If I were a human,  
I could not write poems to you,  
I could not pass a night without you.  
Humans are different; they are afraid of death,  
They are afraid of snakes,  
They flee away when they see snakes;  
Whereas instead fleeing away, mistaking them as my friends  
I approach them, embrace them.

Translation by S M Maniruzzaman

Nirmalendu Goon

# This Day I Haven'T Come To Shed Bloo

Like all of you present here I love roses a lot  
While crossing the Race Course field yesterday  
One of the roses blooming there  
Said to me; "Make your verse sing of Sheikh Mujib"  
I'm here to sing of him

A bloodstained brick that had  
Fallen from the Shahid Minar told me yesterday  
"Make your verse sing of Sheikh Mujib"  
I'm here to sing of him.

Like everyone present here I love to see Palash trees blooming  
While crossing the Sangbad's office yesterday  
A newly bloomed palash whispered in my ear  
"Make your verse sing of Sheikh Mujib"  
I'm here to sing of him.

The water sprinkling from Shahbagh Avenue's fountain  
Cried out to me  
"Make your verse sing of Sheikh Mujib"  
I'm here to sing of him.

Like all of you here I am partial to dreaming and to love  
An intrepid dream that came to me last night told me  
"Make your verse sing of Sheikh Mujib"  
I'm here to sing of him.

Let all of you heartbroken people assembled on this spring day  
Let all the still, dried up, unsuspecting,  
Not-yet-blossomed Krishnachura sprigs listen intently  
Let the dark cuckoo that will perch on the tree  
In the darkening light know I have kissed holy soil  
Under my feet this day.  
I'll be faithful to the pledge  
I have made to the Palash this day  
I'll be faithful to the pledge  
I've made to my vision  
I haven't come here to shed blood this day  
I've come here only to sing of my love for him.

[Translated by Fakrul Alam ]

Nirmalendu Goon

# What Sin Would Redeem Me

I have never tasted the fruit  
of the forbidden tree,  
I have been waiting. waiting.  
like the sea that waits for the river,  
or the river for the surging tide,  
in the remote hope  
that a feeling would curt up  
from within the rocks  
and set my heart ablaze with passion.

I have never been to a brothel,  
nor ever wallowed in that forbidden pleasure,  
I have been waiting, waiting -  
I like the revolution that brews and simmers  
and waits impatiently for the climactic hour,  
or like the heaving bosom of a young maiden  
awaiting her first love.

I have never slept with any pleasure girl  
in the hope  
that love, like the sea monster  
churning the sea in a violent mating duel,  
would teach me the art.

Tell me, O wise soul, please do,  
what sin would redeem me.

[Translated by M. Harunur Rashi]

Nirmalendu Goon

# You Are Leaving

You are leaving: the steamboat starts off undulating the river  
Amidst the clamour of engine  
From behind the cloud of smokes  
Beauty of your weary face gleams  
I don't remember from when I am watching your going away.  
You're leaving: there is no end to your leaving away  
It has been long since you started leaving  
There is no end to it, no end by any means.

A few words with the winds, a few words with the rains  
Then I spot you again as I turn to the Dhaleswari;  
As if your sailing starts off afresh. You're leaving:  
The launch starts off undulating the waters  
Your weary fading face flashes tearing the black smokes  
Exactly like your leaving for the first time.  
You're leaving: with two winkless eyes  
I keep on gazing in the direction of your way.

You're leaving: the river ripples with whimper  
You're leaving: the wind whiffs of death  
You're leaving: my existence sways. The steamboat starts off  
The turbine picks up speed shaking up my soul's propeller.  
Your vanishing face flashes tearing through the moving cloud of smokes  
As if you're drowning and floating up  
Nothing can complete your departure.  
You're going for 3000 days, you're going and going.

2

You're leaving; the sky collapses on the moonlight of the wavy river  
Your sailboat, like a black goose,  
making way through the kash grove,  
grazing the sugarcane fields,  
proceeds at the beckon of an unknown universe. As you go away  
the sky breaks down like a sky. O waves,  
O all devouring river, O unfeeling dark boat, whom  
you're carrying away atop, she was none to me - why then  
The evening sky falls down on the moonlit waters?  
Falling down into the deep of water, only because you're leaving away?

3

You're packing up: bulbs knock off the lamp posts  
Intense darkness of earth's womb descends encompassing the whole town  
As if a crafty magician has spread his black scarf over this township  
There is no music except for the saddening chorus of a few crickets  
There is no jingle; no artistry of life, there's no soulful animation.  
Rendering this locality blind, you're moving to a distant city.  
Collecting in my eyes some dreamy light from that city  
I wonder at your destination, skyward. You're leaving:  
Noah's flood erupts in your departing eyes, spectacles. You're leaving:  
a melancholic beagle stirs up a storm in the inside Ashoke garden  
You're going away  
Leaving behind a wretched forlorn city of dead.

4

Clouds of sorrow collect in the restless eyes  
I can't look at your face.  
I look around to steal a glance at you.  
The rains drench the aerodrome: my eyes tend to mingle with water  
I can't look up and meet your eyes.

5

You're going away, my poems are lying alone  
Laden with the grief of a shot down lion.  
You're leaving: some words waver in tears.

[Translated by Faizul Latif Chowdhury]

Nirmalendu Goon