



*Always and
Forever*

Poems for Hazar Imam

Zafeera Kassam

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DEDICATION



Diamond Jubilee Mubarak, Khudavind!
Ya Mowla, Ya Shah Karim,
You mean the world to us.

Today and Always

If I could I would write You a sonnet
But I stand poetry-illiterate
With little knowledge as to where
Line breaks should go
What meter is and what iambic is
Rhyme schemes bamboozle me
And syllable-counts make me self-conscious
Don't get me started on modernism
Romanticism
New-age new-verse free-verse and symmetry
I am the paragon of nescience¹
When it comes to poetry
But, my beloved, if I could
I would write You a sonnet

I would lavish You with written praise:
Metaphoric ebullience would drip off my
proverbial pen
When I paint Your handsome countenance in
ink
With clichés to capture it permanently in time;
Your eternal smile — picturesque and burned
Into my retinas and my dreams;
I would write You a garden of petals
To grace Your every step on this hard earth

And affection I'd express
With a string of pearly adjectives;
I would write with cadence
To capture Your mellifluous lilt
Birds You send to sing me morning songs
To light up my days like an adoring sun;
I would write of the comely syzygy²
That You are, the sagely earthiness
With which You carry Yourself
And the personified panacea³
I find You to be.

If I could I would write You a sonnet,
But I, humble, ignorant poet, offer free verse
With the hope that You will smile
Today, and Always.

¹nescience – ignorance; lacking of knowledge

²syzygy – alignment, especially of celestial bodies such as the sun, moon and earth

³panacea – elixir/universal cure

Wind-chimes

A sweet song
soul driven
unencumbered
the slightest breeze
the casual draught
the challenging gale
they sing they sing
they sing through it all
the storm the thunder
the chasm of silence
their music their melody
quintessential quixotic
A sweet song
soul driven
a divine gift
crafted in
human eloquence

Effervescence

Song in a mason-jar
dancing notes carry far
a-hum; a-drum: a-joy; ahoy!
little things conspire and toy
plucking strings; flicking springs;
here sits compact within reach
the succulence of a peach,
and presence of a zephyr --
quintessence of pleasure;
the scent of frangipani,
thought segments of You and me;
perhaps such whimsy a time
exists for moments in rhyme
enrapture, in a mason jar,
captured, that shooting star --
a smile lingering on the lips
like music abuzz my fingertips.

Quintessence

Today, I will write of love.
Though love is defined as we are defined,
Love is and always remains
Eternal.
That, we are not.
It is us — jaded, cynical, egoistic — who
taint the very thing
That could cure us our lacking faith
But of all seen and unseen reverence
It is Your love that stands the test of time
Though love is defined as we are defined,
You are the truest and deepest definition
Of the simplest and profoundest truth
That is love.

God Abound

Beyond the veil of mundane
Past the waterfall of daily clamour
On a stage set amidst marvels
There He dances, like nobody's watching.

He is always dancing
So Music perpetuates the fine lines
Earth spins ever entranced

Closer to home and within fractions
Infinitesimal miracles abound
When He leaps and prances
Unaware and un-subdued
There He dances, like nobody's watching.

If He were to stop
He were to implode
Energy thrives on motion
Energy cannot be quelled

All that pulsates
All that sizzles electric
Originates from His realm
All that is impassioned
All that is invigorated
Oscillates in accord with His kinetic kismet

Thus Spoke the Sun

There exists a lake of divinity in all;
This lake deep and existential in some;
This lake shallow and drying up in some;
There exists estuary of deeds in all;
This fills and empties the lake;
Bow your head, behead your ego;
This God will settle in your heart,
Your best friend moving in for eternity.

Shwaas¹

The cycle of breath
(inhale)(exhale)(inhale)(exhale)
is a rosary of life
and each bead
is etched with Your name
(Shah)(Karim)(Al)(Husseini)

¹Shwaas (Hindi) - breath

Zikr¹

The mere murmur of Your name is a
poetically scribed scroll
encased in the gold chambers of my heart.
Let it be known
that should I unconsciously raise my hand
to my chest, it is
because Your name, like a divine
incantation, echoes the goofiest
of smiles inside my mind.
And I don't want to lose this feather-
moment
of delight to the thieving winds of the
world that embroil me
in the troubles of today.
It is enough that they weigh heavily
upon my brow
because, at the very worst,
I still have the memory of You
to ease deep furrowed frowns into laughter
lines.

¹Zikr (Arabic/Urdu) - Remembrance

*Drop in an Ocean; Ocean in a
Drop*

Just as blood is red
never not
So are we
of the same fabric

Then what is this concept
of 'near' and 'far'
when there is You in me
and I exist not
if You exist not.

*Haqeeqat*¹

A truth that exists before our eyes
A truth that holds up the skies
We embrace it not as openly as we should
A truth that could liberate us if we would
A truth that embodies our existence – our
surmise
A truth we accept upon our ego's demise
To seek, to reveal, as the sages realize,
Thus unequivocally acknowledge and conclude:
He is no ordinary man, this truth implies.
Enigmatic – hidden in plain sight in humanly
guise,
This role He tends to dexterously reprise --
Dismissed by fools, this truth not understood,
But He is all facets pure and good;
Supreme divinity compressed into human size:
He is no ordinary man, this truth implies.

¹ Haqeeqat (Urdu) - Truth

Falsafa¹

I should write of love,
for I am fortunate to have it.
But every time I start,
I stop.
This love is a silent type -
Not ostentatious; never demanding;
growing even as I am not
but should the curtain be
wrenched open to sceptic eyes,
this love will surely be scorned;
b'tween us is all its meant to be.

¹Falsafa - the pursuit of philosophy in Islam. The Muslim delight in philosophy rests on a confidence that God is the creator of all things, and that knowledge ('ilm) leads to a deeper understanding of Him and of His works

Love like this...

You love us with the intensity of fire
And the determination of water,
With unwavering conviction
Intermingled with acceptance;
This quiet potency moves the mountain in
us
To yield and to supplicate egoless ;
You're an unfathomable mystery and at
the same time
An open secret; an oxymoron, powerful
A contradiction that we become believers
Of miracles that occur,
and exist simultaneously.

Love (*Heth*)

Over the ages,
the wise and the foolish
have spoken of love:

do this; don't do this;
this way right;
this way wrong.

It is only when
I wisely gave in to Your Love,
sagely abandoned the world,
did I come to realise:

there's no right, no wrong;
there's no proper, no improper--

these restrictions, limitations
in love
lessen the fervour of love.

The truth is:
There is only Love,
Love that is You

That is the beginning
and the end
of anything that needs
to be said on the matter
of Love

It is True

It is true I am loved in ways
more magical than a spherical rainbow
with more dedication than a spider to its web
holding heat to fire and fertilizing deserts with
nectar

It is true I am loved in ways
beyond comprehension and cohesion
deeper than the ocean's womb
farther than the next universe

It is true I am loved in ways
majority of people only hope to know
songs are written about
poetry seeks to encompass

It is true I am loved
in many ways
but it is You
who loves me
the way
I want

Kadam Mubarak!

Most benevolent, most merciful,
You are our King, You are our Lord –
beautiful;
You are parental, an inspirational trend
You are our one true friend.

Epitome of compassion,
Embodiment of love and passion;
You are near, You are dear
Thank You for being here

No greater a gift, a mercy, a treasure than
your presence
We, the *jamat*, are blessed with Your
empyrean essence.

Ambrosia Dew

*Mowla as our manifest love
His face the shape of pearl
luminous in ever argentine light
peace and surrender bestow
unto us His beaming enamour
happiness abound, unabridged
this legacy of love is Mowla
this wonderment is Mowla
words cannot define
words cannot compute
this ineffability is Mowla
this splendour is Mowla
this Mowla, divine.*

Delight

Grey suit, blue suit, pin-striped debonair,
flushed faced, preening, wind caressing Your
hair,
these are few of the numerous qualities that
delight.

Elegant mansuetude¹ and dapper grace,
how eagerly all of nature entreats to keep pace,
these are few of the numerous qualities that
delight.

Every act of oblivion, every exhibition of
equanimity,
followed by endearing peek-a-boos and knowing
congeniality,
these are few of the numerous qualities that
delight.

When least expected -- oh those eye-to-eye
conversations,
frissons that flood and tidal-wave inspirations,
these are few of the numerous qualities that
delight.

Uninhibited mirth, unsuppressed joy,
ebullience experienced frolic and toy,
these are few of the numerous qualities that
delight.

But, of all, Mowla majestic on His throne,
flanked by *noorani* family; royally known,
these are the most extraordinary sights that
delight.

¹Mansuetude – gentleness

Fulfilment

Epiphany divine
bathe me in light
All eyes on Him
His eyes on me
with a gracious smile
shared as if
long-lost friends
were we
He restored my faith
a guiding star of North
radiance spoken of
in hymns and devotion
Now I see, now I feel
what it is to be
bathed in light
How the universe conspired
to stand me in a ritzy lobby
at the right time, in the right place
for my heart was cast in gold
that needed His sun to make it glow.

The Song Of My Soul

The song of my soul,
Calls out to You;
Beseeching Your presence,
For my eyes thirst,
The glimpse of You.

The song of my soul,
Sings true:
Praying for a time,
When our hearts embrace
And rejoice...

The song of my soul,
Pleads favour,
Crying tears of fever,
Fighting restraints of fear,
Waging a war of fervour.

The song of my soul,
Sees not the world,
Sees not the sky, nor sea,
Sees not fortune nor fame,
Sees only its reflection in You.

The song of my soul,
Rings loud, rings strong,
With sheer abandon.
No fury, no hate,
Drowns its sincere melody.

The song of my soul,
Is endless and eternal,
Repetitive though not;
Unending, unfinished,
A new day adds a new note.

And this,

The song of my soul,

Recites for You:

Words of tender - love and amour

Harken please,

Pray, grant me You.

Merely Exalts Solely

As I stand here in Your *zaheri* glow,
I know I cannot meet Your eyes with mine
for I am merely and You are solely,
but I know -- every cell in me knows,
that Your gaze upon me is perpetual
as the skies, as time, as long as I am
apart from You 'til I am a part of You;
And this gaze is as if the rays of the sun:
nurturing; warming; loving; protecting,
under which my soul photosynthesizes,
gravitating towards its home, in You.

As I stand here in Your *zaheri* glow,
I know I cannot raise a hand to Yours,
for I am merely and You are solely;
Though I long to, I cannot: my hand
shakes

and though I am Yours -- Your spiritual
child --

I cannot run into Your paternal embrace:
my knees quiver; my stomach somersaults;
my volition wavers;

And though I'd dearly love to touch
my head to Your feet, I cannot promise
I'd ever leave that exalted abode.

But not a moment turns cold, passing by,
without Your hand square upon my
shoulder

guiding; nurturing; warming; loving;
protecting

under which my soul grows,
gravitating towards its home, in You.

As I stand here in Your *zaheri* glow,
I know I cannot speak with You
for I am merely and You are solely --
My lips resolutely shut, my tongue stuck
to the roof of my mouth;

Words are but a jangled lump in my
throat,

and thoughts too timid to manifest.

But how many conversations we have
every day!

The jacarandas blooming a sprinkle of
purple;

the bougainvillea a burst of magenta and
fuchsia;

the way a car pulls out when I need a spot
to park;

the brief drizzle of blessing on my
windscreen alone;

the synchronicity that exists in inexplicable
ways --

These are all You saying over and over
again:

"I'm here, I'm here, I'm here,
never away, never afar, never distant;
for you, as you, are mine"

This is the blanket of familiarity
under which my soul glows,
gravitating towards its home, in You.

*As I stand here in Your zaheri glow,
I know I cannot be anyone else but I
who is deeply grateful, deeply in love
with You, my lord, my friend, my
everything.
And I know nothing else is of a matter;
I want naught but You:
to come home; the home in You.*

Teri Dosti Mein

Our Best Friend is the Lord of the Worlds,
King of the kings;
Abundantly merciful,
Endlessly generous,
Extremely beautiful.

Our Best Friend is the lighthouse in the dark,
Beacon of hope;
Ever patiently aglow,
Unimaginably accepting,
Here, to rid all woe.

Our Best Friend is the paragon of virtue,
Faultless; flawless;
His loyalty unquestionable,
His tender protection unwavering,
His integrity unimpeachable.

Our Best Friend is the epitome of love,
Ocean of affection;
Saviour of humanity;
Tirelessly working to uplift our lives,
Restoring peace, unity and dignity.

Our Best Friend is the *Shah*¹ divine,
*Manzil-e-maqsood*²;
*Aql-e-Kul*³; *An-Nur*⁴;
Shah Karim Al Husseini,
dearest to human and *hoor*⁵.

¹Shah - Sovereign

²Manzil-e-maqsood - Final destination

³Aql-e-Kul - Universal Intellect

⁴An-nur - The Light

⁵Hoor - angel

Valentine's Sonnet For Mowla

Mowla I miss, with every passing day;
Dull are the colours; tasteless is the food;
Limp are flowers, and music holds no sway;
In my chest grows an ache, darkens my mood.

My Mowla, desire do I You first;
Your mercy I beg, Your smile I so crave;
Only a glimpse of You will quench this thirst,
With Your *deedar*, a path forward shall pave.

O my Mowla, resonance of my pulse;
It is You who are all and everything,
It is You who exist above all else --
Come, please, teach our hearts again to sing.

Mowla, dearest Mowla, my heart's beat,
Please bring close the time that our souls meet.

Spring Of My Soul's Winter

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

Our souls – as if fish in a niche of water,
its levels receding as time stretches
end to end to end to end; unending:
days turn to weeks turn to months
turn to tundras¹ of time in limbo;

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

Our souls – anxious, unsecure, unhinged,
perched on the precipice of perdition²,
praying that the estuary of Your
munificence³
may flow into this niche we claim.

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

Writhing; wailing; woebegone
the wall that dammed our sentience⁴
which once permeated peace –
this wall is worse than indifference.

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

We beg *O Mowla! O Khudavind!*

We beseech *O Mowla! O Khudavind!*

We implore and we entreat with fervour:

Collapse this perpetual partition!

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

Deserve it we surely not,

benevolent You surely are,

at Your mercy we find redemption;

grant us this one wish:

may we be flooded with *deedar* of our

beatific Imam.

Ameen, Ameen, Ameen...

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

Only the warmth of Your paternal smile

can melt the winter in our bones;

Only the susurrus⁵ of Your maternal

blessings

can bloom a verdant garden in our minds;

O Mowla! O Khudavind!

Only the affectionate gaze of our
Omnipresent
can spring a fountain of love in our hearts;
Only the fortunate glimpse of our Imam
can invigorate the appetite⁶ of our souls.

¹Tundra - vast, flat region that is completely frozen

²Perdition - eternal damnation/hell

³Munificence - great generosity

⁴Sentience - awareness/ability to feel and perceive

⁵Susurrus - soft whisperings

⁶Appetence - instinctive inclination/strong natural craving

Vous Me Manques'

Of missings, I find there are two kinds
- though I know not for sure -
there's the tender one, the kind
that sits at the bottom of the soul,
a molten acceptance of absence
born from unequivocal certainty
that though one is physically afar -
spiritually, emotionally, mentally,
all hearts beat as one;
distance is a mere breath between
the seconds of manifest thought.

And then, there's the violent ache, the
kind
that claws its way up our consciousness
swinging its scythes at the columns of our
composure,
that visceral despair whose vivid colours
stand stark against the rest of existence,
feasting on flesh, sucking on logic

Of missings, I find there are two kinds -
oft are we thrown between these two
emotions at play on a picnic with pathos.

Title(French) - I miss you/You are missing from me

Ceremony

I've taken off my watch -

pushed back the leather strap through the
loops,
unbuckled it, flicked out
the pin, tugged out the knob;

I've stopped its existence; I've put it aside,
relinquished it to a drawer, to vegetate
never to be sought again;

I've come to the realization:
For now - it's been a while, actually -

I tell time by
Your arrivals and Your departures;
I know seasons by
Your absence and Your presence;
I feel space by
the length I wait for You and the width
I spend with You.

There's no need now
to keep track of the seconds
of the minutes of the hours
of the days of the weeks
of the months to come -

It's all relative; an hour-glass
holding sand, stands in sand.

Let Love In

We must endeavour to keep the channel of
communication open

Love, like water, fills spaces and silences as
much as you allow Him to –

A cup runneth over: Fills a tub; Fills a room;
Fills a home;

Fills an estate; Fills a county; Fills a city;

Fills a country; Fills a continent; Fills a planet;

Fills a galaxy; Fills a universe; Fills the whole of
existence.

Just one drop and a parched nomad finds a
place to call home;

An atheist finds a supremacy to believe in;

The lost is found and the impossible possible.

Isn't it miraculous?

Let love in and love finds a way to make all that
is ordinary extraordinary

Let love in and love finds its way into

transcendentally transforming truth

From a notion to reality; Hope burns bright like
a new dawn,

When all the pieces seem to fall into place. And

His plans reveal His love.

Enlightened

Love shows you a place
your reflections in a million bubbles
distorted but blissful, distorted but blessed,
a place where effervescence is born.

Love shows you the place
selflessness in apparition of a smile
sacrifices at an altar of compromise,
the place where acceptance is birth.

Love shows you your place
supplication at the feet of forbearance
humility in the dew of forgiveness
the place where the heart is at home.

Inside Out

It's a remarkable thing, it is said -
thrilling and, simultaneously, incredibly
frightening.

I don't think I'll ever understand -
plant in me the tree of knowledge;
grant me a boon of comprehension;
make me as enlightened as the saints
but the mystery behind Your smile
will for eternity evade my sleuthing;

How, unlike anyone on earth
or any element known to mankind,
You're in a constant state of ageless beauty.

These eyes of Yours in this mirror
speak fluent a language cosmic,
I will never consciously understand
though I already seem to innately know.

Should I hope to see this phenomenon up close
I find that which was there is nowhere;
In its place, cordoned off,
revealing nothing, not even
the moniker of its maker;

And how I still covet
exactly that which is out of reach
as if the forbidden peach
enticing from its palace in the highest canopy;

Then I too shall have my soul
transform into a homing pigeon
to commute the great distance
to communicate the simplest plea
to bestow such magnanimity and benevolence
to reach down to elevate me up
for I am not capable of such an endeavour.

Then I too will accept:
It's a remarkable thing –
thrilling and, simultaneously, incredibly
frightening:
How love can turn a person inside out

Love Like This - A Double Tertractys¹

O
Master
My Master
Cast over me
Your love iridescent; Your love serene
As if a sunset; as if a pink moon
Cast over me,
My Master,
Your love
Please

Tertractys - type of poem consisting of 10 lines of
1,2,3,4,10,10,4,3,2,1 syllables.

You encompass all

Your voice is made of birds singing in the spring
Your smile is made of butterflies taking flight
Your lap is the resting place for misunderstood
voles
Your feet kiss the ground and flowers bloom -
Then how can we not love You as though You
were something remarkable?
You are a miracle of nature, filling our lives with
orchards
of hope, tranquillity, passion and zest.
You are why I fail at words and excel in poetry.

Miracle Connect

A tangled web of resonance exists
threads that link what manifests
in time and form and function
to that which is latent
pervading between the bricks of reality.

And You are that presence in my life
that connects me to the source
of the universe.

You are that which restores my faith
my belief in the magical and enchanted
exhilaration of existence.

You are the cable to my cathartic Cosmo,
my rope along a steep descent,
the vestibule where I am unrestrained
to pursue a quest beyond the gnosis
of this limited, caged monkey-mind.

You are at the heart of matter
that matters most to the soul of me:
You are my miracle connect
the Phoenix of hope
born from the ashes of doubt and
disappointment.

Where The Soul Dances

Positively abound
they grow, they glow
thoughts abundant
a field of poppies
of daisies, of daffodils,
of roses, of rhus,
and rhymes and cities
growing and breeding
under the radiant sun
beneath the starry skies
and I
spread-eagled upon my back
my serenity surrounding me
cocooning my meditate mind
in a field beatific
splendour unpardoned
thriving, thriving
and I
touching my forehead
in reverence and awe
to the feet of my Lord
who sits in my heart
and rules the universe

Charan Sparsh¹

The story in mythology goes
That when Krishna was born
He was being carried across a river
In a basket towards His adoptive father
And in the storm, the raging waves
Rose higher and higher and higher
Eager to touch the feet of the Lord
Much to the worry of His father
Who was struggling and drowning
But when the waters finally felt
The lotus feet of their King
They simmered and settled,
calmed and satisfied.

It feels the same way with me.

The tumult and turbulence
that's in the nature of the ocean
of my complicated heart
are soothed and quelled
when Your lotused feet
grace the shore of my discontent
and I feel as if everything I'm fighting for
I need not wage a war for anymore
because love has won and the conch
sounds the end of my personal Mahabharata².

¹Charan sparsh - to touch the feet out of reverence

²Mahabharata (Sanskrit) - battle

Beneath Your Smile

Where the dandelions dance
That's where I want to be
Where the mockingbirds sing
That's where I want to be
Where the silk route runs
That's where I want to be
Where the mountains bow
That's where I want to be
Where the soft rain falls
That's where I want to be
Where the tulips grow
That's where I want to be
Where the French bread bakes
That's where I want to be
Where Your horses gallop
That's where I want to be
Where the cobbled streets go
That's where I want to be
Where the honey bees buzz
That's where I want to be
Where the fountains cascade
That's where I want to be
Where the quiet streams flow
That's where I want to be

Where the heart soars
That's where I want to be
Where my soul is free
That's where I want to be
But most of all
Where You are
That's where I long to be.

Anchor

You're a silhouette of surety
in a world of confusion,
a sound of acknowledgment
in a chorus of ignorance,
a knowing smile in a crowd
of harsh frowns,
a golden reverence in
the dark alleys of disrespect
and a sweet syrup after a bitter pill.

*Des Pardes*¹

Because of You,
I am a foreigner in my own home;
Only familiar with Your heart,
everything else feels
like a place I don't belong.

Because of You,
I have lost all bearing;
my compass is spinning chaos
North is true where You stand -
where You are:
the place I find solace and sang-froid².

¹Des - Home

Pardes - Foreign place

²sang-froid - equilibrium

Qasida

The Amazon of happiness flows through His
beam
straight into the hearts of His murids.
In our souls, in our depths,
songs of praise - *qasida* - erupt
bubbling through the corrupt
surface of life's troubles;
gratitude and servitude seep into the crevices
created when we see our Imam jovial as can be;
eagerly we wish to immerse our conscience
into that endless existence of euphoria.
Oh, what a reward to attain:
Like moths to light, bees to nectar,
rivers to oceans, and we to He.

¹Qasida - poetic praise

Ishaaron¹

Every word of love's secret language
spoken aloud in a single glance.

The way Your smile lights up our world --
a new dawn of a new birth of a new song
of an ancient relationship
that not the tongue can explain,
not the ears hear, not the hands touch,
not even our minds decipher, but our hearts
start to sing and never stop.

What wondrous a creation You have made -
through these mere apertures in these eyes
one glimpse of You travels ceaselessly straight to our
souls
light bright illumination of enlightenment
we need not speak, we need not use words,
everything is said concisely, precisely,
when, with Your mercy and unending affection,
we catch Your twinkling eyes -
In that instant, we are Yours,
And You are everything:
You mean the world to us, always and forever;
And we are holding strong to one wish:

May we forever earn Your favour and pride.

¹Ishaaron – gesture

Hand in Hand

Your hand in mine:
There is no loneliness

Your hand in mine:
There is no negative energy

Your hand in mine:
There is no fear of the unknown

Your hand in mine:
There is no dissatisfaction

Your hand in mine:
Makes me feel cosseted in the warmth
And security of a mother's embrace
And a father's protection.

Pocket of Happiness

I yearn for a gulp of relief -
the way water quenches burning thirst;
a buttery balm soothes a sore sole;
the cool of the sheets against feverish skin;
bitter ails wash away under steaming jets;
ease with which the pipe drains;
wind-chimes welcoming long lost zephyrs;
a parting that falls just right;
the tug of the ear and a quick grin;
flash of affirmation, nod of acknowledgement;
and Mowla accepting our wish to be
in His eternal service.

Hoarder of Happy

Mowla and I -

Moments encapsulated in a snow-globe:

Each glorious smile frozen;

Captured for posterity;

Each nod wave thumbs-up,

Twinkling grin,

Stealthy gesture,

Loving act of acknowledgement,

Cherished and revelled in,

As if jewels of the world:

Invaluable assets

Gathered greedily;

Sustenance,

Going forward

Cursed be...

Cursed be my mind
should the thought
of You be even a
mere breath away

Cursed be my sleep
should the night
not end in Your name

Cursed be the day
that You are not the beat
that this heart plays

Cursed be this life
that is not graced
by the glorious *deedar*
of my Beloved Imam

The Amourous Inclination to be Yours

I gravitate towards You:
metal to magnet;
narrows to estuary;
apple to ground;
bees to nectar.

I feel it in the day
these thoughts run amok
run towards You
an oasis from chaotic occupation —
it's blissful.

I see it in the night
brown eyes shut; inner eyes wide open
impossibilities realize; dreams mature
my floating conscious
caught in the current of Your mantra.

I know it in the twilight —
that time neither light, neither dark;
 not in, not out;
not here, not there

 I suspend my existence
to be with You
 (even for one second —
one second forever).

I gravitate towards You
like life to death,
 and beyond.

Sealed Shut

Falling in love with You —
Poetic paradise; poetic nightmare:
I don't know, I do not know
whether to revel in the happiness
(the absolute, quintessential joy)
of this bond b'tween You and me;

I don't know, I do not know
whether to relent to the anguish
(pure liquid burning)
of this despair of being separate;
being distant from You.

Torn between two worlds,
walking on a bed of nails:
I love it, I hate it;
I hate the pain, I love You.

And worst of all —
I am cause, I am effect
monstrous maelstrom
trapped invisible
in a mason jar,
struggling.

Like a Mountain, Not a Tree

I stood in Your grace,
You wished me all the happiness in the
world;
For that alone I cannot lose hope:
Signs of abundance everywhere I turn.
I stood in Your grace; now,
I look forward to the time I never have to
leave.

Skywriter

At my window, looking at the dark cloudy
sky;

I idly wrote Your name against it,
my finger a slow swirl around Your letters.

I swear the sky smiled,
clouds parting in an instant
revealing twinkling stars and a glimpse of
Mars.

Distance is naught
when affection is cosmically inclined
in our universe.

Resurrection

Stood have I in the shade for so long -
a wary vampire at home
in the dank and dark
but the sun of Your countenance
has drawn me out.

Now,
I bask in this warmth
that caresses my soul
as if it has been dunked
in rosewater oil

Immersion (Cyhydedd Hir)¹

You are everything;
how when the birds sing
all those sure notes bring
sun to my heart.
And this light is Yours;
when You speak, hope soars,
when You smile, love roars –
the rest is art.

At Your feet, I lie;
worries pass me by,
doubts don't leave me wry –
You're here, that's all:
every wish fulfilled;
in me, You've instilled
faith forever gild.
In love, I fall.

¹Title – Welsh form of verse poetry

Happy Mothers' Day

You are the sun of love and the moon of
affection,
A mother above all mothers –
And what can be said of the One who has
created
Someone as exalted as no other?

You are the light of the universe and
shade of hope;
Under Your protective cloak we
surrender.
Without Your guidance and patience,
We are lost sheep doomed for plunder.

You are the sea of sustenance and harbour
of peace;
At Your feet we find our serenity;
In Your arms we wish to retire,
From all that is immaterial, and falsity

You are the sun of love and the moon of
affection,
A mother above all mothers --
And what can be said of the One who has
created
Someone as exalted as no other?

Happy Fathers' Day

A father like no other;
Majestic a mountain in the skyline of our
psyche
Whose resolute presence is comfort in all
chaos;
Your every form a sight to behold.

A father like no other;
A man of honour, handsome to a fault,
Flawless in all manner and thought.

A father like no other;
Creator of I and mine, us and ours -
The careful sculptor of destiny
Who carves our path with intricate detail;
With You, our guide and guru, we are
never lost.

A father like no other;
A man of honour, handsome to a fault,
Flawless in all manner and thought.

A father like no other;
Nurturer of kindness, Well of forgiveness:
In You, we find solace, in You, we see
home;
Vast a universe whose burdens You
shoulder,
And yet time You make to attend to us;
You have gifted us love, in all its essence.

A father like no other;
A man of honour, handsome to a fault,
Flawless in all manner and thought.

Ineffable

Serenity there dwells
in the essence of His name:
Shah Karim Al-Husseini –
to speak it, to meditate on it,
to thus be swaddled,
protected by invisible forces at play,
eased into a warm cocoon of unshakeable faith --

Our wounded hearts heal;
Our broken spirits mend;
Our anxious minds calm.

Ecstasy there dwells
in the radiance of His grin:
Shah Karim Al-Husseini –
to envision it, to frame it
to thus be infused with joy,
pure as innocence, ebullient as wind,
and like moths to a candle:

Our wounded hearts heal;
Our broken spirits mend;
Our anxious minds calm.

Hope there dwells
in the timbre of His voice:
Shah Karim Al-Husseini --
to listen to it, to revel in it
to thus be mesmerised by musicality
of the entire universe, reverberant in His
“*Khanavadan, Khanavadan, Khanavadan*” –
 Our wounded hearts heal;
 Our broken spirits mend;
 Our anxious minds calm.

Love there dwells
in the embodiment of Him:
Shah Karim Al-Husseini –
to know Him, to keep Him close,
to thus embrace our truth:
drops of the ocean are we
drawn to the source of us;
His *Zaheri* presence in this world,
a gift we must never take for granted --
 With healed hearts;
 With mended spirits;
 With calm minds, rejoice –

Jubilation here dwells
in the celebration of Him:
Shah Karim Al-Husseini Aga Khan -
to sing His praises, to feast in His honour,
to thus exalt our Lord of the Time
whose milestone eightieth birthday
we are fortunate to commemorate,
spare no second, spare no expense,
tis a special *Salgirah* for our
Khudavind and *Mowla*
Father and friend
Pir and *Murshid*

Mad about Mowla

They say I am mad,
mad to reduce my esoteric spiritual faith
to something “misconstrued” and “physically
oriented”.

Am I mad to catch a glimpse of my beloved
Imam

by the roadside if I can, when I can?

When I know:

The future holds the dire destiny:

“coat na darshan bhi nahin milega”?

When I know:

“seeing the face of Ali is more than 1000 nights
of *bandagi*”?

Am I mad?

Yes, I’m mad. I’m mad about *Mowla*.

They say I am mad,
mad to chase after the physical manifestation
of a universal truth;
Am I mad to covet
the manifestation of marvels that is my beloved
Imam?
Whose voice tugs the heart strings;
Whose glance is rare and iridescent as the
Kohinoor;
Whose smile shifts the earth beneath my feet;
Whose blessings calm the torment of life;
Whose radiance - when red - is my heart's
rehabilitation;
Whose radiance - when white - is my soul's
reckoning;
Who is my all and everything, my reason to
exist.
They want me to abandon my calling and it is I
who is mad?
Am I mad?
Yes, I'm mad. I'm mad about *Mowla*.

They say I am mad,
mad to disregard protocol and to obdurately
pursue this passion,
paying no mind to the consequences of this
quest.

Am I mad to yearn for *deedar*?

As *Meera* yearned for the *darshan* of *Lord Krishna*,

As Prophet *Musa* yearned for clarity,

As Prophet *Muhammad* yearned for *Hazrat Ali*?

Am I mad to wither without it?

As a rose in the desert sun,

As a fish out of water,

As a bird without wings,

As a human without air?

Am I mad?

Yes, I'm mad. I'm mad about *Mowla*.

They say I am mad,
mad to seek *moksh* in ‘just a man’.

Just a man?!

Such a tongue should be sliced off, and if not,
cut off my ears should I have to hear such
blasphemy again.

If the truth cannot be seen by them, I refuse to
be blinded
with their falsehoods and ignorance.

Ali sahi Allah - this is the marrow of my bones;
the fabric of my soul.

And when all of the world’s pleasures,
all of nature’s magnificence
feels dull, bland, faded against the glory of *Shah*
Karim Al Husseini,

then am I mad to dedicate this life,
the next, and all to come in this cycle of births,
at the feet of my beloved Imam?

Am I mad?

Yes, I’m mad. I’m mad about *Mowla*.

Lament

O Imam-e-zaman!

Ocean of love unconditional;
60 years You have dedicated,
Engineering tirelessly wheels in motion,
Steering this World to be better a place;
We are so proud, so proud, to be
Under Your umbrella of generosity.

Ya Shah Karim!

Bearer of unlimited kindness;
And how we receive Your benevolence,
With hands held up unabashed,
And how we give back with closed fists.
What has happened to us?
Why have we forgotten what You mean to us?
What indeed do we do to celebrate You?
No cakes are cut on Your *Salgirah*
No *nazranas* given nowadays on birthdays
No trumpets announcing Your *kadam mubarak*
Offerings presented to You
In plastic bags or Styrofoam plates
The gold and silver dishes gathering dust
In some forgotten cupboard of our hearts;

In the name of simplicity and austerity
We have stripped Your grandeur bare
Filled our homes with gem embedded goblets
And preached chastity with champagned tongues;
Doubt plagues our minds
And disobedience our actions;
Questions and disbelief run rampant;

Where unequivocal resolution once stood unshaken
As a mountain, now sways as a tree.

We love You, we believe, we want You happy, we
suppose
We love to say You reside in our hearts
But fail to gather our wits when the real test comes;
There is no real excitement when You arrive,
We actually partake sherbet and cake when You leave;
Deedars have grown fewer by the years,
Excuses have grown exponentially,
Wrapped up clever in quick words:
Esoterism, social convergence,
And the essence - the gnosis - conveniently
misconstrued;
Jamatkhana attendance attributed to Your happiness
When it benefits our own souls,
Firmans given selected attention,
Ginan verses sliced to save time.
We sit with heavy hearts and weary souls,
Unhappy at the general air of nonchalance;
Whence there You sit merciful and graceful
Surveying Your children solemnly,
Uttering not a blunt word at the blatant disregard.

Ya Shah Karim, Ya Khudavind,
Why have we grown so afraid
Under Your exceptional paradigm of fearlessness,
As *Ali*, as *Hussein*, as *Sultan Mohamed Shah*
And even now:
Imam-e-zamaan
An inspiration, role model, paragon, saviour -
What do we do for You?
What do we do to express our love for You?

What is done by us that is only for You
In a manner of love and recognition?
Instead we hide our truth
Behind smoke screens and mirrors;
We no longer raise Your throne on our shoulders,
Never shower Your *zaheri* form with petals of affection.

Ya Shah Karim, Ali Sahi Allah,
We hold not steadfast to the rope,
Slipping down a slippery slope of silence,
And yet You love us; Despite, and in spite of, our faults
and selfishness, You love us a hundred times more
Than we could ever love You
And a hundred times every single day
You show us over and over again.

Ya Shah Karim al Husseini,
With tears in my eyes, shame in my heart,
I beg for forgiveness; I pray that You inspire us -
Fill our beings with that conviction
To love You back better than we have
To celebrate You with sincerity.
We have not known an Imam as marvellous as You,
We need not look elsewhere
For anything when we have You;
We just need to start becoming aware,
Of just how much we take for granted --
How little we do for You compared
To how much You do for us and indeed the world.
You are ineffable, incomparable *Imam-e-zamaan*
Whose praises ought to be sung
From the moment of birth to last of breaths.
You are our *Sahib*, deserving of all we hold dear to
ourselves.

Harken; Awaken!

Fling open the gates to copious happiness!
Our Lord is coming to town;
Riding in on His *Garur*, He comes to bless our
humble home.
Our benevolent Lord, our merciful King,
He comes to bless our eyes with His beatific
smile,
He comes to bless our hearts with His majestic
presence.
Break down those stoic stances!
Our Lord, *Mowla* and *Murshid*, is coming to see
us.

Listen to this:
In *yugs* prior, where people were infallible in
their devotion
He was incarnate but for a short period of time;
In *kalyug*, in a period ruled by convenience and
malevolence,
He has taken permanent incarnation.
This is not irony – this is His unfathomable
mercy,
to be here for us, even when we do not entreat
Him to;

to pardon us, even when we do not beg Him to,
to help us, even when we do not turn to Him,
to love us, even when we love ourselves more
than Him.

Open your eyes and kneel now in humility,
bring Him tokens of appreciation and gratitude
expressed;
He asks for nothing – nothing in return, but
don't you sit there!
Praise Him to the sky, behold His physical glory,
Sing, sing, sing, and melt your nonchalance,
This precious moment will be gone too soon.

Selfish

It hurts my heart
when the ignorant
express ignoble thoughts
about You.

If only they were privy
to the esoteric gnosis
and what I know about You...

But I also know
if the whole world
subscribed to this open secret,
I'd be left a mile behind
in my devotion of You.

Composed upon the asphalt at the airport

I have tried, I have attempted
to linger in this threshold
between our realities,
where miracles flourish and thrive;
committing to memory
second-by-second frames
to sustain another stretch
of desert — this oasis, I don't want to leave
but inevitable,
separation impends.

Quite unspeakable is the lament
the regret that I could not make You stay;
how it burns, this yearn, to stop Your steps
that lead away from me, that take You far,
that leave me behind, thirsting again and forlorn;
Your every absence
singes my soul; acutely am I aware
that You are no longer here, my dear Mowla,
and I am wilting in the long shadow
of Your departure.

What are the forces that bend metal?
Why could I not master them in time
to bend Your path 'round back to me?
For I would throw my all, my everything,
like caution to the wind,
and if You could not turn back
I would want to hurl myself
at Your feet, to cling to Your legs --
drag me along; wherever You go
I want to go, wherever You are
I want to be
because where I am now, You are not,
and being here and not there
is stripping the flesh off of me.

Jubilee

Where Your gaze falls
Hope blooms a-forth
Colourful buds sway happily
In the delightful breeze of Your voice
How You smile, all of nature rejoices
A celebration to mark a new page
With Your enormous, magnificent blessings
We start afresh, humbly surrendered
At Your feet - our happy place
Jubilee Mubarak, Mowla,
We love You!

Diamond Jubilee Mubarak – a Ghazal

Joy beyond measure, to us, 2017 will bring
And we sing: *Ya Mowla, Diamond Jubilee
Mubarak!*

For this auspicious year, all the angels are
descending
As we sing: *Ya Mowla, Diamond Jubilee
Mubarak!*

The entire universe is thrilled,
reverberating
When we sing: *Ya Mowla, Diamond
Jubilee Mubarak!*

Look how Mother Nature is preening,
gushing and blooming
While we sing: *Ya Mowla, Diamond
Jubilee Mubarak!*

History is bearing witness; Earth is
gleaming, rejoicing
Lo! We sing: *Ya Mowla, Diamond Jubilee*
Mubarak!

Nothing can assuage this yearning, nor
dampen this feeling
So let's sing: *Ya Mowla, Diamond Jubilee*
Mubarak!

Diamond Jubilee Dua

Permit us to cry tears of gratitude
into a decanter,
Scented with rosewater
to wash Your feet with reverence;

Permit us to fashion our passion
into carnations,
Beaded together in a garland
to adorn Your majesty;

Permit us to melt our excitement
into gold,
Cast into a chain
to titivate Your filigreed *khilat*;

Permit us to foster our pride
into red carpets,
Unravelling worldwide
to usher You to Your throne;

Permit us to sing our joy
into qasidas and aartis,
Invocations from the heart
to garner Your jubilation;

Permit us to cook our love
into biryani and chicken samosas,
A dainty dish for the King
to feast, in utmost delight;

Permit us to bake our zeal
into multi-tiered cakes,
An alchemy of flavours
to celebrate all the years;

Permit us to choreograph our fortune
into *dandia ras* and cultural dance,
A yearlong of communal festivity
to commemorate our most beloved Imam.

Ameen

The Wait Begins...

I relish the time I spend waiting for You-
Long and arduous; delicious this ordeal -
A buffet of emotions lain east to west
(sunrise to sunset and even under
the twinkling stars and half a moon
do I sit with patience asleep on my lap)
though the time spent with you I cherish -
A sip off a cup of gleeful delight -
gone too quick, too quick, quick,
like the sight of Your departing plane
farther, farther, farther, all too quickly
devoured
by the white unperturbed clouds...

AUTHOR BIO

Zafeera Kassam is an Ismaili by birth and by choice,
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