

## Khurshid-Banu Natavan (1830-1897)

### BIOGRAPHY

Daughter of the last Karabakh khan – Mehdi Kulu-khan, Natavan was one of the best lyrical poetesses of Azerbaijan, advanced and bright person of her time.

Natavan was born on August 15, 1830 in Shusha. Being the only child in the family she was the only heir of the Karabakh khan and after her father's death she was closely engaged in philanthropy, the social and cultural development of Karabakh. Among Natavan's most famous deeds was a water-pipe that she laid down to Shusha in 1883, thus solving the water problem of the Shusha people. Natavan also founded and sponsored several literary societies in Shusha. One of them called "Majlisi Uns" became especially popular and concentrated major poetic-intellectual forces of Karabakh of that time.

In 1885 Natavan lost her beloved son Abbas who died from tuberculosis. Beginning from this date her poems, which were generally lyric and wistful, became permeated with a tragic sense of loss. Soon she fell ill by herself and in 1897 died in Shusha. She was buried in Agdam in the family cemetery named "Imarat". As a sign of respect, people carried her corpse from Shusha to Agdam on foot.

Natavan's literary heritage is consisted of mainly ghazals which major characteristics are humanism, kindness, friendship and love.

### POETRY

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### To My Son Abbas

Parted with you, I burn night and day,  
Like a thoughtless moth in a candleflame.

Like a rose you were destined to fade and die;  
Like a nightingale mourning its rose sing I.

My heart aches with longing to see you, my star,  
I roam like Majnun in search of Leili.

\\ whisper your name, for your presence I sigh,  
Like a grief-stricken dove on a bough sing I .

Like Farhad from the source of my happiness banned,  
At the foot of the mountain of parting I stand.

Your name all these days I have chanted and sung  
Like a parrot with sug-ar under its tongue.

Haunted with sorrow, all day I wander;  
Burning with grief like a Salamander.

My heart, that once soared in a heaven of love,  
Broke its wings and was dashed to the earth from above.

Blind to the light of the sun and the moon,  
Like a moon eclipsed, I am shrouded in gloom.

Through my tears your image I always see,  
You dried up so soon, o my cypress-tree!

Oh, would I were blind not to see you dead.  
The sun now scorches the earth, your last bed.

My hopes were frustrated; you left me and died,  
I did not live to see you join your bride.

Your brown eyes expectantly looked at me;  
Was it only that mine your shrine should be?

I weep tears of blood, to sunlight I'm blind,  
As a lost soul I wander, Abbas, my child.

The anguish of losing you gnaws at my breast,  
Tears flow from my eyes without respite or rest.

## Lilac

O flowering lilac, whose was the skilful hand that drew you?  
O Radiant-Featured, was it a loving slave that drew you?

Chancing to penetrate into your palace, garden,  
O poppy-cheeked, was it a skilful gardener drew you?

In this flowerbed world there were all too many plain faces;  
Was that the reason why the almighty keeper drew you?

The flowers take their colours and fragrance from you,  
As a flower the hand of the world's creator drew you.

What a wealth of gentleness shows in your beauty!  
With her gift of fancy bestowed by God, perhaps it was Natavan that  
drew you?

### Time has plunged me into an ocean of pain and woe...

Time has plunged me into an ocean of pain and woe,  
Parted me with my sun-faced; all is dark wherever I go.

My patience has reached its limit, O God almighty on high!  
Either allow me to join him, or have mercy and let me die.

In vain I implored and begged you, you left and never returned.  
Now come and look at me, sun-faced, see into what I have turned.

How long must I pine in longing-my life is all misery.  
Have pity, at least for a moment; beloved, remember me.

What terrible tortures I suffer! Our parting I cannot bear.  
Am I worthy of nothing better than eternal grief and despair?

Our parting has stolen my reason, my soul has forgotten repose.  
Behold how merciless fortune has doomed me to endless woes.

I wonder why my cruel lover will not have pity on me.  
I burn in the flame of parting-the one who lit it was he!

How beautiful were those days when I was together with you.  
Now I am broken-hearted, sadly my fate I rue.

For a while I was reunited with my lover, that pitiless man,  
But now I am once again lonely - I have become Natavan [1].

(1) Natavan - miserable.

## Beloved, how could you break the oath to me you swore?

Beloved, how could you break the oath to me you swore?  
Beloved, am I today not the same as I was before?

You seek new company, love, with other women you meet,  
Have you forgotten me, the one that you once called sweet?

Yes, you have found another before whom you bare your soul;  
She is receiving the joy which from my life you stole.

My life is now a nightmare of infinite, black despair.  
People talk of my madness always and everywhere.

Your heartlessness, o beloved, is driving me insane.  
Have pity on me, have mercy, come back to me again.

O Destiny, how cruel, how ruthless you are to me!  
Who does he give his love? "Who can the lucky one be?"

Life overflows with anguish, with tears overflow my eyes;  
But he, my fickle lover, turns a deaf ear to my sighs.

Why, have you been avoiding me all this time,  
Me, the unlucky slave of a lord so truly sublime?

Love, you have driven your slave to the limit of desperation,  
Gossips are calling me now the victim of sinful temptation.

Have pity on me, your slave, o my lord, my Padishah!  
My lamentations echo throughout the world, near and far.

You and your love make merry, carousing day and night,  
And I, your unlucky victim, have forgotten what is delight.

There was a time when you wanted nobody else but me.  
Now you have changed, and your old love you even refuse to see.

What was the cause, my monarch, explain to your subject, pray?  
What have I done that you leave me like a flower plucked and thrown away?

What shall I do, distraught and unhappy as I am now?  
How could I ever have given my heart to you, oh how?

Make merry, my love, with my rival, feast and have a good time,  
While I must weep tears of anguish because you're no longer mine.

Chirp with your newly-found mate like two nightingales on a bough:  
And I - remember what I was like, and what have I turned into now?

Kill me, let Allah give strength to your ruthless hand!

What have I done to you that such torture I have to stand?

I sigh and I weep in sorrow, pain is tearing my heart.  
Poor Natavan, your lot was unfortunate from the start.