

## Mirza-Shafi Vazeh

### Ghazals

\* \* \*

My head and my heart work in opposite ways,  
But both will succeed in making me perish.  
"Keep away from love," so one of them says.  
The other is all for the woman I cherish.

Daily and nightly my reason revolts  
At my heart's excess of passionate fire.  
But what heart can restrain the flame that it holds?  
So mine, too, always burns with love and desire.

\* \* \*

If I don't come to you and steal a kiss,  
This paltry world will offer me no bliss.  
There is no other joy that it can give.  
Your love alone can make me glad I live.

Your glances flood the world with light sublime  
So that all secrets it contains I may divine.  
I owe my noblest feelings to that light,  
Imbuing all my life with pure delight.

My loving dreams soar higher than the skies.  
My guiding stars are your beloved eyes.

\* \* \*

At the hour when breath joins breath, when flower joins flower,  
At the hour when loving hearts join into one,  
And lips from lips drink madness-at that hour  
The mind gives way and sanity is gone.

So do not justify a transient feeling,  
And shun the common animal delight.  
Love is a force that elevates our being  
Only when it emits a spiritual light.

\* \* \*

As numerous as the stars in the moonlit sky  
Are the wounds in my breast from the knives of your eyes.  
Not a star in the sky, no celestial body are you,

Yet you always attracted my eyes-my love I cannot disguise.

My life has become a burden, one gloomy, eternal night  
Such a sweet tormentor's victim, can I refrain from sighs?  
I live, but my life has been poisoned by hopeless love for you.  
My eyes have become like a fountain that never dries.

This woeful ghazal has been written by lovesick Vazeh.  
Behold how, smitten with jealousy, slowly he dies!

\* \* \*

Accompanied by wine, attended by a rose  
With pretty lips that hardly ever close  
Except to favour me with a delicious kiss,  
Let Satan have my soul-I'll have my bliss.

\* \* \*

The winds bring windmills into motion,  
Steam engines are propelled by steam.  
A storm of turbulent emotion  
Moves us to struggle for our dream.

But stronger far than steam or storm,  
More powerful than even death  
Is something mild, humane and warm:  
Your charm, my love, your gentle breath.

\* \* \*

When one fine day the golden gates of heaven  
Fly open for believers' motley crowds,  
The sinner and the sinless both together  
Will probably stand waiting, torn with doubts.

Among the sinners only I will be as calm  
And fearless as I always was since birth.  
Why should I vex myself when you, my life's sweet balm,  
Already opened heaven's gates for me on earth?

\* \* \*

Look at the stars revolving in the heavens.  
As far as ever from this world of ours they seem.  
It looks as if this beautiful umbrella  
Above our heads is woven of our dreams.

The stars stand far apart from one another,  
They shine or hide in fair or cloudy weather.  
Do they feel sad to be so distant from their lovers  
And do they long, like you and I, to come together?

\* \* \*

Let my life drag on as slowly as time,

Let old Fortune's wings droop as low as mine;  
Dearly we pay for remembered bliss,  
But that also has its reward, which is this:  
Although, my sweet love, you're no longer near,  
Your face I still see, your voice I still hear.

\* \* \*

Though every time you utter words both true and wise  
A thousand storms break out and countless dangers rise,  
Pay little heed to that, whatever may befall.  
Mirza-Shafi Vazeh, prize honour above all.

For truth and beauty are so closely bound  
That either one without the other can't be found.  
Mirza-Shafi, try persecution to elude,  
Be prudent as you can, be cautious and be shrewd.

Do veil your words, a little, sound more sooth,  
In any case, take care to sweeten bitter truth.

\* \* \*

What shall I do-shall I laugh or complain:  
Half the world lacks the implement known as the brain.  
Unrepenting and shameless, tranquil and cool,  
They repeat all my words-the words of a fool.

And yet, O Creator, accept my praise  
For the plentiful fools that we have these days.  
If the fools weren't so many, then I fear  
True wisdom would never be held so dear.

\* \* \*

O you who help to save men's souls from hell and dirt,  
You, greatest gift of God, beloved work,  
Your loyal servitors you comfort and console,  
The first desire, first dream, first need of the wise soul.

Only the knave from hard to easier work will fly.  
Were I not bound to you by countless ties, I'd die.  
O greatest gift of God, believe my word,  
I will stay true to you till I'm interred.

\* \* \*

At every moment a grain of our life is spent.  
However you call, it will not come back, all that went.  
From the very outset a noble aim you must choose,  
Determine what you are out to gain and what you can lose.

It's not our fault we are born into this world,  
If you live an empty life, your groans will never reach God.

\* \* \*

The swifter to rise in the eyes of those you serve,  
There are two conditions you must by all means observe:  
Wherever you ought to be outspoken-be quiet,  
Wherever you ought to be silent-speak outright.

\* \* \*

If you hear bad words about somebody else  
Do not pass them on, do not ring all the bells.  
It is easy to ruin another's home,  
But it's harder by far to build stone upon stone.

\* \* \*

Ignoring all, I've given in to madness,  
And troubles in my heart no longer throng.  
Youth has returned and I am full of gladness  
All thanks to wine and love and you, my song.

Drink wine, Mirza-Shafi, and waste no time.  
Intoxicate yourself with women, wine and song.  
Only when drunk, you come in streams, my rhyme,  
And so, my songs, be drunken, come along.

\* \* \*

There was once a time when with arms young and strong  
I would hold you close in my tight embrace.  
And still today, when I'm no longer young,  
With the same old passion my blood will race.

In the ring of my life, you are the gem,  
How beautiful with you it appears!  
All my songs-for you I have written them.  
Look into my heart, love, and never mind years.

\* \* \*

If a sharp sabre falls on a bed  
The silk coverlet shields the sleeper's head.  
Cruelty often proves helpless when faced  
By kindness, gentleness, spiritual grace.

\* \* \*

Let the wind as much as it likes raise dust,  
The dust will be nothing but dust-just dust,  
While amber, though hid in the dust of the valley,  
Will never lose its lustre or value.

\* \* \*

A scholarly man addressed me one day,  
"What do you think of the Shah, please say?  
Is his mind as broad as his brow appears?"

Is his heart big? How does he hear with his ears?"

"He is a man just like all the rest,  
Like us in a gown and turban dressed,  
But he knows that people are cowards and fools  
And that is the secret whereby he rules."

\* \* \*

With his own hand the Shah once signed a manifesto;  
O people of Iran, how greatly it impressed you!  
"How wise he is, our Shah, to say the very least!"  
Then all began to celebrate and feast.

"O one and only Shah, salam to you!  
What other shah could do the wondrous deeds you do!"  
Mirza-Shafi looked on in meditation;  
He felt astonished at the people's exultation.

What quaint opinions have the people of Iran  
Of high-placed persons like a shah or khan!  
If one of them should happen to do good,  
They seem astonished that he ever could.

\* \* \*

Can a man fall in love with a woman?  
He can: None will accuse him-he won't have to quarrel.  
If a woman, though, falls in love with a man  
The world is against her and calls her immoral.