

The Broken Verses

By Syad Hashmi

Translated from Balochi by Fazal Baloch

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Dedication

دلے دردانی قاضی منہ واراں
 اے دانائی پہ سیم ء زرنیا تلگ
 مبارک قاضی

*(Qazi! Much I owe to the pains,
 My heart does enfold
 This wisdom I didn't barter
 With silver and gold)*

Mubarak Qazi

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Translator's Note

An indefatigable figure Syad Hashmi (1926-78) is known as the pioneer of modern Balochi literature. He dedicated his entire life for the promotion of Balochi language and literature. Syad was simultaneously, a poet, fiction writer, a linguist and a lexicographer par excellence.

After exhaustive research of twenty six years he compiled the first ever comprehensive Balochi to Balochi dictionary Syad Ganj. He also wrote the first ever Balochi novel Nazuk which was first published in 1976.

fragments Syad maintained rhythm while the rest he strung in prose. The book is divided into three parts; *Dastoonk* (Verses), *Passaw* (Replies) and *Misken Dagar* (The Fragrant Earth). These pithy epigrams run through a band of themes ranging from author's personal experience of life, dichotomy of friends and hypocrisy of leaders to the marginalization of Balochi language.

Wordplay is the hallmark of these fragments. In the fragments where Syad has employed wordplay, and where it was indispensable, I tried to remain as close as I could to the original text to transpire the essence of the original. To put it precise, in some fragments I opted for word-to-word translation.

I acknowledge my debt to Sajid Hussain, A. R Dad, Dr. Ghafoor Shad, Asghar Baloch and Obaid Shad whose worthy suggestions made these translations possible.

I, as the translator make no claim to the perfection in these translations and am wholly responsible for errors and omissions, if any, has crept in the book.

Fazal Baloch

Nasirabad Kech

26 December 2020

Verses

I know not, where from
These words, like a swift bird
Settle in my heart
Sometimes I know not
What they are meant for
Yet 'tis all enough
You decipher them!

Each day
With its silver light
And each night
With radiant stars
Descends on the earth
But
Two lunatics await them
One craves for the day,
But never breaks the day
The other yearns for the night,
But never falls the night!

Heavy ships

Day and night

Tear through the soft and gentle bosom of the sea

But never it bothers the sea

Yet

Even for a moment

If it furrows its brow

Each ship helplessly runs for an exit

They say:

*“Knees always seek the help of the heart”**

But concurs

Neither the knees nor the heart

Some quips me a mad

Some a lunatic

It is my only sin

My mother tongue

I speak in

Even if like a grave

Pitch dark the night remains,

One's hand can reach out to his mouth.

Yet many a time

The mouth bitten the hand

And ignorance it feigned!

For an ailing man
Crying in utter pain
A few words of solace
Or a curse will answer
To all his anguish

He lost his sanity
The 'other' was overjoyed
For now he would own all his riches
His sanity he regained
And found himself in utter ruin
But it didn't bother the 'other'.
Again 'he' ran into some wealth
And the 'other' began to lurk around him.

For forty years
A man kept his sharp sword
In the sheath of love and care.
And then with the very sword
They slashed off his head
But the sword never knew.

Burns the wick
Sizzles the oil
Yet it's the lamp
Everybody hails

At times they are felt like wounds

At times salves,

At times pain

At times panacea,

At times hemlock

At times honey

People regret what I say

They are ignorant

For these are the very words

At me once they hurled

Pain was asked:

“Why don't you reveal yourself?”

“For the sake of God”,

Smiled and retorted the pain.

Don't drag me

It will efface your footprints.

A gentleman instead of greeting jibed at me:

“We are mourning here and yet you come to recite your poems?”

I shot back:

“I can chant elegies too”.

I never saw the gentleman again.

I was yet to see it

They showed it to me

After I knew

They quip,

“A lunatic”!

Keep your gift with yourself
You may have nothing to gift
In the days ahead.

One is desperate to speak
Yet he is mute
One is eloquent
But he is afraid
Both are helpless
One lacks reason
The other rhyme

A waterskin I carry on my shoulder
But its opening is tightly roped
And I can't untie it
I am dead thirsty
And parched throat
Sometimes with the moistures of the waterskin
I wet my lips and rhyme a few words
When nobody cherishes them
I turn dismayed.

Each tuned call
Pleases the ears
Except the truth

Disappointed in myself,
I wouldn't regret
Dismayed by others
Sad I become
Again

Disappointed in myself
I regret
Dismayed by others
I wouldn't care a dime
It's a verse
Without rhythm or rhyme

Every stooge comes accompanied by a rogue
But at the end
One of them shall fall in the pit.

Who could be more shameless than the man
Who holds out you a handgun
And goads you thus:
“Go and kill your brother”
If you refuse,
He feels no shame at all.

A drug
That can't soothe the pain
Never call it a drug
A pain
That owes much to a drug
Say not it a pain
Whether you agree or not.

How can you lead me?
Following in my own footprints
You are treading along

The prowess

That makes me oblivious of my own means

May I never have!

Like a camel tail

You have your hand outspread

Before everyone

What could you proffer me?

Long ago

Told me a caste-conscious fellow:

“So-and-so’s caste is low”.

I am amazed to know

That now his own son is ‘So-and-so’s son in law.

Indeed “son in law is the ‘Master’

Among the brothers”

Once someone said:

“A hand that makes a crown of thorns is better than an idle hand”.

Perhaps he was ignorant of the pain

Caused by the thorns

Pierced through the wounded heart.

The jobs

You cannot get done

Ask the others for

The words you can't utter

Do them!

Never nod your head

Say, 'Yes', or 'No'

We pull it from either end
Whether it breaks or not
Down one of us shall fall
After all
A loss
For three of all

In essence it is dark
The glittering
Blazing and the bright sun
But only if you can discern

Attentively watch the day today

Tomorrow may never see you

Don't pass your enemy's pearls for beads

And beads of your friend for pearls

Because today's audience

Isn't yesterday's ignorant

The pleasant shadows of the morning
Wouldn't last for long
Heat of the sizzling noon can't scorch the heart
Evening too shall pass into the night
And to none the night offers shelter.

Let me share good news with you
But don't be so overjoyed
Happiness is evanescent.

Darkness

Man's companion

Since the ages

If it disappears

Man is lost!

Light?

Nowhere it exists

If it does anywhere

Then why darkness wouldn't vanish forever?

Light

The soul of existence

If it disappears

Life is lost!

Darkness?

Nowhere it exists

If it does anywhere

Then why light wouldn't vanish forever?

Burn to ashes

If you must

Never get just singed

Climb up, where will you go?
You are but destined to descend.

Bygone days-----that one has witnessed,
Howsoever they have been,
Always leave bittersweet memories in the heart.
Like a dream, every now and again,
They flash before the eyes.
Similarly, the unseen era and unrequited glory,
Like a thorn prick the heart.
The memories of the former have a feeling of mirth
But the later carries a different upshot
Because it's the figment of one's own imagination

It is said:

“When you take a step up

You must know

How to back off”.

Don't rummage but seek

Don't look but behold

Don't touch but grab

Don't ramble but go ahead

Don't hark but discern

For

Head is other than the ‘Skull’

I am well cognizant with their affairs.
One day he took me to a restaurant
The table with a sumptuous meal was laid out
A while later,
He began to brag about his exalted lineage
I regretted
For how poor and helpless his own brother was.

Far in the distant sky
Shoots down a shining star
Everybody tries to catch it
A blessing for someone
A curse for the others

With the blood of my fervent heart,
I nurture the dry lands of my helpless companions.
Hoping that one day
These plains and fields will wear green.
When red flowers blossom,
Pray gather their seeds
For they are the blood of my heart.

He told his cousin:
“The people who live there are wholly stupid”
He has forgotten
How, for a long time
He had been helpless beneath my feet.

Don't fly so high

The sun

Might blaze you!

Three donkeys broke their tethers

And bumped into each other

By the garbage heap.

One was a sturdy one with an elongated head

The other was a lame one.

And the third was a bruise-skinned one.

They struck a conversation

And all at once started braying in chorus.

In their parlance they said:

*“Donkey suffered the fracture, branded was potter-the
bonesetter”.*

Strolled ahead———saw myself

Looked back——— found myself

Turned right———there was me too

In left was me as well

Yet

I'm still desperate to see myself.

I asked them to join hands with me to design a language for our disenfranchised people.

With arms akimbo, he looked up in the overcast sky of

Shalkot*,

Cracked a sardonic laughter and said:

“You live in a dream world!”

But now he is himself waking up gradually.

On the back of my palm
Crawled an ant
I jerked my hand
It fell on the land
And in no time it transmuted into an elephant and mocked me:
"You are too afraid gentleman!"
I was about to retort when it transformed back into an ant
Since then I have been waiting with regret
When into a giant
It does rise again

Every knot holds
Something in its fold
The more are the knots
The more precious are the folds
But don't ever get beguiled
Some knots only hold emptiness.

Of the places,
Lowest is the earth
Highest the heaven
Neither can we forsake this
Nor reach out to that
The place in between is the best of all
But alas! Our helplessness

Man is neither the descendent of the king
Nor of the slave
But of the man himself
Wither someone likes or not

So far only once

My spirit has conversed with me

It said:

“Go alone! You wouldn’t remain alone!”

But

Twice I ignored its advice

And maligned myself

Now I sit and wait for its next advice.

Don’t tread the same path over and again

But never forsake your roadmap

Because to keep the former and leave the later

Both will bring you loss.

I showed it to you
And then buried it back.
But now
I wouldn't tell you where
You must seek it yourself

I contracted myself and found
I was invisible
Then, expanded myself and found
I was invisible too
Now I wonder who I am and who they!

If he calls you
Pretend to be deaf at first
It will heal his deafness

Remember both ends of the day
Emerges the night
Somewhere in between

Don't strut so hard
That you end up dragging your feet

Headache is a pain in the head

Heartache in the heart

But the ignorant construe the both as pain

Anything that is red

Ends up black and dark

I wanted to pour my heart out on the paper

But my self-esteem didn't let me to.

Azure is the firmament
And turquoise the ocean
But don't ever be proud of them
Either has a heart
Black and dark

When naked
Nobody bothered to cast a look
Now covered
Everyone is eager
To catch a glimpse

Someone

Wandering within my heart told me:

“I know you”

I asked him:

“Who am I?”

Said:

“You? You are but you!”

I looked and found he was right;

I'm forever beholden to him.

Howsoever

Your mother

Loves you

But never

Like Kambar*.

You will get offended
By a single discourteous word of the one
Who has always been courteous to you
Doesn't it sound unbecoming?

He screamed at me”:
“Who do you think, you are, after all?”
I said:
“Wait for the reply”
I jotted down a few words on a piece of paper
And dispatched it to him.
To this day it lies before him.
With envy and hatred,
He bites his ruddy skin.

He has so far seen the outfall of the spring

And become *head-less*

If he sees its base

He will become *base-less*

How capricious is my heart

Urges the others to have patience

But always remains restless itself

Don't ever grid up your loins to efface me

After all

I am your own dignity and pride

Head is a head
 And foot, a foot
 Don't ever exchange their positions

Let the day call
 Let the night fall
 Why you fear, after all?

The two brothers were quite young.
 They rode on an empty earthen jar like a camel
 Rolled it on either side
 And chanted in chorus:
“Vaad, vaad, vattri... .. Vaad, vaad, vattri”
 They didn't know the meaning of these words then.
 Today they know but wouldn't tell you.

Of remorse
You'd beget nothing
But hope's string
Howsoever faint
Will earn you something

Don't smudge yourself
With too much conceit
That you may collapse

Between you and I
If a line you can cast
You are not lost

You are only tricked by your son
For a cunning man is only beguiled
By his own offspring

A friend told me:
“I’m going to tie the knot with so-and-so”
I said:
“She has a tainted past”
“And mine?”
He asked me.

I remained silent.

If my prosperity brings you ruin,
Then I wonder
What makes you prosperous?

Four learned men gathered somewhere
Music was blaring out of the gramophone
One said:
“Whenever the unlettered men speak they fill the air with
clamors”

Rest of the three nodded in affirmation:

“They are airheads”.

A moment later they struck a conversation

And the song,

Blaring out of the gramophone was barely audible.

Let him fly
Down he will fall
If unfamiliar to the art

The reason is ambitious
To explore the heavens
Even though
It's sailing across a sky.

To remember and to remind
May share something in common
Yet they are unparalleled
Each ravages a different pasture

The loss others suffer
May not bring joy to everyone
But even if you are not envious of others' gain
It will leave you a tad dismayed

I was deep asleep
They shouted at me
I turned open my eyes
And found
It was dark all around

I advised them and said:
“It is the right and straight path to be followed”
Everybody jibed at me
“You have gone waylaid yourself!”
Now I see they are gradually turning to the very path
I am delighted
At last my hard work is paid off.

Someone told me:

“So-and-so has set everything on fire”

I replied:

“He will burn himself”.

Dawn and dusk

Like a mountain

Remain unmoved from their place.

Unless they realize,

They are trapped

Between darkness and light

I try to keep myself away from you.
I fear my presence may stain your dignity.
But I can't because my heart is so close to you.
You should distance yourself from me.

A man is liberated
From one calamity
Only when he falls into another

Cold and winter
Share no common ties
But the heat never concedes.

No matter
How fast blows the wind
It can't soothe the blazing heart

When your own house is on fire
How shamelessly
You speak of other's prosperity?

Anything that throbs
Shall burst open
And anything that wiggle
Shall fall apart

Worth of something is only reckoned
When it goes off the hand
So be watchful of what you have
In your hand

No bridle can curb a camel's strides
Don't ever try.

First friend:

Why don't you sport beards?

Second friend:

I can't hide myself behind them.

(Twenty years later)

First friend:

Hey, you sport beards?

Second friend:

Yes, for the sake of manners.

Life and death

Both lament

And seeks a third thing

But they know not at all

What the thing is

They are out for.

A slip-knot is different from a noose

But

Refrain from either

Anything,

Even seen from the closest angle

Never becomes a minute particle

I wonder

If something is wrong with the eye or the thing.

He beckoned me

But I never went

Now gone

I lament

A fella advised me:

“Whenever you crack laughter

Just look in the mirror”

A piece of gold

You find lying on the road

And begin to wonder, as I say:

"It's rusted"

People with weak eye sight couldn't discern.

But now as their vision is improving.

Gold too is shedding off its dust

You seek peace?

Isn't it sufficed?

You have the liberty to utter

The very word

The thing that you wouldn't like for yourself

How would you wish it for others?

Fathomless is the sea of helplessness

Replies

If I could,
I would embrace
The slithering tides of the azure ocean of Balochi
And dive into its fathomless bottom,
And from its serene and treasured lap
Would gather choicest of pearls,
And each time to reply you,
I would offer you a handful of these pearls.

The dark drizzle of pain and sorrows
Are the gifts from my beloved Hanul.
From my heart I can't efface them.
These pains and sorrows
With their pricks and pangs
Comfort this bedridden sick man.
Such a patient has gone
Way beyond the reach of advice and tonics.

If her ornaments are not borrowed from anywhere
The newlywed bride does not take them off
But I adore her
Even if she is clothed like a widow

Sigh?
Life in utter helplessness
Is itself a never ending sigh
But only if you are alive!

Out of demureness

Don't ever overburden yourself

There isn't any sincere friend around,

Who may extend his shoulder to your crumbled back

It sounds true,

To find fault with others

May stain one's own character

But everybody wishes

That nobody remains

Without fault and flaws

My sanctum

I've erected on the embers of my burnt desires

From which rises a new life

And pulls me into its embrace

For my heavy loaded camel

To pass through a marshland

And for my frail and old horse

To pass over the narrow chasms

Is like facing death

But I am grateful of newly saddled mares and young camels

Indeed they are worthy hires.

If your knucklebone* misses its mark
And your striker continuously goes off target
At last you will be pulled out of the game

I am helpless
Against the strides of the unbridled horse of grief and
sorrows
Yet you expect from me
To chant the songs of mirth and merriment

Your words
Were like goblets of bitter drinks
Anyhow I quaffed them
I wonder
Why you didn't direct these lethal arrows
At the sentries guarding the fountains
No matter
If they caught us
In retaliation

Each tongue utters its words better than the other
Each heart knows its situation better than the other

I wouldn't forsake
The cold and serene fountain of my lips
Just because it has been scorched
By the blazing wind of cruel time

**Knucklebone Game (Majooli) is traditional Balochi game played with the knucklebones of a goat or sheep.*

True,
He who loves to sleep will grow poor
But not everyone is so lucky
To gain without pain.
At this day and age
Sincere and dedicated companions are hard to be found
Fainéants are at the helm
But they can't move unless they are whipped forth
How come these plains wear green?

Other than life

A myriad of agony and distress

Has found repose in my frail heart

I couldn't betray them

Don't ever get dismayed

You too have your share of the same in your heart

If you don't concede

You are overwhelmed by your intransigence

You are right that:

“No panacea for our lethal wounds is there yet”

But we never knew before the nature of our wounds

Once the illness is identified

Its cure eventually comes to fore

Who knows?

The fresh and warm blood of our heart

May heal our wounds

I long for her
Am desperate to hear
A word or a message from her
Had I known
You would extend me your companionship,
I would have told you
To bring some tidings from her
But alas!
You only draw pleasure
In raking my wounds.

They jerked her hem off my hand
But they know not at all
She has her hand on the edge of my soul

The place of tears
Streaming down from my eyes is right in your heart
If you are unaware
It is your own fault

Your grievance is just,
But you are well aware
Where the needlecraft has gone wrong
A tangled thread
Can't be undone
By ripping the stitch

Every man

Hopes to find some company

After all

Hope is what life hinges upon

Yesterday you browbeat me

I wonder

Why today you are crouched in a corner

Don't ever get amazed
At my fortitude
For Baloch is nation that is hardly crushed
Having suffered oppression
For thousands of years
It still lives on
Beneath the feet of tyrants brutes

Your message I received
You still worship wealth and riches
And I regret
You are yet to realize
Your follies

Had you not seen
A glimpse of a beloved
Amid the rows of dazzling lamps and lights
In that illuminating wigwam
Nobody's gaze would've fallen on you
In this gathering

An "epistle" is "half-encounter*"
No wonder if you are amazed
For each novel idea
Evokes wonder and amazement.

Beg not my pardon
For not replying
My absurd and worthless letters
No trumped up excuse is worthwhile

Don't drag me
To the mirthful soiree
Neither the songs of your singers
Can bring my dead heart back to life
Nor they can reinvigorate my old and frail words.

The Fragrant Earth

O, my fragrant motherland!

It's not you

The ravenous wolves have clawed off

Rather it is my heart

They have rent apart

Its wounds are still green

And blood still fresh

It will eventually heal itself.

I'm like those brave youths,
Who the enemy ambushed
And slashed with their swords
Deadly wounded,
They lay in a wilderness
Lethal wolves prowl around
And wait for them to breathe their last
So they could savor their flesh
But I want to tell them
Don't sit and relax yourself
Our esteemed mothers
Will give birth to such brave sons
Over and again

One's hands are red with my blood
Yet he claims innocence
The other, like a jackal
Stole my floor with sack
Yet purports to be a tiger
Third has snatched away a patch of my chador
And now has his eyes on my shirt
Yet he pretends to be a brother
And the fourth one appears
So kind and courteous
That I tremble in fear.

If no flesh stuck to my frail bones
Then what are you so ravenous for?
If my veins are drained of blood
Then what are you thirsty for?

Land? I do have
People? I do have
Language? I do have
Roadmap? I do have
Then why should I be dependent on you?

I know
How to care and cure
My fractured arm
I seek not your sympathy
For I'm all aware
Of your concerns and intentions

They let no one touch
Their nail-clippings
But they are ravenous to tear
Their share of my flesh

Don't sit and relax on our weaknesses

For everybody knows

A giant elephant

Is killed by a little ant.

We need not your palaces.... don't set our huts on fire

We need not your castles.... don't raze our mountains

We need not your godowns.... don't destroy our pastures

We need not your ships.... don't dismantle our boats

We need not your planes.... don't slay our camels

We need not your armors.... don't break our arms

Don't hurt our hearts

The Divine Spirit may curse you.

I am not a piece of castaway bone

Dogs are fighting for

They have cleaved me into pieces

Yet they expect of me to hold them

In high regard and reverence

Granted,

Darkness has come upon us

But it has not descended yet

On our intellect

We are without arms
And enemy's swords hang over our heads
Yet hope we've not lost
Our shadows on the swords
One day we shall cast
Hopelessness must have overwhelmed you
If you laugh

Lamps
Pouring out light
In the palaces
For
Fire is alit in our huts

I know

He is all set to slash my tongue

Otherwise,

Two tongues,

How can concur

In the same mouth!

It is the year 1957

Man has completed

A trip around the earth in just forty five hours

But still your beloved son

With his blistered feet

Travels the pebbled road

Who is to blame?

He is well aware!

One reaps the harvest
And countless goes without a crumb
O, Sun!
But where do you shine?

Enemies' lethal swords
Hang over our heads
Their sharp axes desperate
To rend our bodies
Yet we scuffle
To lunge each other

The yields of your fragrant earth
Sprouted on your kind lap
But I cry tears
For they are red with your blood

O, my motherland!
Soil of thy fields
Like collyrium
Soothes my eyes
How could I let the evil feet
Tread upon thee!

Your sky rains fire
But none of your brave sons
Regret the heat.

I asked someone
Was yesterday better or today?
So he replied:
This is fire and that was ember

The sun has risen overhead
But I am amazed
You still need to be led

People said he sat mourning in the mosque.
I went to see him for he was the symbol of our honor and
pride.
I sought emancipation for Balochi.
But he began to lambast me.
I regretted to discover our leader had gone waylaid.

Your adage:

“A bowl of water worth eternal allegiance”

Has long ran its course

For,

At the cost of your fidelity

The cruel time has trampled your freedom.

You hold no sway on your own house

How shamefully

Your authority you seek

At *assemblée publique*

He moves from place to place
And gives speech for the nation
In sympathy with poor
Sheds his tears
Hurls words of condemnation
At tyrants and oppressors
But at the end
He is found fastened
To his Master's royal chair

I was informed
A new era has dawned
Overjoyed I got there
Only to discover
Another pile of logs
Have been added to the fire

You are not so weak and frail
That whosoever wishes could thrash you
I wonder
If someone has stripped you
Of you 'Balochi Ego and Pride'

Your delightful soirées
Disrupted by tyrant brutes
I sacrifice everything for the day
When you bear out an invincible son
To liberate you
From the clutches of these tyrant oppressors.