



Poetry of
Azerbaijan

A Drop in the Ocean



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Khurshid-Banu Natavan

Khurshid-Banu Natavan (1830-1897) was the Orient's first poetess to have a monument erected to her by her countrymen (in Baku). Natavan was born in Shusha into the family of Garabagh Khan. In 1872, she founded a literary circle in Shusha which united all the progressive poets of the time. Natavan's graceful, subtle verses speak of love and the beauties of nature. But many of her poems are permeated with a tragic sense of loss caused by the death of her young son from tuberculosis.

Lilac

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

Chancing to penetrate into your palace, garden,
○ 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?

* * *





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.

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg

