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AZERBAIJANIAN POETRY

CLASSIC
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TRADITIONAL

Edited by Mirza Ibrahimov

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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 a 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.

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 Medjnun in search of Leili.

I 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 sugar 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.

Translated by *Dorian Rottenberg*

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?

Translated by *Dorian Rottenberg*

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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.

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*