

ASAD MUHAMMAD KHAN

Poems of Leave-Taking^{*}

FRIEND

You are a most remarkable fellow!
I discovered you in 1982

To take before my God
I string a manifold garland of heads
I have strung yours in the one made for that year.

On Judgment Day when I arrive before the Throne
I shall show this wreath and say:
“Here, have a look—I kept a score of all I received
It wasn’t such a bad place after all ...
there were many there who were also good.”

WHEN WAS DEATH NEVER AMONG US

When was Death never among us
But I recall someone
Someone with a life-giving voice
A man of tall stature
who had us in his cover
and would not let us be exposed to the ugliness and
terror of death

Now that he has moved away, one can see

^{*}These are unpublished poems which were sent to the editor as a gift. At the editor’s request Musharraf Ali Farooqi translated them. The original Urdu poems appear elsewhere in the Urdu section. —*Editor*

See
As one will see

MY JARS OF HONEY

Every time I stop to catch my breath
Clouds are pulled away above me
I am driven out again into the sun

In search of days free of strife
I have toiled like a honeybee
And gathered my honey drop by drop
Now, one by one
My jars of honey
are breaking

PEOPLE BEGIN DYING

It is a blessing of advancing years that one begins to
understand people and things
The vagueness of Life begins to diminish in parts

It is a curse of advancing years that things begin to
disperse before one's eyes
And people begin dying ...
The vagueness of Life returns

What I mean to say is this:
Either things and people should not have
been made for me so charming
Or, I should have been made a little more
self-contained
Or, until such time that I remained,
My treasures should not have been touched.

IN JUST SUCH A SEASON

I had wet my hands in a sparkling spring ...
I had seen a rainbow draw its bow of vibrant colors ...
A bird just flew by the window making an utterance ...
Many a year ago a bright-eyed fawn had passed by me in
 just such a manner,
and my daughters broke out clapping with delight ...
The stretch of cloud with the crack has been darned
by the week-old moon with its patch ...
In just such a season Sarwat had written three poems at
 one sitting ...
I hear my collection is at the typesetter's ...
Raees Farogh!
My brother!
I am telling you these things because
I wished to tell you these things
But that day when I arrived at your house
You had left ...

—*Translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi*