

Silent Path

Selected Sindhi Poems

Veena Shringi

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Veena Shringi

Translated into English

Dr. Vinod Asudani



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Tel. : 98101-94729

E-mail : sanbunpublishers@hotmail.com

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Dedication

to my dear parents

Mrs. Satyawati Shringi

and

Pt. Gopi Krishan

*What I deem to be poems or word-pictures,
They are, truly, lines from the holy scriptures,
They take my hearts and soul away,
Where the Beloved over me has sway.*

(Shah Latif)

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Preface

I am happy that my poetry book in English titled 'Silent path' is in your hands. What I have written is a spontaneous thought process over a period of time, conditioned by occurrences, events, literary writings and poetry. These poems are touched by different events, life impacting everyday occurrences and igniting thought processes, culminating in muse. Since it gave rise to the poet in me, I thought of sharing my thoughts with readers at large. Hence I seek your indulgence at my effort.

These poems have been read over a period of time by me at literary events and seminars. Dr. Vinod Asudani who is a reputed poet was kind enough to suggest to me that the effort merits publication in a compiled book form and he will be happy to translate the poems in English. I do not have enough words to thank his efforts, valuable time and erudite translation of my poems, which he felt were worth publishing. I commend it to the readers with the hope that they may find them of interest and in turn

kindle their thought process on issues dealt in poems.

No work is complete unless indebtedness is expressed to persons who inspired and encouraged my creative work. The foremost being my late beloved mother Mrs. Satyawati Shringi and my late dear father Pt. Gopi Krishan who are no more. Yet constantly remain in my thoughts with everlasting gratitude for their encouragement in all my endeavours. There are host of other persons who for sake of brevity cannot be mentioned individually and I acknowledge their contributions in my life.

With these words, I dedicate my poetry book 'Silent path' to my 'Dear Parents'.

Oct 10th, 2014

Veena Shringi

C-84 Inderpuri

New Delhi-110012

Ph: 98107-28440; 98683-77321

Translator's Note

I have always found translation to be a joyful and rewarding activity. Of late I have devoted myself to the translation of Sindhi literary works into English language. I consider it to be my literary duty to render some of the selected Sindhi works into English Language so that worldwide readers can have accessibility to Sindhi literature which is second to none.

When I was hardly six year old I developed an interest to listen to Sindhi programmes aired by different stations of All India Radio. For next fifteen years or so it was part of my routine to listen to Sindhi Programme of the external services of All India Radio daily, then broadcast from 5.30-6.30 in the evening. Veena Shringi was one of the announcers for this programme. I was really charmed by her voice and style that lent the uniqueness to the entire programme. I was especially fond of *Geetan Bhari Kahaani* (Story full of songs) that she presented with all the zeal and fascination.

Then I had little imagined that I would be one day personally interacting with Veenaji who has commanded respect and admiration from millions of listeners from India and Sindh. I consider it to be my privilege that I have been in touch with her for last 15 years. I have got the opportunity to meet her personally and interact with her in many seminars and poets' meets.

Every creative writer has her own range of subjects and her own world view to present them. Veena Shringi is sensible and a socially sensitive poet. She has the keen sense of observation that lends its own significance to her poetry. She has not confined herself to the traditional rules of rhyme and meter. Her poetry is characterized by poetic sense and sensibility. On the one hand, she writes on the traditional subjects of love and betrayal and on the other, her poetry presents a wonderful commentary on changing dynamics of personal and social relationships. She also emerges as a cultural critic in her own accord. She critically examines the changing circumstances of Sindhi community in Post- Independence era. At times, the search for roots and intense desire to preserve Sindhi culture dominates her expression. One cannot miss the profound sense of agony that she shares with all sensitive souls who are solicitous for the decline of love and interest in Sindhi language especially among the young.

Veena Shringi has been active in the field of Sindhi literature for last four decades. She has been closely associated with Delhi Sindhi Akademi and National Council for the promotion of Sindhi language. She is the founder secretary of an organization called “Maarvi” devoted to the promotion of Sindhi literature and culture with special focus on women. She has also the honour of being on the Language Advisory Board of Central Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi in the capacity of its member. She has written in different genres of literature including drama, story, poetry, essays, articles, travelogue, plays, etc. She has also contributed significantly to the field of Children’s Literature.

Her literary output that includes more than twenty books has fetched her many awards and honors. She earned

the rare distinction when her first book was awarded by Central Hindi Directorate in 1984. She was chosen for the prestigious 'Woman of the Year' award in 1994. She is also the recipient of literary awards from Delhi Sindhi Akademi and the National Council for the promotion of Sindhi language. Her books have been admired in Sindh as well. Her literary pursuit is being viewed as an attempt to foster the ties among the people of India and Sindh. She became the proud recipient of G.M. Sayed honour which was true recognition of her lifelong commitment to the cause of promotion of Sindhi culture. She had the honour of interviewing Benazir Bhutto, perhaps the only recorded interview of the late Prime Minister of Pakistan in Sindhi language.

Even today, her creative urge is alive. I am confident that she will continue to serve the cause of literature.

I am sure my humble effort to render some of her selected Sindhi poems into English would be appreciated by the readers.

Date: 01/09/2014

Dr. Vinod Asudani

Associate Professor & Head

Department of Humanities

Shri Ramdeobaba College of

Engineering and Management,

Nagpur

Mobile: 09503143439

Email: hodhumanities@rknc.edu



Dr. V.H. Asudani is an academician, researcher, scholar, poet, writer, social activist, psychologist, counselor, HRD trainer, thinker, and philosopher. He is Associate Professor and Head Department of Humanities, Shri Ramdeobaba College of Engineering and Management, Nagpur. Despite being a visually challenged since birth, he was placed on the merit lists of S.S.C, H.S.S.C and B.A examinations. He is a gold medalist in M.A English, History and Sociology.

He is a prolific writer who writes in English, Hindi, Sindhi and Urdu Languages. He has eight books to his credit including three in Sindhi, one in Hindi and four in English. His anthology of poems (the roots of fire) received Yuva Puraskar from Bharti Bhasha Parishad Kolkata. He is nominated as a member on language advisory board Central Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi and Member Maharashtra State Sindhi Sahitya Akademi, Mumbai.

1. Taking Side

In the darkness of the night
In the dim light
He walked side by side with me.
I had courage not
To turn and look at him
In the ocean of heart
Unseen incidents
Gave rise to unrest
My courage failed me.
Steps refused to move
I asked him
Why you take my side
Having heard this
He felt ashamed
He smiled and said
You and me have promised to take
each other's side in this life
I am your shadow.

2. A Dwarf

By taking long strides
He tries to walk with the bigwigs
But he always seems a dwarf
He is always quick
To have snaps with bigwigs
But alas!
He remains a dwarf

3. A Wandering Corpse in the Open

Today my ideal
Feeling timid
Has sought refuge in my soul.
Devils in form of humans
Have scratched truth and honesty
As if
Flesh has been scratched
From the mummies of Egypt.
Corpses are kept safely for centuries.
Truth and honesty have knocked on the
doors of seventh sky
In the beautiful coffins
Corpses' of human values
Wander in markets.
My ideal
Repeatedly appeals me
Oust me not from your soul
As you have done from your tongue
It is afraid of its existence.
They may dishonor and expose it publically.

4. Mirror

It was yesterday
Mirror felt shy looking at me
When
Life kept pace with time
The same mirror challenged me

5. Commitment

You may or may not be faithful to me
But be faithful to your language
To you
Faithful and faithless are dead words
Faithlessness is a great and dignified word
What kind of this commitment is yours?
You may or may not be faithful to me
But be faithful to your language

6. Age of Applause

It is age of applause
It is a bad time
Sycophants speak loud
It is mine
It is mine
It is mine
No, no!
It is mine
It is mine
Neither is it yours
Nor it is mine
Give up the quarrel
It is plunder
Let's divide fifty fifty.

7. Salvation

Right from beginning to end
You have deceived me
Sometimes in the name of love
Sometimes in the name of formality
Sometimes in the name of personal limitation
Sometimes in the name of self respect.
I have deceived me by repeatedly reposing
my faith in you.
By throwing your betrayal in to the Ganges
I have saved you from the sin of betrayal
And given you Salvation
To your faithlessness
Thus
I have been faithful to my own faith

8. Damaged Diamond

From time to time
With your assurances
With your promises
With your sweet words
You have spread Diamonds all around
When
From the heap of Heart less Diamonds
I tried to pick up a Diamond
It too turned out to be a damaged one
Damaged Diamonds are not to be worn
I threw away the damaged Diamond in to the river

9. A False Tradition

I entreat my Children
To save the Legacy
“Eat, Drink, Dance, sing
But forget not your Language and Legacy.”
Daughter- in- Law replied
“Mummy, worry not,
Have a sound sleep.”
“Shabass! My Child,
You are my Darling Daughter.”
She said
My mother too
Has kept alive Sindhyat in her home
She has kept Lord Jhulelal* in Golden Frame
All admire my daddy’s efforts
We too follow the Suit
We will keep Lord Jhulelal’s Photo in Silver Frame
We will celebrate Chetriochand**
We will play the cassettes of Devotional songs
Having listened to Daughter in law
I sighed
It is truth
Everything is dead
Only a false tradition goes on

* Incarnation of Lord Varun

** Sindhi community’s new year

10. Life

Sometimes life is current of cold water
Sometimes it is murmur of river
Sometimes waves
Sometimes a desert song in the evening.
Struggle to live
Is the music of accident and incident
Loot and plunder hatred
In the dark colorless life
It is attempt to Suicide
Why such helpless afford to live
Again and again
Life is named as liveliness
It is an attempt to allure life

11. Surely Morning Would Come

Surely morning would come
In the cradle of stretchers
My eyes search for
Known faces of human beings.
Birds going back to their nests
Shepherd taking his herd of sheep homeward
Voice of evening prayer from mosque
Jingling of bells from temple
The voice of Shah's poem
We kept on listening

12. Boundary

When I found myself in love
Relations retorted
You are Hindu
And he is Muslim
Our religion and rituals are different
His faith is different
I replied
Lord and creator is one
Creation is one
Allah Ishwar is one
Why should I not love?
This is the message from Geeta and Quran.
Mother responded
You ride the blind horse....love
Religion is boundary
Trespass it not.
You are Immature
Allah is love
Ishwar is love
Love song I hum always
Fear of
Changing time and condition
Begin to oppress
The heart of lover
Religion and rituals

Knocked the door of his heart
Distance went on increasing
Conflict of religion and rituals
Threw the passion of love into
The waters of Ganges and Yamuna
What kind of norm it is of love
To be committed to love.

13. Eyes Witnessed Murder

One day

I saw a strange scene in the garden

Trees and plants were moving in the breeze

The fragrance of flowers soothed the heart

The Heart was charmed by the sweet song of Cuckoo

My vivacious heart wandered from flower to flower

When an instinct arose in heart to pluck the flower

The barbaric board in front of me said

“Plucking of flowers is strictly prohibited

One can look at beauty of flowers

Feel the fragrance”

Suppressing the desire to pluck the flower

I was lost in enjoying the colorful creation

All of a sudden

A bumblebee entered the garden

He went around every flower

Finally planted himself on the white rose

Sucked it's a nectar and flew away.

None stopped him

None prohibited him

My eyes were witness to this murder

I too didn't do anything

But remained a mute spectator

14. A Short Lived Youth

In the lanes of Brundavan
Chanting Radhe Krishna Hare Hare
Neither was Lord attained nor salvation
Ho mother
In a lullaby you had wished
"Ho my child!
You will be a queen
A prince will come and take you away."
Your sweet words kept on ringing in my ears
I consented to marry.
I began to enjoy the spring of life
Alas! It was short lived
Suddenly
There was lightening in the sky
Deafening sound of thunder was heard
Tall waves rose on the ocean
Terror of Tsunami loomed large on the horizon.
Life and life partner both were lost.
Whose curse it was
The queen had become a widow
In the hope of salvation
Chanting Radhe Khrina Hare Hare
Radhe Krishna hare Hare
I wandered
In the lanes of Brundavan
Neither was Lord attained nor salvation
Ho mother

In a lullaby you had wished

"Ho my child!

You will be a queen

A prince will come and take you away."

I kept on chanting

Radhe Khrishna Hare Hare, Radhe Krishna Hare

I could get neither Radhe nor Krishna

They say,

"This world is a dream."

"Brundavan is abode of Lord Krishna

You are blessed here."

15. A Prisoner

My vivacious heart
Wanders like a deer.
My Fancy
Flying high like a free bird
Touching the snowy cliffs of Everest
And high skies
I know not to which desert
It will take me to.
Tortured by extreme thirst
I know not
Where it will lie-down lifeless
Time has decreed my punishment
I have to be separated from my native land
In order to live
In free land with freedom
Two nations theory has to be accepted.
Even enjoying freedom
I repeatedly ask myself,
“Why am I not me?”
I get an instant answer
You are a prisoner of land
Yes, I am a prisoner of conscience.

16. Victory and Defeat

Life competes with time
In this battlefield of triumph and trials
It is to be seen
Whether agonized life
Wins victory

17. A Lamp

Oil is committed to wick
Wick is committed to oil
I cooperate with both of them
Together they lend light to the world
But alas! None of them is faithful to me.
All night
Oil helps wick to burn
Every evening
Wick appears in new apparel
Every evening and every night
I stand by them
But alas! None of them cares for me
Someone remonstrated
Darkness pervades below the lamp
I remain incomplete
The world gets light
Darkness pervades below the lamp.

18. A Word from Heart

If I can be with myself
I can pour my heart
I can share sorrows with you
But when you have snatched away
all the rights from my life
Who shall I complain to
In some corner of heart smiling, sobbing, emotions
Pearls in eyes
Remained hidden there
In the flow of life
I floated away all feelings
In the flow of time
I floated away
The cool moonlight and pleasant night

19. History of Ruins is not Written

While turning the pages of history
I wish to set right my own history
Ocean of memories
Peeps through the windows of mind
Rendering nights replace
And days restless
Slowly began to recall
A courtyard and cattle
Fields and forms
Woman drawing water from well
Chirping of the birds
Murmurs of the river
Sweet songs of a nightingale
Younger sister gathering fruit
A child playing in the monsoon
Men holding rings of camels
I wanted to preserve every page of my history
Carefully collecting everything
I proceeded to the critics for their comments
Critics having looked at my collection of pages
Were astonished and they asked
"Which nation's history is it?"
I replied "It is the history of ancient civilization".
Through his specs the critic looked at me and asked
"Are you the inheritor of Mohenjo-Daro?"
"Yes I am a heroine from the valley of Sind"
He blessed me and said
"The history of ruins is not to be written"

20. With the Turn of History

With the turn of history
In the whirlwinds of world
Many races rose and fell
They continued to be exploited
In the name of greatness and glory
But
The race which suffered the tyranny of time
Has been witnessed by you and me
You and me have neglected its suffering
The time has turned a blind eye to it

21. A Bird with Wings Clipped

I am a bird with wings clipped
I desired to do something in life
I wanted to be different from man
I wanted to have my own identity
But the heartless hunter
Attacked my nest
And clipped my wings

O proud nightingale!
Disturb me not
With my wounded wings
I wonder across the nations
Everyone sympathizes with me
“Look she is a poor Koel with wings clipped”
I live unknown
I will go away from here unlamented.

22. A Fragmented Life

I have got a fragmented life
A fragment confined to studio
A fragment within four walls of home
A fragment in social activities
A fragment in literary activities
My life is incomplete
Drags on in all the four directions
Alas! This helplessness.

Sometimes I cry
Sometimes I get furious
Alas! I have got a fragmented life.

23. Silent Path

This helplessness
This silent path
This unseasonal rain
These memories
Hidden stories in heart
Enthusiastic days lurking in eyes
Devotion to Shah, Sachal and Sami
Memories of ruins of Mohenjo-Daro
Kinjhar*- sadh- belo**
Flames continue to burn in the silent paths
You and I walk in loneliness
These are historical memories
They will continue to guide
Posterity to come
This helplessness
This silent path

* Lake

** Religious place

24. Loneliness

In the garden of life
In autumn and in spring
Though unwilling
My loneliness and I
Keep each other's company
Thus, we oblige each other my loneliness and I.

25. Peacock Dances with Dirty Feet

May I get a cool shade in life?
Where I can sit and quench the thirst of inner artist.
There doesn't seem such hope
Peacock dances with dirty feet
I have been punished
To walk on hot sand

26. Conscience

He has wrapped his conscience in velvet
He puts it in a box
To keep it safe in bank locker
His hungers only for wealth.

27. A Companion

O moon!

Your moonlight

Sometimes makes me restless

Sometimes infuses energy in me.

You are same

I am same

Then what is it

Sometimes you make me cry

Sometimes you soothe.

You journey through the night

I journey through sun and rain in life.

When I get tired

I make you my companion in moonlight.

No, I like this not

Either be my companion in the struggle of life

Or make me your comrade in your journey.

28. Cupid

There dwell Laxmi and Saraswati
How I can step in
When Laxmi goddess of wealth
and Saraswati goddess of learning
Are already present.

O cupid! You can have an alliance with goddess of wealth
No do not do so
Your job is to promote love
You can raise your image at International level
By promoting only love
You can follow the policy of non-alignment.

29. Struggle

The joy that dwells in the struggle of life
Is hard to find in an easy one
The world has created many troubles for life
But I have instead of rejecting accepted you
Instead of hating you loved you.

But you with casteism have attacked me
But I have put my faith in secularism
In the name of social customs
You have exploited the weaker sex
But I have put my faith in humanism.

With my delicate hands
I have taken a pledge to break the iron chains
The joy that dwells in the struggle of life
Is hard to find in an easy one
The world has created many troubles for life
But I have instead of rejecting accepted you.

30. A Thirsty Soul

I am neither Amrita Pritam nor Kamala Das
So you find not sensational events in my life
I am a thirsty soul of a bird
wandering in desert
It searches for a drop of water
to quench its thirst and gasps.

31. A Darling Daughter

Even in the edifice of affluent
I observed dearth of dollars
for darling daughter
Such heartlessness hurts my heart.

32. Death

Who is there?
Why don't you come in?
Why do you peep through in this dark night?
I am not permitted by time
To come in or knock on the door
I am death
I wait to make you my companion.

33. War

You and me travel on the same path
You have raised your voice to uphold the truth
I have fought against untruth
The only difference between you and me
Is that you have fought on one front
I
Being a weaker sex
Have to fight on two fronts.

34. Democracy

Democracy is the name of freedom of expression
Raising slogans in processions
Availing financial assistance
For selfish ends
Is not the freedom of expression
But it is black marketing and robbery.

35. Love

Love is like a holy drop
What's it?
It lives only for a moment
My heart fails to understand
Your this philosophy
It is the relationship of souls
Once tied cannot break up.

36. Conference of Crows

One day

A conference was called by crows

Each and every bird was invited

They proposed

Every decision would be unanimous

Owl would be chairman

Poetry recital would be arranged

Sparrow, parrot all had to contribute a lot

Sparrows will bring some grains

Eagles would arrange for food

Pigeons will convey message

Parrots will conduct proceedings

Nightingale will entertain with sweet songs

At this Koel cried

We also want to participate

Crows retorted

Don't be foolish

Do you mean to make the show flop

We want to make the show hit

If you believe in our wisdom not

Ask honorable chairman

All crows cawed and surrounded Koel

You fools challenge our wisdom not

This is a unanimous decision

The conference of crows is successful

Let the unity among crows live long.

37. Inheritors

Demons dwell in slums
Or citizens in cities
Where animals
Birds
People crowd together
These orphans
Are the inheritors of my free nation.

38. Journey Through a Long Night

Upon closing eyelids
Your image lurked in my eyes
Upon opening eyelids
Your image hovered over my head and heart
It was the night
When we met last
Then we walked the separate paths
But our destination and imagination were one
Imagination and destination were one
Even when separated
Even when lonely
We were together
In this state of
Closing and opening eyelids
We journeyed through the long night.

39. An Ordeal

At every turn of life,
At every sojourn of life,
At every confluence of life,
One has to pass through an ordeal by fire.
The scanning eyes of lust,
Are shredding the fabric of bashfulness.
To whom shall I assure of my chastity?
Because I am 'Seeta of Kalyug',
When 'Seeta of Satyug' had to,
Walk through the test of fire,
To prove her chastity,
Who am I?
A 'Seeta of Kalyug'!

40. A Thickly Leafy Tree

I am,
Shade of,
A thickly leafy tree.
Every passerby,
Every traveler,
Gets respite under me.
Yet,
Every one has peeled off my barks.