

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Noshi Gilani**  
**- poems -**

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# Noshi Gilani(14 March 1964)

Noshi Gilani (Urdu: نوشی گیلانی ) (born in 1964 in Bahawalpur, Pakistan) is an Urdu poet of international fame and a former academic from the Bahawalpur University, Punjab, Pakistan.

She is one of the leading Urdu poets in Pakistan and has successfully published five collections of poetry.

In 2008, her poetry was translated into English and her poems were read in the UK, with the Poetry Translation Centre's World Poets' Tour.

She hosted a tribute to folk singer Pathanay Khan, sponsored by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA).

## <b> Personal Life </b>

Noshi Gilani settled in San Francisco USA in 1995 but after her marriage to Saeed Khan she decided to move to Australia. She married Saeed Khan, an Australian-based Urdu poet on 25 October 2008 and they currently reside in Sydney Australia. It was reported by her mother Mrs. Sarwar Gilani Sahiba, a professor of Urdu and Persian languages and literature, died in Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

## <b> Works </b>

The candour and frankness of her highly-charged poems is unusual for a woman writing in Urdu and she has gained a committed international audience, performing regularly at large poetry gatherings in Pakistan, Australia, Canada and the US. Unknown outside the Pakistani community, the translations here mark her introduction to an English-speaking audience.

She is a member of younger generation of female poets. Her experience of living in US shows a notable impact on her significant number of poems. Living through Diaspora has increased the complexity of her poems and reinforced her sense of female identity and introduced a new revolution against restraint creative writers in Pakistani society.

# A Change Of Season

A change of season  
Exposes something  
Hidden in her fear:  
A way across that island  
Lit by the pain in her eyes

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# Can Someone Bring Me My Entire Being?

Can someone bring me my entire being?  
My arms, my eyes, my face?

I am a river flowing into the wrong sea  
If only someone could restore me to the desert

Life goes on but I want no more from it  
Than my childhood, my firefly, my doll

My vision does not admit this new season  
Take me back to my old dream

Of finding one face among the many in my city  
Whose eyes can read deep into me

My life has been a boat in a whirlpool for so long  
O god, please let it sink or drift back to the desert.

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# How Hard It Is To Manage Life

How hard it is to manage life  
As hard as making you my friend

There might be a whole new story  
Please get to the point

I might drown in these shadows  
Please light your eyes!

I am compelled by how it feels  
To make you sad yet unaware of your sadness

One must give blood from the heart  
Watch out! Do not write poetry

How hard it is for the self  
To deny what it all means!

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# I Say Nothing Anywhere

I say nothing anywhere, I am silent  
While you, as if my lord, order me silent

The story has something to say  
But its characters are silent

Blame rains down  
Yet, like a stone, I am silent

Till now the killer has been quite safe  
Because the walls and doors are silent

People demand the killer's whereabouts  
But the village guards are silent.

The same chained evening, same time of year  
But why this time is everyone silent?

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# Insight

I have a feeling  
That wherever I glance  
There will be disaster

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# Kept On Compromising On Life

Kept on compromising on life  
kept reciting poetry, kept blazing

I burned down with the lamps  
Your arrival was only a dream

I cannot explain how much I remember  
Of you in this monsoon

City people! Did the breeze convey  
Our village of flower, scent and lantern?

You befriended the firefly  
We kept searching for stars

Those who could not know union  
kept writing the story of separation

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani



# Last Conversation With The Sky

Although my feet are worn to shreds  
My journey ended nowhere  
Because I am incapable  
I have neither a lamp nor the ability  
To search for a way ahead  
This is all so difficult  
Such strain that my eyes  
Weep not tears but blood  
Such is my helplessness  
O my lord, my honoured one!  
A companion  
A companion

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# Please Bring A Token Home From Each Journey

Please bring a token home from each journey  
Along with your worn-out feet, bring butterfly wings

I am writing the story of our companionship  
If you can, please bring a noble word

I hope fidelity will not exhaust us  
That we can renew this romance

That if in some enchanted place, you are captured  
by a moonlit face, you will carve a likeness, bring it home

Your passion for travel takes you away from home  
Please do not bring back regret like dust in your pockets

It is strange air that we all breathe  
May your eyes fill when you come home

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# The Breeze Rewrites

Now that the breeze has learnt to write  
She can choose to rewrite autumn as spring  
To redefine spring as waiting

Now that the breeze has learnt to write  
She can transform the urge to travel into a curse  
And curse those sticking to a faithful path

Now that the breeze has learnt to write  
Coming together is described as moving apart  
Love, portrayed as a weakness  
A tree, something that cannot give shade

Now the breeze can extinguish our lanterns  
Give credence to dusk, dismiss unreliable dawn

Oh all you who teach the breeze to write!  
Now that the breeze has learnt to write

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# The Flower Is Torn At The Heart

The flower is torn at the heart  
Its fragrance befriends the breeze

Who can tell who destroyed it?  
We have spent this evening under sentence

No one has to go on this journey  
I can still turn round, if you want

Every street in this city is asleep  
It's my turn to stay awake

In the uncertain view of this evening  
The whole thing wavers

How can we honour our union  
When my heart is gripped by fear of separation

My heart desires above all  
That we make this evening ours

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# The Wind, Too, Can Change Direction

Do you know?  
The wind, too, can change direction  
The birds might leave their nests at dawn  
And forget to find their way back  
Sometimes in spring the tree branches out  
Before autumn the leaves separate  
Like the paths my life takes  
Blown this way and that like dust  
The strange smile taking shape on your lips  
Says 'So, what's new?'  
Of everything in the story, you are new  
Do you know?  
But how could you know this?  
Your encampment of love and faith  
Could blow away like dust  
The wind, too, can change direction.

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# There Was A Heart That Burnt Out: Light

There was a heart that burnt out: light  
Light O god, O god light

Flower, perfume, stars, breeze: light  
These are your names, no matter how we shape you

When afternoon rose on the evening's horizon  
Who was it in my heart who said: light

Now there is no point in adorning the stars  
The season of meeting him is gone: light

Dawn broke on a dream in which  
I wrote simply by looking: light

The two curses we are trapped between:  
How we live in darkness, how we imagine: light

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# There Was A Time When I Loved Alone

There was a time when I loved alone  
Without dream or friend

There was a time when your love was untrue  
When I endured such torment that

I don't remember anything now but  
There was a river ... or a villa ...

You confused my heart so much  
That love shrank to a riddle

Yet had I been the slightest bit disloyal  
You would almost have taken my life

Time is like the snakes  
Devouring jasmine in my courtyard

Who can I tell, this sad evening  
How bright the line of fate once was on my hand?

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# This Prisoner Breathes

I am trapped in a jungle of voices  
In which I cannot spread my wings  
Even so, you insist that I take flight  
You will not set me free  
And are so offended by my point of view  
That you stitch my eyelashes closed  
You insist that I must explain the weather  
Terrorise my feet with echoes of chains  
You say that my desire to be free  
Is too much for your precious jungle  
Yet you set fire to the boat carrying my feelings  
Surround this sea of feeling with desert sand  
But listen!  
Whatever happens ...  
Suffocation, torture, desert or jungle  
This prisoner breathes

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani



# To Catch Butterflies

I once thought it easy  
To seize fragrance  
To capture the evenings of monsoon  
While sitting at home  
To clutch starlight in my hand

I once thought it easy  
To seize fragrance  
To light the flower that is my courtyard  
With the whisper of fireflies  
To hold his memory in my dreaming eyes  
Like roses cast upon a lake  
I had thought it easy...

How I fooled myself! How could it happen?  
'To catch butterflies, you have to go far enough

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani

# You Know Only Dreams

You know only dreams  
We know the danger of dreams

[Translated by Nukhbah Langah and Lavinia Greenlaw]

Noshi Gilani