

Tapan Barua's Poems

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The agony of disappearance

The man whom I always met
At the Sunday market,
Is seen no more.
The man whom I used to meet at the bank counter
While standing in the queue
Is also seen no more.
The man who used to sit in the back rows
Listen to and appreciate poems at the poetry meets
Is also seen no more.
The man who used to make a phone call
Though after lengthy gaps just to say 'How are you'
Is heard of no more.
How can I ask them today
Who despite being no kith or kin
Were so intimate;
They who have left for good
Were so closely related.

Yes! without us being least aware
Who has to depart and at what hour
The reason remains confined within a question-mark;
Why one has to pass away
The reason remains confined within a dormant tear-drop of the heart.

Perhaps one day in this way we'll all disappear
From the midst of our near and dear ones
From some mart,
From some unmoving queue before a counter,
From some poets' meet where no smile beams,
From the silence of a quiet switched-off mobile.
After the departure would any reason remain
For someone to go out looking for someone?

The face of war

After ravages what's the relevance of the ballads of bereavement
After death what's the job of the title of the martyr?
The wildfire of gunpowder-missiles,
Bomb blasts, the roar of war-ships,
The threats of using chemical weapons!
Who's slain who survives
Who are friends who are foes
What's victory what's defeat?

Early morn when a pigeon asked over and over again
Helplessly I said—
This is a monster's face!
Unheard are the voices of a mother or a brother

This after all is the face of war
This is the most horrific and loathsome face
Of mankind!

Translated by Krishna Dulal Barua

Krishna Dulal Barua is a prominent translator and writer based in Nagaon, Assam. He received the Katha Award for translation in 2005.

Tapan Barua is an Assamese poet based in Tengakhat, Dibrugarh. He has fourteen collections of poems to his credit. *Anunadit Shabdabor* (1923) is his latest collection of poems.