

You Have Beguiled My Mind

*Baul Songs of Shah Abdul Karim**
Translated into English by Amitendu Bhattacharya

Allāhu Allāhu Allāhu

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Let Your Name rend the air

Let people everywhere offer You prayers

I'm a wretch, don't live apart from me

If You don't make me do it, how can I worship Thee?

Let Your brilliance pierce every heart and soul

Let Your attributes make the blind see

And once again make them whole

You are the Merciful, the Divine One

I'm the ignoramus

Let me live or let me die but

In You I trust

Prophet Yunus drew power from Your Name

And lived forty days in the belly of a whale

Your lustre made solid mountains crumble

Nabi Musa found solace in meditating on Your Name

King Nimrod against Nabi Ibrahim conspired

Tying Ibrahim's limbs, catapulted him to a bonfire

It was the power of Your Name

That doused the flames

You were the oarsman of Noah's Ark

When the land was overrun by flood

Thrown into a well who but You

Should come to Nabi Yusuf's rescue

In Your Name Ibrahim plunged
The dagger into Ishmael's back
It was You who gave the son an armour
And repulsed the attack

Do give me shelter for I'm a sinner
Begs Abdul Karim:
You are Ghafoor's Rahim, the Forgiving
Do take me under Your wing

How Shall I Know You

How shall I know you, O precious guide of mine?
Neither granting a glimpse nor brooking intimacy
How long shall we stay far apart like this?

How long shall I be a captive in the cage of illusions?
Continually think of seeking you leaving everything behind
Hope to find redemption before the dying of the light
How shall I know you, O precious guide of mine?
Don't find you in incantations and charms
Move away from you the more I read scriptures
Wonder in my heart in which ocean you're dispersed
How shall I know you, O precious guide of mine?

Says Baul Abdul Karim, shower your kindness on me
In your hall of audience with bowed head and folded hands
I make an appeal: submit yourself to your devotee
And abide in me till eternity

You're Always Nigh

Make me live or make me die
Do me just this one favour:
That I should never forget

You're always nigh
Day and night, in sleep and in dream
Merging soul with soul
In this dark night if You take me along
Revealing your attributes, O Merciful
My devotion to You should never dilute
Mad about You, I repose my faith in You alone
You the friend of the poor and the destitute
If You ever seek my news, I'll attain immortality
Drinking the ambrosia of Your Name, O Merciful
Forgetting You I should never be blissful

For Your sympathy for the living
Your Name has universal currency
Abdul Karim says, let me stay at Your feet
Don't push me away, O Merciful
Allow me to savour Your presence sweet

I Had No Inkling

I had no inkling of what my friend had in mind
Showering love, he has now abandoned me
Listen, O companion, I have no restraint
If I can't see you, I'll die
Tell me how else can I survive?

Our tales flood my memory
He left me and I didn't see
Thought he'll forever be there for me
And never flee

Baul Abdul Karim says
I burn in the blaze of separation
Dearest friend didn't take me along
When he moved on

Krishna Comes to Radha's Arbour

Krishna comes to Radha's arbour
Sees honeybees sucking nectar from flowers
Prances in peacock robes
Radhika the worshipper

Flower garlands in her friends' hands
Radha arrives, pure, resplendent and calm
Her body perfumed and sandalbalmed
Krishna puts a garland round her neck
Lights up the bridal chamber
Krishna and Radha exchange garlands
Dance with abandon all her friends
Witnessing their game of ardour

Sing, dance and make merry them all
The lovers of Krishna's play of devoted love
Did they care for family, clan or honour
Lalita or Vishaka?

You have Beguiled My Mind, O *Baula* Songs

For all that you have given me, what shall I give you in return?
You have beguiled my mind, O *Baula* songs

After entering my heart when you gave a nudge
Taking the *ektara* with me, alongside you I trudged
Without you I'm restless, I've offered you my soul
You have beguiled my mind, O *Baula* songs

The way to be united with you I think of continually
My thoughts I express by stringing together word and melody
In love, the river-waters of the heart instead of downstream flow
upstream

You have beguiled my mind, O *Baula* songs

Congenial poets have sung numerous mushy songs
I present the picture of the land's sorrows and wrongs
The demands of the vulnerable

Karim wants the reign of peace, You have beguiled my mind, O *Baula* songs

* Shah Abdul Karim (1916-2009) is the preeminent Baul singer and song writer of recent times. Throughout his life he lived in Ujan Dhol village by the Kalni river in Sylhet division of Bangladesh. Born to poverty and hardship, he earned his living by becoming an agricultural help. As a shepherd he had ample time to jot down his passing thoughts and emotions. Nobody exactly knows the number of songs he had composed but the figure is estimated to be around fifteen hundred. He received his spiritual and musical training from Shah Ibrahim Mastan Baksh. His songs transcend the narrow demarcations of religious, political and national boundaries, and are shining examples of the rich heritage of devotional poetry that thrives in the land of Bengal even today. In 2001, Shah Abdul Karim was honoured with the Ekushey Padak, the second highest civilian award in Bangladesh, for his contributions to folk music and culture.