

ALI SARDAR JAFARI

## My Journey\*

Then a day will come  
When the eye's lanterns die,  
The lotus of hands wither  
Every butterfly of speech, of voice  
Fly from the tongue's petal.  
In the depth of a black sea  
All faces  
As if blooming from buds  
As if laughing like flowers  
Will fade.  
The circling of blood, the heart's pounding  
All music shall sleep  
And on the velvet blue air  
This iridescent gem  
This my heaven, my land  
Its mornings, its evenings  
Not known, or understood  
Will weep like dew on  
This human handful of dust.  
Everything forgotten  
From memory's lovely house of idols  
Everything taken  
Then no one will ask  
Where is Sardar in this gathering  
But I shall come here again  
I shall speak through the mouths of children  
I shall sing with the speech of birds  
When seeds smile in the earth

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\* "Mērā Safar," from the poet's *Kulliyāt-e Sardār Ja'fārī*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: National Council for Promotion of Urdu, 2005), 240–42.

And shoots tease with their fingers  
The layers of soil  
I shall open my eyes again  
In every leaf and bud  
With greenery in my palm  
I will weigh the drops of dew  
I will be the tint of henna, the ghazal's rhythm,  
The very mode of verse  
Like the cheek of a fresh bride  
Twinkling behind every veil  
When cold winds bring Autumn leaves  
Under young feet  
From the dry leaves will rise  
The sounds of my laughter  
All the earth's golden streams  
All the blue lakes of sky  
Will be filled with me  
And the world will see  
Every tale is my story  
Every lover here is Sardar  
And every beloved, Sultana.  
I am a fleeing moment  
In time's enchanted house  
A restless drop  
Always falling  
From the flask of time past  
Into the future cup  
I sleep and wake  
And sleep again  
I am a centuries-old game  
I die, to be immortal.

—*Translated by M.A.R. Habib*