

The Grass Is Like Me

— More Poems By Kishwar Naheed

translated by Baidar Bakht and Derek Cohen

An anthology of poems by Kishwar Naheed, in English and Hindi, will be brought out this year by Manushi Prakashan



The Grass Is Like Me

*The grass is like me.
It learns to love life
Only after feet have crushed it.
By becoming wet
Does it mean to show
Modesty's warmth, or
Passion's heat?*

*The grass is like me.
As it lifts its head
The mower
Promising to turn it to velvet
Levels its lifting top.*

*You really labour
To put women down,
But the desire to grow
Dies neither in the earth
Nor in the woman.*

*Hear me.
The old idea to make a track was
good
These who shy from the heat of
courage
Will still be trampled
To make tracks for authority.
But they are straw,
Not grass.
The grass is like me*

The First Priority of Third Class Citizens

*We need to speak
Even with our mouths on the ground.
My innocence pleads,
Mouth on the ground,
That fear is laid
On all pathways of life
At the command of the city's ruler.*

*Not many who speak
Are left in the town.
We really should cut off their heads
And treasure them as souvenirs.
Such people will not be seen again.*

*I swear by God
That even when my eyes become
blisters
I will still cry,
Since cries grow in my fields.*

*The stagnant quiet in my courtyards
Robs my children of laughter.*

*My office boy refuses the uniform,
The symbol of a third class citizen.
The matter is beyond uniforms and
symbols.
Whether the symbol*

*Of the severed tail of the lizard
or the meaning of the stench of
blood,
All are names for fear.*

*We are exiles in our city.
We, soulless live beings,
Are devoid of even the will to speak.*

Story of Noah's Times

*If you don't want to see ugliness,
Then close one eye.
Close the other.
If you hear a hurt cry
Close both ears.
When an echo gets trapped in the
ears,
You dare not open them.
The danger of the flood is still quite
far.
The flood control is at work
In the underground passages.
If it is forbidden
To read the witting on a paper,
Read the tree leaves.
The earth too has a zeal
To drink man like wine
And get drunk*