

Poem
14

My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last!

(Bullah Shah Translated by A. R. Luther)

Words and Expressions

breathing his last	–	on death bed; dying	آخری سانس لے رہا ہے
mere aghast	–	horrified; appalled	خوفزدہ
decamp	–	depart; leave	رخصت ہونا
shriek	–	cry; scream; yell	آدہ زاری، ماتم، چیخ و پکار
flare up	–	burn; burst out; erupt	بھڑکنا، اٹھنا
charming	–	pleasant; delightful; fascinating; appealing	خوشگوار، مسحور کن
sight	–	scene; spectacle	منظر - نظارہ
dwelt	–	live	رہنا
across	–	in the next world; hereafter	آخرت، حیات بعد از موت

Multiple Choice Questions

Choose the correct synonym.

- My neighbour friend **breathing his last**!
A) on death bed B) losing hope
C) suffering D) crying for help
- What should I do, O God! **Aghast**!
A) amazed B) ashamed
C) disgusted D) horrified
- He is to **leave**, now can't remain.
A) spare B) depart
C) relax D) linger
- He is to leave, now can't **remain**.
A) abstain B) cure
C) manage D) stay
- On every side **decamping** talk.
(Board 2010)
A) shrieking B) detaining
C) departing D) devastating
- At every place are **shrieks** in stock.
A) horrors B) deaths
C) cries D) pranks
- Flare up** flames in heart to height
A) burn B) alight
C) horrify D) creep
- For, **visible** is not charming sight
A) distant B) observable
C) vague D) veiled
- For, visible is not **charming** sight.
A) tragic B) pleasant
C) repugnant D) decamping
- Without His love, Bullah in **loss**.
A) anger B) loneliness
C) harm D) privilege
- Can hardly **dwelt** here or across.
A) depart B) forget
C) live D) deal
- Can hardly dwell **here** or across.
A) in this horror B) in this loss
C) in this tragedy D) in this world
- Can hardly dwell here or **across**.
A) in the next world
B) in another society
C) in another company
D) in another shock

Answers

1. A	3. B	5. C	7. A	9. B	11. C	13. A
2. D	4. D	6. C	8. B	10. C	12. D	

Questions and Answers

Q.1 When does a person remember Allah?

Ans. A person remembers God when he is in trouble or when he is up against a painful situation.

Q.2 What is the effect of the death scene?

Ans. It creates fear and terror in us and at the same time makes us recall the death of our near and dear ones. It reminds us, time and again, that we are death-devoted.

Q.3 What is the effect of the death of Bullah Shah's friend on him? (Board 2015)

Ans. Bullah is extremely distressed on the death of his beloved friend. This sense of loss has darkened his entire world. Finally he seeks God's grace against the pangs of separation and the horrors of death.

Q.4 Why does a person feel helpless on the death of a friend?

Ans. He feels helpless as he cannot undo the reality of death and his love and affection cannot save his friend from departing the world. There can never be a tragedy greater than seeing, helplessly, one's near and dear one suffering from pain and nearing death.

Q.5 "Flare up flames in heart to height." Comment.

Ans. The poet feels anxious and distressed on seeing the sad spectacle of the departure of his loved one from this world. The death scene heightens the feelings of distress and desolation.

Q.6 Without whose love is Bullah in loss?

Ans. Bullah feels himself in loss without the love of Allah Almighty. He believes that only God's grace can help him against the horrors of death.

Q.7 What conclusion does the poet draw in the last three lines of "My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last"?

OR

What is the central idea of "My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last"?

Ans. The poet concludes that the man having no love for God is bound to live a restless life in the world here and the world hereafter. Only God's grace can support him in the trials of both the worlds.

Q.8 Who is the author of "My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last"?

Ans. Bullah Shah, a great Punjabi mystic, has written this poem.

Explanation with Reference to the Context

Stanza 1:

My neighbour friend breathing his last!
What should I do, O God! Aghast!
He is to leave, now can't remain,
Companions ready to catch the train.
What should I do, O God! Aghast!

Reference:

These lines have been taken from the poem "My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last" a Punjabi Kafi by Bullah Shah (rendered into English by A.R. Luther).

Context:

The poet experiences a sense of great loss and distress at the departure of his friend from this world. But he finds comfort in God's love against this loss. He says that only God's grace can support him in the trials of both the worlds.

Explanation:

Bullah Shah finds it hard to believe that his beloved friend, his neighbour and above all his spiritual mentor is no more. The very departure of his neighbour friend puts him in deep melancholy. He looks helpless against this loss. The death of his loved one reminds him of his own death and the death of other loved ones. There is wailing and crying all around. The near and dear ones of the departed soul mourn the death, making the scene very pathetic. These shrieks make Bullah terrified and he finds himself unequal to the horrors of death. In his helplessness, Bullah Shah turns to Allah, the Creator, for strength and support in this hour of grief and terror.

Stanza2:

Flare up flames in heart to height,
For, visible is not charming sight
What should I do, O God! Aghast!

(Board 2010)

Reference:

These lines have been taken from the poem "My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last!" a Punjabi Kafi by Bullah Shah (rendered into English by A. R. Luther).

Context:

The poet experiences a sense of great loss and distress on the departure of his friend from this world. But he finds comfort in God's love against this loss. He says that only God's grace can support him in the trials of both worlds.

Explanation:

The loss of a beloved friend makes the poet feel lonely and distressed. His heart burns in the fire of separation. These flames can only be extinguished with the soothing presence of the friend.

In the Islamic Sufi tradition, Allah's grace and benevolence are the sole motive and refuge for the Muslims. A Sufi who seeks Allah's love would seek the guidance of some chosen one. Bullah Shah was a disciple of Hazrat Shah Inayat Qadri (R.A.). The above lines express Bullah Shah's devotion to Shah Inayat Qadri. He cannot bear the separation from his "*Murshad – the spiritual mentor*" as he is the only access to Allah.

Stanza 3:

Without His love, Bullah in loss,
Can hardly dwell here or across.
What should I do, O God! Aghast!

Reference:

These lines have been taken from the poem "My Neighbour Friend Breathing His Last!" a Punjabi Kafi by Bullah Shah (rendered into English by A. R. Luther).

Context:

The poet experiences a sense of great loss and distress at the departure of his friend from this world. But he finds comfort in God's love against this loss. He says that only God's grace can support him in the trials of both worlds.

Explanation:

The poet looks upon life as a very transient thing, so delicately hanging on a breath. In these lines the poet says that all the losses in life can be borne only if we are in love with God. It is the love of God Almighty, His grace and mercifulness, which is needed for salvation in the next world and for the redemption of our sins. Bullah Shah says that man must aspire for the love of God which is most needed in this life and hereafter. We should do pious deeds to seek Allah's help. Nothing, other than this, is of any use when we count on the last breath.