MUHAMMAD IQBAL

On River Ravi's Bank

Evening's calm descends.
The river absorbed in its song.
I can't express what I feel.
The water music, like a litany, carries me along, enticing me to kneel down and pray. The world appears a holy place to me.
Although I stand beside the river
I have lost my bearings.
I don't know where I am.

The hoary sky's trembling hands can't hold the cup. The red wine spills and stains the evening's dress. The fleeting day passes into nothingness. The twilight hues resemble flowers like wreaths laid upon the setting sun. In the distance the slender towers of the Mughal king's stately tomb confer magnificence upon the lonely scene. Imperial vestiges which remind how ruthless time has been. I see all this as if on the pages of a book which belongs to the former ages. The place conveys the sense of an almost stilled serenade and the trees arrayed

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in an impassive muster.

A swift boat moves along the river's surface. The boatman toils to cope with the rush of water. It moves at a clipping pace, just like man's vision which can reach in an instant what may be extremely distant. The boat soon goes out of sight. In a similar fashion the vessel of man's life rides the sea of infinitude, appears and disappears. It meets with no rude shocks, nor does it founder. Although it may vanish from our view it will never perish.

—Translated by Muhammad Salim-ur-Rahman