

## You Tell Us What To Do

When we launched life  
on the river of grief,  
how vital were our arms, how ruby our blood.  
With a few strokes, it seemed,  
we would cross all pain,  
we would soon disembark.  
That didn't happen.  
In the stillness of each wave we found invisible currents.  
The boatmen, too, were unskilled,  
their oars untested.  
Investigate the matter as you will,  
blame whomever, as much as you want,  
but the river hasn't changed,  
the raft is still the same.  
Now you suggest what's to be done,  
you tell us how to come ashore.

When we saw the wounds of our country  
appear on our skins,  
we believed each word of the healers.  
Besides, we remembered so many cures,  
it seemed at any moment  
all troubles would end, each wound would heal completely.  
That didn't happen: our ailments  
were so many, so deep within us

that all diagnoses proved false, each remedy useless.

Now do whatever, follow each clue,  
accuse whomever, as much as you will,  
our bodies are still the same,  
our wounds still open.

Now tell us what we should do,  
you tell us how to heal these wounds.

Translated by Agha Shahid Ali