

From a Poet's Pen

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It may seem unbecoming for a poet to take pains to elucidate his work for the general reader. And I may agree with Robert Penn Warren who said, "The poet is in the end probably more afraid of the dogmatist who wants to extract the message from the poem and throw the poem away than he is of the sentimentalist who says, 'Oh, just let me enjoy the poem.'"

The poet, however, may be obliged to play the role of a critic in the absence of literary critics and in the presence of the younger Somali immigrant population for whom the language of Somali poetry may look like gibberish and the imagery archaic.

This is unfortunately the plight of immigrant poets who write for a younger Somali-speaking generation, who find themselves so distant from their language and rich culture. Although art in general seems to be as endangered as Somali dugongs in today's technology driven world, the high art of Somali poetry seems to have suffered a devastating blow as a result of the mass migration of the Somali people to the West. Poetry is about the beauty of language and no matter whether one understands the words or the meaning, the music alone always exudes beauty. As Carl Sandburg noted, "poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess what is seen during a moment." I find it unfair to poetry to be left covered in a mist. I prefer to raise the curtain just enough to entice the readers to explore more by themselves. Therefore, unlocking the poem's meaning will follow the text.

CIDDU YAY DIDIN

Hadduu canbar iyo
Illaa calankii
Taallo caaniyo
Caaqil weyn iyo
Uu ciiltire iyo
Ceeleeye ahaa
Sidii culaygii
Cidaad marsadoo
Aan ceebiba qaban

*

Gol cammiranuu
Ku caweeyiyo
Caadilku xareed
Firdowsa cawa leh
Ha ka cabbiyee
Cigaal dhimayoo

*

Nabad cuudkiyo
Caleenta gobkiyo
Sidii caano geel
Ceegaagta dhulkiyo

*

Calan joogiyo
Mus cadaadiyo
Distoor cidhibliyo
Xeer caddaan iyo
Cigaaliya iyo
Udub cududliyo
Cashar weyn iyo
Cilmuu ka tegoo

*

Col u dhaarshiyo
Rag uu carbiyiyo
Waa taa carrigii
Durba curad wiil
Caynaanka qabtoo
Ciiri maynee
Yur dheh cadawgoo
Ciddu yay didin

Hadduu cuurtiyo
Hadduu ciidmiyo
Hadduu cadaw iyo
Ahaa col madow
Inkaar culusoo
Ciiddeena la dhigay

*

Amaa cawo iyo
Ahaa cirsan yeedh
Carceer wiiloo
Cadkiisa la dhigay
Taariikh cuuriyo
Ciraabana qoray

*

Camalkiisiyo
Wuxuu cod lahaa
Caawaba la tegyoo
Cigaal wuu baxay

Hayaeeshee Curri
Dhashiisa cuniyo
Cayayaan iyo
Cammadhkii uu
Cuwaaftuu helo
U cuuri jiree
Wixii coonkiyo
Calooshiisiyo
Cankiisa ku jira
Kol ay cantaf tahay
Illaa ay calashaan
An ciidmaynee
Markay cokadaan
Haddii la ceshoo
Cadkii qaybtii
Cid kale loo rido
Xanaaq iyo ciil
La caytamayee

*

Cirkaan gubi iyo
Cartaan berri tegi
Ciiddaaban sumayn
Hunguri la ciyaar
Ciyaalku ogyahay
La cooliyayiyo
Awtii is cunaysee
Caddaysimadee
Cabaadka badnayd

*

Ayey carradiyo
Cirrolaha iyo
Caruurteenii
Waxay la curtaan
Caawaba sugayaan

Geed cuf weynoo
Carruuraha iyo
Cidduba hadhsatoo
Cimri dheeraa
Hadduu ciiruu
Casar galabeed
Xar cunaayiyo
Cudur soo rido

*

Kollay caws iyo
Cosob doogoo
Caafimaadliyo
Abees collobloo
Carra-jiifiyo
Ceel wiyeeroon
Cidba aragoo
Caaro fuushiyo
Carrab-sare iyo
Carma geedoon
Xoolo cunin iyo
Dhir caraacara
Inu caydh iyo
Meel cadeedliyo
Cidla kaga tegi
Caddaan weeyee

*

Kalluun caarliyo
Carsaanyo badeed
Meel cammuudloo
Cagtu qaadiyo
Xeeli cidhifkii
Biyo caariday
Kaga carareen
Caqli taliyiyo
Haddaan cilmi iyo
Ruux ciraaba leh
Oo u ciid roga
Galsho ceel iyo
Laas u caynaba
Carcarta horiyo
Intaan wadku cudhin
Cirkoo hooriyo
Sallax ceeryoon
Kula caymada
Caadilku u bixin
Cabudhaad iyo
Harraad culus iyo
Inu ciil dili
Ammaa cadaw heli
Caad ma saarnee

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Meel cir weyniyo
Cirir ka onkoday
Tegen ceeriya
Ninka cawl iyo
Caylo ka eryaday
Wiilka casar galab
Caroog ku tumee
Carrigeenaad
Ka caymadsatoo
Coodda keligaa
Cuni mayside
Qaybi ceeshkoo
Calool ha u dhiman
Cartan ugu yidhi

*

Ruug cadaadigu
Markuu cirka dayey
Cirjiidha hubsaday
Islaana calanliyo
Coomir weynoo
Cillaan marsadiyo
Ka faashaday culin

*

Casaan dhiigiyo
Colaada hoortiyoo
Cashiiraa is doox
Cankoo bar u baxay

*

Hadduu cadcadkii
Ninkii ka calmaday
U carreeyuu
Ciidda ugu riday

*

Caada kow iyo
Carmal maxlaloona
La cawryeyn iyo
Cid ay Dayo-Cali
La sii carartoo
Ceeyoon waayeel
Xawd ku celin iyo
Hal ciin daaqdiyo
Caqli laawuhu
Muxuu cay iyo
Cilaaq uga dhigay
Ama loo cajibay

Adoon ceel iyo
Caga hoostood
Habeen cusbo iyo
Cad la soo xaday
Adoo la cudcudan
Oday cimad weyn
Geed cadaadiyo
Cobol hoosteed

Bac cagaar iyo
Kiish cas ugu geyn

*

Amaan caaro yuub
Soo cammiranoon
Ciidan soo kicin
Wiilyow cajabtee
Distoor calmadee
Loo caleen lulay
Cadaalad ogow !

Ragga collobtiyo
Caddiinta bartiyo
Ciddijaan laha
Calaacal madaw
Goor caweysina
Cunnaabi adoo
Ciidho ugu guray
Ama ciir iyo
Aqal cidhifkii
Caano ugu shubay
Caleen ugu dhigay
Ciyow weynoo
Ka caagay hurdiyo
Coomaadiga haad
Yaanay kugu ciyin

*

Misna codcod iyo
Nin cajiin iyo
Shiishad cammirrayd
Canka gelin jirey
Cinban maayee
Cirroolaha qaar
Yaanay kaa caban

Calaf baa jira
Aan la cuninoon
Cuma kuu marin
Cuud dad leeyahay
Cad agooneed

Ciyi gabadheed
Xoolo caydheed

Hadday caadiyo
Cuncun gaariyo
Naf carruur ihi
Kugu carisana

*

Ciddi fadhashadu
Ceebna kuugu filan
Cuudna maahee
Caalimkii uun
Ceelkuu sii qoday
Caasha geliyoo
Cantuugo ogow
Looyar culus iyo
Oday caan iyo
Culimada qaar
Ciyaarsiin kara
Cadaw jabin kara

Caymad geeloo
Cidla u baxay baad
Doobi culan iyo
Hees carruureed
U cayntaartee

*

Haddaad carro iyo
Ceel dhanaan iyo
U weydo caleen

*

Daruur curatiyo
Galbeed caad maray
Haan looma culee

*

Adoon is cadibin
Col shisheeyiyo
Cadaawa u geyn
Oo aan cadho iyo
Canbaari ku ool

Buuggaagu cad yahay
Oo cawaandiya
Dadkii ku casumay
Hoggaanka u celi;

Codkii fiigiyo
Nin ciil u bukoo
Canaadnimo iyo
Cadhadiisuba
Anaa curad iyo
Cudur reer iyo
Ceelalyow tahay
Cirka ha gujee
Carraabaha iyo
Cagta ha u hakin

*

Ninkay cabashadu
Calool ka tahee
Caaqiibo jacayl
Kuu canaantee
Caana baqay iyo
Cillo huurtiyo
Ceeb arkaayana

*

Ha ceejinoo
Caabudhaad iyo
Ciil ad korisiyo
Colaad ha u burin

Cindi hadal iyo
Cid kaleeto
Caqli talisood
Cisayn weydiyo
Kursi caashaqu
Yaanu ku cammayn

*

Xukun cawaliyo
Maamul caafimaad
Oon caddaan baraf
Biyo caynkood

Qarsan ceeb iyo
Casri dahabiya
Inaad curisoo
Carruuraha iyo
Ciiddu werisaan
Kaa cawaansanay
Allow ku cisee.

Bashir Goth, 11 May 2002

Unlocking the Poem's Meaning

Title: Ciddu Yay Didin (People Should Not Panic):

The title has a double symbolic meaning. The first and most obvious meaning is a reassurance to the people that the system of government and constitution that is in place will safeguard a smooth transfer of power as well as peace and harmony. Thus, there is no reason for panic. The second meaning is an allusion to the perceived opposition of some people to the new President, and a call for skeptics to give him the benefit of the doubt. The title sums up the poem in a nutshell.

Stanza 1:

The first stanza highlights Egal's long career in leadership, his popularity, and his rare political acumen as depicted by words such as: *Canbar* (ambergris), *Calan* (flag), *Taallo* (statue), *Caaqil* (wise elder), *Ciiltire* (source of comfort and solace), and *Ceeleeye* (pioneer).

It also portrays his "Teflon" character and his skill as a political survivor who slipped through scandals and problems with astonishing ease as so vividly shown by the last three lines:

Sidii Culaygii
Cidaad marsadoo
Aan ceebiba qaban.

Stanza 2:

This is a prayer for his soul to rest in peace in heaven. But, the stanza drops abruptly ("*... Cigaal dhimayoo...*"), suddenly leaving the reader looking into an abyss, a void, a fearful emptiness and a heightened

expectation, thus symbolizing the sudden death of Egal and the vacuum he left behind.

Stanzas (3–5):

These stanzas make an explicit description of the legacy left behind by Egal in the form of a constitution, peace and stability, functioning governmental bodies, and political parties. Because Egal built the system from scratch, it bears his fingerprints all over it to the extent that it could be called *Cigaaliya* (Egalism).

The end of the fifth stanza makes the point that the bicameral legislative body, men trained by Egal, has succeeded in the transfer of power according to the spirit of the Constitution and that a new leader has already taken the reins of power. The stanza ends, however, with a call for Somalilanders to rise to the defense of their country against the enemy and stop panicking, thus giving the poem its name.

Stanzas (6–8):

These lines allude to the conflicting viewpoints of Egal's opponents and his supporters, and point out the futility of such an exercise after the man's death. He did what he did, whether good or bad, whether you loved him or hated him. Now he is dead. Still, the last line of the 8th stanza ends at a point of limbo...a recurrence of the heightened expectation of the second stanza, raising the question, "and then what?"

Stanzas (9–12):

These stanzas make a sarcastic and allegorical characterization of the various types of opportunistic, self-serving and deceitful, Machiavellian, amoral, unscrupulous, and perfidious predators and politicians whose loyalty was based on Egal's favors and handouts.

Stanzas (13–14):

Here we find another allegorical dramatization of Egal's rule and the people living under it. It depicts Egal as a giant old tree, protectively shielding all kinds of lush greenery, poisonous snakes, and plants, as well as buried treasures under it. Now that the tree has fallen, all dan-

gerous snakes will be on the move and the treasures will be exposed to looting and plunder.

Stanza (14):

This stanza is an allegorical allusion to the situation of Somaliland, comparing it to that of a fish left behind on the beach by retreating seawater. It will certainly die if a rescue does not come. It needs somebody to return it to the water. The retreating sea symbolizes Egal's departure.

Stanza (15–19):

These stanzas sum up the story of Somaliland and the rivalry and conflicts that prevailed under Egal's rule. The story goes as follows:

A hunter finds a deer in the wilderness and kills it. He sits down to grill the meat when a stranger emerges from nowhere and tells the hunter to share the meat with him because he found it in an area that was common property.

The hunter consults his seers, fortune-tellers, and soothsayers. They all tell him that they see episodes of red blood, war, and death. They interpret these scenes as a prophecy of the hunter's approaching death and a civil war among his family over the inheritance. The hunter realizes that the best way to prevent an imminent civil war among his family is to throw the meat in the soil so that his own tribe would refuse to eat it and only the stranger will take it, the reverse of *Doqoni saaftin carra loogu riday galad ma moodo*. Here the stranger realizes that the *carro* is for his own advantage.

The deer symbolizes the Seat of Power.

The soil in which the meat is thrown symbolizes the Constitution.

Stanza (20):

The action of the hunter (an allusion to the leader, Egal) initiates a strong debate among his family as well as the family of the stranger who took the soiled meat.

The hunter's family saw the step as a good way to prevent war among themselves; others saw it as a goodwill gesture, showing that people of the same area should have the right to share the resources;

while a third group saw it as a temporary solution to prevent a calamity, but they had the firm belief that the stranger should know that he was only safekeeping the meat. He should clean it and return it to its legitimate owners.

Thus comes the story of *Carmal maxlaloon* (a divorced woman who should return to her first husband only after she marries another man and divorces him) and *Dayo-Cali* (the folklore story of the fox that looted animals she found in an unguarded camp but later abandoned them when the owners caught up with her).

The last words, *Maxaa loo cajabay*, express the bewilderment of the stranger's family over the willingness of the hunter's family to share the booty with them, despite it being soiled.

Stanzas (21–28):

These stanzas advise the new leader to bring a system based on fairness and accountability. But the leader must also be tactful and not alienate the elders and self-serving crooks and politicians who have the ability to bring down a government if they do not achieve their goals; in other words, to walk carefully on the tightrope. In Stanza 25 there is a warning to him not to steal public funds, but then in stanzas 26–28, there is sinister advice that if he cannot resist the temptation, then he should not bring shame to himself by nibbling on funds but should instead snatch a big chunk that will allow him to hire big lawyers and buy him the loyalty of infamous but influential politicians and elders. Just drop your pail into the same well that the former wise leader used to draw water:

Hadday caadiyo
Cucun gaariyo
Naf carruur ihi
Kugu carisana

Ciddi fadhashadu
Ceebna kuugu filan
Cuudna maahee

Caalimkii uun
Ceelkuu sii qoday
Caasha geliyoo
Cantuugo ogow...

Stanzas (29–32):

Here is some advice to the new leader to return the rule peacefully and without tarnish to the public if he is unable to succeed in achieving the people's aspirations. Likening Somaliland to runaway camels, the leader is advised:

If you fail to find
Water and a licking slate
Don't hand them over to an enemy
Don't exhaust yourself
Trying to do what you cannot do
Just return them to the people
Without them bearing
Any signs of harm or ill health

Stanzas (33–36):

These stanzas continue to advise the new leader not to heed the grumbling of self-serving politicians hiding under the cloak of opposition and democracy, but at the same time, warning him not to ignore the genuine grievances of true opposition figures whose sole interest is to expose and rectify mistakes:

Don't oppress them
Don't stifle them
Don't nurture hatred
Don't let grievances blossom
Listen to them carefully
Let not yourself
Be blinded by power.

Concluding Stanzas:

The concluding stanzas warn the new leader against dictatorship and being blinded by power. Thus comes the following stark warning:

Cindi hadal iyo
Cid kaleeto
Caqli talisood

Cisayn weydiyo
Kursi caashaqu
Yaanu ku cammayn

It also expresses the hope that he will spearhead a clean administration, as crystal as ice and as clear as water. These lines wish him to usher in a Golden Age.