

Peacock in the forest

Once a female peacock said to her mate:
"You've elegance, a sweet voice, amazing steps and colours,
but alas, you are confined to this wilderness.
Whenever I see you, absorbed in dancing,
an immense desire disturbs me.
Would that every living eye could see you!
Would that others could benefit from your art!"
The peacock replied: "O, my co-dancer, my soul mate,
you don't know how much I have travelled,
how many forests I have traversed, how many places.
Countless eyes have seen my art, my skill.
My sole aim was to seek applause from those present.
In this way I conquered them.
When in their eyes I'd see the spark of appreciation,
my feathers would there and then grow wings.
Then as it happened, one day, during the dance,
a piece of glass or a pebble cut me.
So much for dancing, I could hardly walk!
Gradually, I got estranged from the world.
After a while, one day, when I went to the arena,
I saw a peacock, elegant and handsome,
better than me and how different,
enchanting the spectators with his art.
I kept gazing at him for a long time.
It seemed he was like me, but in my place.
Life's caravan does not halt;
time's river never stops.
Today it's me, tomorrow someone else,
and someone else the day after tomorrow.
Everyone has their time, their day in the sun.
Now, if ever I dance, it's for myself,
or just for you, for you!"

Basir Sultan Kazmi

translated by the poet and Simon Fletcher