



Specially written for Cruse Bereavement Care's  
Fiftieth Anniversary

“If you wear shoes, your whole world is covered with leather.”  
Indian saying

Frail are my feet when I lose what I walk with,  
Stony the ground and painful the thorns;  
Scorching in summer and icy in winter.  
The road I must trudge on freezes and burns.

I'm managing now with shoes I've borrowed,  
I appear unchanged as I walk on the road;  
But the stones and thorns still hurt when I'm lonely,  
The ground can be scorching or icy or hard.

O fetch me a bowl of warm healing water,  
Soothe my exhaustion, bring life to my toes.  
I wonder if, learning from others before me,  
I'll find a firm pace, fresh hope, new shoes?

The leather can't be like that of my old ones:  
It's hammered by sorrow and stitched by grief;  
But kindness from helpers has made me look forward  
To shoes that are mine again, sturdy and safe.

William Radice, © 2009

William Radice is a widely published poet and Bengali scholar who is particularly well known for his translations for Penguin of the poems and stories of Rabindranath Tagore. He wrote the libretto for the version of *Zaide* that Cruse staged at St John's, Smith Square, London, with the Trinity College of Music in 2007.