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Translator: Inayat Khan

Translator: Jessie Duncan Westbrook

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HINDUSTANI LYRICS ***



ZAFAR.



HINDUSTANI LYRICS

RENDERED FROM THE URDU

BY

INAYAT KHAN

AND

JESSIE DUNCAN WESTBROOK

Sufism is the Religious Philosophy of Love, Harmony, and Beauty

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FOREWORD.

Of the many languages of India, Urdu (Hindustani) is the most widely known, especially in Upper India. Both as a written and a spoken language it has a reputation throughout Asia for elegance and expressiveness. Until the time of Muhammad Shah, Indian poetry was written in Persian. But that monarch, who mounted the throne of Delhi in 1719, greatly desired to make Urdu the vogue, and under his patronage and approval, Hatim, one of his ministers, and Wali of the Deccan, wrote *Diwans* in Urdu. This patronage of poets was continued by his successors, and exists indeed to the present day; and the cultivation of Urdu poetry has always been encouraged at the many Courts of India. Some of the Indian Rulers are themselves poets, and find their duty and pleasure in rewarding with gifts and pensions the literary men whose works they admire. The Court of Hyderabad has for long had a circle of poets: the late Nizam was himself eminent as a writer of verse. The Maharaja-Gaekwar of Baroda is a generous patron of literary men, and the present Rulers of lesser States such as Patiala, Nabha, Tonk, and Rampur, are deeply interested in the cultivation of poetry in their Dominions.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries many towns in India had extensive and flourishing literary coteries, and it is from the poets of that period that this handful of verses is gathered. The *Mushaira*—a poetical concourse, wherein rival poets meet to try their skill in a tournament of verse—is still an institution in India. Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Lahore, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares, Calcutta, and Hyderabad, have all been, and some still are, nests of singing birds. Of the extent of Urdu literature some idea may be gained from the fact that a History of it written about 1870 gives the names of some three thousand authors, and that *Tazkiras* or anthologies containing selections from many poets are very numerous.

The poetry is very varied and of great interest. It includes moral verses and counsels, sometimes in intermingled verse and prose; heroic poems telling the old tales of the loves of Khusru and Shirin, of Yusuf and Zuleika, of Majnun and Leila, and the romances of chivalry; elegies on the deaths of Hasan and Hussein, and of various monarchs; devotional poems in praise of Muhammad and the Imams; eulogies of the reigning Ruler or other patron or protector of the poor; satires upon men and institutions, sometimes upon Nature herself, specially upon such phenomena as heat, cold, inundations and pestilence; descriptive verse relating to the seasons and the months, the flowers and the trees. Above all there is a great wealth of love poetry, both secular and mystic, where, in impassioned ghazals or odes, the union of man with God is celebrated under various allegories, as the bee and the lotus, the nightingale and the rose, the moth and the flame.

Most of the poets represented in this book write as Sufis, or Muslim mystics, and scoff at the unenlightened orthodox. For them God is in all and through all, to be worshipped equally in the Kaaba and in the Temple of the Idols, or too great to be adored adequately through the ritual of any creed. He is symbolized as the beautiful and cruel Beloved, difficult to find, withdrawn behind the veil, inspiring and demanding all worship and devotion. The Lover is the Madman, derided by the unsympathetic crowd, but happy in his ecstatic despair. He drinks the wine of love and is filled with a divine intoxication. For him this world is *Maya*—illusion, and the true life is that which is unmanifest. He finds no abiding place in this mortal caravan-serai, this shifting House of Mirrors; for his Soul is ever passing forward on the high Quest. Knowledge and skill are as dust, and self as nothing, compared with the Love that goads and urges him on.

As a language, Urdu has a most composite ancestry, and comprises elements derived from the original languages of India, from Sanskrit, the tongue of the Aryan invaders, from Persian, from Turkish, from Kurdish and other Tartar tongues, from Arabic, even from Egyptian and Abyssinian; and later from such very foreign sources as Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English. The political phases through which India has successively passed have left their record in this hybrid character of the language. The process of its evolution really began long before the Christian era, when Sanskrit—the language of the Aryan conquerors—began to commingle with the languages of the peoples in Upper India, or Hindustan. From this union came the prakrits, or vernaculars. The one which at the time of the Buddha was current in Magadha—parts of the

present British Behar and Orissa and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh—was known as Magdhi, and the message delivered by the great Teacher was recorded in that vernacular. This spread rapidly with the growth of Buddhism, and became the court and official language of a large part of Upper India. The language which was developed in the north and north-west was called at first by the simple name Bhasha (Bhakha), which means the usual tongue, but later took the name of Hindi, and is written in the Sanskrit (Deva-nagari) character.

At the beginning of the eighth century the Muslims appeared as conquerors in India. Mahmoud of Ghuzni, about 1,000 A.D., won great victories, and from that time Bhasha began to be modified in the towns. Four centuries later Tamerlane of the Mogul race entered India and took Delhi, laying the foundation of the Empire definitely established by Babar in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Hindi became saturated with Persian, itself already laden with many Arab words introduced through conquest and religion. The market of the army was established round Delhi, and bore the Tartar name of Urdu, which means horde or army, and thus, camp. It was especially at Delhi, after its rebuilding by Shah Jehan and its growth into the metropolis and literary and commercial and military centre, that the hybrid tongue took definite shape; it was named Zaban-i-urdu (literally, the language of the army) or simply Urdu, and was written in the Persian character. Even in its infancy it manifested a wealth of poetic inspiration derived from its varied ancestry.

The poets from whose work the lyrics in this book have been selected were mostly writers of voluminous Diwans, and they occupied various and diverse stations in life. Some were Rulers, some soldiers, some darweshes (devotees), some men of letters only. The name given is in each case the takhallus (pen-name); each has some special significance, as Sauda, the folly of love, Momin, the believer, Zafar, the victorious; and frequently this name is introduced, by way of signature, into the closing stanza of a poem.

ABRU: born at Lucknow, lived at Delhi, was a darwesh of the Order of Kalenders, and wrote an Urdu Diwan much appreciated for the ingenious allegories in which it abounds.

AMIR: Amir Minai of Rampur, one of the best poets of the latest period: a great mystical poet: his Qasidahs for Muhammad are sung by devotees: Court poet of Rampur: travelled to Mecca and Medina, and, after the death of his patron, Nawab Kalbe Ali Khan, came to Hyderabad on hearing of the Nizam's fame and interest in poetry: rival of Dagh, by whose side he lies buried in Hyderabad.

ARZU: a poet of Gwalior, where he held an important Government post in the days of Shah Alam II. (r. 1759-1806). He wrote his poems mostly in Persian, and was the author of a Dictionary of Mystical words.

ASIF: pen-name of H.H. Mir Mahbub Ali Khan, Nizam of Hyderabad, who died in 1911: pupil of the poet Dagh (q.v.) and was an esteemed poet, and patron of poets.

DAGH: a court poet of Rampur: went to Hyderabad and became the teacher of the Nizam in poetry (see Asif): lived there in great honour as Poet Laureate, and was given the title of Fasih-ul-Mulk (the eloquence of the nation): his poetry is described as natural and graceful in expression: his proficiency was so great that no poet could stand against him in the Mushaira: he was of extraordinary wit.

FIGHAN: of Delhi: was the foster-brother of the Emperor Ahmad Shah (r. 1748-1754) and was one of the principal officers at the Imperial Court: famous for his piquant and witty conversation, and greatly skilled in jeux de mots, at which he spent his days and nights.

GHALIB: came of a distinguished Turk family of Samarkand: wrote in Persian as well as in Urdu, and held the position of Poet Laureate at the Court of Bahadur Shah (r. 1837-1857) the last Mogul Emperor.

HALI: a modern poet: pupil of Ghalib: recently dead: greatly admired, chiefly by the Muslims, for his poems calling for Muslim and Indian renaissance. He received from the British Government the title of Shams-ul-ulema.

HASAN: Mir Shulam Hasan, born at Delhi: passed his youth in Faizabad

and then came to Lucknow to join the literary circle there: was as handsome in person as in mind, and his verse is still popular.

HATIM: one of the early poets: born about 1700, he lived till near the end of the century: a soldier by profession, but in his old age renounced the world and became a darwesh: his cell was near the gate of the Imperial Palace, and many persons resorted to him for counsel.

INSHA: born in Murshedabad, lived in Lucknow about the end of the 18th century: enjoyed the favour of Prince Suleiman Shikoh: wrote verse in Turkish, Arabic, Persian, but was most famous for his Urdu poems, which are elegant in style and conception.

JURAT: of Delhi, celebrated for his skill in music, astronomy and poetry: became blind when still young: was pensioned by the Nawab Muhabbat Khan and afterwards by Suleiman Shikoh: author of an enormous volume of Urdu poetry composed of ghazals and of love-poems in the modern taste. Wrote satires on the rain, the cold, smallpox, etc. Versed in Hindu as well as Muslim poetry.

MAZHAR: of Delhi: family originally from Bokhara: learned in jurisprudence as well as poetry: many favourite poets were his pupils: was a Sunni, made profession of spiritual poverty, and was even reputed to be able to work miracles: was killed by a fanatic because he disagreed with the Shiah mourning for the death of Hussein: died in 1780, aged nearly a hundred years.

MIR DARD: author of a famous Urdu diwan: skilled in the sacred music as sung at the assemblies of the Sufis: lived the life of a sage, the Padishah often coming to him for counsel, though he himself never sought the Emperor's Court.

MIR SOZ: of Bokhari ancestry, had to leave his country in time of peril in the dress of a fakir: came to Lucknow, where he became tutor to the Nawab Asaf-ud-Daula.

MIR TAQI: born at Agra, in his later days lived at Lucknow, under the protection of the Nawab of Oudh: wrote many kinds of verse, but excelled in the ghazal and the masnawi, and was the author of a biography of poets: wrote his own autobiography in Persian, and also Persian poetry.

MOMIN: of Delhi: author of six long masnawis: skilled in medicine, astronomy and astrology, and deeply read in poetry: at first lived a gay and reckless life, in his old age gave himself to prayer and fasting, and acquired great contemporary fame: his work is considered to be the most delicate flower of Urdu expression.

MUSHAFI: belonged to a distinguished family of Amroha: lived at first at Lucknow, then went to Delhi: there he held famous literary reunions, at which gathered many poets of whom he was the inspirer and teacher.

MUZTAR: born and educated at Lucknow: his ancestors occupied an honourable rank at Delhi: was a pupil of Mushafi.

NASIKH: of Calcutta: belonged to the latter half of the 19th century: Deputy Magistrate and Member of the Legislative Council of Bengal.

SAUDA: born at Delhi about 1720: a soldier by profession: much esteemed in his lifetime, and was a favourite at Court: excelled in all kinds of poetry, chiefly the ghazal, the qasidah, and satire.

TABAN: of Delhi: as famous for his beauty as for his poetic talent: pupil of Hatim, and was a friend of Mazhar and Sauda: was descended from the Prophet on both father's and mother's side.

WALI: of the Deccan, the first to write an Urdu Diwan: is considered the Father of Urdu poetry: born at Aurungabad, wrote in the latter half of the 17th century. He held a just balance between Sunnis and Shiahs, and did not flatter any Ruler in his verses. He knew the literature and art of Europe and wrote many mystical and spiritual poems.

YAKRANG: one of the officers of the Emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-48): lived in dignity and honour at Delhi.

ZAHIR: a well-known modern poet, lived at Rampur at the Court of Nawab Kalbe Ali Khan, afterwards at the Court of the Nawab of Tonk,

and finally at Hyderabad, in the literary circle of the Nizam, by whom he was much appreciated and rewarded.

ZAUQ: a celebrated poet at the Court of Bahadur Shah (r. 1837-57): was his teacher in the arts of verse: compiler of an anthology Of poems: is said to have written one hundred thousand verses: is still highly popular and much quoted.

ZAFAR: or Bahadur Shah, was the Padishah of Delhi, the last Mogul Emperor, and lived 1768-1862: son of Akbar II.: was over 60 years of age when he came to the throne: himself a poet and a good judge of music and painting, he gathered round him literary men and artists: of fine countenance and distinguished manners, and extremely loved and admired by his subjects: skilled in all kinds of poetry, and some of his ghazals continue to be popular: author of a voluminous Diwan, and a Commentary on the Gulistan of Saadi: a clever calligraphist, wrote with his own hand passages from the Koran for the ornamentation of the principal Mosque of Delhi. His son Dara was also a poet. At the Mutiny in 1857 he was taken prisoner and sent to Rangoon: there he continued to write verses, and died at an advanced age. His portrait, which forms the frontispiece to this book, is from a miniature kindly lent by the Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

J.D.W.

Dulwich Village, London.

October, 1918.

I.

Thou tak'st no heed of me,

I am as naught to thee;

Cruel Beloved, arise!

Lovely and languid thou,

Sleep still upon thy brow,

Dreams in thine eyes.

From out thy garment flows

Fragrance of many a rose—

Airs of delight

Caught in the moonlit hours

Lying among the flowers

Through the long night.

Look on my face how pale!

Will naught my love avail?

Naught my desire?

Hold it as gold that is

Cleansed of impurities

Tried in the fire.

Pity my heart distrest,

Caught by that loveliest

Tress of thine hair,

So that I fear the shade

Even by thine eyebrows made

O'er eyes so fair.

ABRU.

II.

Thou, Sorrow, wilt keep and wilt cherish the memory of me

Long after my death,

For thou dwelt at my heart, and my blood nourished thee,

Thou wert warmed by my breath.

My heart has disgraced me by clamour and wailing for years

And tossing in pain,

Mine eyes lost their honour by shedding these torrents of tears

Like fast-falling rain.

O Wind of Disaster, destroy not the home of my heart

With the blasts of thine ire,

For there I have kindled to burn in a chamber apart

My Lamp of Desire.

AMIR.

III.

Had I control o'er her, the dear Tormentor,

Then might I rest;

I cannot govern her, nor can I master

The heart within my breast.

I cast myself upon the ground in anguish

Wounded and sore,

Yet longed to have two hearts that she might pierce them,

That I might suffer more.

Utterly from her heart hath she erased me,

No marks remain,

So there shall be no grave from which my ashes

May greet her steps again.

O cruel One, when once your glances smote me,

Why turn your head?

It were more merciful to let their arrows

Pierce me and strike me dead.

No tomb, Amir, could give my dust oblivion,

No rest was there:

And when they told her I had died of sorrow,

She did not know—nor care.

AMIR.

This Life is less than shadows; if thou yearn

To know and find the God thou worshippest,

From all the varying shows of being turn

To that true Life which is unmanifest.

Beware, O travellers, dangerous is Life's Way

With lures that call, illusion that deceives,

For set to snare the voyagers that stray

Are fortresses of robbers, lairs of thieves.

The seer's eyes look on the cup of wine

And say—We need no more thy drunkenness;

An exaltation that is more divine,

Another inspiration, we possess.

O praise not peacock youth; it flits away

And leaves us but the ashes of regret,

A disappointed heart, a memory,

An empty foolish pride that lingers yet.

Upon the path, Amir, we journey far,

Weary the road where mankind wandereth;

O tell me, does it lead through Life's bazar,

Or is it the dread gate and house of Death?

AMIR.

V.

Here can my heart no longer rest;

It tells my happy destiny,

Towards Medina lies my quest,

The Holy Prophet summons me.

I should not marvel if for flight

Upon my shoulders wings should start,

My body is so gay and light

With this new gladness in my heart.

My weary patience nears its end;

Unresting heart, that yearns and loves,

Convey me far to meet my friend

Within Medina's garden groves.

My spirit shall not faint nor tire,

Although by many tender bands

My country holds me, I desire

The journey through the desert sands.

By day and night forever now

I burn in Love's hot furnace breath,

Although there gather on my brow

The cold and heavy sweats of death.

And ever in my home in Hind

At dawn's first light, at evenfall,

I hear upon the desert wind

The Prophet of Arabia call.

AMIR.

VI.

The light is in mine eyes,

Within my heart I feel Thy joy arise,

From gate to inmost shrine

This palace of my soul is utterly Thine.

O longing seeking eyes,

He comes to you in many a varied guise,

If Him you cannot find

The shame be yours, O eyes that are so blind.

I as His mirror glow

Bearing His image in my heart, and know

That glowing clear in His

The image of my heart reflected is.

O drink the Wine of Love,

And in the Assembly of Enlightened move,

Let not the darkness dim

Fall like a curtain 'twixt thy soul and Him.

Who gives away his soul

Forgets his petty self and wins the whole,

Losing himself outright

He finds himself in the Eternal Light.

Crazy art thou, Amir,

To wait before His gate in hope and fear;

For never in thy pain

Shall He yield up thy ravished heart again.

AMIR.

VII.

How can I dare profess

I am the lover whom Thou dost prefer!

Thou art the essence of all loveliness,

And I Thy very humblest worshipper.

Upon the Judgment Day

So sweet Thy mercy shall to sinners prove,

That envying them even the Saints shall say—

Would we were sinners thus to know Thy love!

When in the quest for Thee

The heart shall seek among the pious throng,

Thy voice shall call—If Thou desirest me

Among the sinners I have dwelt for long.

At the great Reckoning

Mighty the wicked who before Thy throne

Shall come for judgment; little can I bring,

No store of good nor evil deeds I own.

Among the thorns am I

A thorn, among the roses am a rose,

Friend among friends in love and amity,

Foe among foes.

AMIR.

VIII.

I shall not try to flee the sword of Death,

Nor fearing it a watchful vigil keep,

It will be nothing but a sigh, a breath,

A turning on the other side to sleep.

Through all the close entanglements of earth

My spirit shaking off its bonds shall fare

And pass, and rise in new unfettered birth,

Escaping from this labyrinth of care.

Within the mortal caravan-serai

No rest and no abiding place I know,

I linger here for but a fleeting day,

And at the morrow's summoning I go.

What are these bonds that try to shackle me?

Through all their intricate chains my way I find,

I travel like a wandering melody

That floats untamed, untaken, on the wind.

From an unsympathetic world I flee

To you, your love and fellowship I crave,

O Singers dead, Sauda and Mushafi,

I lay my song as tribute on your grave.

AMIR.

IX.

Of no use is my pain to her nor me:

For what disease is love the remedy?

My heart that may not to her love attain

Is humble, and would even crave disdain.

O traitorous heart that my destruction sought

And me to ruin and disaster brought!

As, when the chain of life is snapt in twain,

Never shall it be linked, so ne'er again

My utterly broken heart shall be made whole.

I cannot tear the Loved One from my soul,

Nor can I leave my heart that clings to her.

O Asif, am I not Love's minister!

Who has such courage in Love's ways to dare!

What heart like mine such bitterness can bear!

ASIF.

X.

The eyes of the narcissus win new light

From gleams that in Thy rapturous eyes they trace,

The flame is but a moth with fluttering flight

Drawn by the lovelier lustre of Thy face.

This shifting House of Mirrors where we dwell

Under Thy charm a fairy palace seems:

Who hath not fallen tangled in Thy spell

Beguiled by visions, wandering in dreams!

The hearts of all Thy captive lovers stray

Hither and thither driven by whims of Thine,

Sometimes within the Kaaba courts to pray,

Sometimes to worship at the Idols' Shrine.

O Asif, thou hast known such grief and shame,

Shrinking beneath the cruel scourge of Love,

That all the earth will hail thee with acclaim

As most courageous of the sons thereof.

ASIF.

XI.

When shall the mocking world withhold its blame,

When shall men cease to darken thus my name,

Calling the love which is my pride, my shame!

O Judge, let me my condemnation see;

Whose names are written on my death decree?—

The names of all who have been friends to me.

What hope to reach the Well-Belovéd's door,

The dear lost dwelling that I knew of yore;

I stumbled once; I can return no more.

The joy of love no heart can feel alone,

The fire of love at first unseen, unknown,

In flames of love from either side is blown.

O Asif, tread thy pathway carefully

Across this difficult world; for, canst thou see,

A further journey is awaiting thee.

ASIF.

XII.

I ask that God in justice punish me

With death, if my love waver or grow less;

Faithful am I indeed—

How can you comprehend such faithfulness?

To you alone I offer up my heart,

To any other what have I to give?

No light demand I make,

What answer will you grant that I may live?

If on the last dread Day of Reckoning

I think of you, and in my heart there shine

The beauty of your face,

God's Beatific Vision shall be mine.

Once I had friends, now none are left to me;

I see none else but you, because my heart

Has wholly fled to you,

And thus I walk the ways of Earth apart.

I, Asif, am the chief of sinners held,

This dark dishonour will I not deny,

But glory in my shame;

Where is another sinner such as I?

ASIF.

O changing Wheel of Fate, still let there last

Before our eager eyes, still let there burn,

This vision of the world; when we have passed

There shall be no return.

I thought that, leaving thee, rest would be mine,

My lost tranquillity I might regain,

But separation brings no anodyne,

And kills me with its pain.

How can I traffic in Love's busy mart?

Thou hast won from me more than stores of gold;

That I may bargain, give me back the heart

Thy cruel fingers hold.

O heart desirous, in Love's perilous way

Thy journey take and in his paths abide,

And thou mayst find perchance, lest thou should stray,

Awaiting thee, a guide.

DAGH.

XIV.

O Weaver of Excuses, what to thee

Are all the promises that thou hast made,

The truth derided, and the faith betrayed,

And all thy perfidy?

Sometimes thou sayest—Come at eventide:

And when the evening falls, thou sayest—Dawn

Was when I called thee. Even when night is gone

I wait unsatisfied.

When in thy haughty ear they did commend

Me as the faithfulest of all thy train,

Thou saidst—I hold such lovers in disdain,

I scoff at such a friend.

O Mischief-maker, passing-on thy way

So lovely is thy mien, all creatures must

Cry out—It is debarred to things of dust

To walk so winningly.

Why shouldst thou keep from tyranny anew?

Why shouldst thou not betray another one?

What matter if he die? Thou hast but done

What thou wast born to do.

Who cares not for his heart nor for his creed

Is the idolater. His worthless name

Is Dagh. O Fair Ones, look upon his shame!

He is disgraced indeed.

DAGH.

XV.

Thy love permits not my complaint to rise,

It reaches to my lips, and then it dies.

Now, helpless heart, I cannot aid thee more,

And thus for thee God's pity must implore.

Seest thou not how much disgrace and pain

The scornful world has heaped upon us twain,

On thee for beauty and the sins thereof,

On me for this infirmity of love.

Oft-times she will not speak to me at all,

Or if she deign to speak, the words that fall

Cold from her haughty lips are words of blame:

—I know thee not—I have not heard thy name!

Deep in my memory was graved the trace

Of all I suffered since I saw thy face;

But now, Belovéd, thou hast come to me,

I have erased the record utterly.

With empty hands all mortal men are whirled

Through Death's grim gate into the other world:

This is my pride that it is granted me

To carry with me my desire for thee.

They say when I complain of all I bore

—It is thy kismet, what would'st thou have more?

My rivals also bear thy tyranny,

Saying—It is her custom and must be!

DAGH.

I met you and the pain of separation was forgot,

And all I should have kept in mind my heart remembered not.

What cruelty and scorn I in your bitter letters knew!

No love was there; O Gracious One, have you forgotten too?

Strange is the journey that my soul by wanton Love was led,

Two steps were straight and clear, and four forgotten were instead.

There was some blundering o'er my fate at the Great Reckoning;

You have forgot, O Keeper of the Record, many a thing.

You took my heart, but left my life behind: O see you not

What thing you have remembered, and what thing you have forgot?

To meet Annihilation's sword is the most happy lot

That man can gain, for all the joys of earth has he forgot.

A Muslim on the path of Love beside a Kafir trod,

And one forgot the Kaaba, one the Temple of his God.

DAGH.

What happiness is to the lover left

Of peace bereft,

What freedom for his captive heart remains

Held in her chains?

Sometimes unto the mountain peaks he goes

Driven by his woes,

Sometimes within the barren wilderness

Hides his distress.

Curses on Love, and may his home disgraced

Be laid in waste!

To me the world and all the joys I sought

Are less than naught.

Gladly, O Executioner, to Death

I yield my breath;

And only wonder who shall after me

Thy victim be!

FIGHAN.

XVIII.

If you should meet the Loved One as you stray,

O give my letter secretly to her,

Then haste away

And do not tell my name, O Messenger.

O Morning Winds that from the garden blow,

Should you meet one like me forlorn and sad,

On him bestow

The peace and solace I have never had.

O Eyes that weep and weep unsatisfied,

That shed such floods, yet never find relief,

O stem your tide

Lest you should drown the world in seas of grief.

She need not have one anxious doubt of me,

She need not fear my further wanderings—

How can I flee?

How can a bird escape, deprived of wings?

XIX.

How difficult is the thorny way of strife

That man hath stumbled in since time began,

And in the tangled business of this life

How difficult to play the part of man.

When She decrees there should exist no more

My humble cottage, through its broken walls,

And cruelly drifting in the open door,

The frozen rain of desolation falls.

O mad Desire, why dost thou flame and burn

And bear my Soul further and further yet

To the Belovéd; then, why dost thou turn

To bitter disappointment and regret?

Such light there gleams from the Belovéd's face

That every eye becomes her worshipper,

And every mirror, looking on her grace,

Desires to be the frame enclosing her.

Unhappy lovers, slaves of cruel chance,

In this grim place of slaughter strange indeed

Your joy to see unveiled her haughty glance

That flashes like the scimitar of Ede.

When I had hardly drawn my latest breath,

Pardon she asked for killing me. Alas,

How soon repentance followed on my death,

How quick her unavailing sorrow was!

GHALIB.

XX.

I grant you will not utterly forget,

I hold you not unheeding and unjust,

But ere you hear my prayer

I shall be dead and turned to senseless dust.

How little can one eager sigh attain

To touch thine icy heart to tenderness!

Who can live long enough

To win the beauty of thy curling tress?

XXI.

The high ambition of the drop of rain
Is to be merged in the unfettered sea;
My sorrow when it passed all bounds of pain,
Changing, became itself the remedy.

Behold how great is my humility!
Under your cruel yoke I suffered sore;
Now I no longer feel thy tyranny
I hunger for the pain that then I bore.

Why did the fragrance of the flowers outflow
If not to breathe with benediction sweet
Across her path? Why did the soft wind blow
If not to kiss the ground before her feet?

GHALIB.

XXII.

I had a thousand desires, for each of them I would have died,

And what did I gain?

So many indeed are fulfilled, but how many beside

Insatiate remain!

We have known of the tale of how Adam to exile was driven;

More shameful in truth

Is my fate to be cast from the garden more favoured than Heaven

Where she walks in her youth.

That living and dying in love are but one I have proved,

This only know I

That I live by the sight of the beauty of her the Beloved

For whom I would die.

GHALIB.

XXIII.

How long will she thus stand unveiled before me,

Shrinking and shy in maidenly distress,

How long, my dazzled eyes, can ye contemplate

Her blinding loveliness!

No rest is for my heart by love tormented,

It cannot even win the peace of death;

How long shall it endure with resignation

The pain it suffereth!

Like shifting shadows come the great and mighty,

And live their splendid day, and hurry past;

And who can tell how long the changing pageant

Of fleeting life shall last!

O look on me, unhappy Asif, driven

As dust before the wind across the street;

How long has Love ordained that I should suffer

Beneath the passing feet.

GHALIB.

**XXIV.
THE WIDOW.**

I call on Death, for Life is my distress,

And I myself a load of weariness

Weighing upon myself. Helpless am I;

Dared I to weep, then never would run dry

The fountains of my grief: I cannot speak:

Even the occupation that I seek

Goads me and wearies me. A jungle drear

This world and all its moving crowds appear,

And I the loneliest of all things on Earth,

Yea, lonely in the household of my birth.

Tired am I of my suffering through the years,

Even as mine eyes are wearied of their tears.

Spring comes again and brings the cooling breeze,

And Autumn with the rain among the trees,

Fair Summer with its moonlit nights of gold,

And Winter with its sweet and gentle cold;

These come and go, with morn and even-fall,

How can I tell how I have passed them all?

Well, I have borne them all!

Hope gleamed awhile, but fled unsatisfied,

The flower sprang up, but drooped and fruitless died:

The silver bow of Ede shone above all,

But never came the looked-for Festival:

I saw the splendour of the season wane,

Never the benediction of the rain

Fell on my parchéd heart: the thunder loud

Pealed from the bosom of the darkened cloud,

But never came the long-desiréd rain:

I sought the fruit upon the tree in vain,

The thorn smote deep into my heart instead:

Across the desert wastes of sands I sped

Seeing the silver watercourses gleam,

But it was all a vision and a dream,

And thirsting in the desert I was left

Lone and bereft.

HALI.

XXV.

Like silver torrents flow thy words to me,

But ah—I have no voice to answer thee.

My heart thy words have burnt with whips of fire,

Do they not burn thy lips, O Heart's Desire?

Thy promises are broken every day,

Yet—See my faithfulness!—I hear you say.

Candle-like wastes my body all these days

My flame-like tongue endures to sing thy praise.

O Hasan, I have spoke and sighed and sung,

Yet never from my heart my tale was wrung,

My secret grief can never find a tongue.

HASAN.

XXVI.

I cannot rise to follow her,

Here in the dust is my abode,

For I am but her foot-print left

Lying forgotten in the road.

Where are repose and patience gone?

Where is my honour, held so fair?

All these are naught to me—I dwell

In the black chambers of Despair!

INSHA.

XXVII.

How can I win that Hidden One

Who sits within the secret place?

For even in my very dreams

She wears the veil upon her face.

What heart is there in all the world

Can bear thy cruel tyranny?

Keep then this broken heart of mine

That thus thou mayst remember me!

JURAT.

XXVIII.

What kind of comforter art thou to me?

What help and solace in calamity?

No wound is there upon my bruised heart

But thou hast touched to make it sting and smart!

But yet, Beloved One, I ask in pain

When is the hour when thou wilt come again?

My soul cries out to thee in bitter need

—When wilt thou come—or wilt thou come indeed?

O Saki, do not pass my goblet by,

Although the feast is spread its lip is dry.

Be careful, O my tears, lest you should tell

The world my secret that you know too well.

O Sorrow, in thy tangled paths I go,

The Kaaba's gateway I no longer know,

But bend my head wherever I see rise

The arch that curves o'er the Belovéd's eyes.

MIR.

XXIX.

To whom shall I relate

The weary story of my sorrowful love?

O Friend, this is my fate,

This is the record of the pain thereof.

I prayed in vain to her;

She said—You weary me, I hear thy prayer,

It is thy messenger,

But when it pleads with me I do not care.

I said—Never again

Canst thou forget my faithfulness to thee;

She answered in disdain

—What mean thy love and faithfulness to me?

Life called to me

Telling me earth is full of hope and bliss,

Now undeceived I see

How foolish I to seek a world like this.

MIR SOZ.

XXX.

Even in the Kaaba courts my heart was moved,

Brooding upon the idol that I loved,

Mourning its loss. Now like a bird am I,

That painted in a picture cannot fly

Nor move nor sing; my heart is so outworn

With all the lingering sorrow I have borne.

Within my heart thy presence I have felt,

Within mine eyes, Belovéd, thou hast dwelt

For long long days. Who taught thee for a shrine

To choose a heart so desolate as mine?

Long time I told my friends my bitter grief,

And in the telling sought to find relief;

In silence now instead I take my rest,

And find that peace and loneliness are best.

MIR TAQI.

XXXI.

Wherever the Belovéd looks she stirs

 Trouble and longing sore and eager breath

And deep desire in all her worshippers,

 And some for her have drunk the cup of Death.

O Night of Separation, darkest night

Of deepest grief, thy cruelty shall cease;

To-morrow I shall greet the dawning light

Within the city of Eternal Peace.

O threatening Whirlwind rolling on thy way,

I shall unloose thy knot, if thou but dare

With angry gusts to toss and disarray

A single curl of the Belovéd's hair.

Sometimes her beauty goads and maddens me,

I cannot bear her cruel loveliness,

But turn her mirror that she may not see;

Why should I let her double my distress?

Hearken, O Momin, all thy life is done!

In idol-worship at the Temple thou

Hast spent thy days, and thus thy years have run:

How canst thou call thyself a Muslim now?

MOMIN.

XXXII.

I, like a wandering bubble,

Am blown here and there

Shifting and changing and fashioned

Of water and air.

Thou turnest thy face, O Belovéd,

I cannot tell why,

Art thou shy of a mirror, Belovéd?

Thy mirror am I!

When over her face she unloosened

The dusk of her hair,

What need had the world of the cloud-wreaths,

They fled in despair.

MUSHAFI.

XXXIII.

No man hath ever passed

Into the Country of Eternal Rest

With every longing stilled.

Who hath not lingering cast

Long looks behind, and in his eager breast

Held many a secret yearning unfulfilled?

Ah, Mushafi, to thee

Silence and thought in solitude are best,

For thou hast known

That laurel crowns are idle vanity;

There is no worldly rank thou covetest,

And what to thee is Suleiman's high throne?

MUSHAFI.

XXXIV.

Where has my childhood gone, where are its placid years?

For cruel youth hath brought passion and bitter tears.

To the Creator now I from the dust complain—

Beauty, the thing he made, brings with it only pain.

Long I desired and dreamed, waiting with eager breath,

But ere she came to me, Fate sent the sleep of Death.

To God as servitor I my devotion gave,

Now Love hath taken me, bound me to be his slave.

I, Muztar, die with grief, yearning unsatisfied,

Still hangs the purdah's fold I cannot draw aside,

Nor lift the needless veil woven of shame and pride.

MUZTAR.

XXXV.

The fire of love I for my idol know

Within my bosom hides,

As in the mountain 'neath its crust of snow

The flame abides.

Long have I yearned in vain to kiss her feet,

I lay my weary head

Down in the dust, that thus my lips may greet

Where she may tread.

No wealth have I, but like the moth I live:

Since love demands a price,

I, like the moth, have but my life to give

In sacrifice.

How has my bird-like soul been stricken low,

Pierced to the very heart!

My love has used instead of bolt and bow

A deadlier dart.

NASIKH.

XXXVI.

The wound upon my heart glows bright and clear

With such a steady and unwavering light

That in the darkness I shall have no fear

And need no lamp to guide my steps aright.

When of the darkness of the grave I hear,

The night of death, and all the pangs thereof,

I reckon not, for one thing alone I fear—

The night of separation from my Love.

NASIKH.

XXXVII.

Shall I or shall I not console my heart

And win relief?

Or shall I sit in solitude apart

Nursing my grief?

O hear, while of my life now nearly done

Some sparks remain!

Soon I may be, who knows, O Cruel One,

Speechless with pain.

How can I to the fisher speak my thought?

Her snares are set,

My fish-like heart is by her lashes caught,

As in a net.

Look on my sorrowful mien, O Love, and tell

My hopelessness,

None of the manifold troubles that befell

Can I express.

Fair is the garden, Sauda, to thy view,

More fair appears

Her dwelling; let me all its ways bedew

With happy tears.

SAUDA.

XXXVIII.

I am no singer rapt in ecstasy,

Nor yet a sighing listener am I,

I am the nightingale that used to sing

In joy, but now am mute, remembering.

I know the drop within the ocean hides,

But know not in what place my soul abides:

I cannot read the hidden mystery—

Whence came I, whither go I, what am I.

My friends have paid due reverence at my grave,

And held my dust as sacred, for I gave

My humble life to the Belovéd's sword,

Killed by her beauty, martyred by her word.

I deemed life was tranquillity and rest,

I find it but a never-ending quest;

And I, who sat in quietude and peace,

Toil on a journey that shall never cease.

SHAMSHAD.

XXXIX.

Repent not, for repentance is in vain,

And what is done is done;

What shouldst thou reckon of me and all my pain?

For what is done is done.

They said to her—Behold him, he is dead!

How did he lose his life, unhappy one?

—O bury him deep in the grave, she said,

For what is done is done.

This is the pain of love that I have caught,

And what is done is done;

A thousand remedies avail me naught,

And what is done is done.

For love I gave the honour of my name,

And Good and Evil are to me as one;

Let all the world chastise me with its blame,

For what is done is done.

The dust of Taban we could find no more,

But yet nor rest nor respite hath he won;

His breath, his soul, floats round thee as before,

And—what is done is done.

TABAN.

XL.

O Lovely One, when to the ravished sight

Thou wilt unveil that radiant face of thine,

Each atom of the worlds, catching thy light,

Reflecting thee, bright as a sun shall shine.

Walk not, my flower, within the garden close,

Lest thou should give the bulbul new distress;

For at thy glance each blossom turns a rose

To lure him with her cruel loveliness.

Victorious One, thou hast unsheathed thy sword,

The scimitar of thy beauty gleams again,

So over all thy lovers thou art Lord,

Holding dominion in the hearts of men.

Art thou serene and calm and unafraid

When thou considerest thy tyranny?

Think of the reckoning that shall be made

Between thy heart and mine at Judgment Day.

WALI.

XLI.

O ask not frigid Piety to dwell

In the same house with Youth and warm Desire;

It were as idle as if one should tell

Water to be a comrade of the Fire.

O say not only that the Loved One left

My lonely heart, and fled beyond recall;

But I of rest and patience am bereft,

And losing Her I am deprived of all.

Take heed, O Hunter, though within thy net

Thou hold this bird, my soul, with many bands,

I struggle sore, for Freedom lures me yet,

And may escape from out thy cruel hands.

YAKRANG.

XLII.

Thou shouldst have given to me the robe and crown

And made me king of kings,

Or dressed me in the tattered darwesh gown,

Poorest of earthly things.

O that I were thy fool to do thy will,

Simple and led by thee!

What meaning have my knowledge and my skill,

They have no worth to me.

Lo, thou hast made me as the dust that flies

Unheeded in the street,

O were I that which in her pathway lies,

Trodden beneath her feet!

My heart is as it were to fringes shred,

Such wounds it had to bear;

Would that it were the comb, to touch her head,

To tend her perfumed hair!

Long have I known that it was thy design

To burn my soul outright;

O may at least the happy fate be mine

To be the Tavern light!

ZAFAR.

XLIII.

Mine eyes were shut

And yet I saw the shining vision gleam;

Now that mine eyes are opened, know I not

Was it a thought that held me—or a dream?

Long to myself I said—It will be well,

When I can see her, I will tell my pain:

Now she is here, what is there left to tell?

No griefs remain.

Faithless she is to me, and pitiless,

Despotic and tyrannical she is,

I looked for love, I looked for tenderness,

I leant on vain impossibilities.

I listened to thy voice that stole to me

Across the curtain where thou satst apart,

Desire came like a restless ecstasy,

A sorcery that fell upon my heart.

When I had burst my prison, and was free,

I saw no fetters held me, and I found,

O Zafar, that these chains that shackle me

Are ties of self wherewith my soul is bound.

XLIV.

I care not if no rest nor peace remain,

I have my cherished pain,

I have my rankling love that knows no end,

And need no other friend.

I yearned with all my heart to hold her fast,

She laughed, and fled, and passed!

Lakhs of enchantments, scores of spells I wove,

But useless was my love.

I would have given my life to make her stay,

She went away, away, she went away.

Though I effaced myself in deed and thought

And brought myself to naught,

The dark and Sundering curtain hangs between

I cannot pierce the screen.

And still I know behind the veil she hides,

And naught besides

In all this changing Universe abides!

XLV.

That I should find her after weary years,

And that mine eyes should keep from happy tears,—

That is not possible, this is not possible.

If she should come after these many days,

And if my wondering eyes forget to gaze—

That is not possible, this is not possible.

Sometimes I long to kiss my idol's face,

Sometimes to clasp her in my wild embrace—

That is not possible, this is not possible.

How can I let her seek my rival's door,

How can I bear the friends I loved before—

That is not possible, this is not possible.

O Zafar, does she bid me to return,

And dare I, for I tremble and I burn—

That is not possible, this is not possible.

XLVI.

Whence did the yearning of the soul arise,

The longing to attain the Heavenly Sight?

Before what mortal eyes

Was manifested the Eternal Light?

When the soul understands and wakes to find

Thou hast within the heart of man Thy throne,

It sees how arrogant and blind

The self that but its mortal self hath known.

Thou and I also were the seer and seen,

When none beside existed. Thou and I

Have Lover and Belovéd been

Before this era of mortality.

How strange the turns in Love's unending game,

For neither Lover nor Belovéd lit

The ever-burning flame:

Whence was the spirit that enkindled it?

The road that leads where pious pilgrims bow

In Kaaba or in Temple, Thou hast laid;

And first of all wert Thou

To tread the road that thou Thyself hadst made.

ZAHIR.

XLVII.

Thy beauty flashes like a sword

Serene and keen and merciless;

But great as is thy cruelty,

Even greater is thy loveliness.

It is the gift of God to thee

This beauty rare and exquisite;

Why dost thou hide it thus from me,

I shall not steal nor sully it.

And as thy beauty shines, in Heaven

There climbs upon its path of fire

The star that lights my rival's way,

And with it mounts his heart's desire.

Even in thy house is jealousy,

Thy youth demands the lover's praise

Over thy beauty, which itself

Is jealous of thy gracious ways.

I died with joy when winningly

I heard the Well-Belovéd call—

Zahir, where is my beauty gone,

Thou must have robbed me after all.

ZAHIR.

XLVIII.

O Tyrannous One, when from my heart was drawn

The fatal arrow, like a scarlet flood

My life gushed forth; but yet the one word Hope

Was written in my blood.

Why should the Cosmos turn its wheel of worlds

If not to search for thee eternally?

Why should the tireless Sun arise each morn

If not to look for thee?

Alas my fate! before you came to me

Already had I felt the touch of Death,

Nor was I spared before thy worshipped feet

To offer up my breath.

For long, throughout the world, I sought for thee,

Through weary years and ages of unrest;

At last I found thee hidden in my arms

Within my breast!

ZAUQ.

FRAGMENTS.

Each morn I see the Sun in majesty

Come back to shine thy rival as before,

But O what ages has it taken thee

To come to me—if thou wilt come—once more!

ARZU.

Through Love did I the joy of life attain,

And walking in the way that He hath led

I found the remedy to heal all pain;

Why therefore is my pain unremedied?

GHALIB.

O burnish well the mirror of thy heart

And make it fair,

If thou desire the image of thy Love

To shine reflected there.

HATIM.

No fault is thine, Beloved, I do not blame thee,

Nor do I blame my rivals for their part,

I know my trouble causeless, yet I hearken

To my unreasonable, doubting heart.

MAZHAR.

What thou hast done, never an enemy

Would practise on a bitterly-hated foe;

And yet, my friend,

I took thee for a friend, and did not know.

MAZHAR.

Mayhap my sorrowful heart

Did not deserve thou shouldst bestow on me

Thy priceless love, but neither did it merit

Thy cruel tyranny.

MAZHAR.

She lightly laughed—And so is Mazhar dead?

Alas, poor helpless one! I knew not I

What was his trouble.—Then again she said

—I did not think him ill enough to die.

MAZHAR.

If I behold her, I am mad,

And if I see her not, I die;

O Love, to tender hearts like mine

Thou art a great calamity.

MAZHAR.

I ask for Allah's pardon, if I dare

To weigh and criticise what He hath done;

But when He made thy beauty shining fair,

What need was there for Him to make the Sun?

MIR DARD.

In spring, O Bulbul, go not in thy grief

To seek the garden, wandering apart;

But wait—one day within thy very heart

It shall arise, in bud and bloom and leaf.

MIR SOZ.

Some friend of mine, may be,

After my lonely death may let her see

How foolish were her idle doubts of me;

But no! how can I think the rolling Wheel of Fate

Should turn to favour one so long unfortunate?

MIR TAQI.

I, like a poor fakir,

Wander from door to door,

Bearing my load of pain;

But thou, O Ever-Dear,

Thou comest never more

Unto my door again.

SAUDA.

O changing Wheel of Fate, what thing is there

Thou hast not in thy myriad cycles brought!

Wilt thou, indeed, I wonder in despair,

Bring me at last what I so long have sought?

SAUDA.

I longed that the Beloved might come to me,

Or Patience come and in my heart remain;

But neither came, and now at last I see

The only constant friend I have is Pain.

TABAN.

False is she, breaker of all promises,

The heart's unending malady is she;

All this and more she is,

And she herself the only remedy.

Only in visions can I come again

To the Belovéd, and a shade she seems;

My lips desire in vain

The touch of ghostly kisses,

The shadowy kisses that I know in dreams.

O kind imagination, thou hast given

Eyes to my heart, and though She veil her grace

Fold behind fold, they seek the hidden heaven,

They find the secret beauties of her face.

I did not weep until my heart was lost,

So strange the bartering of love appears,

I gave the shining jewel of my soul

To buy these pearls—my tears.

The eyes say in reproach, O wayward heart,

What road of ruin hast thou led us in!

The heart complains, O eyes,

Beguiled yourselves, ye lured me into sin.

GLOSSARY.

Bazar—market place.

Bulbul—nightingale.

Darwesh—devotee, dervish.

Diwan—collection of poems.

Ede—festival.

Fakir—an ascetic in Islam.

Ghazal—ode: form of verse written in couplets, all in one rhyme.

Hind, Hindustan—Upper India, north of the Vindhya Hills.

Islam—The religion of Muslims: lit. absolute surrender to Allah alone.

Kaaba—central sanctuary of Islam, at Mecca, holy city of Islam.

Kafir—unbeliever, one who is not a Muslim.

Kismet—fate.

Lakh—100,000: myriad.

Masnawi—epic poem, written in rhymed couplets.

Mecca, Medina—sacred places of Islam, in Arabia: the birthplace and burial place of Muhammad.

Muhammad—the Prophet of Islam (A.D. 570-632).

Mushaira—poetical concourse (see Foreword p. 1.).

Muslim—or Musulman; lit. one surrendered to Allah alone.

Prophet—see Muhammad.

Purdah—curtain.

Qasidah—elegy or eulogy.

Saki—the cup-bearer, wine-giver.

Sufi—see Foreword, p. 2.

Suleiman—Solomon, King of the Jews: in Muslim legend lord over angels and demons.

Takhallus—pen-name.

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