

## Ruba'iyat [Quatrains] Poetry

### Precious Pearl

*Fati, your nature with light is adorned!  
Bonds of the intellect's veil have been shorn!  
As though from an ocean of light and of grace  
This precious pearl so pure has been born!*

Ordibehesht 1367 AHS

[April–May 1988]

### Explanation

While the above expresses something of the rhythm and rhyme of the original, a more literal rendering of this quatrain is as follows:

*Fati, as the light of your nature adorns you  
You have become beautified from the bonds of the veil of the intellect  
It is as though from the sea of the dominion of light and eminence  
This precious pearl so pure has been raised*

Like so much of Imam's advice to his daughter-in-law, the idea that intellectual pursuit can be an obstacle to communion with one's divine nature recurs in this poem.

The words for dominion and eminence (grace), *Sultani* and *Sadr*, are family names which allude to Fatimah Tabataba'i's genealogy.

### The Path

*Fati who treads the path of the angelic domain  
Wants to pass from the state of the noetic domain  
She is blind who from the well of the sensible domain*

*Would go without a guide toward the divine domain*

May 29, 1984

## The Absolute Beauty

*Fati, uproot your heart from worldly interests*

*Withdraw your heart from befriending this and that*

*Opt for only the one Friend who is the absolute beauty*

*Withdraw your heart from the being and space of this world*

June 3, 1984

## Explanation

According to the mystics of Islam, the lowest level of being is the sensible world, *nasut*. Above this is the angelic domain, *malakut*, which Henri Corbin has called the *mundis imaginalis*. Higher still is the world of the intellect, the noetic domain, *jabarut*. Finally, there is the divine domain, *lahut*.

The phrase 'being and space,' *kown o makan*, is an idiom commonly used in poetry to indicate the physical world.

## Gnosis

*Fati, what does it mean, you and the reality of gnosis*

*What does it mean to comprehend the essence without attributes?*

*Having not read the A you shall not find your way to Z*

*Having not read the path, what does it mean to be gifted?*

## The Friend

*As long as you have the Friend, you shall suffer no harm,*

*As long as He exists, there is no dust of quality and quantity*

*Abandon whatever there is and choose Him*

*There is no advice more excellent than these two words*

May 25, 1984

## Wake Up

*Other than the way of the Friend, where can you go?*

*Except for His homage, what can you say?*

*Whatever homage and tribute you say is His homage  
Wake up, O pal, how long will you sleep?*

## **The Sun of the World**

*Wake up, O friend, from this heavy sleep!  
Behold the face of the beloved manifest in every particle  
When you are asleep you are hidden in your selfhood  
The sun of the world is hidden from your eye  
June 7, 1984*

## **Affliction of the Heart**

*One who is not softened by a sigh is steel hearted,  
Or who is not warmed by the moaning of the heart burned,  
He has cast a lasso of cruelty about his neck  
The affliction of my heart causes him no shame*

## **Sun**

*O sun! Rise, for we are all sleeping!  
We are glowing with the fever of separation from your face  
Every quarter and rooftop is enlighten by your face,  
But we are like bats and are veiled*

February–March 1984

## **A Sleeping Heart**

*What is the world illuminating sun compared to your eye?  
Where is the memory of the face of the beloved in a sleeping heart?<sup>1</sup>  
With your clay body you shall not become an angel  
O my friend! Where is the dust and the Lord of Lords?*

## **Wayfarer**

*Arise because those who tread the path are all on the way,  
Constantly they move on toward the dwelling,  
There, where there is no memory save that of the Friend,  
The depressed hearts are all black faced*

July 15, 1984

## Think of a Way

*If we cannot be obedient we shall sin  
We shall turn from the seminary to the khanaqah<sup>2</sup>  
The cry "I am the Truth" was the way of Mansur<sup>3</sup>  
Oh Lord, aid me so I might think of a way*

## Mt. Sinai

*O Friend, take me to the service of a Pir<sup>4</sup>  
Defender, take me to be initiated<sup>5</sup>  
My desire is to reach Mt. Sinai by this long way  
Befriend me and send me a bosom friend*

February–March 1985

## Memory

*To whom should I complain of separation from you?  
My Defender! To whom should I go with my case against you?  
The tempest of your sorrow would snap asunder the thread of existence  
Your memory shall go, and I shall even forget the memory of myself*

## Complain

*Oh Pir, I desire the khanaqah  
Obedience is of no benefit, I desire sin  
The companions have all departed for the Ka'bah  
I complain of myself for I desire the place of sin*

February–March 1985

## Face of the Beloved

*Oh meadow lark, get out of this cage!  
Paradise seeks you, become enchanted!  
You are a peacock who has come from the quarters of the beloved  
Remember the face of the beloved and become mad!*

## Dervish

*O you whose memory is a comfort to the hearts of the dervishes!  
O you defender of the dervishes from difficulties!  
There is Sinai and the tree and there is the vision of epiphany of the face  
O friends! This is what is obtained by dervishes!*

March 5, 1985

## No Respite

*O Pir! Take me to the khanaqah!  
All the companions have departed. Take me to the path  
I can bear it no longer. There has come no respite  
Give me refuge oh you who give aid!*

## Captive

*It is an honor to me to become impoverished by you,  
To become cut off from myself and to become your captive,  
To be tempest stricken and afflicted by your dominion,  
Singly to become the target of your bow and arrow*

February 23, 1985

## Beware

*Fati! One must journey toward the Friend  
One should transcend the self  
Every knowledge with the scent of your being  
Is a devil on the way of which one must beware*

## The Cup

*You are not a lover if you have a name  
You are not mad if you have a message  
You have not tasted drunkenness if you are sober  
Be gentle with us 'till you have the cup*

April 29, 1984

## Shadow

*O charisma of Homa!<sup>6</sup>Cast your shadow over my head!  
Come to my aid, extract my existence!  
The noose which has been put around my neck by desires,  
Cast it round the necks of the base, O my Beloved!*

## Hidden Cry

*Who is aware of my heartache but you?  
Who is with me, the madman on the roof and at the gate?  
Of my interior rebellion, in whom may I confide?  
Where is the heart this hidden cry affects?*

March 11, 1985

## Path

*Open a chapter with the description of your face,  
Let it begin a lock of your hair  
Roll up the scroll of the science and philosophy  
Cast a glance toward me, O Beloved that my path may be toward you*

## A Novice of the Way

*O Pir of the Way! Initiate me!  
I am a novice of the Way. Be my Pir!  
I am worn out; I've gotten nowhere on the path  
O you beloved! Be my commander on this path<sup>7</sup>*

March 5, 1985

## A Glance

*O you my joy, my grief, my sorrow!  
O my inner wound and my salve!  
Cast a glance upon this worthless bit  
So my banner may fly over the horizons!*

## Drop

*I am a gnat who by your favor shall become a peacock  
I am a drop from your sea, who shall become an ocean  
If you show favor toward me, I shall open my wings like an angel  
I am ready to kiss the feet of the King of Tus<sup>8</sup>*

February–March 1985

## The Madman

*Become mad; take off the shackles from your feet!  
O peacock! Slander the raven by showing off  
Don't ask the madman about the state of his heart or intellect,  
Find one who is enchanted by the shackles of intellect*

## That Day

*That day when I shall make my way to tavern,  
I shall entrust all the friends to the Sufi robe and to the seat of the Pir<sup>9</sup>  
I shall tear up the scrolls of the sage, the philosopher and the gnostic  
While crying and beating my feet*

March 5, 1981

## The Sun's Glory

*Take away the veil so you may see His beauty,  
So you may see the glory of His unrivaled essence  
O bat! Come out of your skin  
So you may see the manifestation of the sun's glory!*

## Homa

**Homa<sup>10</sup>**

*O peacock! Homa! Cast your shadow over my head  
Befriend me and open my wings and feathers  
O rescuer! Liberate me from my bonds  
By your star, make my star auspicious*

January–February 1985

## What do to?

*I am Farhad, <sup>11</sup> I have the burning of the love of Shirin in my heart  
I hope to meet my old Companion  
I've lost all patience, I don't know what to do  
All night I have her memory in my sorrowful heart*

## Thirsty for Reply

*O Friend! Whatever there is, is a light from your face  
The succor of this heart is your propitious glance  
The night of separation came to an end, but dawn never arrived  
O Beloved! The dead heart is thirsty for your reply*

March 6, 1985

## Quarter of the Friend

*If I find a way to the quarters of the Friend,  
If I find in the shelter in the shadow of her kindness,  
There would be no sorrow, for the way to come and go is free.  
If I am not obedient, I am a sinner*

## Your Memory

*Oh! Your memory is the source of my sorrow and my joy  
The cypress of your stature is the sapling of my liberation  
Take away the veil from your face and open your countenance!  
Oh! You are the principle of my destruction and of my flourishing*

February–March 1985

## Forlorn

*If you are not one of the people, do not find fault with the people  
of the Truth  
O dead ones! Do not take the living hearts to be as dead as you  
Arise from this heavy sleep, O you who are forlorn!  
Do not take the wakeful hearts to be in heavy sleep*

## Idol

*With the eye of I-ness one cannot see His beauty  
With the ear of thou-ness no one can hear His melody  
The we-ness and thou-ness is the cause of blindness and deafness  
Break this idol so that the Friend may appear!*

June 23, 1984

## The Holiday

*This felicitous holiday is the most felicitous  
The community is in the shelter of the mercy of Ahmad  
On the banner of our Islamic Republic  
Is the blessed portrait of Muhammad*

## The Banner

*This felicitous holiday is the holiday of the Party of Allah  
Our enemy is aware of its defeat  
Because the banner of our Islamic Republic  
Is preserved by the greatest name: Allah!*

March 6, 1985

## Explanation

These quatrains were written two weeks before the Persian New Year holiday. Ahmad is one of the names for the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah to him and to his progeny). The 'Party of Allah' is an expression used in the Qur'an (5:56; 58:22), in Arabic *hizbullah*:

***Whoever takes as his guardian Allah and His Messenger and those who believe: indeed, the Party of Allah shall be victorious. (5:56)***

## Tempest

*The secret of my heart is manifest to the Friend,  
Along with perplexity of heart and fruitless suffering  
An increasing tempest is within our hearts  
O Lord! With what dust have you kneaded my clay?*

## Tavern

*The night when all the saloons are open*

*The companions of the tavern sing together*

*Quit of the rival, beside the Beloved,*

*The scroll of separation closed, they share secrets*

March 6, 1985

- [1.](#) There is a saying in Arabic: Aynaturab wa rabb al-arbab? (Where is the dust and the Lord of Lords?) This phrase is used as an exclamation to indicate infinite difference or contrast.
- [2.](#) The khanaqah is the Sufi meeting place.
- [3.](#) Mansur is Hallaj, the martyred Sufi who was convicted of blasphemy for his utterance, "I am the Truth." See note 40, p. 30. (Eds.)
- [4.](#) A Pir is a Sufi master. See note 5, p. 6. (Eds.)
- [5.](#) Initiation is induction into a Sufi order.
- [6.](#) In ancient Persian legends the Homa is a bird, sometimes identified with the Phoenix, sometimes taken to be an osprey, which would fly over the head of a candidate to the throne and thereby bestow a kind of royal charisma upon the new king.
- [7.](#) Among the Sufis the contrast between the exoteric and esoteric aspects of the religion is often spoken of as a contrast between shari'ah and tariqah. Both words literally mean a path, way or road, but the term shari'ah also signifies Islamic Law, while a Sufi order is referred to as a tariqah. Sufi initiation is called dastgiri, literally, taking of the hand; so, 'initiate me' could also be translated as 'take my hand,' or 'give me a hand.' The word translated here as 'novice' literally means infant, or toddler.
- [8.](#) The King of Tus is a reference to the eighth Imam from the Prophet's progeny, Imam 'Ali ar-Rida (peace be with him), whose shrine is in Mashhad near the ancient city of Tus.
- [9.](#) 'Sufi robe' translates dalq, which is a coarse woollen garment traditionally worn by the Sufis. The 'seat of the Pir' is masnad, the place in the khanaqah reserved for the Pir, often covered by a lambskin.
- [10.](#) See note 75, p. 67. (Eds.)
- [11.](#) See note 41, p. 33. (Eds.)

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