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# **Ghazal Poetry**

## The Consolation of the Pir

Kiss the hand of the shaykh who has pronounced me a disbeliever.

Congratulate the guard who has led me away in chains.

I'm going into a solitary retreat

from noon by the door of the Magus,

So that in one gulp I may be filled with the wine of both worlds.

I will not drink the water of Kawthar;

I will not take this heavenly favor.

The beam which shines on your face, oh Friend,
has made me a conqueror of the world.
Console the heart of the dervish from whom the eternal secret

Has been disclosed; who has made me aware of my destiny.

I congratulate the Pir of the tavern who has himself grasped

My annihilation, my nothingness, and who has captivated me,

A servant of my Pir, who comforts the heart himself,

Of one who has forgotten himself and whom he has turned upside down.

Esfand 1367 AHS

[February-March 1989]

#### **Explanation**

This kind of poem, like the next thirty which follow, is a *ghazal*. Persian is a poetic language. Ordinary rhymes are easy to come by, so most poetry uses feminine rhymes which would be awkward and silly and impossibly difficult to manage in English. In Farsi, the poem has a rhyme scheme like this:

iramkard
iramkard
iramkard
iramkard
ramkard
iramkard

The sound "iramkard" is a combination of the ending sound of a verb, a first-person pronoun, and an auxiliary verb, which results in the triple rhymes that runs through the poem.

Imam Khomeini's poetry is a kind of play with the images and themes of Hafiz (d. 1338 CE), the undisputed master of the *ghazal*. In this poetry there is always a contrast between official hypocritical religion, represented by the mosque and the seminary, and the true religion, symbolized by the tavern, the wine, the cupbearer, the Zoroastrian priest, idols, sexual love, etc. This tension is heighten in Imam Khomeini's poetry precisely because he is as official a representative of official religion as one could ever hope to find, and yet he sees himself, in his most private vision, as an iconoclast. Consider the first line: "Kiss the hand of the shaykh who has pronounced me a disbeliever."

This pronouncing that someone is a disbeliever is the job of the official clergy, as Imam Khomeini in his official capacity as a jurist condemned Salman Rushdie. Perhaps it is more than a coincidence that the decree [fatwa] was issued right about the time that this poem was written. The title 'shaykh' is ambiguous. In contemporary Iran the term is used for masters of mysticism. In Arab countries, like Iraq, this title is still used for a jurist, an official cleric, although it is also used like the Persian pir for a gnostic master, or even as a common title of respect for an old man. In classical Persian poetry, particularly in the poetry of Hafiz, the shaykh symbolizes hypocritical observance of the outward forms of religion without regard for its true inner spirit. "Congratulate" occurs twice in the poem.

This is not a translation of the Persian word *benevaz*. When a child performs some task well, one may stroke the face of the child and praises the child. *Benevaz* signifies that one should perform this sort of laudatory stroking. The word that I've translated as "guard" is *mohtaseb* which was the title for a certain low level government functionary, a kind of inspector, during the time of Hafiz, seven hundred years ago. So, in the very first couplet of this poem, we meet three aspects of Imam Khomeini's own personality: the cleric, the leader of government, and the mystic. The mystic is the inner self, the first person in whose voice the poem is narrated, and it is this person which is condemned as a disbeliever by the others, while the mystic accepts and appreciates the cleric and guard. This theme is repeated in the poem, as

he says that in one gulp he has been filled with the wine of both worlds. He has been filled with the wine of this worldly devotion as cleric and leader, and with the wine of other worldly devotion as mystic and poet. The Magus, *Pir–e Moghan*, is a Zoroastrian elder, interchangeable with the pir of the tavern, and the bar keeper. The "water of *Kawthar*" is a spring in paradise which is mentioned in the Qur'an (108: 1–2).

### The Wine of Love

I am a hunter of taverns, don't ask me about the Beloved.
I am dumb, so from the dumb, and distracted don't ask for an oration.
I'm preoccupied with my own blindness and wretchedness,
So from the blind don't ask for sight and vision.

Your languid eyes have brought on my own languor,
So don't ask from one so smitten for aught but delirious ravings.
Don't consort with a wandering dervish, but if ever you do,
Never ask him about wisdom, philosophy, scripture, or of the sayings of the Prophet.

I am drunk with the wine of Thy love, so from such a drunkard Don't ask for the sober counsel of a man of the world.

Dey 1365 AHS
[December-January 1986/87]

#### **Explanation**

In this poem, as in the previous poem, Imam Khomeini may be playing with different facets of his own personality. He was famous for his speeches, some of which have been translated by Hamid Algar in *Islam and Revolution* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), yet in this poem he protests that he is not to be asked for an oration. He is a philosopher and theologian, yet he cautions that one should not turn to him for philosophical insight. He is a cleric who has written a famous commentary on forty sayings of the Prophet, a partial translation of which has been published as *Forty Hadiths: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, Part 1* (Tehran: Islamic Propagation Organization, 1989).2

All of this is superceded by his inner life as a mystic lover. The language used to express this is that of Hafiz. The tavern, *kharabat*, may also be brothel or gaming house. In the tradition of Hafiz, it is the place of mystical ecstacy, where the 'wine,' the love of God, is served. The Beloved, *yar*, or friend/companion, is commonly taken to indicate God. The languid eye, *cheshm–e bimar*, literally sick eye, is used for the seductive languid eye of a mistress, and this genre of poetry is understood to mean the spiritual attraction of the divine. The 'sick eye' of the intoxicated beloved is half–closed, disdainful. The wandering dervish mentioned in the poem is a *Qalandar*, an itinerant dervish with a reputation for being something

of a rogue. *Hikmat*, literally wisdom, has the technical meaning of a kind of philosophical theology or theosophy.

#### Life's Caravan

My life has reached its end, but yet, my Friend has not come.

My story now concludes; but conclusion to this pain has not come

The goblet of death is at hand, yet I never had my turn at the goblet of wine.

The years have come and gone, but a sweetheart's tenderness has not come.

The bird of my spirit's been trapped, and, fallen without wings to fly, is confined to this cage, Yet she who should set me free, who should break apart this cage, has not come.3

The lovers of a darling face are all nameless and without vestige While for those of fame, even a whiff of the air of her affection has not come.

In rank and file of the caravan of the lovers of her face, they wait expectantly.

To whom then should I complain that at last the soul quickening beloved has come?

She bestows the spirit of the dead, and seizes the souls of the lovers. To the ignorant alone, belief in such a ravishing love has not come.

Tir 1366 AHS [June-July 1987]

## The Account of Perplexity

I want the pain, not the drug.

I want the anguish that sticks in the throat, not a pleasant melody.

I am a lover, I am a lover, I am your patient; I don't want to be healed from this.

I would even pay for your cruelty for my soul; I don't want to abandon this cruelty.

From you, my beloved, cruelty is fidelity, So, I don't want any other fidelity, You are both my Safa and my Marwa;

I don't want Marwa with Safa.

The Sufi has no news about the union with the Friend.

I don't want a Sufi without Safa.

You are my supplication and my remembrance;
I want neither remembrance nor contemplation nor supplication.
In whatever direction I turn, you are my qiblah.

I want no qiblah nor that which shows its direction.
Whoever you gaze upon becomes your sacrifice.
I am the sacrifice, I don't want any sacrifice.
Every horizon is enlightened by your visage,
You are manifest, I don't want a mere trace of you.

Ordibehesht 1366 AHS [April-May 1987]

#### **Explanation**

This poem reminds one of the lines of Baba Tahir:

Some want the drug, some want the pain,

Some want union, some want separation,

I am not of those who want the drug, the pain, union or separation.

I want what the beloved wants.

The idea expressed in this poem is that even in the hiddenness of God, He is manifest to the true lover. The very hiddenness itself becomes a mode of manifestation. The pain which is described in the first eight lines is the pain of the lover, the longing for union with the divine. The cruelty is the experience of this longing caused by the need for union. The word translated as 'cruelty' here, *jafa'*, indicates the kind of torment a mistress may inflict upon her lover, as by withholding her favors. The lover wants this cruelty, because he wants to feel the union with the divine. He wants no other fulfillment of any promise

by God except that he should be so favored as to feel the need for union with Him. *Safa* and *Marwa* are the two hills between which pilgrims must run back and forth during the *Hajj* ceremony, to commemorate the searching of Hajar, the wife of Abraham, for water herself and for the son Isma'il.

Also, it is said that when Adam and Eve were ejected from the garden, Adam was put on *Safa* and Eve on *Marwa*. So, the two hills symbolize the longing of the lovers. There is a pun in the following lines on the name 'Safa' which means purity. In saying that the beloved is his Safa and Marwa, he claims that he has no need to perform the rites of the pilgrimage, because he already experiences the hardship of the pilgrimage in his longing for the beloved. In saying that he does not want Marwa with Safa, the lover claims both that he feels no need to perform the pilgrimage, and also that he does not want this rite with purity, that is he doesn't want to be cleansed of the hardship he experiences in his longing.

The sufi is one who has achieved union with the divine, yet line (11) declares that the sufi has no news of it. Line twelve (12) is ambiguous. It can mean that such a sufi, with no news of union with the divine, and thus with no purity, is not wanted, or it can mean that he does not want to be a sufi who is without the difficulty represented by Mt. Safa and alluding to the rites of the pilgrimage. Lines (13) and (14) mention *dhikr* and *fikr*, which are the chief methods employed by the sufi to attain union with the divine. *Dhikr* is the heartfelt remembrance of God, usually through the repetition of one of the names of God, or some short exclamation of praise or faith. *Fikr* is contemplation and *du'a* is a supplication. In these lines the lover states that he does not need such methods, because his yearning is sufficient. The *qiblah* is the direction of prayer towards the Ka'bah in Mecca. Lines (15) and (16) recall the *ayah* of the Qur'an:

#### "Withersoever you turn, there is the face of Allah" (2:115).

In lines (17) and (18), the lover declares his devotion to the beloved with phrase, 'I am your sacrifice.' The claim, 'I want no sacrifice,' means that the lover feels no need for something to sacrifice, such as an animal, because he himself is being sacrificed to God. An animal sacrifice is part of the *Hajj* ceremony. Line (19) again recalls the above cited *ayah* of the Qur'an. In the last line, the lover declares that God is already manifest to him, and so that he neither nor wants any 'trace' (lit. footprint), any sign or symbol which could help him to find the beloved

To those unfamiliar with the tradition of Islamic mysticism, particularly as it has developed in Iran, all of this may sound somewhat shocking. However, the gesture of repudiating the outward ritual of the pilgrimage in favor of an esoteric pilgrimage of the heart can be found in the writings of a number of mystics. The rejection of the exoteric forms of religion is itself a symbol for the need to attend to the inner dimension of religion. Nevertheless, there have been members of the clergy who have opposed such symbolic repudiations of the outward forms of religion on the grounds that they may be misunderstood as authentic opposition to ritual, as the poet's verses about wine may deceive some who would seek physical instead of spiritual intoxication.

## The Bright Rays of the Sun

The meadow lark sings a glad tiding: the season of Spring has returned. The season for wine drinking and for kisses has returned.

At last the time of withering and melancholy has gone.
The days for a caress of your sweetheart's waist have returned.

At last the time of death, decay and ruin has gone. Life, with two hundred images and sights has returned.

The meadow's wan yellow face has since packed up and gone.
Rosebuds in the sun's bright rays to blossoms have returned.

The cup-bearer, the tavern, the troubadour, clapping of hands, And a fancy for the curl of a tress of a dear one have returned.

If you pass the gate of the seminary tell the shaykh

If he would be taught the rosy cheeked girl has returned.

Close the shop of asceticism during this season of joy,
For the strain that the tar4 plays has again to our ears returned.

Farvardin 1366 AHS [March-April 1987]

## **Your Wine Drunk Eyes**

Your wine drunk languid eyes
Have brought on my own languor.
I've become captivated
by your curls.

You are a cypress from the garden of excellence, a flower from the flower bed of beauty. Without even an amorous glance, you've made me lose the interest in all other beauties.

All who have tasted the wine have lost all consciousness,
But I've become conscious by the goblet from your life giving hand.

What shall I do?
I am enthralled, burning, stricken.
Your coquetry and jewel filled ruby lips
have caused me to adore you.

My heart's love
has brought the Mansur5 in me
From my quarters
to ascend the scaffold.

Your love has driven me from the seminary and from the circle of the Sufis.

And has made me the submissive slave of the wine cellar.

Wine from your brim filled goblet has made me eternal.

By kissing the dust of your threshold I've become intimate with mystery.

Dey 1365 AHS
[December-January 1986-87]

# **Spring at Old Age**

Spring has come. I shall begin youth after old age.

I will sit beside the Friend, and have the fruit of my life.

I shall return to the rose garden. I shall mingle with the flowers and the buds.

At the side of the garden I shall caress the moon-faced sweetheart.

I shall cast behind me autumn and its yellowness one day,
For in the garden I shall get news of the rosy-cheeked dear.
My feathers and wings molt in January with agony over the sweetheart.
In April with memory of union with the darling,

I'll get wings and feathers once again.
In the time of autumn I would perch in this ruined land,
If Spring has come, it is because I am ready to take off
for the sake of union with her.

If the wine-bearer spills some wine of the goblet onto the lovers,
If she spills it out of drunkenness, I shall pull the veil from her face.
Ordibehesht 1366 AHS
[April-May 1987]

### Son of the Tavern

Drink a cup at the gate of the tavern and be joyous
In remembrance of the angel who gave you this success.
Even of you do not have an adze with which to dig up the mountain
Become Farhad6 in agony over the sweetheart and be joyous.

Go and wear the earring of servitude, of being a rogue;
Become the ruler of the world of generation and corruption.
Compose a song of the curls and waves of the tresses of the cup-bearer.
With soul and heart be the standard bearer of this custom.

Become a pupil of the master of the faculty of wine in all the branches of love.

Hold up your head over all creation and become a professor.

Drunkards do not purchase position for a farthing,

Even if they should be the Khosrow of time or Kay Qabad.

If you become the pleasant son of the tavern,

Leave the Kingdom of Qaysar and Kasra to the winds. 15/12/67 AHS [March 6, 1989]

## The Flight of the Soul

If the way were clear to her alley before dawn,

If my sleeping fate would join me for a while,

If the morning breeze would find its way to the lane of the friend,

If my distressed heart would become intimate with that cypress stature one,

If the reed would tell of the pain of the hearts of the lovers,

If the sore heart would harmonize with the sorely desired,

If Solomon had mercy on the sorrow of a weak ant, 7

So that it held up its head and became eminent among the companion of the heart,

In this desire I'll offer my head; for her arrival I'll shed my life,
If she opens the gate for me, and returns my affection.

Cast your shadow upon my head, O cypressof the garden of excellence,
Until my soul is ready to fly from this world.

Tir 1366 AHS

[June–July 1987]

## The Wine of Awakening

Take up the cup and take off the robes of asceticism and pretense, Leave the prayer niche to the pretentious shaykh. Inform the pir of the tavern about our state. With a goblet he may dispel the wine craving from our souls.

The begging bowl of poverty is cause for our honor.8

O heart deceiving Friend, increase this honor.9

We eat the crumbs of the conversation of the wandering dervish rogue.

With one amorous glance, show affection to the heart of this old dole eater.

Do not speak of the soul wounding poison of my rival.

Do you know what I've suffered from this speckled snake? 10

Kisses and caresses of the Friend have given life to my soul.

In her absence I have no share of kiss nor caress.

Warn the pir of the saloon of my anguish.

The cup-bearer has made me conscious with a cup of wine.

27/11/67 AHS [February 16, 1989]

### The Miracle of Love

The Friend cried out because the secret of her was exposed.

How humiliated she was before the rogues of the saloon.

I wanted to keep the secret of my heart to myself alone.

But when the door of the bar was opened there was such a tumult!

Open the lid of the wine vat because the Friend has come!
Glad tidings O tavern, for eternal life has been established!
How I enjoy the tuft of your hair, when you undo it.
A mote becomes the sun and a drop becomes the whole sea.

You opened your lips to speak of wine and you become drunk.

Before the cup-bearer all the secrets of the world were divulged.

It is as if the Messiah has passed by the lane of the tavern,

So that at the threshold of God he should have attained such high repute.

You don't know the miracle of love. Zulaykha 11 knows it. For with her the beloved Joseph became so beautiful.

15/12/67 AHS [March 6, 1989]

## The Path of Nothingness

Save your love there is nothing in our hearts.

Your love was kneaded into our clay.

The Asfar and Shifa of Ibn Sina 12 did not untie

Our difficulty with all their hairsplitting disputations.

Tell the shaykh who called my way invalid,
(He will sneer at your truth, our invalidity)
If his wayfarer passes some stations,
Our station shall be path of nothingness itself.

A hundred caravans of the heart pickup to their destination, But our negligent heart was left behind. If Noah was saved from drowning and found his way to shore, The drowning itself is our shore.

Khordad 1366 AHS [May-June 1987]

## **Divulge Your Secret**

The bird of the heart flutters, trying to escape this cage.

The life of the soul is exhausted, so, for a while it becomes mad.

No one knows the state of this butterfly with the burnt heart.

In the presence of the candle of the existence of the Friend, finally, what will happen? ayfarers packed up and left these quarters;

This engorged heart has been left behind where this lane curves.

Divulge your secret, unveil your own beautiful face!

From the agony of seeing your face my eye has become like the Oxus.

O cup-bearer, remember the dry lipped ones left behind,

So your cup may be full to the brim and your drunkenness shall increase.

One day the cloud of mercy shall rain wine instead of water!

The plains shall become intoxicated and cheeks shall become rosy!

Farvardin 1366 AHS [March-April 1987]

## The Agony of Love

Wine from the goblet of the beloved is without consciousness. Selflessness from the drink of this goblet is without wakening. Your languid eye draws everyone to languor. Forever, the sick lover has no sickness.

The lover has withdrawn his heart from everything save the beloved, silently,
Because he has no conversation with himself,
save the story of love.

In whom may I confide of the sweetness of the pain of the agony of the beloved? Save the agony of one occupied with love, the lover has no sorrow.

Pass by the sick bed, one day, of one love sick for your face; See how he has no nurse by his sick bed, save for your love.

Be kind. O Friend, take the veil from your face and stop teasing.

The heart has no request of the beloved save for a vision.

Farvardin 1366 AHS

[March-April 1987]

## The Sea and the Mirage

Release me from these countless pains,
From this rent heart and seared breast.
A lifetime has passed in anguish
for separation from the face of the beloved

I am a bird in fire and a fish out of water.

My lot has been no mystical state, 13

for all this pain and life.

Old age arrived immersed in idleness

after the prime of youth.

I did not profit from the lessons
and discourses of the seminary.

How can one reach the sea from this mirage?

Each precept I learned, and every page I turned

Was nothing but another veil upon a veil.

Behold, O dear, in the season of your youth be conscious,

For in old age you can do nothing but sleep.

These ignoramuses who claim to have guidance

Have no gift under their Sufi robes but "I am".

Our own imperfections and defects

and the perfections and beauties of others, we

Have hidden like old age behind hair-coloring.

Breath no more of it;

tear up your notebook of vanity.

How long will you continue this vain talk

and erroneous speech?

Azar 1365 AHS
[November-December 1986]

### **Monastery of the Heart**

Hail O cup-bearer! Cast away these sighs from the heart, 14
So that your goblet may solve for once and for all
the secrets of these difficulties.
With wine, block the way of the intellect
to the monastery of the heart, 15

For this lunatic asylum is no place for intellects.

If your heart is tied to the love of the sweetheart, leave this place,

For this tavern is naught but abode of those who have lost their hearts!

If you come to yourself for even less than a moment,

from the intoxication of the wine.

Depart without delay from the confines of the retreat of the negligent. 16
When you saw the color of that idol
among the flowers of the garden of the Friend,
You separated yourself from the garden
of the Friend by seas and shores.

You saw the way to the garden and to the paradise in front of you;
You separated yourself from the way of truth and joined yourself to the way of falsehood.

If you give your heart to the world of being and to that which is above it,

You have tied yourself with the strand of a spider by so many chains. 17

28/10/67 AHS (January 18, 1989)

### **Pre-Eternal Goblet**

We are children of love and the adopted sons of the goblet. By drunkenness and the sacrifice of our souls for the beloved we are perfected.

We have given our hearts to the tavern and to the sacrifices of drink.

We are old servants at the threshold of the Magus. We are bed fellows of the beloved, but we are being punished by separation from her. We are drowned in union with her, yet in constant separation from her.

Without color or sound, 18

yet we are bound to color.

We are without name or address,

yet we are always after a name.

We are war with the Sufi, the gnostic and the dervish.

We are battling with philosophy and theology.

We have fled from the seminary and from nearness to creatures.

We are outcast by the wise and hated by the common.

Against being and against those who seek being we are back to back.

With nothingness, since the pre-eternal day, we are stride by stride.

Khordad 1366 AHS

[May-June 1987]

## **The Releasing Goblet**

Cup-bearer, open the gate of the tavern Make me needless of lessons, discourses, asceticism and hypocrisy.

Place a strand of your wavy hair in my way.

Release me from scholarship, from the mosque, from the lessons and from prayer.

Like David playing a melody, bring me a goblet!

Make me forget the pain of ambition, of rising and descending.

Take away the veil from the beautiful face and hair of the beloved.

Banish me from the Ka'bah and from the kingdom of Hijaz. 19
Fill my jug to the brim with pure wine.
With purity of heart
orient your heart toward that ravishing idol.

I have been impoverished by the sorrow of separation from the countenance of the beloved.

Invite me to that goblet of wine that is a universal panacea.

28/11/67 AHS

[February 17, 1989]

## That is Enough!

O you who have been rejected! Enough foolish words.

Enough repeating of repetitions.

Close the tongue of vain expressions.

Break the pen and the inkpot. Enough!

O you lover of fame! O you trickster! Enough of your laughable tales, enough. Your talk is for the sake of this world. Enough tracing of meaningless words.

Leave me alone!

Enough repeating of repetitions.

Enough repeating of repetitions

Sha'ban 28, 1407 AHS [April 27, 1987]

## The Wine of Ramadhan

There came the month of Ramadhan20
The wine and the tavern died out.
The time for love and merriment and for wine was switched to the pre-dawn hours.

The pir of the tavern and I broke our fast with wine.
I told him that your fasting

is in days of leaves and fruits.

Make your ablution with wine for according to the religion of the rogues,
In the presence of the Truth, this, your deed, shall become fruitful.

Sha'ban 29, 1407 AHS [April 28, 1987]

#### The Burn of Love

If the burn of love
didn't pierce our hearts,
The King of Love
wouldn't cast a glance toward us.
I've sold my soul
in my desire to see the beloved.

What excuse can I give?
I had no other commodity.
This head that went with the wind
for the sake of union with His countenance,
If it had remained in view of the beloved,
it would not be a head at all.

If Moses didn't see His face in the branches of the bush, Without a doubt, his tree of knowledge would have borne no fruit.

If you carry the load of love with commitment, how shall you fear?

How, if the east is not in its place or if the west is not?

If we didn't knock on the door of His love Bilqis, 21
We could not have passed to the court of Solomon.

Had the fowl of the garden of sanctity reached union with Him,

Among the assembly of Your lovers it would not be wingless and featherless.

15/12/67 AHS [March 6, 1989]

#### **The Confidant**

Did you know that
I am your wretched captive?
With heart and soul,
I am the cause of your active market.

Every cruelty which was inflicted on me by you, I would gratefully purchase.

My God, I am your companion and your devotee.

A strand of your hair has finally lassoed me. I am the captive of the curl of your hair, of a strand.

Enough, O owl, 22 of your talk about ruins, For in this circle, I am the center of your compass.

The gnostics have cast a veil upon the face of the beloved. I, the madman, am unveiling your face!

The lovers reveal your black secret.

Come to me, the intimate of your secrets.

Open your face to this old man who has fallen off his feet.

Until the moment of death, with all my soul, I am the lover of the sight of you.

Esfand 9, 1367 AHS [February 28, 1989]

## The Day of Union

Don't grieve,
the days of separation
are coming to an end.
This craving in our heads,
the craving of drunkards,
is coming to an end.

She will lift
the curtain from
her moon like face
And glance seductively,
Sorrow will leave
the heart and spirit.

The nightingale will appear among the stems of the flowers.
The raven will leave the garden in hundredfold shame.

The meeting will be lit
by the light
of her face.
Everything but the memory of the beloved
will pass from the memory
of the rogues.

The clouds will disappear before the light of the sun of her face.

The curtain will disappear

from the face of the sauntering cypress.

O friends, glad tidings!
The day of our appointment
is coming.
The days of separation are ending,
and the day of union
is coming.

Esfand 1367 AHS
[February-March 1989]

#### The Retreat of the Drunkards

#### The Retreat of the Drunkards23

I did not find purity in the sessions of the dervishes.

Within the cloister, I heard none call on Him.

I did not find the Friend in the books of the seminary.

At the top of the minaret, I saw no sound of the Beloved.

I did not uncover anything in any scholarly books.

In the lessons of Scripture, I was led nowhere.

I spent my life in the temple, spent my life in vain.

Among my companions, I found neither cure nor affliction.

To the circle of the lovers I would go, and there I find a breeze from the garden of a sweetheart, and footprints. The 'we' and 'I' of the intellect are a halter. There is neither 'I' nor 'we' in the retreat of the drunkards.

## The Drunkenness of the Lover

The heart not unsettled by your face is no heart at all;
The one not deranged by your mole is not reasonable.
From your cask has come the drunkenness of the heart-lost lover;
The outcome of my life is this drunkenness, no other.

The love of your face has cast me into this desert.

What can be done? There is no end to this desert.

If between you and Him, besides you stands none else.

If you are a heart-lost lover, abandon yourself.

Throw away your robe24 and prayer mat, if you would tread the way of love.

Because for you there is no way in this station except for love.

If you are of those of the heart, abandon the ascetic and Sufi, For except for this group, there is no way in this assembly.

I clutch the curl of her ringlet while playing,
For except for this, the outcome of this madness is nothing.
Take my hand and release me from this robe of pretense,
For in this robe there is room for nothing but ignorance.
In the tavern, learning and mysticism have no way,
For in the station of the lovers, fallacy has no way.

## The Assembly of the Rogues

#### The Assembly of the Rogues 25

The day will come when I will be dust, I will be dust in her alley.
I will have abandoned the soul, unsettled by her face.

I will take the goblet from her hand that increases the spirit.
I will pay heed to neither of the worlds, bound with her hair.

I will rest my head on her feet, kissing them 'till the instant of death. I will be drunk with the wine of her jug 'till the morning of the resurrection.

I will be a moth, burning, burning all my life in her candle. I will be drunk with wine, marveling at her beautiful face. The day will come when I will be drunk, tipsy in the assembly of the rogues.

I will be the keeper of the mysteries, of all her unspeakable secrets.

If my Joseph does not come
To comfort me in my sickbed,
Then my heart, like Jacob's,
will be unsettled by the fragrance. 26

### A Glance from a Friend

There is nowhere for me, O Friend, but in Your alley.

There is nothing in my head of worth, but the dust at Your door.

At the door of the tavern, temple, mosque and monastery, I have fallen in prostration, as though You had glanced upon me.

No problem is solved in the seminary, and not by the speech of the sheikh. 27
The knot of my difficulty
would be opened by Your glance.

The Sufis and the dervishes present these I's and we's.
But radiance for my heart is Your clearing it of I's and we's.

I am nothing, nothing, for being is all in naught. Nothing else but nothing, for You gaze upon the naught.

I followed all those of the heart, who head music, who had states, But no music at the feast I heard of the beautiful waitress. I pray devotedly at the door of one who sits behind a curtain, night and day. With just one glance from her, maybe, a drop will yet become a sea.

## **Languid Eyes**

O Friend, I have become captivated by the mole over your lip.
I have seen your languid eyes and I have become sick.

I have departed from myself, beating the drum of "I am the Truth!" I have become like Mansur, a buyer of a hanging rope.28

Grieving for the sweetheart

Has cast fire in my soul,

Angry enough to die from,

and in the bazaar I am known.

Open the door of the tavern before me night and day, for I have become weary of the mosque and seminary.

I took off the clothing of asceticism

And of pretentiousness,

And put on the robe of the tavern's pir,29

And I gained consciousness

The sermonizer in city
Bothered me with advice,
Until came to my aid the breath

Of the wine drunk rouge.

Let us speak then of the temple

Of where I was awakened,

And of the idol of the tavern

By whose hand I was shaken

#### The sea of Annihilation

#### The sea of Annihilation 30

If only there would come the day when my place would be in your lane So that my joy and sorrow there would be my heart's exclusive care.

If only there were in my hand Your curl of hair with knotted strands, Those knots would open up for me each complex difficulty.

Last night so far apart from you my heart was like a darkened room The assembly gathered 'round candle light, of your memory burning there so bright.

When they got drunk from drinking wine, a group of friends lost consciousness, But of this group no share was mine, naught for those of intelligence.

He who every bond would break is surely unjust, ignorant, 31
And of self and world and place he surely must be negligent.
For all those who have lost their hearts knowledge is a curtain, a curtain,
Those who from curtains would depart, are those whose ignorance is certain.

The lover floats upon a sea of nothing because of zeal,
Those who in darkness stand, are without news upon the strand.

When from the gnostic realm I come, I saw all that had been in vain, All that we'd heard or studies of, Rajab 1405 AH (1985)

## The Jug of Love

I am a supplicant for a goblet of wine from the hand of a sweetheart.

In whom can I confide this secret of mine, Where can I take this sorrow?

I have lost my soul in despair
of seeing the face of the Friend.
I am the rue whose burnt scent fills the air;32
I am the moth 'round the candle.

I have a filthy robe and prayer mat with which I pretend, which at the door of the tavern I would rend.

From the jug of love just a sip from the Friend and drunk I'll strip my soul from the robe of existence.

I have become old, but with just a glance or nod I'd be young. 33 So, please let me go from the little house of the horizons.

## **Good Ending**

O You saqi! Fill up my cup34 with wine to cleanse my soul! For my soul is overflowing, flowing over with passion for fame.

Fill up my cup with the wine which annihilates this soul, which expels the core of intrigue and my well-laid traps from being.

Fill up my cup with the wine which releases this soul from its own bonds, which takes hold of my reins and breaks the hold of my dignity.

Fill up my cup with the wine which in the hideout of the rogues who know no honor may demolish my prostrations and break down my standing for prayer.

I missed you in the sacred precincts of the flower faced girls of the tavern. At each aperture to which I come another flower takes hold of my reins.

I would go to the circle of the old who are unconscious of themselves, perhaps they will give me wine which will dispel my soul's raw thoughts.

O You Messenger! Take a message from me, to those who are light burdened upon the sea of nothingness, and to the captain of the desert bring praises and salams from me.

I end this letter of nothing in nothing with a goblet! Tell the pir of the monastery of this my good ending.

- 1. That is, originally twenty-two poems plus eight from the Sabu-ye 'Ishq (The Jug of Love). (Eds.)
- 2. The English translation of the whole book is already published by the Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works. (Eds.)
- 3. In Farsi personal pronouns have no gender, so the use of the feminine pronouns for the beloved is somewhat arbitrary.
- 4. The tar is a traditional Persian stringed instrument.
- 5. Mansur is Mansur al-Hallaj (858–922 CE), the famous Sufi martyr made famous in the West through Louis Massignon's magnum opus, The Passion of Hallaj, tr. Herbert Mason (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982). Hallaj was charged with blasphemy and with claiming to have the authority to free the pious from the requirements of Islamic law.

He responded to the charge of blasphemy with the explanation that when he uttered the words, "I am the Truth," he had achieved a state of mystic union with God, and was speaking not for himself, but as the instrument of God. He was whipped, mutilated, crucified, decapitated, cremated, and his remains were scattered. According to Imam Khomeini's doctrine of Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist (wilayat al-faqihmutlaq), the Guardian-Jurist has absolute authority, even to the point of abrogation of the laws of Islam if he deems that such measures are required for the defense of the Muslim

polity. This facet of the doctrine of Guardianship of the Jurist has been especially controversial among conservative clerical circles.

<u>6.</u> Farhad is a romantic hero in a tale from the Khamseh of Nezami. Farhad is given an impossible task of digging a road through a mountain by King Khosrow who wishes to eliminate him as a rival in love. The tale is translated by Peter J. Chelkowski in the beautifully illustrated Mirror of the Invisible World (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975).

The single earring in a male was an indication that he was a slave. "Rogue" is used for the Persian rend, one of the most important technical terms in the poetry of Hafiz. Much has been written on the meaning of this term, and there are profound differences in interpretation. A rend is a seeker who has achieved a very high degree of spiritual excellence, to the extent that he seems somewhat of a rogue or renegade by those preoccupied exclusively with the exoteric elements of religion.

Some interpreters claim that the rend is above religious law, while others claim that his flouting of the law is merely apparent and is purely symbolic. Khosrow, Kay Qabad, Qaysar and Kasra are all legendary kings of ancient Persian tales of whom are most widely known from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.

- 7. The reference to Solomon's mercy on the ant alludes to a passage in the Qur'an:
  His host of jinn and men and birds were gathered before Solomon in ranks. When they came to the Valley of the Ants, an
- 'O Ants! Go into your dwellings lest Solomon and his hosts should unwittingly crush you! He smiled at her words, and said: O my Lord! Make me thankful for the favors You have bestowed upon me and my parents, and may I do good which will please You, and admit me, through Your mercy, among Your righteous servants." (27:17–19).
- 8. The begging bowl is the kashkol, a traditional Sufi symbol of spiritual poverty, that is, of the heartfelt need for God.
- 9. This line alludes to a saying attributed to the Prophet: "Poverty is my honor."
- 10. The speckled snake is infamous for its deadly poison. When Imam Khomeini accepted the ceasefire with Iraq, in September 1988, he commented that accepting UN resolution 598 was for him like taking poison.
- 11. Zulaykha is the wife of the 'Aziz in the Qur'an, Potiphor's wife in the Bible. In the poetry of Jami, Zulaykha and Joseph marry after the death of the 'Aziz.
- 12. The Asfar is the magnum opus of Mulla Sadra (d. 1610 C.E.), and the Shifa is the major work of Avicenna, Ibn Sina (d. 1037 C.E.); both are central works of Islamic Philosophy.
- 13. The term for mystical state is hal. This is often used as a technical term of Islamic mysticism. In the mystic's spiritual development various such states will be exhibited. The Sufi robe is a patched called kherqeh. Imam Khomeini satirizes those who would claim to be mystics but who are still dominated by egotism. Imam Khomeini warns not only of the hypocrisy associated with symbols of exoteric religion, the mosque and seminary, but he also warns of the spiritual materialism associated with the mystics.
- 14. This opening couplet alludes to that of a ghazal of Hafiz: Hail, O cup-bearer! Bring the cup for us, for whose hearts Love seemed easy at first, but proved difficult.
- 15. The word translated here as 'monastery' is khaneqah, which signifies a Sufi meeting place, or a Sufi retreat.
- 16. By 'the negligent' is meant those who have so immersed themselves in the divine that they have forgotten themselves.
- 17. The reference to the spider's web is an allusion to an ayah from the Qur'an:

"The likeness of those who take protectors other than God is the likeness of the spider which makes a house for itself, but verily the flimsiest of houses is the house of the spider, if they but knew." (29:4).

- 18. The phrase 'color and sound' signifies wealth and the things of the material world; the word sound, nawa, by itself may have the meaning of opulence. The positive image of nothingness in the last line is most striking. In the mystical tradition, the soul must become as nothing in order to be infused with the divine, but the use of the nominalization, nothingness (nisti), is unusual.
- 19. The Ka'bah is the House of Allah erected by the Prophet Abraham and his son, the Prophet Isma'il (peace be with

them). It is the focus of the Hajj pilgrimage. The Hijaz is the part of Arabia in which Mecca is located.

- 20. Ramadhan is the month of fasting in which Muslims refrain from all food, drink, and sexual intercourse from the first light of dawn until after sunset. Since the month of Ramadhan is a month of the lunar calendar, it falls in different seasons in different years. In the year in which this poem was written, the first of Ramadhan fell on April 30. The phrase 'days of leaves and fruits' refers to the May of 1987.
- 21. Bilqis is the Queen of Sheba who became the bride of King Solomon (peace be with them).
- 22. In Persian literature, the owl is an ominous symbol forever haunting ruins. The phrase, 'to have fallen off one's feet' is a Persian idiom used to indicate extreme weariness.
- 23. This poem and the following seven are taken from Sabu-ye 'Ishq (The Jug of Love) as translated by Dr. Legenhausen and Sarvdalir. See A Jug of Love, op. cit., pp. 9–26. (Eds.)
- 24. The robe mentioned here is the patched robe of the Sufi, the kherqeh, which, though originally a symbol of poverty, came to be worn with pride by those who would feign deep spirituality. By the time of Hafiz (d. 791 AH/1389), the patched robe had become a symbol of affected spirituality, so that he would end one of his ghazals: "Hafiz, throw away the wooden kherqeh and go."
- <u>25.</u> The rogue is the Persian rend, one who is known for his unorthodox cleverness, and the hero of the poetry of Hafiz. The assembly is the session of the mystics, in which they gathered in a circle around the master.
- <u>26.</u> The reference here is the Qur'an in which Jacob claims to perceive the scent of Joseph from miles away:
- "And when the caravan had departed, their father said: 'Most surely I perceive the scent of Joseph, unless you think me doting." (12:94)
- 27. The figure of the sheikh is most often used as a symbol of a rather superficial religious orthodoxy.
- 28. The reference here is to Mansur al-Hallaj, who in ecstasy said, "Ana al-Haqq!" (I am the Truth), and was martyred as a result in 922 C.E.
- 29. A pir is literally an old person, but the term is typically used for a Sufi master.
- 30. Annihilation is fana, the spiritual state in which the ego is obliterated and awareness solely of God.
- 31. This is a reference to Qur'an: "Surely, We offered the trust to the heaven and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and fear from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; surely, he is unjust, ignorant." (33:72)

Man is unjust to himself for taking on the burden of responsibility offered to him by God. The poet's comment is that man must be ignorant, in the sense of being heedless of worldly desire and the ego, in order to fulfill the divine trust.

- <u>32.</u> Literally, "I am espand in fire." Espand or esfand is rue, a wild herb whose seeds are burnt to ward off the evil eye, or on occasion of happiness or sadness.
- 33. Literally, a glance from the corner of the eye, idiomatically, a favor.
- <u>34.</u> The saqi is the wine bearer. "O You saqi" is a famous phrase used in the poetry of Hafiz in which the interjection "O You" is one which occurs in numerous places in the Qur'an.

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