

SELECTION FROM

A MESSAGE  
FROM THE EAST

*Muhammad Iqbal*

Translations From

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## A MESSAGE FROM THE EAST

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## The Making of *A Message from the East*

In 1907, while Iqbal was in England, somebody asked him if he also wrote verses in Persian. By that time he had become very well-known as an Urdu poet but had not written more than a few verses in Persian. His friend Sheikh Abdul Qadir recounts that this suggestion had such effect on Iqbal that two or three ghazals were ready by the next morning.

Despite this, he didn't turn to writing poetry properly in Persian for the next six years. He even started his masnavi in Urdu and finished it in Persian only when the poetic tradition of Urdu was turned out to be unsuitable for the purpose. While writing 'Secrets of the Self' and 'Mysteries of Selflessness' (which are being abridged in this series as *Secrets and Mysteries*), he felt inclined towards writing short poems, ghazals and quatrains in Persian too, and decided to compile an anthology consisting of poetry in both languages.

In the meanwhile, the first part of the masnavi got translated into English. It was much talked about in the literary circles of the West, and some journals also carried reviews about it but unfortunately none of the reviewers seemed to have made a good effort at understanding the purpose of Iqbal. The famous novelist E. M. Forster further confounded the chronology of Iqbal's poems and ended up writing an odyssey of his mind which was far removed from facts. All this must have convinced Iqbal that he should not only address the East but also familiarize the West with his real message. Hence he started preparing an anthology of Persian poems, ghazals and quatrains which he called *Payam-i-Mashriq*, or *A Message from the East*.

He could see the irony that so many of his generation had received inspiration for action from the writings of Western poets and thinkers in order to get rid of that fatalism which had taken roots in the East in the days of its decline. Iqbal was among those who did not stop here but also rediscovered the past masters of the East through research and finally took Rumi, the great Persian poet, as his guide. However, as he now looked back at the West, he found it to be in the grip of the same defeatist mentality which appears in nations in their periods of decline. The new generation of European intelligentsia had severed its link with those great writers of their own civilization from whom even Iqbal had received inspiration. Pessimism had become the guiding principle for literature in the West.

*A Message from the East* was compiled against this backdrop. It reflected the best tradition of Persian poetry but also alluded to icons of Western learning. The preface aptly mentions that literary movement of Germany from a hundred years ago in which Europe adopted the poetic conventions of Persian literature and Goethe even named an anthology of his *West-Oestlicher Divan*. Iqbal declares his book to be a friendly response to that same Divan.

Iqbal's father felt that the book should get printed soon. Iqbal wished to add more poems which were quite necessary in his opinion but in deference to his father's desire he went ahead with the printing. Books used to be scribed by hand in those days (a custom which has almost died out since the advent of computers), so the transcription started in March and continued through April. In the end, Iqbal wrote preface and the dedication. After these had been transcribed by the scribe too, the book went to the press and hence the first edition of *A Message from the East* came out in May 1923. It comprised of 216 pages.

The book had got published but Iqbal wasn't satisfied yet. He continued writing more poems, which he had intended to include in this book, and eventually a second edition came out the next year with many changes and additions. The number of pages had increased to 280, and among the peculiarity of this edition was its unusual size - 13 cm X 20 cm - making the book to appear more like an album. All subsequent books of Iqbal's poetry were published on this size or slightly larger with similar proportions.

Only one more edition of the book came out during Iqbal's lifetime, apparently in 1929. Further editions were published only after his death in 1938.

Iqbal wanted to get the book translated into English and other European languages but that could not happen in his lifetime. In the West, the book didn't get the kind of reception he may have expected. His former teacher Nicholson, who had translated 'Secrets of the Self,' even forgot to tell his readers in his review that the book was also meant for the Western audience. Despite all this, the book has remained the most generally popular among all the Persian works of Iqbal, and the way it attracts the reader is sometimes different from other works of Iqbal. The present selection, comprising mainly of translations by A.J. Arberry, Hadi Husain and Mustansir Mir, attempts at retaining this characteristic of the book.

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# Preface

The impulse that brought forth *A Message from the East* was provided by the *West-Oestlicher Divan* of the German "Philosopher of Life," Goethe, through which he tried to instill the Persian spirit into German literature.

The main purpose underlying *A Message from the East*, which has been written a hundred-odd years after the *West-Oestlicher Divan*, is to bring out moral, religious and social truths bearing on the inner development of individuals and nations.

There is undoubtedly some resemblance between Germany as it was a hundred years ago and today's East. The truth, however, is that the internal unrest of the world's nations, which we cannot assess properly because of being ourselves affected by it, is the fore-runner of a great spiritual and cultural revolution.

Europe's Great War was a catastrophe which destroyed the old world order in almost every respect, and now out of the ashes of civilization and culture Nature is building up in the depths of life a new Adam and a new world for him to live in, of which we get a faint sketch in the writings of Einstein and Bergson.

Regarded from a purely literary standpoint, the debilitation of the forces of life in Europe after the ordeal of the war is unfavorable to the development of a correct and mature literary ideal. Indeed, the fear is that the minds of the nations may be gripped by that slow-pulsed magianism which runs away from life's difficulties and which fails to distinguish between the emotions of the heart and the thoughts of the brain. However, America seems to be a healthy element in Western civilization, the reason for which perhaps is that it is free from the trammels of old traditions and that its collective intuition is receptive to new ideas and influences.

The East, and especially the Muslim East, has opened its eyes after a centuries-long slumber. But the nations of the East should realize that life can bring about no revolution in its surroundings until a revolution takes place in its inner depths and that no new world can take shape externally until it is formed in the minds of men.

In the end, I must thank my friend, Chaudhry Muhammad Hussain, M. A., who arranged for publication the manuscripts of the poems presented here

# Dedicatory Epistle

*Ameer Amanullah Khan of Afghanistan*

O King, O blessed ruler! O you who are young but have the wisdom of old age, are able to see that which is hidden and who has Jamshid's Cup in his breast! Your courage is solid like your mountains, your prudence is the opener of knots and like my imagination your ambition soars high like my imagination and unites a scattered nation. O noble lord! You have gifts from kings and priceless gems in your treasure, now accept a humble gift from this fakir as well.

I have come with to offer the youth of Love with a song that illumines the breast since I have been made an adept of the mysteries of Life. That leader of Europe, the German poet Goethe, who was enamored by the charms of Persia dwelled upon the thoughts of coquettish beauties and sent greetings to the East from the West. In response to him I have shed moonbeams on the dusk of Europe with a message from the East. Since I am self-aware but not arrogant, I will tell you about myself as well as about him.

That European sage was like a lightening. He was born in a garden, grew up in spring and turned into a paradise for ears like a nightingale. My flame has been nurtured by the old men of the East, I am born of a barren land and have been crying in empty air like a caravan bell. Yet we both are the knower of the same secret of the universe and are the message of life amid the tyranny of death. We both are daggers like a morning although he has been drawn while I await in my scabbard. We both are priceless pearls from a boundless ocean although he leapt in the depths and broke out of his oyster while I am still in the grip of an oyster hidden in the deep. Even my companion passed by my tavern without taking a cup. I offer him the pomp and glory of a king, place the throne of the emperors at his feet but he asks me for charming pleasantries and poetic accomplishments. The silly fellow looked at my appearance but didn't care to look into my conscience nor witness the passion of my soul. My nature embraced Love and justified the union of straw and fire, and God washed away the image of all else from my eyes by bestowing upon me the secrets of kingdom and religion. My verse is a drop of my blood and therefore the petal of rose takes color from the meaning of my word.

Do not consider poetry to be a madness, for this madness is a great wisdom in its perfection. Nature has given me the wealth of craft but has thrown me away in India where the roses and tulips remain deprived of my song and I have become an alien bird in my own garden. Hence fate only favors the wretched, so pity on the one who has some perfection!

Exalted king, you have seen that our sun has set. The burning fire of No god left the breasts of the Arabs and they lost the way in their own deserts. Egyptians are caught in the whirlpool of the Nile. Turks who were strong like charging elephants have become lazy and indifferent, the heirs to the Ottoman throne have become a pawn in the hands of destiny so that Asia and Europe has turned crimson from their blood. The ancient fire that used to burn in the heart of Iran has turned cold, its soil has lost the heat of and luster of life as Love lost the manners of Salman – Persian remains but not the Persian! The Indian Muslim lost the liking for faith, sold his soul and became a worshipper of the belly.

Muslims lost attraction. Khalid the son of Walid and Saladin are no more. Nature has given you a pure heart and made it care for the plight of faith. Pass over the desert tulip like the morning breeze and revive the ways of the Blessed Siddiq and Umar the Great. The Afghan nation, with bodies of steel and illuminated foreheads, has still not received its share of the world and lies scattered in the hills although the blood of lions courses in their veins and their sight is sharp like falcons. Yet the star of their destiny hasn't shone yet. Unaware of the tumults of life they are recluses in the mountains. Be one of the Siddiqs of this nation by making efforts in tailoring the Afghan character, for you have the strength to strive hard.

Life is nothing but the knowledge of what lies within and what lies without. It comprises not of rights but of struggle and therefore acquire knowledge wherever you find it, for God has called it the Great Bounty. Our Prophet, who was the lord of all creation, on whom the Quran was revealed and who had witnessed God without veils also had as his constant prayer, "Lord, Increase me in knowledge!" The knowledge of things is that very "knowledge of names" which God gave to Adam as He formed him. It is also the rod of Moses and the illumined hand. It is what has brought luster to the West that their science makes turns dust into gold.

Our soul has lost the taste for feeling, otherwise the dust of the road is nothing but pieces of diamonds themselves. Knowledge and wealth are what improve the condition of nations and bring prestige. There are rubies in your Badakhshan, and the lightning of Sinai in your mountains, so plunge the dagger into the heart of the universe, for it too has concealed treasures just like Somnath.

If you wish to found your empire on firm foundations, you will require an insight into human nature, for there are many who do the work of the devil, and there are many devils who wear the cloak of Enoch. Their appearances are fake and misleading while their conscience is dark and smoky like the scar of the poppy. These scoundrels appear to be pious but they carry nothing but deceit and their hearts are filled with hypocrisy. O insightful king, know it well that every stone that shines isn't a diamond. The secret of life and death has been revealed by our master Rumi, "Every calamity that befell the previous nations was because they mistook stone for sandalwood."

The leader of the nation is its servant in our religion. We have the justice of



Umar and the poverty of Ali. In the multitude of tasks of the faith and the world, be alone with yourself awhile, for whoever sat in watch over oneself for awhile became a hunter whom no prey could ever dodge again. Be a fakir in the garb of a king with a watchful eye and fear of God. Leader of the nation King Murad, who had thunder and lightning for his sword and servant, he too was a fakir despite being a king with the pomp and glory of a sky – he was an Ardashir with a soul like that of Abudhar, so that his heart would be wrapped in the cloak of a dervish while his body was clad in armor. Muslims who ruled lived like Salman the Persian in Ctesiphon, steeped in poverty while being kings, having no possessions except sword and the Quran while being in government.

Heavens and earth are contained in the bag of the one who has the love of Muhammad as his resource. Ask God to give you a particle from that love, the fervor of Siddiq and Ali, for the survival of this nation is from the love of the Prophet. This is the entire wealth of the universe, for the hidden essence of being became manifest with his appearing, and the soul has no peace except in his love, for this is a day which knows no evening. Rise, revive the tavern of love and bring again the message of love to the mountains!

# Tulip of Sinai

1

All being is a martyr to His whim,  
 All life is graven with the need of Him:  
 Don't you see that the Sun, that lights up the sky  
 Is a scar of worship on Dawn's forehead?

2

My heart is lit up by inner flame,  
 And tears of blood have made my eyes see the world.  
 Consider him ignorant of the secrets of life  
 Who calls love a madness.

3

Love brings spring  
 And star-spangles the garden.  
 It's a sun whose rays pierce the heart of the ocean  
 And show light to the fish.

6

The riches of love are not for everyone  
 Nor do they suite all:  
 The tulip is born with a wounded heart  
 But the ruby's heart is cold.

14

Turn your handful of dust into a body,  
 A body stronger than a rock-built fort,  
 And a feeling heart—  
 Like a stream running by the side of a mountain.

20

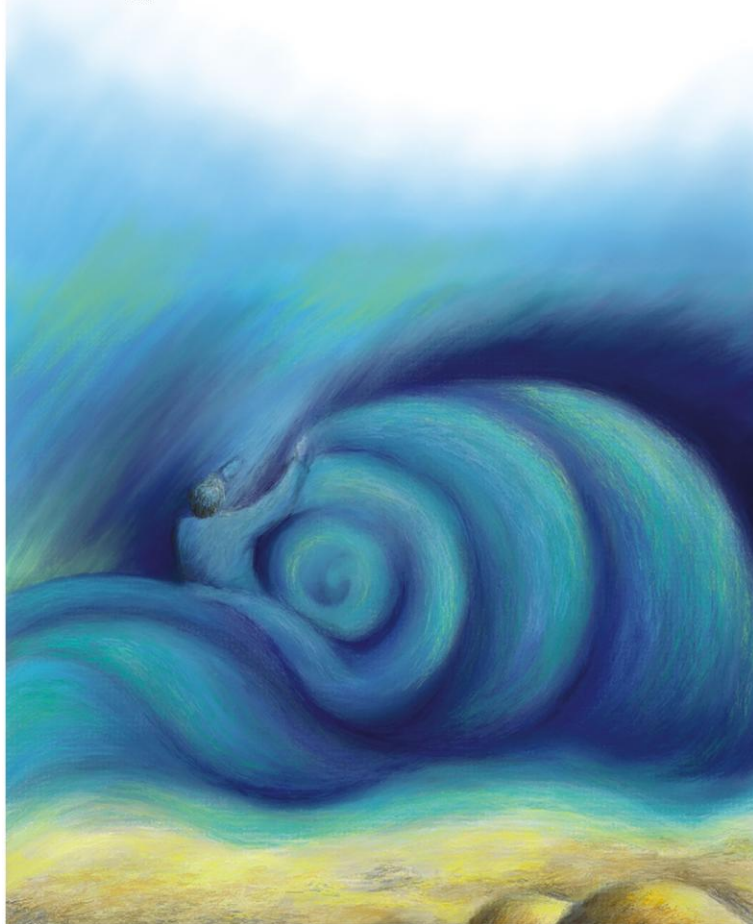
What joy it is to be born into the world, O Lord!  
 The heart of every atom is filled with a passion for existence:  
 When the bud cracks open the branch,  
 It smiles with the love of life.

21

I hear that the moth prayed before Creation:  
Let me be made but for a moment,  
Disperse my ashes in the morning,  
But let me be in love for a night.

60

Do not party on the shore, for there  
The music of life is played too softly.  
Plunge in the sea and grapple with its waves,  
For struggle is the secret of eternal life.



## 106

I retreated to the world of the senses,  
 Parting company with Plato and Farabi—  
 I saw the world with my own eyes,  
 And did not desire borrowed sight.

## 107

Nobody knows how selfhood came to be,  
 For the self is not a prisoner of the passing time.  
 Khizr told me ingeniously  
 That the sea is not older than its waves.

## 112

My heart knows the secrets of body and soul,  
 Death cannot be tough on me.  
 So what if one world is vanished from before my eyes,  
 A hundred more within are yet in the waiting.

## 121

Many thousand years I spent with Nature,  
 Surpassing myself in my union with it  
 However, my story is captured in these few words:  
 I carved, I worshipped, and I broke.

## 130

I carve idols after my own image,  
 Imagining my God to be like me.  
 I worship myself in all my sates,  
 For I am a prisoner of my self.

## 132

Secrets of the heavens are treasured in the earth,  
 And the finite reveals the mystery of Infinity.  
 The shifting sand can tell you the way,  
 Since every particle is floating towards the Friend's abode.

## 148

Do not call the world impermanent,  
For each moment of ours is a veil upon the face of eternity.  
Do not let go of today,  
For tomorrow is not yet born.

## 153

I heard it from within a grave  
That some are alive under the earth  
While those who live by others' dictates  
Might be breathing and yet have no life in them.

## 160

Love appears in a new color before each heart,  
Now making terms with the stone, now with glass.  
It made you sad and robbed you of yourself  
But I came closer to myself through it.

## 162

The love of speech filled my heart with blood  
And set me off on my quest,  
But when I opened my lips to speak of love,  
Words veiled this secret in a thicker shroud.

## 163

At last from subtle reason he has fled,  
His self-willed heart knew passion, and it bled.  
What are you asking of Iqbal in the clouds?  
Our wise philosopher has lost his head.



# Thoughts

## The First Rose

I don't see a companion in the garden yet, for the springtime is approaching and I am the first rose. I look at myself in the mirror of the rivulet, just in order to see the face of another.

By the same pen that was used to write the letter of Life, a message has been written on my colorful petal: My heart is with the past and my eye discerns the present, I witness the future and follow a new pattern.

I blossomed from the dark dust, donned the robe of a flower, but I am a star from left behind from Pleiades.

## The Conquest of Nature

### *1. The birth of Adam*

Love exclaimed that the one who would roll his heart in blood is now born.

Beauty trembled as it realized that the one born has a penetrating look. Nature frowned that from the dust of a world without will, one has risen to be one's own maker, breaker and judge. From the heavens the news reached the Sleeping-chamber of Eternity: "Beware, you who are veiled! The one who lifts all veils has come into being." Desire, forgetful of itself while sleeping in the lap of life, opened its eyes and a new world was born.

"Through all my years I lay in the duct and convulsed," said Life. "Until at last a door appeared in this ancient dome."

### *2. Devil's Refusal*

"I am not such a foolish angel that I would bow to Adam! He is made of dust, but my element is fire.

"It is my ardour that heats the blood in the veins of the universe: I am in the raging storm and the crashing thunder, I am the bond that holds the atoms together and the law that rules the elements, I burn and give form—I am the alchemist's fire.

"What I have myself made I break in pieces, only to create new forms from the old dust. From my sea rises the wave of the restless heavens—the splendor and glory of my element fashions the world.

"The stars owe their existence to You, but they owe their motion to me: I am the soul of the world, the hidden life that is seen by none. You give the soul to the body, but I set that soul astir.

"Adam—that creature of dust, that short-sighted ignoramus—was born in your lap but will grow old in my arms!"

### 3. *The Seduction of Adam*

“A life of passion and longing is better than eternal quiet. Even a dove that is caught in a trap but keeps flapping its wings, changes into an eagle!

“You do no more than bow down in humility. Rise like the tall cypress tree, you who are slow to act! The waters of Kawthar and Tasnim have robbed you of the joy of action. Take wine from the jug, real wine clear as crystal, made from grapes.

“‘Good’ and ‘bad’ are figments of the imagination of your Lord. Take pleasure in action, step out and take what you desire. Come, rise up, so that I may show you a new kingdom! Open your eyes and go about seeing the sights the world has to offer.

“Now you are a drop of water worth nothing. Become a luminous pearl! Come down from the heavens and live in the ocean. You are a flashing sword, strike terror into the world’s soul. Come out of the scabbard and show your mettle. Spread an eagle’s wings and spill the pheasants’ blood. Living in the nest spells death for a falcon.

“You do not yet know this, but with union comes the end of longing. What is eternal life? To burn, and keep on burning!”

### 4. *Adam speaks on coming out of Paradise*

“How good it is to turn life into a longing and melt the hearts of mountain, wild and desert with a single breath!

“To open a door from the cage unto the garden, to traverse the way up to the heaven and to have none but the stars to confide in!

“To cast, with secret longing or obvious humility, a knowing glance on the Sanctum of His Glory!

“To see none but One in the multitude of an entire garden at times, and at times to discriminate the stinging thorn from the rose.

“I am an incomplete burning, a yearning incarnate. I sell certainty for doubts, for I know the pleasure of seeking.”

### 5. *The Morn of Resurrection*

#### *(Adam in the presence of God)*

“You, whose sun gives the star of life its splendor, with my heart you lit the candle of the sightless world!

“My skills have poured an ocean into a strait, my pickaxe makes milk flow from the heart of stone. Venus is my captive, the moon worships me. My reason, which



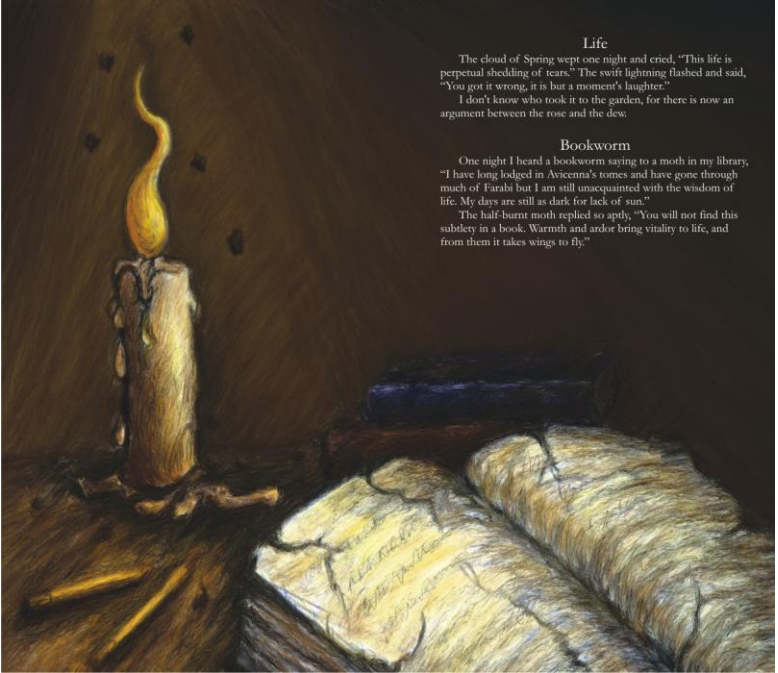
does great deeds, subdues and controls the universe.

“I have gone down into the earth, and been up into the heavens. Both the atom and the radiant sun are under the spell of my magic. Although his sorcery deluded me, excuse my fault, forgive my sin: if his sorcery had not taken me in, the world could not have been subdued.

“Without the halter of humility, pride could not be taken prisoner. To melt this stone statues with my hot sighs, I had to don his girdle.

You rob on the highway by causing sloth, I guide along the right path with burning passion. I did not beg paupers to bow down before me: I am mighty, but do not need a hell. I am a judge, but do not need resurrection.

“Reason catches artful nature in a net and thus Ahriman, born of fire, bows down before the  
creature of dust!”



### Life

The cloud of Spring wept one night and cried, "This life is perpetual shedding of tears." The swift lightning flashed and said, "You got it wrong, it is but a moment's laughter."  
I don't know who took it to the garden, for there is now an argument between the rose and the dew.

### Bookworm

One night I heard a bookworm saying to a moth in my library, "I have long lodged in Avicenna's tomes and have gone through much of Farabi but I am still unacquainted with the wisdom of life. My days are still as dark for lack of sun."

The half-burnt moth replied so aptly, "You will not find this subtlety in a book. Warmth and ardor bring vitality to life, and from them it takes wings to fly."

## The Perfume of the Flower

In a bower of heaven's garden, a houri became anxious and said: "No one ever told us about the region on that side of the heavens. I do not understand about day and night, morning, and evening, and I am at my wits' end when they talk about birth and death."

She became a waft of perfume and emerged from a flower-branch. Thus she set foot in the world of yesterday and tomorrow. She opened her eyes, became a bud, and for a time smiled. She turned into a flower, which soon withered and crumbled to the ground.

The memory of that lovely maiden, her feet unshackled, is kept alive by that sigh of hers which is called perfume.

## The Song of Time

The Sun on my skirt, stars in my bosom. I am nothing if you look at me, I am your life if you look at yourself. I am in city and wild, in chamber and hall, I am pain, I am balm, I am abundant luxury: I am the world-destroying sword, I am the Fount of Life.

Genghis and Tamerlane are specks of my dust, Europe's tumult a spark of my flame. Adam and his realm is one of my designs, and the blood of the heroes waters my Spring: I am hellfire and I am Paradise.

Behold this strange phenomenon: I am at rest and I move. Behold the taste of tomorrow in the wine of my today, behold in my heart a thousand beautiful worlds hidden from you, a thousand swift stars, a thousand blue skies: I am the garment of the human being and the robe of the Almighty.

Destiny is my spell and stratagem is yours: you are in love with Layla and I the wilderness for your frenzy. Like a pure spirit I am beyond your how and how much. You are my hidden secret and I am yours: I am manifest through your soul, and hidden in it.

I am wayfarer and you the end, I am reaper and you the harvest. You are an instrument of a thousand strains and the flow of this assembly. O lost in clay and water, find the place of the heart! Behold this boundless ocean contained in a wine-cup: I am a high storm raging from your lofty wave.

## Eternal Life

Do not think that the work of the wine-maker is over, for there are grapes yet to sprout from the vine.

The garden is a happy place, but you cannot live like a bud, the robe of whose life is shred to pieces by the breath of the morning breeze. If you are acquainted with the subtlety of life then do not seek or accept a heart that is free from the pain of longing.

Withdraw into yourself and be firm like a mountain. Do not live like straw, for the wind is strong and the flame is wild.

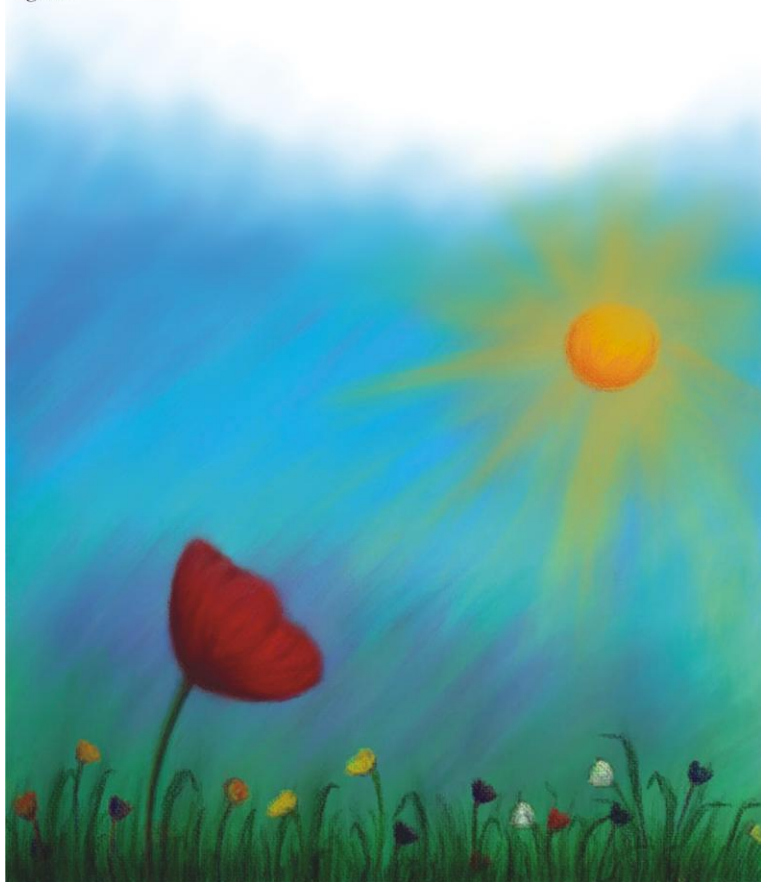
## The Tulip

I am flame that on Creation's dawn was burning in Love's heart before the nightingale and the moth came into being. I am greater than the sun, I am thriving in the core of each atom, and even the heavens acquired its spark from my flame.

I was residing in the bosom of the garden like breath when I was drawn up by a delicate tree-stem as sap from beneath the earth. She took away my fire and said, "Stay awhile by my side!" Yet my tarnished heart found no rest, writhing in that narrow strait of a branch until my essence arrived at last upon the display of color and scent.

The dew bestrewed my way with shining pearls, the morning giggled and the breeze circled me. The nightingale heard from the rose that my fire has been forfeited. She wept, and said that the robe of life was purchased dearly!

I wait upon the sun with my bosom split, maybe that it will kindle my flame again.



## Solitude

I went down to the sea and said to the restless wave, "You are for ever searching, What is your trouble? Your bag contains a thousand glowing pearls but do you, like me, have in your breast a pearl of a heart?"

It writhed in pain and drew away from the shore. It did not say a word.

I went up to the mountain and said, "How unfeeling you are! Have the sighs and screams of a soul in torment ever reached your ears? If within your rocks there is only one diamond formed from a drop of blood, then come for a moment and talk to a wretched man like me."

It withdrew into itself and held its breath. It did not say a word.

I travelled far, and asked the moon, "Your lot is to keep traveling, is it also your lot to reach a destination? Your face sends out rays that turn the world into a land of Jasmine but does the radiance of the scar on your face come from the glow of a heart or not?"

It cast a jealous glance at the star. It did not say a word.

I left the moon and the sun behind, and reached the presence of God. I said, "Not one atom in Your world is intimate with me. The world has no heart but I, though a handful of dust, am all heart. It is a pleasant garden, but unworthy of my song!"

A smile appeared on His lips. He did not say a word.

## The Stream

Behold the stream!

How merrily it flows, like a Milky Way on the bosom of the meadow. It was sound asleep in the cradle of the clouds and opened its wondering eye in the lap of the mountains. Its graceful motion strikes music from the pebbles, its brow chaste and unsullied like the mirror. Towards the boundless sea how merrily it flows, linked with itself, unlinked with all, it flows.

Around its track Spring fashioned a fairyland! Narcissus bloomed, and tulip, and Jessamine. The rose said temptingly, "Stay with us here awhile." The rose-bud laughed and pulled the helm of its skirt. Unmindful of these green-robed beauty-vendors, it cleft the desert and rent the breast of hill and dale. Towards the boundless sea how merrily it flows, linked with itself, unlinked with all, it flows.

A hundred brooks from woods, meadows, vales, gardens and villas cried: "O you with whom accords the earth's expanse! Stricken with drought, we have fallen by the way. Protect us from the pillage of the sandy waste!" It opened its breast to the winds of the East and the West, clasping its weak and wailing fellow travelers. Towards the boundless sea how merrily it flows, with a hundred thousand matchless pearls it flows.

The surging river went over dam and dyke, went over the narrow gorge of valley, hill and glen. Leveling the high and low like a torrent, it went over the king's palace and rampart and field and orchard. Passionate, fierce, sharp, restless and heart-inflaming, each moment it arrived at the new and went beyond the old. Towards the boundless ocean how merrily it flows, linked with itself, unlinked with all, it flows.



## Alamgir's Letter

*(To one of his sons who used to pray for the father's death)*

You do not know that God has tested, tried, tied and unraveled many since the Eternity.

He has heard many anguishing laments from our aggrieved dark dust. Many like Shabbir were bathed in blood but He did not give a single cry. He was neither moved by the tears of Jacob, nor sighed at the pain of Job.

Do not fool yourself into thinking you can ensnare that seasoned Hunter with your prayer.

### Love

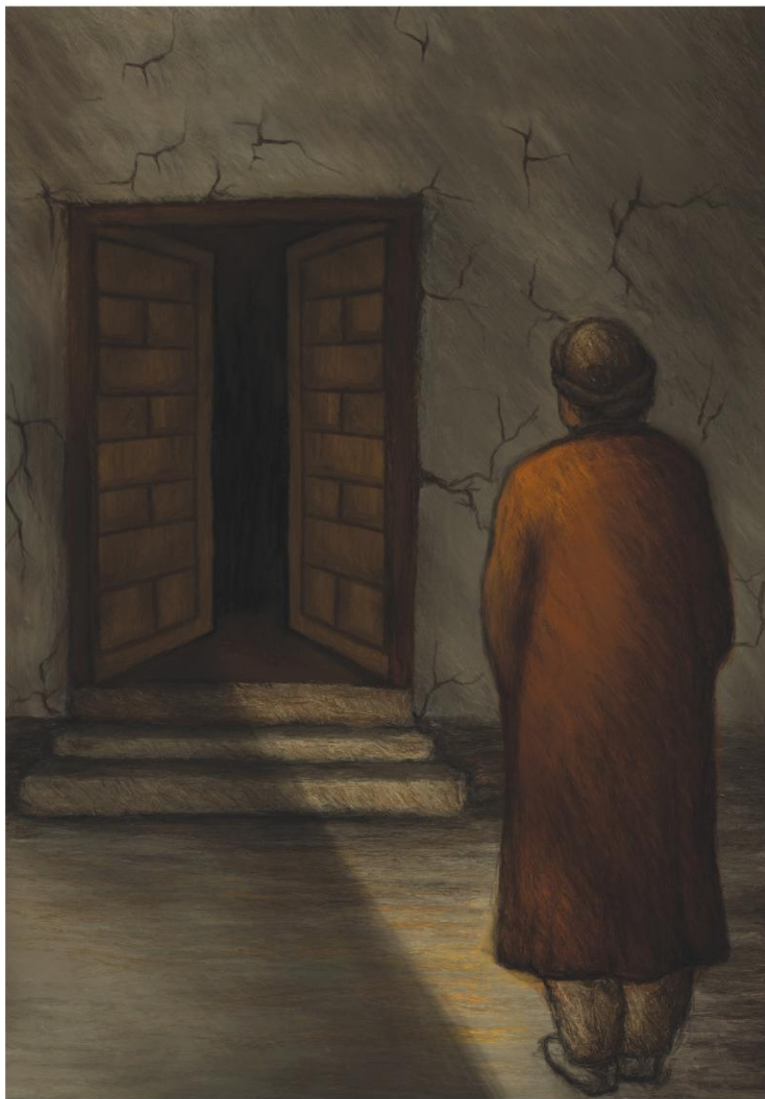
Intellect, which can set the world aflame with a single flare, learns from love the ways to illuminate the world. To love your soul owes all its states from the passion of Rumi to the amazement of Farabi. I say this intoxicating word, and I dance—in love is the comfort of heart despite all this anxiety.

Every subtle meaning cannot be contained in word. Descend into your heart awhile, and maybe you will find it.

### Ghani Kashmiri

Ghani, that poet of a nightingale's melody, the minstrel of the Paradise-like Kashmir, would lock the door while at home and leave it open while going out.

Somebody said to him, "O charming poet, everyone is amazed at what you do." What a fine thing that dervish said in response—that dervish who ruled over the realm of meaning. "What the folks saw me doing is quite right," he said. "There is nothing of value in this house except me. As long as Ghani is sitting in his cottage there is a treasure at his home. When he, the light of the company, is out, then it is empty like no other home can be."





## Dialogue between God and Man

*GOD*

I made the whole world with the same water and clay but you created Iran, Tartary, and Ethiopia. From the earth I brought forth pure iron but you made from that iron sword, arrow, and gun.

You made an axe for the tree in the garden and a cage for the songbird.

*MAN*

You made the night, I made the lamp. You made the earthen bowl, I made the goblet. You made deserts, mountains and valleys. I made gardens, meadows and parks.

I am one who makes a mirror out of stone and turns poison into sweet, delicious drink.

## Sakinama

*Written in Nishat Bagh, Kashmir*

What a happy time, and a happy season!

Constellations grow from the meadow, the ground looks like partridge-wings with variegated flowers, and the waterfall is showering diamonds. There is no stopping for the sight except by tulips and roses, and no rolling of the air except over a meadow. Have you seen the vanity of the bud on the riverside? What fascinating beauty to whom a mirror is being held!

What a mellifluous song in such a lovely tune is coming from the solitude of the trees! The spirit in the body and longings in the spirit are resuscitated with the song of the starling and the chirping of the nightingale. The voices of birds perched in high nests mingle with the song of the stream—you would think that God has sent down Paradise and placed it at a mountain's foot so that by His grace the progeny of Adam may be spared the pain of awaiting. What may I feel in such a garden, but to desire wine, a book, music and a fair companion?

O fair Saki! I implore you to bring us some relic of our ancestors, pour in the cup that wine that may illumine the soul as light and burn it as fire. Make tulips grow from my barren clay and build a paradise from my dust.

Do you not see that the same voice is coming from all lands, from Kashgar to Kashan. The peoples' eye has shed that purest of all tears whose magic can compel thorns to turn roses, but Kashmiri, who has become a habitual slave is carving idols from the tombstones of the dead. With a conscience devoid of lofty ideals, he is unacquainted with his selfhood and embarrassed of himself. His labor adorns his master in fine silk, but a tattered robe is all he gets for his own frame. His eye is devoid of sight and his chest devoid of a heart.

Pour a drop of that wine on Kashmiri, so that a spark may leap up from his ashes.

## The Leftover Wine

The breeze of spring makes of  
 The garden a wine-tavern.  
 It casts buds into jar-shapes,  
 And makes of flowers cups.  
 When love attains its climax, then  
 No rivalry remains.  
 In flitting round a candle moths  
 Join hands with one another.  
 An eagle in a cage,  
 When he accepts food offered,  
 Becomes so timid that he trembles  
 On seeing shadows of quails' wings.  
 O gardener, tell Iqbal  
 To be off from the garden,  
 For this spellbinding singer  
 Makes men forget the roses.

You have made every thorn  
 Prick us and know our tale.  
 You took us to the wilderness  
 Of madness, and let everybody know.  
 Our fault was we ate of a grain,  
 And his that he refused to bow.  
 You never pardoned that poor devil,  
 Nor have You yet forgiven us.  
 A hundred worlds spring up like flowers  
 From our imagination's soil.  
 There is but one real world; and that too  
 You have made of the blood of murdered wishes.  
 Like colour the reflection of Your beauty  
 Shines through the glass.  
 You have made of the goblet's wall  
 A screen for Yourself, just like wine.  
 O, lay some new foundation, for  
 We happen to like novelty.  
 What is this giddy peep-show You have made  
 Of yesterdays, to-morrows and to-days?

A true lover does not differentiate  
 Between the Ka'bah and the idol-house.  
 The one is the Beloved's privacy,  
 The other His appearing publicly.  
 Better than any company  
 In this world or the next  
 Are a sagacious friend  
 And two goblets of wine.  
 Here everyone has eyes  
 And everyone a tongue.  
 So in your company  
 One story breeds another.  
 Who is He Who has launched  
 A night-attack on hearts,  
 Who like a Turk has plundered  
 A hundred cities of desire?  
 Where I roam in my mad pursuit  
 The angel Gabriel is but small game.  
 Come, O my manly courage, cast  
 A lasso upon God Himself.  
 Iqbal has in the pulpit blurted out  
 A secret that was not to be revealed.  
 Well, he had issued forth still raw  
 From the wine-tavern's privacy.

This azure sky,  
 All that is high, all that is low,  
 For all its vastness, is  
 Encompassed in the lover's heart.  
 If you desire to know the secret of eternity,  
 Then open your eyes to yourself,  
 For you are many, you are one,  
 You are concealed and you are manifest.  
 O my afflicted heart,  
 You now know what is love.  
 You cannot rest within my breast  
 And pour yourself out through my eyes.  
 Arise, for spring  
 Has lit the flowers' lamps.  
 Arise and spend some moments with  
 The tulips of the wilderness.

Love's magic charms are numberless,  
 And countless Beauty's ways.  
 O we are infinite,  
 Both You and I.  
 A hundred times were raised to heaven,  
 A hundred times were buried in the earth

The power and the pomp  
Of Khaqans and Faghfurs, of Daras and Jamshids.

You cannot fit into the Harem, nor  
Into the idol-house.  
But O how eagerly You come  
To those who seek You eagerly.  
Set foot more boldly in  
The sanctum of Your lovers' hearts.  
You are the master of the house.  
Why do You come in stealthily?  
You plunder the possessions of  
The Sayers of the rosary,  
And You make night-raids on the hearts  
Of wearers of the sacred thread.  
Sometimes You raise a hundred hosts  
To shed the blood of friends,  
And sometimes come into the company  
Equipped with measure and with cups.  
On the bush of a Moses You  
Hurl flames so ruthlessly,  
And to the candle of an orphan You  
Come gladly like a moth.  
Come, quaff a cup of wine, Iqbal,  
From the wine-cellar of the self.  
You are back from the tavern of the West  
A stranger to yourself.

# Images of the West

## A Message

O morning breeze, convey this to the Western sage from me:  
 With wings unfolded, reason is a captive all the more.  
 It tames the lightning, but Love lets it strike its very heart:  
 In courage Love excels that clever sorcerer by far.  
 The eye sees just the colour of the tulip and the rose;  
 But far more obvious, could we see it, is the flower's core.  
 It is not strange that you have the Messiah's healing touch:  
 What is strange is your patient is the more sick for your cure.  
 Though you have gathered knowledge, you have thrown away the heart;  
 With what a precious treasure you have thought it fit to part!

The courting of philosophy is a vain quest, indeed;  
 For in its school Love's lofty regimen is not decreed.  
 Such are its blandishments, it leads astray the pupil's heart:  
 There is no mischief its coquettish glances do not breed.  
 But its cold fire can never set the seeker's heart aflame:  
 It cannot give the heart Love's sweet pain, though it makes it bleed.  
 Though it has roamed the deserts, it has captured no gazelle;  
 Though it has searched the garden, it has not a rose for meed.  
 The wisest thing that we can do is to appeal to Love;  
 For our desires' fulfilment we should always kneel to Love.

Wisdom, since it set foot on life's labyrinthine way,  
 Has set the sea on fire and made the whole world go awry.  
 Its alchemy converted worthless grains of sand to gold;  
 But oh! it gave the wounded heart no love-balm to apply.  
 Alas! we were so foolish as to let it steal our wits:  
 It waylaid us, subjecting us to highway robbery.  
 It raised up much dust from the civilization of the West  
 To cast into that civilization's Holy Saviour's eye.  
 O how long can you go on sowing sparks and reaping flames,

And tying up your heart in knots which bear new-fangled names?  
 The self-absorbed and world-regarding wisdom are two things.  
 The nightingale and falcon have two different kinds of wings.  
 It is one thing to pick up stray grain lying on the ground;  
 Another to peck at gems in the Pleiades' earrings.  
 It is one thing to roam the garden like the morning breeze;  
 Another to delve in the rose's inmost ponderings.  
 It is one thing to let doubt and conjecture bog you down;  
 Another to look up and see celestial happenings.

Blest is the Wisdom which has both the worlds in its domain,  
Which calls man's heart's fire as well as the angels' light its own.

We, since we issued forth out of the sacred shrine of Love,  
Have burnished mirror-bright the very dust beneath our feet.  
O look at our adventurousness in the game of life;  
For we have robbed the wealth of both the worlds and boldly staked it.  
We watch the day-and-night procession move before our eyes,  
With our tents pitched right on the margin of a running streamlet.  
Once in our heart, which launched a night-raid on this ancient fane,  
There was a fire which we breathed into all things, dry or wet.  
We were a flame; we flickered, broke down and became a spark:  
And since then we burn fitfully, with yearnings vague and dark.

Love learned the greedy ways of earthly lust and burst all bounds:  
It caught men in its toils as fish are caught by fishermen.  
Preferring war to peace, it reared up armies everywhere,  
Which plunged their swords into the hearts of their own kith and kin.  
It gave the name of empire to its acts of banditry;  
And heavy sat its yoke on those who lived in its domain.  
Now, holding in its hand a goblet full of human blood,  
It dances madly to the tune of flute and tambourine.  
It is high time that we washed clean the tablet of our heart:  
It is high time that with a clean slate we made a fresh start.

The royal crown has passed into the hands of highwaymen.  
Hushed is the song of Darius; mute is Alexander's flute.  
Farhad has changed his pickaxe for the sceptre of Parvez.  
Gone are the joy of mastership, the toil of servitude.  
Freed from his bondage, Joseph sits on Pharaoh's high throne:  
The tales and wiles of Potiphar's wife cannot win her suit.  
Old secrets that were veiled stand unveiled in the market-place:  
No longer are they subjects of debate for the elite.  
Unveil your eyes and you will see that in full view of you  
Life is creating for itself a world completely new.

In this our ancient dust I find the pure gold of the soul:  
Each atom of it is a star's eye with the power to see.  
In every grain of sand lodged in the womb of mother earth  
I see the promise of a many-branched fruit-laden tree.  
I find the mountain as light as a tiny blade of grass,  
And heavy as a mountain seems a blade of grass to me.  
A revolution too big for the universe's mind  
I see, I know not how: I see it just about to be.  
O happy he who sees the horseman, not the dust alone,

Who in the throbbing of the strings sees music's essence drawn.

Life is, and as long as it lasts, will be a running stream:  
 This old wine's youthful effervescence will always be new.  
 What has been but should not have been will not be any more:  
 What should have been but has not been will be—it must be so.  
 Love is all eyes for Beauty's revelations yet to be:  
 And Beauty, fond of self-display, must always be on view:  
 Deep in the earth that I have watered with my blood-stained tears  
 My teardrops will remain embedded, gems of a rich hue.  
 "I see in the dark night a portent of the coming dawn.  
 My candle has been put out, but to greet the rising sun."

## The League of Nations

To the end that wars may cease on this old planet,  
 The suffering peoples of the world have founded a new institution.  
 So far as I see it amounts to this:  
 A number of undertakers have formed a company to allot the graves.

## Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

A bird flew from its nest and ranged about the garden;  
Its soft breast was pierced by a rose-thorn.  
It reviled the nature of Time's garden;  
It throbbed with its own pain and pain of others.  
It thought the tulip was branded with the blood of innocents;  
In the closed bud it saw the guile of Spring,  
From the cries of burning woe a hoopoe's heart caught fire.  
The hoopoe with his beak drew forth the thorn from its body.  
Saying, "Get the profit out of loss:  
The rose has created pure gold by rending her breast.  
If thou art wounded, make the pain thy remedy.  
Accustom thyself to thorns, that thou mayst become entirely one with the  
garden.





## An Assembly in the Other World

### *TOLSTOY*

Ahriman's hirelings,  
 Warriors of kings,  
 Draw oppression's sword  
 For a loaf of bread.  
 Evil is their good,  
 And the husk their food.  
 Friends of others, these  
 Are their own kin's foes.  
 Country, church and crown  
 Are narcotics grown  
 By the masters to  
 Buy their slaves' souls with.

### *KARL MARX*

For all his wisdom, man is not yet self-aware,  
 And capitalism has rendered man man's murderer.

### *HEGEL*

Reality is double-faced.  
 The orchard and the desert are  
 Two aspects of it that one sees.  
 To know the whole truth one must taste  
 Both grapes and bitter gourds.  
 So fond is Nature of antitheses  
 That it has set at war  
 Employees and employers, slaves and lords.

### *TOLSTOY*

The two-faced intellect with its philosophy  
 Of egotism bids the worker suffer patiently.

### *MAZDAK*

Iran's seed sprouts forth from the soil  
 Of the empires of the Kaisers and the Czars.  
 Death dances a new dance in kings' and rich men's palaces.  
 For ages does an Abraham burn in a Nimrod's fire  
 Before he can cast out old idols from  
 The sanctuary of his Lord.  
 Gone is the age of Parvez, wake up now,  
 O victims of his tyranny.

Wrest back from him  
The good things he deprived you of.

### *KOHKAN*

Though outwardly so simple and so shy,  
My loved one is a tyrant, sly  
And full of mischief and deceit.  
She looks all amity,  
But is a fighter in reality.  
Like Christ's her tongue is sweet:  
Her heart is hard like that of Genghis Khan,  
That cruel man.  
My intellect has broken down:  
My madness will soon reach its crown;  
My vision has dissolved in tears.  
Appear to me: I pine for you.  
My pickaxe has laid low a hill  
At your command; but still  
The world appears  
To favour Parvez, as you do.  
From earth to sky all things seem running in a race.  
The caravan moves fast: make haste, increase your pace.

### Einstein

Like Moses he sought a theophany  
Until his mind, in quest of light,  
Unveiled its mystery.  
A moment's flight from heaven's height  
To the observer's eye—  
Such is the unimaginable speed  
Of its fast-beating wings, indeed.  
Sequestered, it lies at the core  
Of black coal in a pit.  
When manifest in its full glory, it  
Burns up like straw a bush on Mount Sinai.  
Unchanging in this magic world of more  
Or less, of high and low,  
Of far and near, of to and fro,  
Its make-up has in it two sets  
Of qualities, engaged in mutual strife,  
Like brightness, darkness, soothing, burning, life  
And death, one of which sets begets  
The angels and the houris, while

The other shows in Ahriman the vile.  
 What can I say about this subtle-minded sage  
 Except that from  
 The race of Moses and of Aaron there has come  
 A Zarathustra in our age?

Dialogue between Auguste Comte and the Laborer

*COMTE*

All men are one another's limbs,  
 The leaves and stems  
 Of one big tree.  
 If man's brain is the seat  
 Of intellect and if his feet  
 Trail on the ground,  
 This is because they both are bound  
 By Nature's ineluctable decree.  
 One man commands, another works, both born  
 To it. A Mahmud cannot do  
 The work of an Ayaz.  
 Do you not see it is because  
 Work is divided between you  
 That life becomes a garden, with both rose and thorn?

*THE LABOURER*

Philosopher, you cheat me when you say  
 That I can never break my way  
 Out of this magic circle that you weave.  
 You pass base brass for gold,  
 And teach me to resign myself to fate.  
 With my pickaxe I excavate  
 Long waterways, in which I hold  
 The very ocean prisoner, and retrieve  
 Milk and honey from Nature's stores.  
 Purveyor of strange subtleties,  
 You give poor Kohkan's prize, for all his sores,  
 To the idle, rich and sly Parvez.  
 Do not try passing wrong for right  
 With your philosophy.  
 You cannot dupe a Khizr's sight  
 With a mirage's trickery.  
 The capitalist, with nothing to do but  
 Eat and sleep, is a burden on this earth,  
 Which thrives because of those who work on it.  
 Do you not know this idler is a thief by birth?  
 The crime that he exists you want excused.

## Hegel

His thought is fully rational  
 And unrelated to the sensuous,  
 Although his ideas  
 Are decked out in the garb of brides.  
 Do you know what kind of a bird  
 Is his high-soaring thought?  
 It is a hen which through excess of heat  
 Conceives without a mate.

## Jalal and Goethe

In paradise that perceptive German happened upon the Master of the East. Where is a poet of such stature! Though not a prophet, he was possessed of scripture. To the one who knew divine secrets, he read about the pact of the Devil and the doctor. Rumi said, “You who bring words to life and hunt angels and God, your thought has made its home in the inner recesses of the heart and created this old world anew. At one and the same time in the body's frame you have seen the tranquillity and the restlessness of the soul. You have been a witness to the birth of the pearl in the shell. Not everyone knows the secret of love or is fit to reach these portals. *He who is blest, and a confidant, knows that cunning comes from the Devil and love from Adam.*”



*Italicized lines are from Jalaluddin Rumi (1207—73).*

With all your wisdom you have been bemused

## Bergson's Message

If thou wouldst read Life as an open book,  
 Be not a spark divided from the brand.  
 Being the familiar eye, the friendly look,  
 Nor visit strange-like thy native land.  
 O thou by vain imaginings befooled,  
 Get thee a reason which the Heart hath schooled!

## Philosophers

### *LOCKE*

It was dawn that lit up the tulip's cup with a drink from the sun, for the tulip itself bore an empty cup when it joined the company of flowers.

### *KANT*

By nature it had a taste for wine that is like crystal. It is from eternity's sleeping-chamber that it brings its shining, star-like cup.

### *BERGSON*

It did not bring either wine or a cup from eternity. The tulip gets its eternal passion from the scar in its own heart.

## Poets

### *BROWNING*

There was nothing to fortify life's effervescent wine:  
 I took some aqua vitae from Khizr and added it.

### *BYRON*

Why should one be obliged to Khizr for his aqua's loan?  
 I poured a little of my heart's blood into the wine-cup.

### *GHALIB*

To make the wine still bitterer and my chest still more sore,  
 I melted the glass itself and added it to my wine.  
*Italicized lines are from Jalaluddin Rumi (1207—73).*  
 I melted the glass itself and added it to my wine.

### *RUMI*

How can dilutions be as good as the real stuff itself?  
 I pressed wine out of grapes direct and filled my cup with it.

## To England

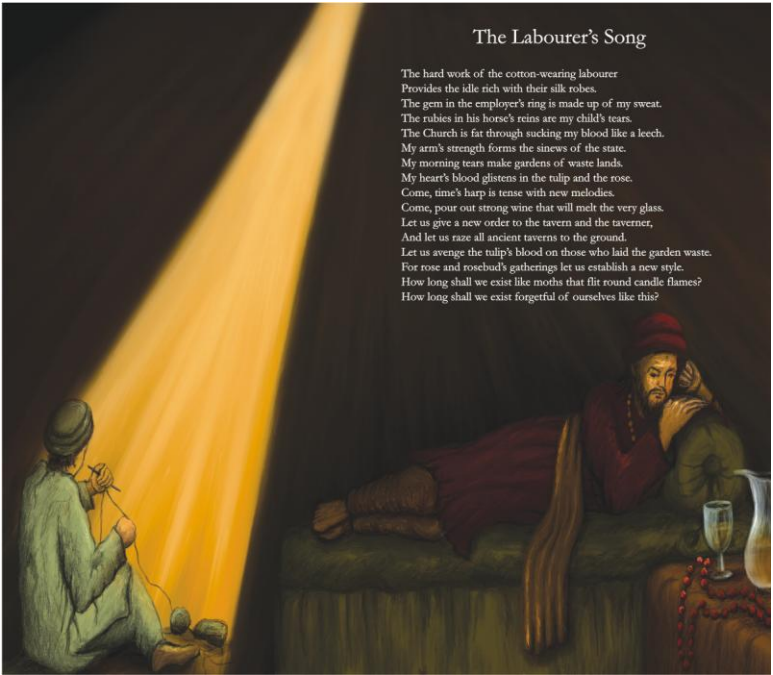
An Easterner tasted once the wine in Europe's glass;  
 No wonder if he broke old vows in reckless glee.  
 The blood came surging up in the veins of his new-born thought:  
 Predestination's bondslave he learned that Man is free.  
 Let not thy soul be vexed with the drunkards' noise and rout!  
 O saki, tell me fairly, who was't that broached this jar?  
 The scent of the rose showed first the way into the garden;  
 Else, how should the nightingale have known that roses are?

## Division between the Capitalist and the Laborer

Mine is the din of the steel factory,  
 And yours is the church organ's melody.  
 Mine is the bush that pays the king a tax,  
 Yours Eden with its Sidrah and its Tuba.  
 Strong liquor with a hangover is mine,  
 For you drink comes from Adam and Eve's brewery.  
 Duck, pheasant, pigeon are my birds: huma  
 And anqa are your royal property.  
 The earth and what is in its bowels are mine;  
 From earth to heaven all is your territory.

## The Labourer's Song

The hard work of the cotton-wearing labourer  
Provides the idle rich with their silk robes.  
The gem in the employer's ring is made up of my sweat.  
The rubles in his horse's reins are my child's tears.  
The Church is fat through sucking my blood like a leech.  
My arm's strength forms the sinews of the state.  
My morning tears make gardens of waste lands.  
My heart's blood glistens in the tulip and the rose.  
Come, time's harp is tense with new melodies.  
Come, pour out strong wine that will melt the very glass.  
Let us give a new order to the tavern and the taverner,  
And let us raze all ancient taverns to the ground.  
Let us avenge the tulip's blood on those who laid the garden waste.  
For rose and rosebud's gatherings let us establish a new style.  
How long shall we exist like moths that flit round candle flames?  
How long shall we exist forgetful of ourselves like this?



## Aphorisms

Agony in every atom of our being, every breath of us a rising from the dead. Khizr said to Sikandar lost amidst the Land of Darkness, "Hard is Death, but Life is harder."

"Sweet is the time of Spring," the red Rose cried. "Sweeter an hour here than an age outside! Before some lover plucks you for his cap, sweetest to die in this green garden's lap."

The poet is child, youth and old man all in one. Distinctions of age are unknown to poetry.

If you do not possess the power to forgive, the go and get to grips with those who have wronged you. Do not nurse hatred in your heart. O, do not make your honey sour by mixing vinegar with it.

O you, who plucked a rose, do not complain about the thorn. For like the rose the thorn is born of the spring breeze.

Love has no use for those who do not dare. To catch dead birds an eagle does not care.

How nice a thing it would be if every traveler who wants to travel far and fast could go free from the trammels of the past. If blind conformity were good, the Prophet himself would have gone the way of Arabs in an earlier day.