

Jalal al-Din Rumi: 13th c. Persian Sufi mystic, Islamic scholar and poet

O Friend! we are near you in friendship,
Wherever you set foot, we prostrate ourselves like earth.
How is it permissible, in the religion of love,
That we should see your Creation and neglect to see You?
That Friend brought me up with great care and attention;
He sewed me a garment from skin and veins.
The body is like a cloak and my heart in it is like a mystic,
The world is like a monastery and He is my Guide.
Seek knowledge which unravels mysteries
Before your life comes to a close.
Give up that non-existence which looks like existence,
Seek that Existence which looks like non-existence!
There is a world outside Islam and Disbelief,
We are enamoured of the atmosphere therein.
The mystic lays down his head when he reaches there.
There is neither Islam nor Disbelief in this place.
Whenever I prostrate my head He is the one to whom I bow;
In six directions or outside the six, he is the one I worship.
The garden, the rose, the nightingale, the music and the beautiful maiden
Are a mere excuse and He alone is the real object.

Translated by Afzal Iqbal

My heart, sit only with those
who know and understand you.
Sit only under a tree
that is full of blossoms.
In the bazaar of herbs and potions
don't wander aimlessly –
find the shop with a potion that is sweet.
If you don't have a measure
people will rob you in no time.
You will take counterfeit coins
thinking they are real.
Don't fill your bowl with food from
every boiling pot you see.
Not every joke is humorous, so don't search
for meaning where there isn't one.
Not every eye can see,
not every sea is full of pearls.
My heart, sing the song of longing
like the nightingale.
The sound of your voice casts a spell
on every stone, on every thorn.
First, lay down your head –
then one by one
let go of all distractions.
Embrace the light and let it guide you
beyond the winds of desire.
There you will find a spring, and nourished by its waters,
like a tree you will bear fruit forever.

Translated by Maryam Mafi and Azima Melita Kolin

It is the rule with drunkards to fall upon each other,
to quarrel, become violent, and make a scene.
The lover is even worse than a drunkard.
I will tell you what love is: to enter a mine of gold.
And what is that gold?
The lover is a king above all kings,
unafraid of death, not at all interested in a golden crown.
The dervish has a pearl concealed under his patched cloak.
Why should he go begging door to door?
Last night that moon came along,
drunk, dropping clothes in the street.
“Get up,” I told my heart, “Give the soul a glass of wine.
The moment has come to join the nightingale in the garden,
to taste sugar with the soul-parrot.”
I have fallen, with my heart shattered –
where else but on your path? And I
broke your bowl, drunk, my idol, so drunk,
don’t let me be harmed, take my hand.
A new rule, a new law has been born:
break all the glasses and fall toward the glassblower.

Translated by Kabir Helminski

O you who've gone on pilgrimage –
where are you, where, oh where?
Here, here is the Beloved!
Oh come now, come, oh come!
Your friend, he is your neighbor,
he is next to your wall –
You, erring in the desert –
what air of love is this?
If you'd see the Beloved's
form without any form –
You are the house, the master,
You are the Kaaba, you! . . .
Where is a bunch of roses,
if you would be this garden?
Where, one soul's pearly essence
when you're the Sea of God?
That's true – and yet your troubles
may turn to treasures rich –
How sad that you yourself veil
the treasure that is yours!

Translated by Annemarie Schimmel

Rabi'a Basra: 8th c. Sufi female mystic (quite rare then) to whom many poems are attributed - born in Basra, Persia (translations: first three, Charles Upton; last two, Jane Hirshfield)

I am fully qualified to work as a doorkeeper,
And for this reason:
What is inside me, I don't let out;
What is outside me, I don't let in.
If someone comes in, he goes right out again –
He has nothing to do with me at all.
I am a Doorkeeper of the Heart,
Not a lump of wet clay.

I carry a torch in one hand
And a bucket of water in the other:
With these things I am going to set fire to Heaven
And put out the flames of Hell,
So that voyagers to God can rip the veils
And see the real goal.

My joy
My hunger
My shelter
My friend;
My food for the journey
My journey's End.

You are my breath,
My hope,
My companion,
My craving,
My abundant wealth.

Without You — my Life, my Love —
I would never have wandered across these endless countries.
You have poured out so much grace for me,
Done me so many favors, given me so many gifts —
I look everywhere for Your love —
Then suddenly I am filled with it.

O Captain of my Heart
Radiant Eye of Yearning in my breast,
I will never be free from You
As long as I live.

Be satisfied with me, Love,
And I am satisfied.

O my Lord,

if I worship you
from fear of hell, burn me in hell.

If I worship you
from hope of Paradise, bar me from its gates.

But if I worship you
for yourself alone, grant me then the beauty of your Face.

O my Lord,
the stars glitter
and the eyes of men are closed.
Kings have locked their doors
and each lover is alone with his love.

Here, I am alone with You.