



by
Sheikh Muslih-uddin Sa'di Shirazi (1258)

Translated by
Sir Edwin Arnold (1899)



World Famous Persian Poet of 13th Century



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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Chapter 2



The Morals of Dervishes

Story 1

One of the great devotees having been asked about his opinion concerning a hermit whom others had censured in their conversation, he replied:

'I do not see any external blemishes on him and do not know of internal ones.'

هر که را، جامه پارسا بینی
پارسا دان و نیک مرد انگار
ور ندانی که در نهانش چیست
محتسب را درون خانه چکار؟

Whomsoever thou seest in a religious habit
Consider him to be a religious and good man
And, if thou knowest not his internal condition,
What business has the muhtasib (reckoner) inside the house?



Story 2

I saw a dervish who placed his head upon the threshold of the Ka'bah, groaned, and said:

'O forgiving, O merciful one, thou knowest what an unrighteous, ignorant man can offer to thee.'

عذر قصیر خدمت آوردم
که ندارم به طاعت استظهار
عاصیان از گناه توبه کنند
عرفان از عبادت استغفار

I have craved pardon for the deficiency of my service

Because I can implore no reward for my obedience.

Sinners repent of their transgressions.

Arifs (Sufis) ask forgiveness for their imperfect worship.

Devotees desire a reward for their obedience and merchants the price of their wares but I, who am a worshipper, have brought hope and not obedience. I have come to beg and not to trade. Deal with me as thou deemest fit.

Whether thou killest me or forgivest my crime,
my face and head are on thy threshold.

A slave has nothing to command; whatever thou commandest I obey.

بر در کعبه سائلی دیدم
که همی گفت و می گریستی خوش
من نگویم که طاعتم بپذیر
قلم عفو بر گناهم کش

I saw a mendicant at the door of the Ka'bah

Who said this and wept abundantly:

'I ask not for the acceptance of my service

But for drawing the pen of pardon over my sins.'



Story 3

I saw A'bd-u-Qader Gaillani in the sanctuary of the Ka'bah with his face on the pebbles and saying:

'O lord, pardon my sins and, if I deserve punishment, cause me to arise blind on the day of resurrection that I may not be ashamed in the sight of the righteous.'

روی بر خاک عجز می گویم
هر سحرگه که باد می آید
ای که هرگز فراموشت نکنم
هیچت از بنده یاد می آید؟

With my face on the earth of helplessness
I say Every morning as soon as I become conscious:
O thou whom I shall never forget
Wilt thou at all remember thy slave?



Story 4

A thief paid a visit to the house of a pious man but, although he sought a great deal, found nothing and was much grieved.

The pious man, who knew this, threw the blanket upon which he had been sleeping into the way of the thief that he might not go away disappointed.

شنیدم که مردان راه خدای
دل دشمنان را نکردند تنگ
تو را کی میسر شود این مقام
که با دوستانت خلافت و جنگ

I heard that men of the way of God
Have not distressed the hearts of enemies.
How canst thou attain that dignity
Who quarrelest and wagest war against friends?

The friendship of pure men, whether in thy presence or absence, is not such as
Will find fault behind thy back and is ready to die for thee before thy face.

In thy presence gentle like a lamb,
In thy absence like a man-devouring wolf.

دگران پیش تو آورد و شمرد هر که عیب
بی گمان عیب تو پیش دگران خواهد بر

Who brings the faults of another to thee and enumerates them
Will undoubtedly carry thy faults to others.



Story 5

Several travelers were on a journey together and equally sharing each other's troubles and comforts. I desired to accompany them but they would not agree. Then I said:

'It is foreign to the manners of great men to turn away the face from the company of the poor and so deprive themselves of the advantage they might derive there from because I for one consider myself sufficiently strong and

energetic to be of service to men and not an encumbrance. Although I am not riding on a beast, I shall aid you in carrying blankets.'

One of them said: 'Do not be grieved at the words thou hast heard because some days ago a thief in the guise of a dervish arrived and joined our company.'

چه دانند مردان که در خانه کیست ؟

نویسنده داند که در نامه چیست ؟

How can people know who is in the dress?

The writer is aware what the book contains.

As the state of dervishes is safe, they entertained no suspicion about him and received him as a friend.

صورت حال عارفان دلوق است

این قدر بس که روی در خلق است

The outward state of Arifs (Sufis) is the patched dress.

It suffices as a display to the face of the people.

در عمل کوش و هر چه خواهی پوش

تاج بر سر نه و علم بر دوش

Strive by thy acts to be good and wear anything thou listest.

Place a crown on thy head and a flag on thy back.

The abandoning of the world, of lust, and of desire is sanctity, not the abandonment of the robe only.

در قژا کند مرد باید بود

بر مخنث سلاح جنگ چه سود؟

It is necessary to show manhood in the fight.

Of what profit are weapons of war to an hermaphrodite?

We traveled one day till the night set in during which we slept near a fort and the graceless thief, taking up the water-pot of a companion, pretending to go for an ablution, departed for plunder.

پارسا بین که خرقة در بر کرد

جامه کعبه را جل خر کرد

A pretended saint who wears the dervish garb
Has made of the Ka'bah's robes the covering of an ass.

After disappearing from the sight of the dervishes, he went to a tower from which he stole a casket and, when the day dawned, the dark-hearted wretch had already progressed a considerable distance. In the morning the guiltless sleeping companions were all taken to the fort and thrown into prison. From that date we renounced companionship and took the road of solitude, according to the maxim:

Safety is in solitude.

چو از قومی ، یکی بی دانشی کرد
نه که را منزلت ماند نه مه را
شنیدستی که گاوی در علف خوار
بیالاید همه گاوان ده را

When one of a tribe has done a foolish thing
No honor is left either to the low or the high.
Seest thou not how one ox of the pasturage
Defiles all oxen of the village?

I replied: 'Thanks be to the God of majesty and glory, I have not been excluded from the advantages enjoyed by dervishes, although I have separated myself from their society. I have profited by what thou hast narrated to me and this admonition will be of use through life to persons like me.'

به يك ناتراشیده در مجلسی
برنجد دل هوشمندان بسی
اگر برکه ای پر کنند از گلاب
سگی در وی افتد، کند منجلاب

For one rude fellow in the assembly
The heart of intelligent men is much grieved.
If a tank be filled with rose-water
A dog falling into it pollutes the whole.



Story 6

A hermit, being the guest of a Padshah, ate less than he wished when sitting at dinner and when he rose for prayers he prolonged them more than was his wont in order to enhance the opinion entertained by the Padshah of his piety.

ترسم نرسي به كعبه اي اعرابي
كاین ره كه تو مي روي به تركستان است

O Arab of the desert, I fear thou wilt not reach the Ka'bah
Because the road on which thou travellest leads to Turkestan.

When he returned to his own house, he desired the table to be laid out for eating. He had an intelligent son who said: 'Father, hast thou not eaten anything at the repast of the sultan?'

He replied: 'I have not eaten anything to serve a purpose.'

The boy said: 'Then likewise say thy prayers again as thou hast not done anything to serve that purpose.'

ای هنرها گرفته بر کف دست
عیبها برگرفته زیر بغل
تا چه خواهی گرفتن ای مغرور
روز درماندگی به سیم دغل

O thou who showest virtues on the palms of the hand
But concealest thy errors under the armpit
What wilt thou purchase, O vain-glorious fool,
On the day of distress with counterfeit silver?



Story 7

I remember, being in my childhood pious, rising in the night, addicted to devotion and abstinence. One night I was sitting with my father, remaining awake and holding the beloved Quran in my lap, whilst the people around us were asleep.

I said: 'Not one of these persons lifts up his head or makes a genuflection. They are as fast asleep as if they were dead.'

He replied: 'Darling of thy father, would that thou wert also asleep rather than disparaging people.'

نبیند مدعی جز خویشتن را
که دارد پرده پندار در پیش
گرت چشم خدا بینی بیخشد
نبینی هیچ کس عاجزتر از خویش

The pretender sees no one but himself
Because he has the veil of conceit in front.
If he were endowed with a God-discerning eye
He would see that no one is weaker than himself.



Story 8

A great man was praised in an assembly and, his good qualities being extolled, he raised his head and said:

من آنم که من دانم

'I am such as I know myself to be.'

O thou who reckonest my virtues, refrainest from giving me pain,
These are my open, and thou knowest not my hidden, qualities.

شخصم به چشم عالمیان خوب منظر است
وز خبث باطنم سر خجلت فتاده پیش
به نقش و نگاری که هست خلق طاووس را
تحسین کنند و او خجل از پای زشت خویش

My person is, to the eyes of the world, of good aspect
But my internal wickedness makes me droop my head with shame.
The peacock is for his beautiful colors by the people
Praised whilst he is ashamed of his ugly feet.



Story 9

One of the devotees of Mount Lebanon, whose piety was famed in the Arab country and his miracles well known, entered the cathedral (Jamiah) mosque of Damascus and was performing his ceremonial purification ablution on the edge of a tank when his feet slipped and he fell into the reservoir but saved himself with great trouble.

After the congregation had finished their prayers, one of his companions said: 'I have a difficulty.'

He asked: 'What is it?'

He continued: 'I remember that the Sheikh walked on the surface of the African sea without his feet getting wetted and today he nearly perished in this paltry water which is not deeper than a man's stature. What reason is there in this?'

The Sheikh drooped his head into the bosom of meditation and said after a long pause: 'Hast thou not heard that the prince of the world, Muhammad the chosen, upon whom be the benediction of Allah and peace, has said:

I have time with Allah during which no cherubim nor inspired prophet is equal to me?'

But he did not say that such was always the case. The time alluded to was when Gabriel or Michael inspired him whilst on other occasions he was satisfied with the society of Hafsa and Zainab.

مشاهده الأبرار بين التجلي و الاستتار

The visions of the righteous one are between brilliancy and obscurity.

مشاهده و دیدار نیکان ، بین آشکاری و پوشیدگی است
مشاهده الأبرار بين التجلي و الاستتار. مي نماید و مي ربایند

Thou showest thy countenance and then hidest it
Enhancing thy value and augmenting our desire.

دیدار می نمایی و پرهیز می کنی
بازار خویش و آتش ما تیز می کنی
اشاهد من اهوي بغير وسيله
فيلحقني شان اضل طريقا

I behold whom I love without an intervention.
Then a trance befalls me; I lose the road;
It kindles fire, then quenches it with a sprinkling shower.
Wherefore thou seest me burning and drowning.



Story 10

One asked the man who had lost his son:

روشن گهر پیر خردمند که ای
ز مصرش بوی پیراهن شنیدی
چرا در چاه کنعانش ندیدی؟

'O noble and intelligent old man!

As thou hast smelt the odor of his garment from Egypt

Why hast thou not seen him in the well of Canaan?'

He replied:

احوال ما برق جهان است
اه کنعانش ندیدی؟ چرا در چ
گهی بر طارم اعلی نشینیم
گهی بر پشت پای خود نبینیم
اگر درویش در حالی بماندی
سر و دست از دو عالم بر فشاندی

'My state is that of leaping lightning.

One moment it appears and at another vanishes.

I am sometimes sitting in high heaven.

Sometimes I cannot see the back of my foot.

Were a dervish always to remain in that state

He would not care for the two worlds.'



Story 11

I spoke in the cathedral (Jamiah) mosque of Damascus a few words by way of a sermon but to a congregation whose hearts were withered and dead, not having traveled from the road of the world of form, the physical, to the world of meaning, the moral world.

I perceived that my words took no effect and that burning fire does not kindle moist wood. I was sorry for instructing brutes and holding forth a mirror in a locality of blind people. I had, however, opened the door of meaning and was giving a long explanation of the verse:

وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ (Quran 50:16)

We are nearer unto Him than the jugular vein

till I said:

دوست نزدیکتر از من به من است
وین عجبت که من از وی دورم
چه کنم با که توان گفت که دوست
در کنار من و من مهجورم

'The Friend is nearer to me than my self,
But it is more strange that I am far from him.
What am I to do? To whom can it be said that he
Is in my arms, but I am exiled from him.'

I had intoxicated myself with the wine of these sentiments, holding the remnant of the cup of the sermon in my hand when a traveler happened to pass near the edge of the assembly, and the last turn of the circulating cup made such an impression upon him that he shouted and the others joined him who began to roar, whilst the raw portion of the congregation became turbulent.

Whereon I said:

'Praise be to Allah! Those who are far away but intelligent are in the presence of Allah, and those who are near but blind are distant.'

فهم سخن چون نکند مستمع
قوت طبع از متکلم مجوی
فسحت میدان ارادت بیار
تا بزند مرد سخنگوی گوی

When the hearer understands not the meaning of words
Do not look for the effect of the orator's force
But raise an extensive field of desire
That the eloquent man may strike the ball of effect.



Story 12

One night I had in the desert of Makkah become so weak from want of sleep that I was unable to walk and, laying myself down, told the camel driver to let me alone.

پای مسکین پیاده چند رود؟
کز تحمل ستوده شد بختی
تا شود جسم فربهی لاغر
لاغری مرده باشد از سختی

How far can the foot of a wretched pedestrian go
When a dromedary gets distressed by its load?
Whilst the body of a fat man becomes lean
A weak man will be dead of exhaustion.

He replied:

'O brother, the sanctuary is in front of us and brigands in the rear. If thou goest thou wilt prosper. If thou sleepest thou wilt die.'

خوش است زیر مغیلان به راه بادیه خفت
شب رحیل ، ولی ترك جان ببايد گفت

It is pleasant to sleep under an acacia on the desert road
But alas! thou must bid farewell to life on the night of departure.



Story 13

I saw a holy man on the seashore who had been wounded by a tiger. No medicine could relieve his pain; he suffered much but he nevertheless constantly thanked God the most high, saying:

شكر آنكه به مصیبتی گرفتارم نه به معصیبتی

'Praise be to Allah that I have fallen into a calamity and not into sin.'

اگر مرا زار به کشتن دهد آن یار عزیز
تا نگوئی که در آن دم ، غم جانم باشد
گویم از بنده مسکین چه گنه صادر شد
کو دل آزرده شد از من غم آنم باشد

If that beloved Friend decrees me to be slain
I shall not say that moment that I grieve for life
Or say: What fault has thy slave committed?
My grief will be for having offended thee.



Story 14

A dervish who had fallen into want stole a blanket from the house of a friend. The judge ordered his hand to be amputated but the owner of the blanket interceded, saying that he had condoned the fault.

The judge rejoined: 'Thy intercession cannot persuade me to neglect the provision of the law.'

The man continued: 'Thou hast spoken the truth but amputation is not applicable to a person who steals some property dedicated to pious uses. More over a beggar possesses nothing and whatever belongs to a dervish is dedicated to the use of the needy.'

Thereon the judge released the culprit, saying: 'The world must indeed have become too narrow for thee that thou hast committed no theft except from the house of such a friend.'

He replied: 'Hast thou not heard the saying:

خانه دوستان بروب ولی حلقه در دشمنان مکوب

Sweep out the house of friends and do not knock at the door of foes.'

چون به سختی در بمانی تن به عجز اندر مده
دشمنان را پوست بر کن ، دوستان را پوستین

If thou sinkest in a calamity be not helpless.

Strip thy foes of their skins and thy friends of their fur-coats.



Story 15

A Padshah, meeting a holy man, asked him whether he did not sometimes remember him for the purpose of getting presents.

He replied:

بلي، وقتي كه خدا را فراموش مي كنم

'Yes, I do, whenever I forget God.'

هر سو دود آن كس ز بر خویش براند

و آنرا كه بخواند به در كس ندواند

Whom He drives from his door, runs everywhere.

Whom He calls, runs to no one's door.



Story 16

A pious man saw in a dream a Padshah in paradise and a devotee in hell whereon he asked for the reason of the formers exaltation and the latter's degradation, saying that he had imagined the contrary ought to be the case. He received the following answer:

این پادشاه به خاطر دوستی با پارسایان به بهشت رفت

شاه، به دوزخ رفت و آن پارسا به خاطر تقرب به

'The Padshah had, for the love he bore to dervishes, been rewarded with paradise and the devotee had, for associating with Padshahs, been punished in hell.'

قت به چكار آید و مسحی و مرقعدل

خود را ز عملهای نكوهیده بری دار

حاجت به کلاه برکی داشتنت نیست

درویش صفت باش و کلاه تتری دار

Of what use is thy frock, rosary and patched dress?

Keep thyself free from despicable practices.

Then thou wilt have no need of a cap of leaves.

Have the qualities of a dervish and wear a Tatar cap.



Story 17

A bareheaded and barefooted pedestrian who had arrived from Kufah with the Hajaz-caravan of pilgrims joined us, strutted about and recited:

نه بر اشتري سوارم ، نه چو خر به زير بارم
نه خداوند رعيت ، نه غلام شهريارم
غم موجود و پريشاني معدوم ندارم
نفسی می زخم آسوده و عمری به سر آرم

'I am neither riding a camel nor under a load like a camel.
I am neither a lord of subjects nor the slave of a potentate.
Grief for the present, or distress for the past, does not trouble me.
I draw my breath in comfort and thus spend my life.'

A camel-rider shouted to him: 'O dervish, where art thou going? Return, for thou wilt expire from hardships.'

He paid no attention but entered the desert and marched.

When we reached the station at the palm-grove of Mahmud, the rich man was on the point of death and the dervish, approaching his pillow, said:

'We have not expired from hardship but thou hast died on a dromedary.'

شخصی همه شب بر سر بیمار گریست

چون روز آمد بمرد و بیمار بزیست

A man wept all night near the head of a patient.
When the day dawned he died and the patient revived.

ای بسا اسب تیزرو که بماند

خرك لنگ ، جان به منزل برد

بس که در خاک تندرستان را

م و زخم خورده نمرد دفن کردی

Many a fleet charger had fallen dead
While a lame ass reached the station alive.
Often healthy persons were in the soil
Buried and the wounded did not die.



Story 18

A hermit, having been invited by a Padshah, concluded that if he were to take some medicine to make himself weak he might perhaps enhance the opinion of the Padshah regarding his merits.

But it is related that the medicine was lethal so that when he partook of it he died.

آنکه چون پسته دیدمش همه مغز

پوست بر پوست بود همچو پیاز

Who appeared to thee all marrow like a pistachio
Was but skin upon skin like an onion.

پارسایان روی در مخلوق
پشت بر قبله می کنند نماز

Devotees with their face towards the world
Say their prayers with their back to the Qiblah.

چون بنده خدای خویش خواند
باید که به جز خدا نداند

When a worshipper calls upon his God,
He must know no one besides God.



Story 19

A caravan having been plundered in the Greek country and deprived of boundless wealth, the merchants wept and lamented, beseeching God and the prophet to intercede for them with the robbers, but ineffectually.

چو پیروز شد دزد تیره روان
انچه غم دارد از گریه کارو

When a dark-minded robber is victorious
What cares he for the weeping of the caravan?

Luqman the philosopher being among the people of the caravan, one of them asked him to speak a few words of wisdom and advice to the robbers so that they might perhaps return some of the property they had plundered because the loss of so much wealth would be lamentable.

Luqman replied: 'It would be lamentable to utter one word of wisdom to them.'

آهنی را که موریانه بخورد
نتوان برد از او به صیقل زنگ

خواندن وعظ به سیه دل چه سود
نرود میخ آهنین بر سنگ

The rust which has eaten into iron
Cannot be removed by polishing.
Of what use is preaching to a black heart?
An iron nail cannot be driven into a rock.

به روزگار سلامت ، شکستگان دریاب
که جبر خاطر مسکین ، بلا بگرداند
سائل از تو به زاری طلب کند چیزی چو
بده و گرنه ستمگر به زور بستاند

Help the distressed in the day of prosperity
Because comforting the poor averts evil from thyself.
When a mendicant implores thee for a thing,
Give it or else an oppressor may take it by force.



Story 20

Despite the abundant admonitions of the most illustrious Sheikh Abulfaraj Ben Juzi to shun musical entertainments and to prefer solitude and retirement, the budding of my youth overcame me, my sensual desires were excited so that, unable to resist them, I walked some steps contrary to the opinion of my tutor, enjoying myself in musical amusements and convivial meetings. When the advice of my sheikh occurred to my mind, I said:

'If the Qazi were sitting with us, he would clap his hands.
If the muhtasib were bibbing wine, he would excuse a drunkard.'

Thus I lived till I paid one night a visit to an assembly of people in which I saw a musician.

Thou wouldst have said he is tearing up the vital artery with his fiddle-bow.

His voice was more unpleasant than the wailing of one who lost his father.

The audience now stopped their ears with their fingers, and now put them on their lips to silence him. We became ecstatic by the sounds of pleasing songs but thou art such a singer that when thou art silent we are pleased.

No one feels pleased by thy performance
Except at the time of departure when thou pleasest.

When that harper began to sing
I said to the host: 'For God's sake
Put mercury in my ear that I may not hear
Or open the door that I may go away.'

In short, I tried to please my friends and succeeded after a considerable struggle in spending the whole night there.

The muezzin shouted the call to prayers out of time,
Not knowing how much of the night had elapsed.
Ask the length of the night from my eyelids
For sleep did not enter my eyes one moment.

In the morning I took my turban from my head, with one dinar from my belt by way of gratification, and placed them before the musician whom I embraced and thanked. My friends who saw that my appreciation of his merits was unusual attributed it to the levity of my intellect and laughed secretly.

One of them, however, lengthened out his tongue of objection and began to reproach me, saying that I had committed an act repugnant to intelligent men by bestowing a portion of my professional dress upon a musician who had all his life not a dirham laid upon the palm of his hand nor filings of silver or of gold placed on his drum.

A musician! Far be he from this happy abode.
No one ever saw him twice in the same place.
As soon as the shout rose from his mouth

The hair on the bodies of the people stood on end.
The fowls of the house, terrified by him, flew away
Whilst he distracted our senses and tore his throat.

I said: 'It will be proper to shorten the tongue of objection because his talent has become evident to me.'

He then asked me to explain the quality of it in order to inform the company so that all might apologize for the jokes they had cracked about me.

I replied: 'Although my sheikh had often told me to abandon musical entertainments and had given me abundant advice, I did not mind it. This night my propitious horoscope and my august luck have guided me to this place where I have, on hearing the performance of this musician, repented and vowed never again to attend at singing and convivial parties.'

A pleasant voice, from a sweet palate, mouth and lips,
Whether employed in singing or not, enchants the heart
But the melodies of lovers of Isfahan or of the Hejaz
From the windpipe of a bad singer are not nice.



Story 21

Luqman, being asked from whom he had learnt civility, replied:

'From those who had no civility because what appeared to me unbecoming in them I refrained from doing.'

Not a word is said even in sport
Without an intelligent man taking advice thereby.
But if a hundred chapters of wisdom are read to a fool
All strike his ear merely as sport.



Story 22

It is related that a hermit consumed during one night ten mann of food and perused the whole Quran till morning. A pious fellow who had heard of this said:

'It would have been more excellent if he had eaten half a loaf and slept till the morning.'

Keep thy interior empty of food
That thou mayest behold therein the light of marifet.
Thou art empty of wisdom for the reason
That thou art replete with food up to the nose.



Story 23

A man had by his sins forfeited the divine favor but the lamp of grace nevertheless so shone upon his path that it guided him into the circle of religious men and, by the blessing of his association with dervishes, as well as by the example of their righteousness, the depravities of his character were transmuted into virtues and he refrained from lust and passion.

But the tongues of the malevolent were lengthened with reference to his character, alleging that it was the same as it had ever been and that his abstinence and piety were spurious.

By apology and penitence one may be saved from the wrath of God
But cannot be saved from the tongues of men.

He could no longer bear the reviling tongues and complained to the Pir (Sheikh) of the Tariqat. The Sheikh wept and said:

'How wilt thou be able to be sufficiently grateful for this divine favor that thou art better than the people imagine?'

How long wilt thou say: 'The malevolent and envious
Are searching out the defects of my humble self.
Sometimes they arise to shed my blood.
Sometimes they sit down to curse me.'
To be good and to be in spoken of by the people
Is better than to be bad and considered good by them.

Look at me whom the good opinion of our contemporaries deems to be perfect whereas I am imperfection itself.

If I were doing what I speak
I would be of good conduct and a devotee.
Verily I am veiled from the eyes of my neighbors
But Allah knows my secret and my overt concerns.
The door is locked to the access of people
That they may not spread out my faults.
What profiteth a closed door? The Omniscient
Knows what I conceal or reveal.



Story 24

I complained to one of the sheikhs that a certain man had falsely accused me of lasciviousness.

He replied:

'Put him to shame by thy good conduct.'

Be thou well behaved that a maligner
May not find occasion to speak of thy faults.
When the harp is in proper tune
How can the hand of the musician correct it?



Story 25

One of the sheikhs of Syria, being asked on the true state of the Sufis, replied:

'In former times they were a tribe in the world, apparently distressed,
but in reality contented whereas today they are people outwardly
satisfied but inwardly discontented.'

If my heart roams away from thee every hour,
Thou wilt find no tranquility in solitude
But if thou possessest property, dignity, fields and wares,
If thy heart be with God, thou wilt be a recluse.



Story 26

I remember having once walked all night with a caravan and then slept on the
edge of the desert. A distracted man who had accompanied us on that journey
raised a shout, ran towards the desert and took not a moment's rest.

When it was daylight, I asked him what state of his that was. He replied:

'I saw bulbuls commencing to lament on the trees, the partridges on the mountains, the frogs in the water and the beasts in the desert so I bethought myself that it would not be becoming for me to sleep in carelessness while they all were praising God.'

Yesterday at dawn a bird lamented,
Depriving me of sense, patience, strength and consciousness.
One of my intimate friends who
Had perhaps heard my distressed voice
Said: 'I could not believe that thou
Wouldst be so dazed by a bird's cry.'
I replied: 'It is not becoming to humanity
That I should be silent when birds chant praises.'



Story 27

It once happened that on a journey to the Hajaz a company of young and pious men, whose sentiments harmonized with mine, were my fellow-travelers. They occasionally sung and recited spiritual verses but we had with us also an Abid (votary), who entertained a bad opinion of the behavior of the dervishes and was ignorant of their sufferings.

When we reached the palm-grove of the Beni Hallal, a black boy of the encampment, falling into a state of excitement, broke out in a strain which brought down the birds from the sky. I saw, however, the camel of the Abid, which began to prance, throwing him and running into the desert.

Knowest thou what that matutinal bulbul said to me?
What man art thou to be ignorant of love?
The Arabic verses threw a camel into ecstasy and joy.
If thou hast no taste thou art an ill-natured brute.

When a camel's head is turned by the frenzy of joy
And a man does not feel it, he must be an ass.
When the winds blow over the plain
The branches of the ban-tree bend, not hard rocks.

Whatever thou beholdest chants his praises.
He knows this who has the true perception.
Not only the bulbul on the rosebush sings praises
But every bramble is a tongue, extolling him.



Story 28

The life of a king was drawing to a close and he had no successor. He ordered in his last testament that the next morning after his death the first person entering the gate of the city be presented with the royal crown and be entrusted with the government of the realm.

It so happened that the first person who entered was a mendicant who had all his life subsisted on the morsels he collected and had sewn patch after patch upon his clothes.

The pillars of the state and grandees of the court executed the injunction of the king and bestowed upon him the government and the treasures; whereon the dervish reigned for a while until some Amirs of the monarchy withdrew their necks from his obedience and kings from every side began to rise for hostilities and to prepare their armies for war. At last his own troops and subjects also rebelled and deprived him of a portion of his dominions.

This event afflicted the mind of the dervish until one of his old friends, who had been his companion when he was yet himself a dervish, returned from a journey and, seeing him in such an exalted position, said:

'Thanks be to God the most high and glorious that thy rose has thus come forth from the thorn and thy thorn was extracted from thy foot. Thy high luck has aided thee and prosperity with fortune has guided thee till thou hast attained this position. Verily hardship is followed by comfort.'

A flower is sometimes blooming and sometimes withering.

A tree is at times nude and at times clothed.

He replied: 'Brother, condole with me because there is no occasion for congratulation. When thou sawest me last, I was distressed for bread and now a world of distress has overwhelmed me.'

If I have no wealth I grieve.

If I have some the love of it captivates me.

There is no greater calamity than worldly goods.

Both their possession and their want are grieves.

If thou wishest for power, covet nothing
Except contentment which is sufficient happiness.

If a rich man pours gold into thy lap

Care not a moment for thanking him.

Because often I heard great men say

The patience of a dervish is better than the gift of a rich man.



Story 29

A man had a friend, who held the office of Devan (Financial Minister) to the Padshah, but whom he had not seen for a long time; and, a man having asked him for the reason, he replied: 'I do not want to see him.'

A dependent however of the Devan, who also happened to be present, queried: 'What fault has he committed that thou art unwilling to meet him?'

He replied: 'There is no fault in the matter but a friend who is a Devan may be seen when he is removed from office.'

Whilst in greatness and in the turmoil of business
They do not like to be troubled by neighbors
But when they are depressed and removed from office
They will lay open their heart's grief to friends.



Story 30

Abu Hurrairah, may the approbation of Allah be upon him, was in the habit of daily waiting upon the Mustafa, peace on him, who said:

'Abu Hurrairah, visit me on alternate days that our love may increase.'

A man said to a devotee: 'Beautiful as the sun is, I never heard that anybody took it for a friend or fell in love with it',

and he replied: 'This is because it may be seen daily, except in winter when it is veiled and beloved.'

There is no harm in visiting people
But not till they say: 'It is enough!'
If thou findest fault with thyself
Thou wilt not hear others reproaching thee.



Story 31

A man, being tormented story by a contrary wind in his belly and not having the power to retain it, unwittingly allowed it to escape. He said:

'Friends, I had no option in what I did, the fault of it is not to be ascribed to me and peace has resulted to my internal parts. Kindly excuse me.'

The belly is a prison of wind, O wise man.
No sage retains wind in captivity.
If wind twists thy belly let it out
Because wind in the belly is a burden to the heart.



Story 32

Having become tired of my friends in Damascus, I went into the desert of Jerusalem and associated with animals till the time when I became a prisoner of the Franks, who put me to work with infidels in digging the earth of a moat in Tarapolis, when one of the chiefs of Aleppo, with whom I had formerly been acquainted, recognized me and said: 'What state is this?'

I recited:

'I fled from men to mountain and desert
Wishing to attend upon no one but God.
Imagine what my state at present is
When I must be satisfied in a stable of wretches.

The feet in chains with friends
Is better than to be with strangers in a garden.'

He took pity on my state and ransomed me for ten dinars from the captivity of the Franks, taking me to Aleppo where he had a daughter and married me to

her with a dowry of one hundred dinars. After some time had elapsed, she turned out to be ill-humored, quarrelsome, disobedient, abusive in her tongue and embittering my life:

A bad wife in a good man's house
Is his hell in this world already.
Alas for a bad consort, alas!
Preserve us, O Lord from the punishment of fire.

Once she lengthened her tongue of reproach and said: 'Art thou not the man whom my father purchased from the Franks for ten dinars?'

I replied: 'Yes, he bought me for ten dinars and sold me into thy hands for one hundred dinars.'

I heard that a sheep had by a great man
Been rescued from the jaws and the power of a wolf.
In the evening he stroked her throat with a knife
Whereon the soul of the sheep complained thus:

Thou hast snatched me away from the claws of a wolf,
But at last I see thou art thyself a wolf.'



Story 33

A Padshah (King) asked a hermit: 'How spendest thou thy precious time?'

He replied: 'I am all night engaged in prayer, during the morning in supplications and the rest of the day in restricting my expenses.'

Then the king ordered a sufficient allowance to be allotted to him so as to relieve him of the cares of his family.

O thou who art encumbered with a family,
Think no more of ever enjoying freedom.

Cares for children, raiment and food
Restrain thee from the heavenly kingdom.

Every day I renew my determination
To wait upon God until the night.
In the night, while tying the knot of prayer,
I think what my children will eat on the morrow.



Story 34

A man, professing to be a hermit in the desert of Syria, attended for years to his devotions and subsisted on the leaves of trees. A Padshah (King), who had gone in that direction by way of pilgrimage, approached him and said: 'If thou thinkest proper, we shall prepare a place for thee in the town where thou wilt enjoy leisure for thy devotions and others may profit by thy spiritual advice as well as imitate thy good works.'

The hermit refused compliance but the pillars of the State were of opinion that, in order to please the king, he ought to spend a few days in town to ascertain the state of the place; so that if he feared that the purity of his precious time might become turbid by association with strangers, he would still have the option to refuse compliance.

It is related that the hermit entered the town where a private garden-house of the king, which was a heart-expanding and soul refreshing locality, had been prepared to receive him.

Its red roses were like the cheeks of belles,
Its hyacinths like the ringlets of mistresses
Protected from the inclemency of mid-winter
Like sucklings who have not yet tasted the nurse's milk.

And branches with pomegranates upon them:
Fire suspended from the green-trees.

The king immediately sent him a beautiful slave-girl:

After beholding this hermit-deceiving crescent-moon
Of the form of an angel and the beauty of a peacock,
After seeing her it would be impossible
To an anchorite's nature to remain patient.

After her he sent likewise a slave-boy of wonderful beauty and graceful
placidity:

People around him are dying with thirst
And he, who looks like a cupbearer, gives no drink.

The sight cannot be satisfied by seeing him
Like the dropsical man near the Euphrates.

The hermit began to eat delicious food, to wear nice clothes, to enjoy fruit and
perfumed confectionery as well as to contemplate the beauty of the slave-boy
and girl in conformity with the maxim of wise men, who have said that}

the curls of belles are fetters to the feet of the intellect and a snare to a
sagacious bird.

In thy service I lost my heart and religion with all my learning,
I am indeed the sagacious bird and thou the snare.

In short, the happiness of his former time of contentedness had come to an end,
as the saying is:

Any faqih, pir and murid
Or pure minded orator,
Descending into the base world,
Sticks in the honey like a fly.

Once the king desired to visit him but saw the hermit changed from his former
state, as he had become red, white and corpulent.

When the king entered, he beheld him reclining on a couch of gold brocade
whilst the boy and the fairy stood near his head with a fan of peacocks'
feathers. He expressed pleasure to behold the hermit in so comfortable a

position, conversed with him on many topics and said at the conclusion of the visit:

'I am afraid of these two classes of men in the world: scholars and hermits.'

The vizier, who was a philosopher and experienced in the affairs of the world, being present, said:

'O king, the conditions of friendship require thee to do good to both classes. Bestow gold upon scholars that they may read more but give nothing to hermits that they may remain hermits.'

A hermit requires neither dirhems nor dinars.

If he takes any, find another hermit.

Who has a good behavior and a secret with God
Is an anchorite without the waqfbread or begged morsel.

With a handsome figure and heart-ravishing ear-tip
A girl is a belle without turquoise-ring or pendants.

A dervish of good behavior and of happy disposition
Requires not the bread of the rebat nor the begged morsel.

A lady endowed with a beautiful form and chaste face
Requires no paint, adornment or turquoise-ring.

When I have and covet more

It will not be proper to call me an anchorite.



Story 35

In conformity with the above sentiments an affair of importance emerged to a Padshah (King), who thereon vowed that, if it terminated according to his wishes, he would present devotees with a certain sum of money.

His wish having been fulfilled, it became necessary to keep his promise. Accordingly he gave a purse of dirhams to one of his confidential servants to distribute it among recluses.

It is related that the slave was intelligent and shrewd. He walked about all day and returning at nightfall, kissed the dirhams and deposited them before the king with the remark that he had not found any devotees.

The king rejoined: 'What nonsense is this? As far as I know there are four hundred devotees in this town.'

He said: 'Lord of the world, who is a devotee does not accept money and who accepts it is not a devotee.'

The king smiled and said to his courtiers: 'Despite of my wishing to do good to this class of worshippers of God, this rogue bears them enmity and thwarts my wish but truth is on his side.'

If a devotee has taken dirhams and dinars
Find another who is more a devotee than he.



Story 36

One of the Ulema of solid learning, having been asked for his opinion about waqfbread, answered:

'If it be accepted to insure tranquility of mind from cares for food and to obtain leisure for devotion, it is lawful but if it be taken for maintenance it is forbidden.'

Bread is taken for the corner of devotion
By pious men and not the corner of devotion for bread.



Story 37

A dervish arrived in a place, the owner of which was of a noble disposition, and had surrounded himself with a company of distinguished and eloquent men, each of whom uttered something elegant or jocular, according to the fashion of wits.

The dervish who had traveled through the desert and was fatigued had eaten nothing. One of the company asked him by way of encouragement likewise to say something.

The dervish replied: 'I do not possess distinction and eloquence like you and have read nothing so you must be satisfied with one distich of mine.'

The company having agreed with pleasure he recited:

'I am hungry and opposite to a table of food
Like a bachelor at the door of a bath of females.'

The company, having thus been apprised of his famished condition, produced a table with bread but as he began to eat greedily the host said: 'Friend, at any rate stop a while till my servants roast some minced meat';

whereon the dervish lifted his head and recited:

'Do not order pounded meat for my table.
To a pounded man simple bread is pounded meat.'



Story 38

A Murid (disciple) said to his Pir (Sheikh): 'What am I to do? I am troubled by the people, many of whom pay me visits. By their coming and going they encroach upon my precious time.'

He replied:

'Lend something to every one of them who is poor and ask something from every one who is rich and they will come round thee no more.'

If a mendicant were the leader of the army of Islam,
The infidels would for fear of his importunity run as far as China.



Story 39

The son of a Faqih (religious scholar) said to his father:

'These heart-ravishing words of moralists make no impression upon me because I do not see that their actions are in conformity with their speeches.'

They teach people to abandon the world
But themselves accumulate silver and corn.
A scholar who only preaches and nothing more
Will not impress anyone when he speaks.
He is a scholar who commits no evil,
Not he who speaks to men but acts not himself.

Will you enjoin virtue to mankind and forget your own souls?

A scholar who follows his lusts and panders to his body
Is himself lost although he may show the way.

The father replied:

'My son, it is not proper merely on account of this vain fancy to turn away the face from the instruction of advisers, to travel on the road of vanity, to accuse the Ulema of aberration, and whilst searching for an immaculate scholar, to remain excluded from the benefits of knowledge, like a blind man who one night fell into the mud and shouted: "O Muslims, hold a lamp on my path."

Whereon a courtesan who heard him asked: "As thou canst not see the lamp, what wilt thou see with the lamp?"

In the same way the preaching assembly is like the shop of a dealer in linen because if thou bringest no money thou canst obtain no wares and if thou bringest no inclination to the assembly thou wilt not get any felicity.'

He said: 'Listen with thy soul's ear to a scholar
Although his actions may not be like his doctrines.'

In vain does the gainsayer ask:
'How can a sleeper awaken a sleeper?
A man must receive into his ears
The advice although it be written on a wall.'

A pious man came to the door of a college from a monastery. He broke the covenant of the company of those of the Tariq (Mystic). I asked him what the difference between a scholar and a monk amounts to? He replied:

'The former saves his blanket from the waves
Whilst the latter strives to save the drowning man.'



Story 41

A man was sleeping dead-drunk on the highway and the bridle of spontaneity had slipped from his hands. A hermit passed near him and considered the disgraceful condition he was in. The youth raised his head and recited:

When they passed near something contemptible, they passed it kindly. When thou beholdest a sinner be concealing and meek.

Turn not thy face from a sinner, O anchorite.

Look upon him with benignity.

If I am ignoble in my actions

Pass me by like a noble fellow.

A company of vagabonds met a dervish, spoke insulting words to him, struck him and otherwise molested him; whereon he complained to his superior and explained the case. The Pir (Sheikh) replied:

'My son, the patched frock of dervishes is the garment of resignation and who, wearing it, cannot bear injuries is a pretender not entitled to the frock.'

A large river will not become turbid from stones.

The Arif (devout) who feels aggrieved is shallow water yet.

If he injures thee, bear it

Because pardon will purify thee from sin.

O brother, as the end is dust,

be dust before thou art turned into dust.



Story 42

Listen to this story how in Baghdad a flag and a curtain fell into dispute.

Travel stained, dusty and fatigued, the flag said to the curtain by way of reproach:

'I and thou, we are both fellow servants,

Slaves of the sultan's palace.

Not a moment had I rest from service

In season and out of season I traveled about.
Thou hast suffered neither toil nor siege,
Not from the desert, wind, nor dust and dirt.
My step in the march is more advancing.
Then why is thy honor exceeding mine?
Thou art upon moon-faced servants
Or Jessamine scented slave girls.
I have fallen into prentice hands.
I travel with foot in fetters and head fluttering.'

The curtain said:

'My head is on the threshold
Not like thine in the heavens.
Who carelessly lifts up his neck
Throws himself upon his neck.'



Story 43

A pious man saw an acrobat in great dudgeon, full of wrath and foaming at the mouth. He asked: 'What is the matter with this fellow?'

A bystander said: 'Someone has insulted him.'

He remarked:

این فرومایه هزار من سنگ برمی دارد و طاقت نمی آرد

'This base wretch is able to lift a thousand mann (weight) of stones and has not the power to bear one word.'

لاف سر پنجگی و دعوی مردی بگذار
عاجز نفس ، فرومایه چه مردی زنی

گرت از دست برآید دهنی شیرین کن
ی آن نیست که مشتی بزنی بر دهنی مرد

Abandon thy claim to strength and manliness.
Thou art weak-minded and base, whether thou be a man or woman.
If thou art able, make a sweet mouth.
It is not manliness to strike the fist on a mouth.

اگر خود بر کند پیشانی پیل
نه مرد است آنکه در او مردمی نیست
بنی آدم سرشت از خاک دارد
اگر خالی نباشد، آدمی نیست

Although able to tear up an elephant's front
He is not a man who possessed no humanity.
A man's nature is of earth.
If he is not humble he is not a man.



Story 44

I asked a good man concerning the qualities of the brethren of purity. He replied:

'The least of them is that they prefer to please their friends rather than themselves;

and philosophers have said that a brother who is fettered by affairs relating to himself is neither a brother nor a relative.'

همراه اگر شتاب کند در سفر تو بیست
دل در کسی نبند که دل بسته تو نیست

چو نبود خویش را دیانت و تقوا
قطع رحم بهتر از مودت قریبی

If thy fellow traveler hastens, he is not thy fellow.
Tie not thy heart to one whose heart is not tied to thine.
When a kinsman possesses no virtue and piety
Then severing connection is better than love of kinship.

I remember that an opponent objected to the last two lines, saying: 'God the most high and glorious has in his noble book prohibited the severing of connection with relatives and has commanded us to love them. What thou hast alleged is contrary to it.'

I replied: 'Thou art mistaken because according to the Quran, Allah the most high has said:

وَإِنْ جَاهِدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا (Quran 29:8)

If they both father and mother, strive to induce thee to associate with me that concerning which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not.

هزار خویش که بیگانه از خدا باشد
بیگانه کاشنا باشد فدای یکتا

A thousand kinsmen who are strangers to God
Are the sacrifice for one stranger who knows him.



Story 45

A kind old man in Baghdad gave his daughter to a cobbler. The cruel little man so bit her that blood flowed from the daughter's lips.

Next morning the father saw her thus and going to the bridegroom asked him:

'O mean wretch, what teeth are these?
Chewest thou thus her lips? They are not leather.
I do not say these words in jest,
Leave joking off and enjoy her seriously.
If ill humor becomes fixed in a nature
It will not leave it till the time of death.'



Story 46

A Faqih (religious scholar) had a very ugly daughter and when she attained puberty no one was inclined to marry her in spite of her dowry and wealth.

زشت باشد دیقی و دیا
که بود بر عروس نازیبا

Bad is the brocade and damask cloth
Which is upon an ugly bride.

At last it became necessary to marry her to a blind man and it is related that on the said occasion a physician arrived from Serandip who was able to restore sight to the blind.

The Faqih, being asked why he had not put his son-in-law under treatment, replied: 'I fear that if he is able to see he will divorce my daughter.'

It is better if the husband of an ugly woman is blind.



Story 47

A Padshah (King) was casting a glance of contempt upon a company of dervishes and one of them, understanding by his sagacity the meaning of it, said:

'O king, in this world we are inferior to thee in dignity but more happy in life. In death we are equal and in the resurrection superior to thee.'

اگر کشور گشای کامران است
و گر درویش ، حاجتمند نان است
در آن ساعت که خواهند این و آن مرد
نخواهند از جهان بیش از کفن برد
چو رخت از مملکت بر بست خواهی
گدایی بهتر است از پادشاهی

Though the master of a country may have enjoyment
And the dervish may be in need of bread
In that hour when both of them will die
They will take from the world not more than a shroud.
When thou takest thy departure from the realm
It will be better to be a mendicant than a padshah.

Externally the dervish shows a patched robe and a shaved head but in reality his heart is living and his lust dead.

نه آنکه بر در دعوی نشیند از خلقی
وگر خلاف کنندش به جنگ برخیزد
اگر ز کوه غلظد آسیا سنگی
نه عارف است که از راه سنگ برخیزد

He does not sit at the door of pretence away from people
To fight against them if they oppose him
Because when a millstone rolls from a mountain
He is not an A'rif (devout) who gets out of the way of the stone.

The way of dervishes is

- praying,

- gratitude,
- service,
- obedience,
- almsgiving,
- contentment,
- professing the unity of God,
- trust,
- submission and
- patience.

Whoever possesses these qualities is really a dervish, although he may wear an elegant robe, whereas a prattler who neglects his orisons, is luxurious, sensual, turns day into night in the bondage of lust, and night into day in the sleep of carelessness, eats whatever he gets, and speaks whatever comes upon his tongue, is a profligate, although he may wear the habit of a dervish.

ای درونت برهنه از تقوا
 کز برون جامه ریا داری
 پرده هفت رنگی در مگذار
 تو که در خانه بویا داری

O thou whose interior is denuded of piety
 But wearest outwardly the garb of hypocrisy
 Do not display a curtain of seven colors.
 Thou hast reed mats inside thy house.



Story 48

دیدم گل تازه چند دسته
 برگنبدی از گیاه رسته

I saw bouquets of fresh roses
 Tied upon a cupola of grass.

گفتم : چه بود گیاه ناچیز

او نیز؟ تا در صف گل نشیند

I asked: 'What is despicable grass
To sit also in the line of the roses?'

بگریست گیاه و گفت : خاموش

صحبت نکند کرم فراموش

The grass wept and said: 'Hush!
Companionship does not obliterate nobility.

گر نیست جمال و رنگ و بویم

آخر نه گیاه باغ اویم

Although I have no beauty, color and perfume,
Am I not after all the grass of his garden?

من بنده حضرت کریمم

پرورده نعمت قدیمم

I am the slave of a bountiful lord,
Cherished from old by his liberality.

گر بی هنرم و گر هنرمند

لطف است امیدم از خداوند

Whether I possess virtue or not
I hope for grace from the Lord

با آنکه بضاعتی ندارم

سرمایه طاعتی ندارم

Although I possess no property
No capital to offer as obedience.

او چاره کار بنده داند

چون هیچ وسیلتش نماند

He knows the remedy for the slave
To whom no support remains.

رسم است که مالکان تحریر

آزاد کنند بنده پیر

It is customary that the owner gives a writ
Of emancipation to an old slave.

ای بار خدای عالم آرای

بر بنده پیر خود ببخشای

O God, who hast adorned the universe,
Be bountiful to thy old slave.'

سعدی ره کعبه رضا گیر

ای مرد خدا! در خدا گیر

Sa'di, take the road to the Ka'bah of submission.
O man of God, follow the way of God.

بدبخت کسی که سر بتابد

زین در، که دری دگر بیابد

Unlucky is he who turns his head
Away from this door for he will find no other door.



Story 49

A sage having been asked whether liberality or bravery is better replied:

'He who possesses liberality needs no bravery.'

يك تا به ابدنماند حاتم طائی ول

بماند نام بلندش به نیکویی مشهور

It is written on the tomb of Behram Gur:
'A liberal hand is better than a strong arm.'

زکات مال به در کن که فضله رز را
چو باغبان بزند بیشتر دهد انگور
نیشته است بر گور بهرام گور
که دست کرم به ز بازوی زور

Hatim Tai has passed away but for ever

His high name will remain celebrated for beneficence.

Set aside the zekat from thy property because the exuberant vines

When pruned by the vintner will yield more grapes.



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