

THE ILÁHÍ-NÁMA



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Faríd ud-Dín ‘Attár

Translated by

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CONTENTS

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Exordium | 3 |
| Discourse I | 33 |
| Discourse II | 50 |
| Discourse III | 65 |
| Discourse IV | 79 |
| Discourse V | XX |
| Discourse VI | XXX |
| Discourse VII | XXX |
| Discourse VIII | XXX |
| Discourse IX | XXX |
| Discourse X | XXX |
| Discourse XI | XXX |
| Discourse XII | XXX |
| Discourse XIII | XXX |
| Discourse XIV | XXX |
| Discourse XV | XXX |
| Discourse XVI | XXX |
| Discourse XVII | XXX |
| Discourse XVIII | XXX |
| Discourse XIX | XXX |
| Discourse XX | XXX |
| Discourse XXI | XXX |
| Discourse XXII | XXX |



THE ILÁHÍ-NÁMA



EXORDIUM

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

In the name of Him whose kingdom is unending, in describing Whom the speech of the wise is reduced to dumbness.

His name is a joyous message to the souls of men; it appears at the head of the poets' divans.

To think of His name is to cover the palate of the soul with sugar; to mention it is to cover the sword of the tongue with jewels.

Scent without mention of His name is but color; fame without mention of His name is disgrace.

He is a Lord beside whose being all that has existence is the essence of lowness.

Since His being is higher than all we know, how then can we describe it?

With the hand of creation He flung the ball of the terrestrial globe into the crook of the polo-stick of the celestial spheres.

Since no man's intellect can rise above Him, no man can know the extent of His favors.

All negation of the world is affirmation of Him; the whole universe is proof of His being.

His attributes are His being and His being His attributes: if you consider well He is all being.

All that exists is but the shadow of His presence; it is all the effect of His omnipotent creation.

An eloquent speaker said well of His being that the belief in God's unity springs from the rejection of all accessories.

So lofty is His rank that everything from the Moon to the Fish is to His eye as black as hair.

So great is His glory and His self-sufficiency that all the minds and souls of men are but so many playthings to him.

Such is His majesty that if it were to enter a man's soul a hundred storms would spring up in every atom.

Such is His unity that it does not leave room for a single hair; beside His unity the whole world does not weigh a single hair.

Such is His mercy that if Iblis received the smallest portion of it he would bear the palm from Idris.

Such is His jealousy that if it fell upon the world in one moment the two worlds would clash together.

Such is the awe He inspires that if the sun had the slightest awareness of it, it would be lost in an eternal shadow.

Such is the sanctity of His station that from reverence none but He may approach near to it.

Such is His empire that necessarily and inevitably it can neither decrease nor increase.

Such is His strength that, should He wish, He could in a single instant turn the earth and the nine heavens into wax.

Such is the drink that “their Lord will give them to drink” that the soul will dip its bread in blood in hope thereof.

So vast is His realm that if the world ceased to exist its expanse would not be a single hair’s breadth less.

Such is His infinity that the eye of reason and comprehension falls to the ground incapable of traversing the distance.

Such is the term He has set for all that when its time comes the world itself will be ensnared by a single hair.

Such is the vigor with which He calls His creatures to account that they can neither be silent nor speak.

Such is His seclusion that of all the men and women that have sought Him none has found the way to His presence.

Great is the heedlessness that has enchained us, otherwise we should have committed no sin.

Great is the regret that we shall feel, but regret will not profit us.

Great is the endurance that we shall need to acquit ourselves of our charge without betraying it.

The world of love has neither beginning nor end; there is no guide to it save a bleeding heart.

He is a lover who from the first step he takes immerses himself from head to foot in blood becoming like so much mud.

O Lord, I have said many foolish things; I have said much that was true and much that was not.

Though the sinner commit a hundred worlds of sins, yet one atom of Your grace will efface them all.

We have nothing but sins to offer, no acts of devotion. What can we bring to counterbalance our sins? Only a small handful.

Since such is our case, O Lord, do not abandon us to ourselves.

You transcend the categories of quantity, quality, and cause; You are beyond and outside the world.

O Lord, Your mercy is a universal sea; a single drop of it would suffice for us.

If You were to wash the pollution of Your sinful creatures in that sea,
The water would not be darkened for a moment but the case of a whole
world of people would be brighter.

What loss would that sea of mercy suffer if You gave one drop of water
to Your creatures?

It is good that God should cry *ha* and man should answer *hu?* and
that man and God should call to one another.

You have no one in the whole world; why do you not weep bitterly
over yourself?

For if you have a hundred friends in your house, when you die, you
will find them all strangers.

This grief is not given you easily; straw will not give the strength of a
mountain:

If you would have even an atom of this grief, you must have the purity
of the sea and the endurance of the mountains.

If you die a moment before your appointed time, in that one moment
you shall conquer a whole world.

Forsaken and forlorn as you are, if you but knew from Whose pres-
ence you are kept at such a distance,

In regret you would brand your side and bow your head over your
knees in confusion.

If you would be worthy of the Road of God, extinguish the eye of
desire.

When the eye of desire has been blinded, you will see with God's aid
through the divine eye.

There is no limit to man's bewilderment: who can find a needle in the
sea?

The world is like a caravanserai with two doors: entering by one door
you pass out through the other.

You are sunk in heedless sleep and know of nothing; you shall die
whether you will or not.

Whether beggar or king you shall take with you two ells of linen and
ten bricks.

The revolving heavens have exercised much cunning, and there is
none that shall escape them.

Regardless you must in the end be parted from all that you have.

Though your realm stretch from the Fish to the Moon, you must in
the end pass through this gate.

And if you are an Alexander, this transitory world will one day pro-
vide a burial shroud for your Alexander-like glory.

My friend, the King without consulting you has laid up a treasure in some spot.

If such is His will He will take it away or He will leave it where it is.

Why seek to know why He laid it up or why He will take it away?

This faithless world has no light; it has no feast that is not followed by mourning.

If it offers you silver, it is stone, and if it offers you an excuse it is a lame one.

Union without separation is no man's portion; for there is neither rose without a thorn nor sugar without flies.

I know of no one who is without grief to whom I could look for comfort.

Be off with you, resign yourself to your heavy load; drudge away, and if your life is asked give it.

I do not find you brave or strong enough to ascend into heaven without first passing through the grave.

Did not Adam live in sorrow for six hundred years, shedding tears of blood on account of a grain of wheat?

Since he could not take a grain of wheat without suffering a hundred misfortunes, neither may you eat a morsel without the pangs of sorrow.

All our gain, yours and mine, has turned to loss; woe to our birth and to existence!

O world, who is there who rejoices an account of your tyranny? All of your tyranny and oppression is so much wind.

Since the world does not grieve for you, why do you heap dust on your head on its account?

The world has many bridegrooms like you; it remembers many feasts and weddings.

All my life I have striven to find a friend to whom I could confide my secrets.

I can find no true friend; alas for these faithless companions!

Since you were born of your mother for the dust, why being thus lowly do you rear up palaces and belvederes?

Since your eye is destined to be rubbed in the dust, why do you raise up your belvederes to the skies?

Though you have piled up a treasure of silver and gold you will not without pain drink a single draught of water.

Grieve for yourself, for no one else concerns himself about you, nay, you do not concern yourself.

Your own place will be beneath the dust, but your pure soul shall not be sullied by it.

Is not your essence worshipped by the angels? Have you not on your head the crown of God's Vicarate?

You are the son of God's vicar, abandon the bath furnace; abandon your sluggish ways and enter the rose garden.

A king's throne awaits you in Egypt; why are you, like Joseph, at the bottom of a well?

You have no control over your kingdom because demons have taken the place of Solomon.

It is you who are the king in the end and in the beginning, but the seer sees double.

You see one as two and two as a hundred. One, two or a hundred, it is all you.

You have one heart, poor wretch, and a hundred friends: how can you, with one heart, accomplish a hundred tasks?

How long will you concern yourself with food and clothing? How long with your reputation with the vulgar?

In your origin you have a wondrous nature, satin patched with rags.

If you strive every moment to reach the Presence, you shall be honored with the words "Adore, and draw nigh."

With all your foolish thoughts you have worn out your original nature.

O you that sleep, if you are wise, close the door to your desires.

Great is the greed in the heart of Adam's son and great the perplexity in which he wanders around the world.

Your heart is blinded with greed and so you will remain to the brink of the grave.

Until you die your greed will not grow less, for only death is a balm to the wound of greed.

You have drained to the dregs the cup of this world; what would you do with the wealth of the world?

In the eyes of the traveler along the Road all the goods of this world are not worth a single grain.

Fie upon these fly-eating spiders like so many vultures engrossed in carrion!

Fie upon these ant-like talebearers, all of them like ants guideless and lost!

Fie upon the greed of that crowd of bone-eaters, all of them doglike in nature and akin to rats!

O you who are careworn day and night, helpless in the clutches of greed,

Greed has a bridle on your head; it is to you as the halter to the camel.
 Put your trust in the Provider; be calm and patient.
 He does not withhold his daily bread from the infidel; why should He
 withhold it from a wise man?

Being secure and healthy; do not be slack in the morning.

If you awake at dawn you shall receive what you ask for.

The robe of honor bestowed at the Court of God is bestowed at the
 time of the dawn.

The gate of Paradise is opened at dawn; and it is then that His beauty
 is revealed to His lovers.

Would you be king at that moment? Then go and beg at the door of
 Muhammad.

In praise of the Prophet

Muhammad is the exemplar to both worlds, the guide of the descen-
 dants of Adam.

He is the sun of creation, the moon of the celestial spheres, the all-
 seeing eye;

The torch of knowledge, the candle of prophecy, the lamp of the na-
 tion and the way of the people;

The commander-in-chief on the parade-ground of the Law; the gen-
 eral of the army of mysteries and morals;

The lord of the world and the glory of “But for you;” ruler of the earth
 and of the celestial spheres;

The most loyal of the Prophets, the proof of the Way, the king without
 a seal, the sultan without a crown.

As a king he reared up a lofty palace, but he followed the principle of
 “Poverty is my pride.”

His miracle was “We have won a victory” and his banner “help from
 God.”

“As you live” was the crown on his musk-raining head and “Have we
 not opened your heart?” the adornment of his life.

He is of a surety the crown of all sovereigns; he is in very deed the lord
 of the Prophets.

He, and only he, is without question the most excellent of mankind;
 he, and he only, is the confidant of God.

The seven heavens and the eight gardens of paradise were created for
 him; he is both the eye and the light in the light of our eyes.

He was the key of guidance to the two worlds and the lamp that dis-
 pelled the darkness thereof.

His tongue was the interpreter of kingship, his heart the scribe of divine inspiration.

Heaven and earth come under his sway; the two worlds are co-existent with his reign.

The Lord of the Worlds made him His depositary because before divine inspiration he was the most trustworthy man in the world.

Light rose up to heaven because of his beauty, and divine inspiration descended to earth because of his perfection.

Because he walked only in the way of God he was settled in “an unfruitful valley.”

With his mind he solved the difficulties of all mankind for his mind had seen the first design in Eternity Past.

He came in order that restless souls might quench their thirst every moment in the sea of his Law.

He was the greatest of the Prophets because though he came after he was also before.

When Adam opened his eyes for the first time, he saw from where he lay Muhammad’s name inscribed on the empyrean.

He prostrated himself in the dust before his name, but since the dust became Muhammad he fell undefiled.

He was still a suckling when the flood broke over the fire-worshippers.

In every fire-temple, because of the Holy Prophet, the fire was at once utterly quenched.

If fire was quenched for Abraham, it was quenched for the infant Prophet all over the world.

Do you not see how so hot a thing as fire flees before a single hair of his head?

So high were his sandals raised by his Faith that they knocked the diadem off the Chosroes’ head.

The ringlets of his hair toppled the crown of the Caesar and overthrew with the curls the Emperor of China.

When, in the beginning, he pulled his cloak over his head, the angel Gabriel descended and stood at his door.

He said to him: “Verily there is a great good hidden beneath that cloak.”

The space of a single brick was absent from the Prophecy—a holy gap, indeed.

The Prophet has said: “That precious gap was closed by me for all eternity.”

He was indeed the culmination of the Prophets; when he came, the Prophecy was complete.

Have you not seen how first the army comes and then the noble King arrives.

The Prophets are like the army; they came only to announce the king.

When the sultan of the Prophecy was born, the Prophecy came to an end for he was its culmination.

When his religion illuminated the world, all other rites were abolished. God is all-knowing.

What becomes of the countless stars when the bright sun shines forth?

When the Prophet called himself a brick, it was as though every brick had become a paradise.

And if that brick was molded from the seed of Adam, it was because one brick was the foundation of both worlds.

Since the bricks of this world have four sides, so this brick has as its four sides the Four Friends.

When the Companion of the Cave set out with him, the world was filled with light from those two peerless ones.

When he came to the house of Umm Mabad, he saw a she-goat that was unmated and without milk.

The goat gave her soul to him for she saw that the sun had arisen.

When the Master touched her udders milk flowed from them like rain.

His hand was whitened with her milk and thus did Predestination produce the White Hand.

The Prophet was adult while he was still a suckling; Adam was plainly but a child beside him.

When, during the Flight, he entered the cave with the Friend, and there appeared the famous spider,

Which built its web across the entrance, weaving the warp and crossing it with the weft.

When the web was finished an enemy arrived and sought to make his way through that screen.

He went proudly up to the spider, saying: "Remove the screen before these two lovers of the Faith.

Why do you make a screen for the lovers? Produce two tricks from behind this closed screen. Sing this song to the tune of truth."

The spider, realizing the enemy's thought, thus made denial in dumb show:

"Never will a Jamshid or a Faridun fall into a spider's web.

You have not a whit of sense if you seek a Simurgh in a flytrap.

The flesh of a fly is enough for me—how should a falcon fall into my snare?

What effect could a talisman produced from a spider's saliva have upon the one Immortal Being?"

If this miracle is not as I have related, my head is attached to my waist like a spider's.

If his enemy were in the seventh earth, the seventh heaven would lay in wait for him;

To kill his enemy the sun would smite him in the eye with its sword.

Without love for him the heavens cannot revolve; without their longing for him the angels cannot breathe.

The Faith itself could have nothing without his support; no eye ever saw him knit his brow.

He was pure contentment with no feeling of anger; no eye ever saw him frown.

In the beginning the curls came from his knitted brow but they had all departed into his hair.

The curls in his hair were without number; to seek knowledge in them is the highest task.

When his hair fell in ringlets there sprang from it the seventy-two sects.

When these curls and locks appeared on his shoulders, there appeared out of those sixty these seventy.

Each group coveted a ringlet and made a handle out of it.

None can ever hold back his hand from such a ringlet, for it is the "strongest handle."

No one admitted to the Glorious Presence passed beyond self except Muhammad.

Since he passed entirely beyond self all speak for themselves there save only him.

Muhammad was the eternal sun and Jesus the dawn that announced his coming.

Since Jesus brought the glad tidings of the Chosen One, he was born in a single moment without a father.

Aye, since he brought the good news to the people, he was the evangelist and he came in great haste.

As he was the first to bring the good news from God, so he shall return again at the end of time.

There will be but one purpose in his return, to announce Muhammad. O most glorious return!

As his pure heart was the main body of the army, so was the center of his soul the king.

Now at the time of a revelation, the six hundred thousand wings of Gabriel formed the flanks of this main army.

Now, a select throng of angels stood in ranks on either side thereof.

Patience was his buckler and sincerity his sword; his lance cast a shadow over the sky.

He held in his hand the bow of “the distance of two bow-shots;” he fought with the arrows of “when you did shoot.”

He is the Prophet of the Sword with the crown of “as you live,” auspiciously mounted upon Buraq.

What though he ruled the realm of the soul? Holy war was his trade, and hence all this.

Wishing to be slave to the Prophecy he asked God for two weeping eyes.

He called himself “the son of the two slain ones,” from which it is clear to soul and mind.

That he sought glory of God in annihilation and was never attached even for a moment to any single thing.

Because he placed no hope in existence he was sealed with the seal of “his eye turned not aside.”

And when his soul was seething with the turmoil of yearning, sometimes he would say:

“Would that God the Wise, the Just had never brought Muhammad into existence!”

This he said because the Lord of the World had called him his ever-shining light.

Though the wax produces a bright light, yet it is always in pain and suffering without the honey.

At first the wax was absorbed in the honey; and because of their oneness it had no thought of this and that.

Afterwards, when it was taken away and removed from union with the honey,

It whispered these words: “What have I in common with candles? I have lived in oneness; what have I in common with the crowd?”

If I had not become a candle I should still be together with the honey.

When I became a candle and was parted from my beloved, God called me a light; but how long shall I burn?

If I had remained with the honey I should have been saved from all this burning.”

Because he was naked he sat on the sand; because he was hungry he tied a stone to his belly.

These are proofs of his perfect poverty: the poverty of God is a very exalted stage.

Had he had the slightest desire, how should he have been the leader of the poor?

He remained poor because it is ill mannered to pick up the largesse scattered at one's own wedding.

He had no wish for goods and chattels; one day he ate his fill and the next he went hungry.

What though this nine-chambered palace was raised up for him out of nothing, out of smoke?

Often a month would pass without anyone seeing smoke rise from his nine chambers.

If those nine chambers were created out of smoke, it was because no smoke was to rise from these.

When he returned, with a hundred honors, from his ascension, his face never grew dark.

His stars relate that when he sat like the moon in their company,

He eclipsed that company with a light such as that with which the sun eclipses a candle.

All his Companions, when they were near him, were lost to self because of the awe he inspired.

Faced by the sea, how shall a drop of water retain its separate self?

It was because of the awe he inspired that there was disagreement about those on whom the light shone.

As to whether the eyebrows of that leader of the two worlds were joined or not,

The people of the two worlds could not see his eyebrows, for it is not easy to see at a distance of two bows.

The whole world was spread out like a tablecloth before his eyes,

So that the secrets of the universe were revealed to him and he had knowledge of both worlds.

When the divine mysteries were unveiled to him, because of what he had seen he said: "You are what you will."

Seeing with the eye that had looked in the mysteries he could look through the wall at Paradise and Hell.

Paradise and Hell concealed themselves behind him; you know then who were the beggars behind his wall.

They preferred their place behind the wall to the Hereafter because thus they could see the sun of his face.

They both strayed from the Hereafter because of their longing to gaze on such a sight.

Having met those that had lately been with God he hurried forward to be received by God Himself.

He went bareheaded before God, for one can approach God only when bareheaded.

Black-hearted Satan does not dare to appear in his garb.

His food was barley bread, yet he clove the breast of the loaf-like disc of the moon as though it were a grain of wheat.

The food of his soul came from the table of poverty, but though poverty was his so was glory.

When the light of his poverty shone forth Solomon would come to be his slave.

Now he would sweep the dust of the road out of his house; now he would take his rest in the dust of the road.

Now he would run to and fro with Aisha; now he would fetch bricks and mud to build a mosque.

Now he would stitch at sandals; now he would tell secrets to children.

Now he would take part in a funeral procession; now he would visit the sick.

Now he would collect fodder for the camels; now he would carry a hand-mill in his turban.

Now he would act as cupbearer at a banquet, standing in the place of "the lord of the people."

Now in the kindness of his heart he would pretend to be a camel to amuse those two intelligent children.

When that Holy Prophet came into the world, babe though he was, he at once prostrated himself in worship.

He came forth from the womb with his umbilical cord already severed; his mother bore him already circumcised.

If he stood among a crowd of men he was taller by a head than the tallest of them.

No one ever saw his excrement; the earth would swallow it up like ambergris.

He could see both in front and behind equally well. Never did a fly settle on his person.

Since his shadow fell on the celestial spheres, how then could he cast a shadow on the ground?

Since his shadow covered the empyrean how then could it fall on the earth?

One night he resolved to ascend into heaven and to rise above the two worlds.

Buraq, who was pining for his master, had long been tethered to the tree called Tuba.

Sniffing the scent of Muhammad he brayed loudly, broke his tether and galloped towards him.

Then Gabriel appeared and said: "Why are you still on earth, O Pure One? Ascend into the heavens.

You are by right the lord of the empyrean; rise from the earth to its loftiest pinnacle.

You are the symbol of mercy in both worlds; you are the host that dispenses it to both worlds.

You have regaled the earth for a while, and now it is the turn of the heavens.

Make of your poverty an elixir for the peoples of the earth; make of the dust of your feet a collyrium for the angels."

When the Holy Prophet set out upon Buraq he rose with the speed of lightning to the seventh heaven.

He rose, thus mounted, up to the throne of God, for he was lord of Buraq and of the pulpit.

On his right stood the supporters of God's throne and on his left the guardians of the earth.

Beneath the hooves of Buraq the heavens were as the earth, while Gabriel was as the servant at his door.

He unfurled his banner over the empyrean and took his stand on the "seat of truth."

There came a cry from the denizens of the heavens: "The Lord of the World has come to the trysting-place.

The orphan who followed Abu Talib is now a precious pearl sought by all seekers."

A hundred thousand lofty souls were brought from the Divine Presence to welcome him.

Jesus passed in front of him as Zulaikha had passed in front of Joseph, and he restored him from old age to youth as Joseph had done to Zulaikha.

From the breath of his spirit Jesus the Pure received, as it were, new life in heaven.

Solomon came and offered him a crown; beggar-like he set a basket in front of him.

Moses, having paid his respects to him, departed in hopes of being received amongst his people.

Abraham brought his all to sacrifice before him, his son.

Noah came from his Ark to meet him and was proud to find him on Mount Judi.

Adam came and made merry; he questioned Muhammad about the secret of man's nature.

Ridwan brought in wine and asked him about his long journey.

Because he had grown thirsty of that journey he brought him a draught from Salsabil;

And because he was heated with the ardor of his love he tempered that draught with camphor;

And because he was affected with the coldness of certainty he tempered it likewise with ginger.

And when his humors were restored to equilibrium he offered him honey tempered with milk.

And because in *Ta Ha* he had been designated as the Pure One he received "a drink of pure beverage."

His drink was "choice sealed wine," whereof the seal was known to none but God.

The sky, the master of the sun, had led Buraq that night.

The golden sun was the pommel of the Prophet's saddle; the new moon kissed his feet like a stirrup.

The halo of the moon provided Buraq with barley from Gemini and straw from the Milky Way.

As the Prophet galloped along the road that night Buraq cast one of his shoes upon the sky.

That shoe became the new moon; the sky fixed it in its ear and formed an archway for him.

Arcturus offered him a lance having cleared Medusa's Head from the way.

The houris stood all along the road from the Fish to the Moon.

In that turquoise garden, despite the darkness of the night, thousands of eyes were brightened with the splendor of his face.

For gladness the empyrean reared up a pavilion for him and placed a throne in it.

Taking its support from his two tresses Tuba cast its shadow over Paradise.

When the Dragon's Tail reared up against him, it was docked like Scorpio's from fear of him.

The heavens made Virgo into a broom, then bent to sweep the way for him.

Cancer, recognizing his glory, flung himself headlong into the water.
When Gemini girded his loins as his bodyguard, Libra came and balanced its beam.

Sagittarius unstrung his bow: it had two houses and offered them both to his soul.

Aries and Capricorn were roasted for him and a table laid that stretched from the Moon to the Ox-Fish.

Leo became like a lion painted on his carpet and Aquarius like a wheel rolling after him.

When the Two Sisters beheld his face, they threw back their veils in their longing for him.

The Two Vultures appeared without their attributes in order that there might be no evil omen.

Although the Seven Thrones were revolving around the Pole like the seven men,

When they beheld his manliness and life, they became dead women carried upon a bier.

Each angel came with his censer to burn aloes-wood as a token of sincere love.

Ridwan opened the eight gates of Paradise and washed the nine approaches with the water of Kauthar.

The guardian of Paradise rejoiced the world by displaying a great company of houris.

Awed with his splendor the empyrean ceased to move; it stood as still as the eighth heaven.

When the Preserved Table saw the value of the dust under his feet, he made of it clay tablets such as the Shiites use when prostrating themselves in worship.

When the world of light had been filled with his beauty, the "Frequented Temple" fell in ruins out of love for him.

The heavens scattered largesse in very deed, for they offered all they possessed.

Each sphere brought a hundred purses, lawful gifts, for they came from the Sidra tree.

The firmament asked God for a present to offer him, and God adorned it every night with the stars.

And because such was the present offered him the faithful Companions of the Prophets were said to be "like the stars."

From the splendid sun that shone that night each star received a new light.

He gave Saturn the charge of the crops of the heavens; by decree he conferred upon Jupiter a *cadi's* gown.

He honored Mars with the office of executioner; with his hair he cast a shadow over the Sun.

On Venus he bestowed sweetness of language while to Mercury he gave supremacy in wisdom.

To the Moon he appeared like Joseph and caused her to cut both hand and orange.

The Sun of the Law rose up with such speed that even Gabriel with his six hundred thousand wings,

Could not catch up with him or discover where he was.

When he had passed through the ranks of the angels he saw another world like one "level plain;"

A world in which there were none of the marks of a world, no sign of "level plain" or of "cushions;"

A world devoid of nearness and farness, a "light upon light" because of his light.

He found the earth of that world to be patience and all its running water knowledge.

His glory gave grandeur to the heavens, his beauty illuminated the sun.

So did his soul perspire with longing for God that he rent his robe into a hundred pieces.

Aye, since the sky was his robe he rent it all, for that night he could do nothing else.

The proof of this is the Milky Way, which is made up of small pieces of the nine curtains.

Those nine curtains were rent to pieces during his ascension, because he was the intimate of God forever.

There came a voice from God, saying: "Master, at last you have come to Our door. What is your wish?"

Your heart is with all sinners, for you are right when you say: "Walk at the pace of the weakest among you."

The Prophet said: "Lord, You know how I feel; You have no need to question me.

Your favors are so continuous that I cannot count them; my tongue is tied.

Nothing is left of my being; all is now sun, the shadow is gone."

When the Lord of the Two Worlds felt weak, God strengthened his arm with the "two bows."

Muhammad was the mightiest man in the world; therefore it is that he holds those bows.

Better bows the black-eyed houris will never see that the “two bows.”

At that moment when he was immersed in knowledge he had, as it were, two qualities of the arrow:

One of them to stand straight upright and the other to fly through the air.

And having in his being these two attributes of the arrow, the “two bows” are the symbol of his two stations.

When, in the first place, he set out towards God, he sped upwards like an arrow from the bow.

And when, in the end, he was sent back to mankind, he was discharged like an arrow from the bow.

These two flights were from two bows, hence the parable of the “two bows.”

And since Sagittarius is always in two houses, therefore there are always two parts to that bow.

One you know as that of Ahad, and the other is that of the eternal Ahmad.

The attraction of God shot forth like an arrow and split the *mim* of Ahmad in two like a hair.

The *mim* of Ahmad fell out and it became Ahad; and all duality became unity.

In that night the Peacock of the Angels was utterly effaced by the raven of his hair.

See in his two tresses two ravens; see in the almonds of his eyes how they “turned not aside.”

The “two bows” are a symbol of his eyebrows; the ends of those bows are his two tresses.

Since his tresses were all light they gave rise to two rainbows.

I know of no one in the world who could wield the “two bows.”

When the ravens of his tresses grow restless, the Peacock of the Heavens is a fitting quarry for them.

Hurrah for the bow, the thumb and the bow-end! Hurrah for ‘is not’ and “what He reveale” and “turned not aside!”

It is because of its envy of the Prophet’s “two bows” that the sky has two arcs around its axis.

God, Who to glorify Adam revealed to him the names of all things,

Revealed to Muhammad the things themselves and therefore made him illiterate and poor.

Going beyond names to the nameless state of things he had no need to read and was therefore illiterate.

Since he went disembodied along the road of God he became from disembodiment absolutely poor.

Impelled by disembodiment and poverty he received from the Archetype of the Book the surname of “the Illiterate.”

God first of all ordered that there should be fifty prayers a day but for his sake He reduced the number to five.

If that night he passed beyond the whole and the part it was because purging himself of self he became wholly absorbed in God.

O heart, see to the eternal good of your soul; fasten yourself to this saddlebow.

Gird your lions before him as his servant so that you may become a great lord.

What more can I say, O Prophet of God? Impotent wretch that I am, I know no more.

Great is Gabriel and yet he is but your messenger; he does nothing but run your errands.

When Michael saw that you were king he became a purveyor to your army.

With sword in hand and loins girt Izrail stands ever ready to act as your executioner.

The faithful Israfil stands sentry in your doorway.

Of the angels that guard your threshold two are the “illustrious recorders.”

Father Adam is the scribe at your court; many names has he written down describing your nature.

Idris, recognizing you in the stars, established your worship in Paradise.

Since your sovereignty embraces the whole world Noah has chosen to be your pilot.

Salih gladly became your camel-driver and entertained you with camel’s milk.

When Abraham became your mason the whole of the Kaba became your sanctuary.

When Ishmael heard of your faith, a son was sacrificed with uncut throat.

Jacob was filled with grief in his longing for you; it was in search of you that he withdrew into solitude.

Joseph escaped from prison and the well and with a hundred kinds of beauty sought a share of yours.

The noble Khidr waters the end of your street from his fountain.

Elijah received a renewal of life from you and so had chosen to guard your life until Judgment Day.

Jonah became your friend upon the way and he entered the sea in order to find you again.

David felt a great longing for your soul and he gave a hundred lives in his laments for your love.

Job, seeing you as the physician of love, dragged his body away from the worms towards his cell.

Solomon, seeing you as the lord of the world, girded himself like his ring.

John offered his head to your crown, and Aaron stood at your door as a herald.

Moses was but your guide upon the road and Jesus your Indian slave Mubarak.

Since you have such a companion as "Say: 'He is God,'" draw a line through all else than God.

Though the wife of Abu Lahab, filled with annoyance, scattered thorns in your path,

You are a hidden rose: walk cheerfully on, for no rose will bloom without a thorn in its foot.

Some good chance befalls you every instant, and as a protection against the evil eye it is sufficient for you to repeat "Say: 'I take refuge in God.'"

The seven celestial spheres have a lamp on every finger, the stars.

They call to you in pain and anguish, but who would seek the sun with a lamp?

You are the sultan of earth and heaven, the lamp of this world and the next.

The sky is always rolling like a ball in order to catch some glimpse of your majesty.

In that gathering in which there is scope for your majesty the highest heaven is but a shoe-rank,

Although your majesty is immeasurable, being higher than the nine heavens and hidden behind nine hundred screens,

Yet for envy of it this beautiful vault turns over and over, day and night.

A single beam of your majesty shone on the heavens and from that one beam the sun and moon received their light.

What more can I say? For your attributes are such that they would fill a hundred worlds beyond the ken of mind or soul.

Supposing the whole world were full of poppy seeds and there were a panegyrist inside each one of them,

I do not know whether you would be adequately praised or, if you were, whether you would accept it.

You know that none of the poets have sung such praise save only I.

This work is a young bride that seeks the protection of your generosity and wishes for no jewels and adornment but your acceptance.

If you accept me my task is done, if not there is an end to my grief-stricken life.

If you accept these words of mine, I shall with my art rebuild the ancient heavens.

Although your presence is a mighty sea, yet this drop too is a precious pearl.

For though the ocean has a vast mass of water, yet it also cherishes every individual drop.

Do you not see how the boundless sea lovingly assigns its place to every single drop?

What more can I say, O Prophet of God? I have said what I am capable of saying.

You are generosity itself and you know all. If you would bestow a hundred favors on me, it is in your power.

Story

There was a prostitute in Mecca whose entire stock in trade was vice and depravity.

Whenever someone had a mind to debauchery that woman would offer herself as his partner.

She had a melodious voice, was graceful in her movements and pleasant of speech; and there was never a moment when she was not singing.

When the Prophet went to Medina and war and hate were changed into love,

The cause of Islam prospered and the Faith was strengthened by the overthrow of unbelief.

When none of the wicked was left in Mecca and they had been scattered on every side,

That woman went off to Medina in a state of great poverty; sore of heart she approached the Prophet.

The Prophet said: "Tell me, how is it that you have come? As a fugitive or to ply your trade?"

Have you come hither for the sake of the Faith or have you come to sell your wares?"

Said the woman to the Lord of the World: "I have made the journey neither for this reason nor for that.

I have come hither because I heard tell of your generosity.

Wretched and forsaken as I am, I have travelled this long way in the hopes of your giving me a present."

Said the Prophet: "Mecca is full of young men: it would be more fitting for you to ask them."

Said the woman: "Because of your wars and battles and the fear of your dagger and arrows,

The fame of your strength and might, the greatness of your miracles and your renown,

The horsemen of Arabia have lost their strength—how then should anyone go to the singing-girls?"

The Prophet was pleased with her words and gave her his only cloak.

And he said to his Companions: "Let all of you who are my friends give her something from what you have."

The Companions gave her a hundred different kinds of presents, and she became a person of wealth.

A lost woman, O Prophet of God, sunk in polytheism and depravity,

Because she once uttered a word or two in your praise, became by your generosity the owner of great riches.

You did not cause her to despair; you did not deprive her of your favor.

You know that in his praising of you Attar turned many times upon himself like a compass.

If he received as his reward the dust of your street, he received in every mote of it a new sun.

He has praised with his soul the dust of your street; admit him to it if you can.

He cannot do without you, do not disappoint him; take the hand of one who has fallen.

Since the woman had a cloak from you, I too should have a present.

You are king in both worlds and can bestow divine robes of honor.

Honor his body with such a robe of which even his shirt will not be aware.

Adorn his heart with a belief in God's oneness such as cannot enter a specific body.

All that I seek is disembodiment, but why do I speak seeing that you know and are able?

I am the slave of my heart because my heart is always your faithful slave.

Upon your road I have not even the power to say 'Intercede for this beggar.'

If some poor wretch sets out without subsistence on the Pilgrimage,

And if some man of rank sees him in his distress, how shall he refuse him water?

Since you are a man of rank in both worlds, it is fitting that you should let a few drops of water fall on my lips.

My breast is filled with torment in this burning heat, and you will refresh my heart with a draught of water.

And if I am not worthy of your water, at least do not let me be carried off by the flood. And God knows best.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Abu Bakr

He was the leader of the men of the Faith, the great Siddiq, the just Imam of all who shall appear on the Day of Judgment.

He was the greatest of those guided by God's mercy, for he was the first to do good works in the Faith.

On the night of solitude he was the friend and companion of the cave; his largesse on the first day was forty thousand dirhems.

He that sets a good example will always be rewarded.

And since Abu Bakr set this example, he will receive the rewards due to all the world also.

His faith in the Purpose of Creation outweighed the faith of all others because of its precedence.

He had a toothache for ten years but never told the Prophet.

When the Prophet learned of it in a revelation from God, he said to him: "O man of truth,

Why did you never tell me?" He answered: "It is not good to complain of God."

When a man keeps a secret of his body so well, who but God can penetrate the secrets of his soul?

He had put a stone in his mouth in order that his tongue might not scatter jewels.

I have heard of jewels hidden in stones but never saw a stone hidden amongst jewels.

So deeply was his soul absorbed in God that rarely would a word pass his lips.

Since his soul was occupied with meditation he has left on record only eighteen traditions.

But though there were eighteen thousand worlds those eighteen traditions would be a fitting monument to him.

His conversation was concerned only with the creation of the world; and the proofs he adduced were not to be controverted.

See what wisdom and insight was his! He knew of the child while it was yet unborn.

When he prayed for a poor blind man, God granted his prayer and restored the man's sight.

Never did he speak to excess; he would open his mouth only to say "Do not choose me."

When his time came to die they brought him to the shrine of Muhammad.

Because of the loyalty of that key to the world of mysteries, the door opened and the bolt slipped out of the lock.

No one had laid his hand on the lock and yet the bolt leapt out of it to welcome him.

Even iron believed of his loyalty. Why then were the hearts of his enemies harder than iron?

A lock was moved by his loyalty. Why were the hearts of his enemies not unlocked?

When his companions entered the shrine they found a grave already dug.

They laid him in it and withdrew, convinced of his loyalty to the One God.

Of such a one that stands by you though bitten by a snake it can indeed be said that he is a "friend of the Cave."

A snake must be venomous indeed to attack such a friend.

The Prophet called Abu Bakr and Umar his eye and his ear.

And since he called them thus all who have not these qualities are blind and deaf.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Umar

He was the Imam of Imams, the candle of the two worlds, the Commander of the Faithful, the great Faruq.

God spoke through his tongue: therefore it is that Faruq comes from Furqan.

When his heart saw God in its sanctuary, it was united with the very essence of justice.

And when his heart and justice came together, his justice inundated both worlds.

When he closed the door of tyranny forever, with his justice he opened a hundred doors to the Persians.

By him the cause of the Arabs was strengthened and the Persians converted to the Faith.

He that does not believe in this cause and effect is a foe of both the Persians and the Arabs.

Because of his firmness iron turned into wax: he undid the lock of Byzantium.

Two shirts would have been so harmful to his body that he had but one.

When he embraced the Faith he had one shirt, and when he took it off it was his winding-sheet.

So often did he patch it that it came to weigh seventeen maunds.

And yet for his seventeen patches he rent to pieces eighteen thousand worlds.

And having conquered eighteen thousand worlds, why did he dress in rags weighing seventeen maunds?

Since his entire property was one shirt, all his joy was in his belief.

Because of his valor and might Nakir and Munkir did not dare to approach his grave

When the noble Faruq was the muhtasib, no evildoer would prowl about.

As muhtasib he explained what was lawful and was famed for forbidding what was wrong.

The Prophet called him his eye. How great an honor! He also called him the lamp of Paradise. How high a title!

He is the lamp that lights the East and the West but whose oil comes from neither the East nor the West.

Since he is the eye and the lamp of God's Court, how will you journey thither without eye or lamp?

If you have neither eye nor lamp, you can not tell a garden from a furnace.

You must always have your eyes and a lamp too in front of you.

For if you travel without eyes or lamp you will not know the road from the pit not the pit from the road.

If you set out with either, you will in the end in your blindness fall into a pit.

When Muhammad called Umar his eye, his tongue acquired the speech of the Lord of the World.

If you are not blind, take heed; give ear to such an eye and such a tongue.

He that has not this light in his brain would find no lamp even in Paradise.

The radiant sun in the lamp of the heavens; the great Faruq is the lamp of Paradise.

When the trumpet is blown on Judgment Day, the heavenly lamp will be extinguished.

But this other lamp which illuminates Paradise will shine brighter every day and night.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Uthman

The foundation of modesty on which the Faith is based was laid by the Commander of the Faithful Uthman.

The heavens are but vapor rising from the sea of his knowledge, the earth but dust from the mountain of his meekness.

He was a whole world of wisdom, a personified soul, possessed of two marrows in the two lights of the Prophet.

Nay, what do I say? He had three marrows, two from those two lights and one from the Quran. What glory was his!

In a sanctuary lit with three such lights he was clearly seen even by his enemies unless they were blind.

If the sun has a stock of radiance it is only with the aid of Him of the Two Lights.

None but he has ever achieved such perfection, to be united to two daughters of the Prophet.

Since the Quran was revealed in pain, it is the proof that a man is worthy of it,

That he leaves this world in pain; and so it was with that Sun of the Two Lights.

Since he received the favor of possessing the two eyes and lamps of the Prophet

And was, as the Possessor of the Two Lights, of the Prophet's family, how could anyone doubt his loyalty to the Faith?

If a man receives two such lights from heaven, the sun and the moon are his servants.

If you breathe the breath of hatred against such a man, you besmirch the moon and the sun.

He that broke his staff across his knees was struck with a cancer in his own knees.

His staff was in fact, like that of Moses, the foe of his foes.
 And if he had an enemy in the world he was in effect another Pharaoh.
 He said: "Since I laid my hand in the Prophet's hand to pledge allegiance to him.

Out of respect for his hand I have never touched anything unclean."

He that showed such respect to the Prophet's hands subdued the soul of all true believers.

His heart was a great sea of knowledge, his body a vast mountain of meekness.

He had in truth collected the Quran in his heart; all the mysteries of the universe were in his grasp.

Because he collected the Quran he was always composed; because of his application to the Furqan he could discriminate between the noble and the base.

Being the Imam of noble and base why should he be wanting in the judgment of his likes?

All his life he never supped nor slept any night without having first recited the whole of the Quran.

When there was a rising against him his slaves at once armed themselves for battle.

He said to them: "Every slave that shall today lay down his arms shall be free and victorious."

As he was always reading the Quran, it was his constant practice to collect the *Jami*.

In the end he was martyred whilst reading it; and it was the Quran that caught his blood.

Loving the Quran more than all the world that Candle of Lovers was in the end absorbed in what he loved.

Though Faruq was the Candle of Paradise, yet like a candle he lost his head on the road to his Beloved.

On the virtues of the Commander of the Faithful Ali

Were there an Imam from East to West it would be the Commander of the Faithful Haidar.

With the thrust of his lance he conquered this present world; the tale of the three loaves passed beyond the other world.

He was initiated in the mysteries of giving; and seventeen verses of the Quran are devoted to the three loaves.

Those three round loaves were like the discs of the moon and sun, and therefore like the moon and the sun he entertains the two worlds at his table for all eternity.

If you are continually showered with arrows it is sufficient to know that “the love of Ali is a shield.”

The Prophet said to him: ‘O light of my eyes, we were both created from one light.’

Since ‘Ali is of one light with the Prophet they are as one person with no trace of duality.

As gate to the city of knowledge he is with good reason the gatekeeper of Paradise.

So absolutely was he given over to poverty that he was irrevocably divorced from gold and silver.

Though silver and gold were highly valued, they were as a calf to the people of Ali.

How should a calf ever have dared to match itself against a lion such as he?

It is related that he had a coat of armor of which the front and the back were simply a window.

If his back was as exposed as his face it was because he depended upon the Prophet as his armor.

He said once: “Though I should be slain, none shall see my back on the battlefield.”

If you become the dust beneath his feet, this is an excellent place of refuge, for he is both the “Father of the Handsome One” and the “Father of Dust.”

He said: “If by God’s command I were set up in a pulpit and given the office of judge,

I should always judge between the peoples of the world in accordance with the Four Books.”

Whatever he said he uttered out of the sea of certainty. One day he opened his mouth and said:

“If the covering were uncovered’ assisted me, otherwise how could I worship Him without seeing Him?”

Hurrah for that eye, that knowledge and those words! Hurrah for the Sun of the Law, that swelling sea!

The breath of the Lion of God penetrated to China; because of his knowledge the flower produced the scent of the flower.

Therefore it is that they say: “If you are just and pious, go from Yath-rib to China in your search for knowledge.”

Leo is the cradle of the house of the sun, hence the pure scent in the cradle of the flower.

But I am wrong. I speak not of the scent of Cathay, but of that produced by the Lion of God.

Were his knowledge to take the form of a sea, the Black Sea would be but a single drop in it.

He could not endure to be in debt; therefore he hired himself to a Jew.

Someone said to him: "Why have you done this?" He was angry and wielding his tongue like a sword he answered:

"I had rather remove rocks from mountaintops than be in the debt of men.

They say to me: 'It is shameful to work for one's living.' But I say: 'It is shameful to stoop so low as to beg.'"

That the four pillars of the Law are ever flourishing is due to the two fathers-in-law and the two sons-in-law of the Prophet.

Invocation of the Spirit

Come, scent of the soul, open your cradle, for you are the deputy of the Vicar of God.

The words "The Spirit proceeded at my Lord's command" were revealed concerning you; the throne of the spiritual kingdom is yours.

Both worlds together are but a handful of dust; the holy place is in a pure kingdom.

The whole universe is tied to you; earth and heaven are joined to you.

You are joined to us and yet severed from us; you are far removed from our eyes and yet you are in them.

Paradise, Hell and Judgment Day are all signs for your name.

You give the angels knowledge by means of a secret sign; you give God's creatures attributes in a hundred different forms.

If you shine like a hundred suns, each of your rays creates a hundred suns.

Since the light of your sun is ever increasing, one of its rays is the glorious Empyrean.

You are the eternal companion of the Almighty. What more shall I say, for you have always been known?

You are a strange bird. I do not know what you are, for you are outside our affirmation and negation.

Since you are neither on earth nor in heaven, where are you? You are with the Lord of the Worlds.

You are everything and also nothing. What do I say? You are straight and you are crooked.

Breathe out a musk-laden breath from your pure heart; for the Empty-rean is the censer for that breath.

You are king and caliph forever. You have six sons, each of them without a peer.

Each of your sons is a lord of the conjunction, each of them like a whole world in his own are.

One is the carnal soul, with his abode in the senses. One is Satan, with his thoughts fixed on vain imaginings.

One is intelligence, and speaks of intelligible things. One is knowledge and seeks after ascertainable things.

One is poverty and strives after privation, and one is the belief in God's oneness and seeks to find the whole in every essence.

When these six shall have followed the commandment they shall attain to the Eternal Presence.

Since you are caliph until eternity to come, it is by your grace that the world is filled with subtleties.

Don the black robes of caliph like Adam; travel within your breast as though it were the world.

Like Khidr set your foot upon the road of the saints, so that the circling heavens may not overtake you.

Your place, O highest leader, is Noah's ark, and your time the Forenoon and the Night of Power.

Take your seat, like Solomon, upon the throne, but with the ring on your finger.

Display the beauty of Joseph, but see with all your seven limbs like Abraham.

Like the Prophet David play this melody; like Jesus breathe the love of your friend.

Being the companion of Moses, the son of Imran, drink the water of life from the cup of your soul.

Spread your wings in the shade of the Simurgh; sit down with Idris and practice alchemy.

After you have made endeavors without number, you shall receive aid from the light of the Prophet.

When you have achieved this perfection in the Faith, you shall be allowed to utter words.

Do not look with the eye of contempt upon words, for both worlds are filled with the single word "Be!"

The foundations of both worlds are nothing but a word for they were created with the word “Be!” and can be destroyed with the words “Be not!”

The word was sent down by God almighty; it was the glory of the Prophets.

If Moses is known as the Interlocutor, it is because the speech of God made him so.

And had not Jesus been the Word of God, how should he in his glory have been the Pure Spirit?

Muhammad also, he that was meant by the word “Be!” was king on the night of his ascension because of the power of the word.

Words are the currency of both worlds: marriages and divorces are affected with them, and sales also.

When the future generations of lovers were drawn up before God, words were the basis of their contract and covenant.

Whatever you have to do with, something seen or heard, something tasted or forbidden.

Something touched or smelt, something understood or imagined,

Be it thought or idle fancy, possible or impossible,

It is all limited, except when put into words. The Preserved Table is all-embracing because of the power of words.

Appreciation and allusion can be expressed in a hundred different ways.

From this argument it is clear to the intellect that it is concerned no longer with things, but with words.

Since words are the basis of everything, do everything with words; beg with them, ask with them, seek with them.

DISCOURSE I



One who had travelled the world and lost his friends, a man bewildered of heart and disturbed of mind,

Had the tale from a man who knew thereof that once a certain caliph had six sons.

All were by nature of lofty ambition and had not dismissed feelings of pride from their minds.

Of all the sciences of their time they were each without peer in everyone.

Since they were each of them masters of the arts of this world, since each of them was an Adam in both worlds,

Their father made them sit together one day. "You are all," he said, "conversant with the knowledge of the world.

You are a caliph's sons, you are kings—what does each of you ask of the world?

If you have a hundred wishes or if but one, tell me, each of you.

When I know how each of you thinks I will order the affairs of each in accordance with his desire."

One of the princes was the first to reveal his secret. "It is related," he said, "By the great and eminent

That the king of the peris has a virgin daughter to whom the moon cannot be compared.

She is as beautiful as the mind and as delicate as the soul. She is the fairest in earth or heaven.

If I can entirely realize this wish, it is all I crave until Judgment Day.

Being with such a beauty how should anyone seek any perfection beyond this?

He that is near to the sun, how should he wish for a single beam?

Such is my desire, and if I have it not, nothing but madness shall be my faith."

Father's reply

The father said: "Beware of lust, for with lust you are very drunk. When a man's heart is imprisoned in venery, all the coin of his being will be spent.

But every woman who is manlike in her conduct is a complete stranger to such lust,

Just as that woman who was separated from her husband became the leader of men in the court of God."

Story of the virtuous woman whose husband had gone on a journey

“There was a fair and beautiful woman, night and day were the patterns of her cheeks and locks.

She had much kindness and goodness and joined therewith virtue and continence.

In goodness she was a sign to the whole world; she had charm and she also had sweetness.

In every hair on her head that idol had more than fifty or even sixty curls.

Her eyes were almond-shaped, like the letter *sad*; her eyebrows arched like the letter *nun*; together beauty’s proof, a decisive text.

When she opened her shining cornelians, she would slay the mighty with the water of Khidr.

You might say that her smiling lips were a shell whereof the pearls were her teeth.

Gem-like beneath the smiling rubies of her lips the pearls of her teeth displayed their brightness.

Her chin was like a silver apple: from her apple mankind suffered affliction.

The heavens from the picture of her face were such that their soul reeled in the manner of her lovers.

Those who scattered pearls for words called her by the name of Marjuma.

She was a woman such that the revolution of the turning wheel accounted her amongst the number of lion-like man.

It so happened that the husband of that woman suddenly set out upon the Pilgrimage.

That man had a younger brother but he was an ungenerous man.

He charged him to take care of his property on behalf of his family.

When he had spoken these words he finally set out upon the Pilgrimage; his brother accepted what he had commanded.

He applied himself to his brother’s command and took great care of his wife.

Night and day he continued to work for her; every hour he would send her something more.

One day he cast a glance at that woman: he saw through the veil the face of that enchanting one.

His heart was lost and his head turned—nay, how shall I say what happened to him?

So had he fallen into the snare of that beauty that in one moment a hundred lives were spent.

He struggled with his reason, but every moment his love became more ardent.

Since he could not have his way with her, for a while he could do nothing with himself.

When love prevailed and sense quickly departed he quickly revealed his feelings to the woman.

He summoned her to him with force and gold and lamentation; she drove him from her with contumely.

She said to him: 'Are you not ashamed before God? Do you thus show respect to your brother?

Is this your religion and your probity? Do you thus keep trust for your brother?

Go, repent, return to God, and eschew this wicked thought.'

That man said to the woman: 'It is no use; you must satisfy me at once,

Otherwise I will cease to concern myself about you, I will expose you to shame, I will slight you.

Straightaway now I shall cast you to destruction, I shall cast you into a fearful plight.'

The woman said to him: 'I do not fear destruction. The destruction of this world is better for me than such destruction.'

Now that wicked man feared lest the woman would tell his brother what had happened.

That vile person went off and in order to protect himself straightaway bought with gold four persons,

So that those vile wretches gave testimony that this woman had been guilty of adultery.

When the *cadi* had heard her case he at once sentenced her to be stoned.

They took her into the open country on to the high road and they cast stones upon her from all sides.

When stones without number had been cast upon that woman, they thought that her soul had departed from her.

As a warning to mankind they left her there just as she was.

The luckless woman was left upon the plain, left in the midst of the blood-soaked dust.

When the night had passed and day broken, the woman at last came a little to herself again.

She moaned in lamentation and weakness; from her eyes she covered her cheeks with tears of blood.

At dawn a Bedouin mounted on a camel was coming that way from some direction.

He heard that lamentation and became beside himself; he dismounted from his camel and went towards the woman.

‘O woman,’ he asked, ‘who are you who was living like one dead?’

The woman said to him: ‘I am sick and distressed.’ The Bedouin said: ‘I will tend you.’

He set her upon the camel and bore her hastily off; he carried her to his own abode.

He tended her assiduously day and night until that charmer was restored to health.

Again her charm began to return and to affect her companions.

Again the pomegranate flower of her face became fresh, from her head there fell in rings the girdle of her hair.

From beneath the stones of her stoning she came into plain view like a ruby out of hard rock.

Seeing her beauty the Bedouin passed sentence on his own life.

From love of her face he became beside himself, because of the pain he suffered the shirt on his body became a winding sheet.

He said to the woman: ‘Become my lawful spouse, for I have died; restore me to life by union with me.’

The woman said to him: ‘Since I have a husband, now can I look for another?’

When his love had passed all bounds, in the end he called that woman to him in private.

The woman said to him: ‘O one whose head is turned away from the Faith, are you not afraid of God’s anger?’

For the Almighty’s sake you did tend me—have you now obeyed the command of a vile demon?

When you have done a good deed do not spoil it; do not make a breach in the Kaba of good faith.

For when I did not agree to this thing, I suffered many an affliction and was stoned.

Now you too do call me to this thing—know you not how pure of faith I am?

If you rend my person into a thousand pieces, there shall be no blemish on my pure body.

Begone, for the sake of your lust do not purchase with your soul eternal torment.”

Because of the honesty of that pure woman, the Bedouin took her as his sister.

He repented of entertaining that thought, for that practice was the work of the devil.

The Bedouin had a black slave: that slave suddenly came in from a journey.

When he saw that woman's face he gave her his heart; his heart and soul burnt up and he yielded up his body.

In his heart there arose the desire for union with that woman, but that desire could not be accomplished.

He said to the woman: 'I am the night, you are like the moon—why will you not be together with me?'

The woman said to him: 'That shall you never accomplish, for your master asked this of me many times.

Since he, the moon-faced one, did not then obtain union with me, how shall you afterwards, a servant to him?'

The slave said to her: 'Do you turn me away? You shall not escape from me until you deliver me.

Otherwise I shall boldly devise some trick so that you shall depart from this tent a wanderer.'

The woman said to him: 'Do what you will. Why should I fear, for I care not even if my fate is destruction.'

The slave became exceedingly angry with her; the alchemy of rejection turning his love to hatred.

One night he rose up because of the spite that he bore. His master's wife had a handsome child.

He killed that child in its cradle and then took that bloodstained knife

And hid it under that woman's pillow as though to say, 'The cruel woman shed the blood.'

At dawn the mother of that poor murdered child awoke in order to suckle it.

She beheld that child with severed head; she raised a cry from her pain-filled heart.

She filled the world with her clamor and lamentation, she cut off her plaits and bound them around her waist.

They sought to find who had done that thing, who had rendered lifeless so helpless a creature.

From under the woman's pillow there emerged into view a bloodstained dagger.

They all said: 'The woman did this deed; this worthless one slew him so vilely.'

The slave and the mother of the child beat that young woman more than can be said.

The Bedouin came and said: 'O woman, what harm did I do you
That you should slay an infant like unto a moon and should not fear
the blood of an innocent?'

The woman said: 'Who has recorded the like of this in the world?
God, O my brother, gave you reason

That you might apply your reason and understanding, that you might
have your share of reason.

Look with the eye of reason, O chaste one. You have done me so much
good.

For God's sake you have taken me as your sister and many kindnesses
you have shown me.

Is this the way that I would repay you? Consider. What honor would
come to me from this killing?'

The Bedouin, because he was wise in the ways of the world, was con-
vinced by the woman's words.

He was certain that that woman was innocent but also that it was
impossible for her to remain.

He said to the woman: 'Though you are innocent, to see you is from
now on an abomination to the heart.

My wife, since she cast the suspicion of this upon you, because of you
thinks of her child every moment.

Every hour her grief will be renewed, her affliction will become im-
measurable.

She will speak ill to you and not treat you well, and if I treat you well
she will not.

You must depart from here of your own accord.' And in secret he
straightway gave her three hundred dirhems,

Saying 'Spend this upon yourself on the journey.' The woman took
the dirhems and went her way.

When that grief stricken one had gone a little way along the road,
there suddenly appeared a village in the distance.

She saw a gallows set up beside the road with people gathered around
it from every direction.

They were about to hang from the gallows that day a young man sore
of heart and heavily afflicted.

That woman asked a man: 'Who is this? Tell me what his crime is?'

They said to her: 'This village is the property of an emir who in the
practice of injustice is without a peer.

In this village, O discriminating one, it is the custom that whoever
cannot pay the poll-tax

Is hanged upside down by this tyrant—now he will drag him to the gallows.’

The woman said to him: ‘How much is the tax which he needs at this moment?’

They told her: ‘It is well known. Every year his tax is exactly three hundred dirhems.’

The woman said to herself, like the kind person she was: ‘Redeem him now with your life.

As you did escape with your life from stones and gallows, with your life redeem him from the gallows.’

She said to them: ‘If I give this money will he be sold to me?’

They said: ‘At once.’

She quickly gave them those three hundred dirhems so that that young man was quickly relieved of grief.

When she had given the dirhems the woman set off at once; the young man sped after like an arrow.

When he saw the woman’s face from afar, his soul came up to his lips and his laments arose to heaven.

He became giddy and cried out: ‘Why did she free me from the gallows?’

Because if I had lost my life suddenly on the gallows I should never have suffered anything like my love for this moon-faced one.’

He spoke much with the woman, but how should that profit him? For the woman was not fire, how should she have that smoke?

He walked much with the woman and pleaded with her; he brought her nothing therefrom but shame.

The woman said to him: ‘Is this how you do treat me? Thus I did and such is my reward?’

The young man said to her: ‘You have stolen my heart and soul. How shall I turn away my head from you for a single moment?’

The woman said to him: ‘If you do not turn away your head from me, you shall not have even the slightest union with me.’

They walked a long way, talking and listening, until they both came to the sea.

On the shore was a heavily laden ship, full of merchandise and merchants.

Since that young man despaired of winning the woman, he called one of the merchants to him,

Saying, ‘I have a slave-girl like a moon. She has no fault save haughtiness.’

I have seen none as disobedient as she—how long shall I put up with her giddiness?

Although there is none like her in appearance, I will not endure her evil disposition.

I have striven much. How long must I strive? Now, if you wish I will sell her to you.'

The woman said to that merchant: 'Beware, never purchase me from him.

For I am a married woman and free and it was I who saved him from injustice.'

The merchant did not listen to her words; he bought her from him for a hundred dinars.

With a hundred acts of harshness they put her aboard the ship and they launched it from thence straightway.

When the purchaser saw the shape and mien beneath the veil he sold his soul for her.

His heart was storm-tossed in that sea; the crocodile of his lust gathered strength.

He approached the woman. She fell down, saying, 'Come to my aid, O people, come to my aid

You are Muslims and I am a Muslim; you believe and I believe.

I am free and a married woman—God is my true witness at this moment.

You too have mothers and sisters, you too have daughters behind the curtain.

If anyone meditated this evil against them you would no doubt be distraught.

Since you would not approve that they should be so treated, why should you now approve that I should be so treated?

I am a stranger, a woman, poor and in distress, I am weak and feeble, vile and abject.

Do not offend the Consumer of Souls any more, for there is a tomorrow after today."

Since that woman was eloquent and sincere, the crew of the ship had compassion on her.

All at once the crew of the ship became her friends, they became the protectors of that sorrowful woman.

But whoever beheld her face sold a hundred hearts for the love thereof.

In a word the crew of the ship became in the end madly enamored of her.

For a long time they spoke to one another of their love for her, for a long time they concealed that love from her.

Since every heart was filled with longing for her they all came to an agreement

That they should suddenly seize that woman and satisfy their desires by force.

When the woman learned of these wicked men's feelings, she saw the whole sea as her heart's blood.

She opened her mouth and said: 'O Knower of Secrets, preserve me from the evil of these wicked men.

In both worlds I have no one but You. Remove this desire from the hearts of these men.

If You will, grant me death, for death is better than such life.

Give me liberation or death today, for I cannot endure in this agony.

How long will you cause me to walk in blood? You will find none more wretched than I.'

When she had spoken these words and lost consciousness, because of that woman the water of the sea began to swell.

A fire arose from that burning water so that the sea shone like hell.

In one moment the people of that ship were all together hurled head-long into the fire.

They were all at once turned to ashes, but the goods of all of them remained behind.

A wind came in from the side and brought the ship to a town.

The woman cast those ashes overboard and made herself men's clothes.

So that in order to escape from the clutches of lovemaking she might hold up her head like a man.

Many people came along the road from the town: they saw a young man handsome as the moon,

Seated alone in that ship, and with a whole world of goods tightly bundled.

They questioned that sun-cheeked one, asking, 'Have you come alone with all these goods?'

She said to them: 'Until I come before the king I shall tell my tale to no one.'

They told the king about her, saying, 'Today a young man has arrived, who is handsome indeed,

Alone, having brought a vessel loaded with goods: he will tell nothing more.

He asks for you that he may speak and tell the tale of the vessel and those goods.'

The king marveled and set out; he came to that moon of the age.

The wise king questioned her and she spoke as follows: 'There were many of us.

We embarked on a ship and voyaged a long way, all the time day and night.

When the idle ones on that ship saw me, they chose in their lust to love me.

I prayed to God and He so wrought that He averted the evil of that handful of wicked men.

A fire came down and consumed them all; He saved me and illuminated my soul.

See, but one remains left; it is not a man but only black charcoal.

From this I received a warning: I have no wish for the goods of this world.

Take them all, they are wares without number; but I crave one boon of you,

That on the shore of this sea you shall build for me a fair shrine in which I may worship,

And shall say that no person, clean or unclean, shall have aught to do with me.

For since it has chanced that I have come to rest here, I will worship God day and night."

When the king and the army heard her words and beheld her miraculous powers,

So much did they believe in her straightway that they swerved not a hair's breadth from her command.

They erected for her such a shrine that you would say it was the Kaba itself.

She entered it and engaged in devotion: she lived for a long time in contentment.

When that king fell into the snare of death, he summoned his ministers and army.

He said to them: 'It seems to me fitting, since I am departing from this world,

That this hermit youth should be your commander and king in my place.

In order that the people may be at ease because of him, execute this will, O men.'

He spoke thus, and his pure soul ascended to heaven, and this earth swallowed him up beneath its dust.

Straightway the ministers gathered together and assembled the emirs and people.

They went before that woman and told her the secret: they declared to her the king's will and testament.

They said to her: 'Any command that you would make is in your power, for this kingdom is yours.'

The woman of course had no desire for this office, for how shall a hermit become a ruler?

They said to her: 'O holy one, choose sovereignty. Why make excuses?'

The woman said to them: 'Since there is no escape therefrom, I must have a wife like unto a piece of the moon.'

I should have a maid as my lawful spouse for I am grown weary of solitude.'

The nobles said: 'O king, ask for the daughter of any of us you will.'

She said to them: 'Send a hundred maidens, but send them all with their mothers,

So that I too may see each one of them and choose her whom I wish from all of them.'

The nobles with all their heart sent that same day a hundred beautiful maidens.

They all went forward with their mothers; beside themselves with bashfulness they went.

That woman revealed herself to them saying, 'How is kingship fitting to a woman?

Tell these words to your husbands and relieve me of this heavy burden.'

The women departed dumbfounded and informed the nobles thereof.

All those who heard it, great and small, marveled at the case of the woman.

They sent back a woman to her to say: 'Since you are the proud heir apparent,

Set someone over us as king or else rule yourself like a man.'

She chose a regent from amongst them all and then concerned herself with her own affairs.

With her own hand she set up a king, she did not budge for a kingdom.

As for you, my son, for a piece of bread you would turn the whole world upside down.

A woman did not budge for a kingdom—show me a single man like that.

The whole world heard the fame of that woman, how in that a place there was a woman,

Whose prayers were answered like no one else's, a woman who had no equal amongst men.

Many a paralytic became from her breath such that he walked and moved about.

Many a report was spread about her through the world, no one knew her true measure.

When that woman's husband returned from the Pilgrimage he nowhere saw her face.

Suddenly he beheld a desolate household, his brother blind and bewildered.

Neither his hands nor his feet could move, for he had become paralyzed and fixed to one place.

Night and day he was stricken with grief for that woman, the torment of hell had gripped his skirt.

Now his soul burned on account of his brother, now it burned on account of his ceaseless pain.

His brother questioned him about his wife; he began to relate his story to his brother:

‘That woman had committed adultery with a soldier and a number of people had testified against her.

When the *cadi* heard these words from those people, it pleased him to sentence her to be stoned.

Then he caused her to be cruelly stoned. Do you remain, for she has departed.’

When that deserted man heard these words he was exceedingly grieved at her death and depravity.

Having wept and beaten himself he went into a corner and mourned and held his peace.

When he saw his brother in so sore a case, none of his limbs functioning except his tongue,

He said to him: ‘O handless and footless one, I have heard that at this present time in another land,

There is a woman as famous as the sun, whose prayers are answered by God.

Many a blind person has become seeing through her prayers, many a helpless paralytic has begun to walk.

If you will I will take you thither—perhaps that woman will restore you to health.’

That man’s heart was glad. He said: ‘Hurry. I am lost. If you will, help me.’

Now that good man had a donkey; he bound him upon that donkey and took to the road.

By chance they came one day upon that road, upon that Bedouin at nighttime.

Since that Bedouin was a chivalrous man, he made them both his guests that night.

The Bedouin entered into conversation with them asking: ‘Whither are you going from here?’

The woman’s husband said to him: ‘I have heard a tale that a woman hermit utters prayers

Such that many blind persons and afflicted ones have recovered on account of her charms and prayers.

This brother of mine too has fallen ill; he is afflicted with paralysis and blindness.

I am taking him to that woman, so that perhaps he may walk again and become possessed of sight.’

Then the Bedouin said to him: ‘Some time ago a very wise woman chanced to come here.

My slave used her violently and because of that wickedness he became paralyzed and blind.

Now I shall bring him with you also—perhaps he too will be cured by that woman’s prayer.’

In the end they set out and travelled many a stage. In that village they reached that stage

Where they had been about to hang that young man on the gallows; there was a room which they took.

The room was worthy of that caravan, for it belonged to that tyrannous young man.

The young man was paralyzed; neither sight was left or the use of his hands and feet.

They said to one another: ‘This is our case also, for we have the same goods, and this is our grief.

Since we have acquired his coin, it is fitting that we have alighted here.’

The young man’s mother was there also; when she saw two handless and footless ones,

She enquired about their pain and affliction, and they straightway told her the true story.

That woman wept a great deal and said: 'I too have a son, one like these two persons.

I will come with you.' She sprang up and bound her son tightly upon a mount.

All three set out together and came to that woman at dawn-time.

At dawn the morning of happiness breathed; the hermit woman came out from her place of retirement.

She beheld her husband from afar and from joy prostrated herself in worship.

The woman wept much; she said, 'How in my confusion can I go out?

What shall I do or what shall I say to my husband, for I cannot show my face?'

When she looked further back behind him she saw those three persons; she saw the three enemies of her life-blood.

She said to herself: 'It is enough that my husband has brought witnesses with him as companions.

All three are great sinners and their hands and feet bear witness thereto.

When I see the eyes of all three, what more do I wish? What need I say? God is sufficient witness.'

The woman came and cast many a glance at her husband, but she threw a veil over her face.

She said to her husband: 'State what you wish.' That godly man answered: 'I have come here for a prayer, for I have with me a blind and sorely afflicted one.'

The woman said to him: 'This is a sinful man: if he confesses his crime, He will be freed from this unseemly pain; otherwise he will remain blind and afflicted.'

The man who had been on the Pilgrimage asked his brother, saying: 'Since you are exhausted and full of need,

Pronounce your sin so that you may be saved, otherwise you shall be the eternal partner of grief.'

His brother said: 'Pain and suffering for a hundred years would be better for me than to speak of this matter.'

They talked for a long time until at last he was shamed into telling the whole tale from beginning to end.

'I am,' he said, 'a cripple on account of that crime. Now, if you will, kill me, and if you will, forgive me.'

His brother, having reflected for a while, although it was difficult for him,

Said to himself, 'Since my wife has disappeared, I shall at any rate save my brother.'

He forgave him in the end; the woman prayed and in a single moment freed him from a hundred pains.

He again could walk and grasp; his eyes could see again.

Then the slave's master asked him to declare his crime truthfully.

The slave said to him: 'If you prepare to kill me, I dare not repeat my crime.'

Then the Bedouin said to him: 'Speak truly, for today this fear of yours for me has departed.

I have forgiven you eternally—why do you fear? Why do you offer excuses?'

In the end he divulged that secret, saying, 'I killed your child in its cradle.

That woman was not guilty of the killing; because of my wicked deed I have become afflicted.'

When the woman saw that he was speaking the truth, she at once offered up a prayer: she made him both seeing and capable of supplying his wants.

The old woman likewise brought her son forward, and that man too declared his crime.

He said to her: 'A woman came to my rescue when, all at once, she redeemed me from the gallows.

The woman redeemed me with her life, and then I sold her. My tale is short.'

The woman prayed so that that young man also in a moment was able to see and move.

Then she sent them all out and told her husband to remain standing there.

In front of him she drew the veil from her face: her husband gave out a cry as soon as he was aware.

He lost consciousness; when he came to, the kind-hearted woman came before him.

She said to him: 'What came upon you suddenly that you did cry out and fall to the ground?'

He said to her: 'I had a wife and for a moment I thought that you were she.

Your limbs and hers are such that one cannot say there is a hair of difference between them.

One would say that you are exactly like my wife in speech, mien, stature and gait.

Were she not dissolved in the dust, this grief stricken one would say that you are she.'

That woman said to him: 'Glad tidings, O man, for that woman did not sin or commit adultery.

I am that woman; I walked in the path of religion, I was not stoned and I did not die.

God rescued me from many a tribulation; by His grace He brought me to this corner.

And now a hundred thanks to God every moment, Who has granted us this reunion."

That man fell to the ground in worship, saying, 'O pure God,

How shall my tongue offer thanks to You, seeing that this is beyond the limits of my heart and soul?'

He went out and called his companions and told them that tale and all that good and evil.

There rose a shout and a cry to heaven from every tongue.

The slave, the brother and that young man also, were filled with shame but with rejoicing also.

As that woman first of all put them to shame, she afterwards gave wealth to them and forgave them.

When she had made her husband king she gave the viziership to the Bedouin.

When she had laid that happy foundation, she busied herself in that same place with the worship of God."

DISCOURSE II



The son said to him: “If there were not this carnal desire and if there were no private intercourse between husband and wife,

There would be no continuance of the creatures of this world and no order would be left in the universe.

Were it not for this dispensation and blending the whole of the kingdom would be in disarray.

Aye, a thousand and one persons must be set in order before you can properly put a morsel of food into your mouth.

It is by wisdom that those who minister in this way continue work from month to month.

The earth shines from foam and the heavens from smoke because if something were not necessary it would not exist.

If it were not for carnal desire neither you nor I should be in the world.

You will cast out carnal desire from men—inform my heart of the secret thereof.”

Father’s reply

His father said to him: “Heaven forbid that you should think that I would do away altogether with the thought of carnal desire.

But since you have chosen this from the world and have both spoken and heard of this,

It is as though from a hundred worlds of secrets you are conversant only with that of carnal desire.

I have told you this in private that you may step outside carnal desire.

When it is possible to be the confidant of Jesus who would wish to be the companion of an ass?

Why do you associate yourself with an ass in carnal desire, when you could be closeted with Jesus?

Since, after all, this lust is a thing of one moment only, is it not better to have eternal privacy with the loved one?

Since the Eternal allows you to be alone with Him forever, forego the ephemeral, i.e. carnal desire.

For carnal desire such privacy is not desired—whoever does not possess this secret is defective.

But when carnal desire reaches its culmination, from carnal desire there is born passionate love without limit.

But when passionate love becomes very strong, there arises spiritual love.

When spiritual love reaches its uttermost limit, your soul becomes annihilated in the loved one.

Forgo carnal desire, for it is not the goal: the root of everything is the loved one, the loved one.

If you are cruelly slain in that pathway it is better than being entrapped in carnal desire.”

Story of the woman who became enamored of a prince

“A king had a silver-breasted son in whose lovelock the Moon herself was ensnared.

No one beheld the face of that prince who did not turn the face of his heart towards that beauteous lad.

So much was he the wonder of the world, that the world, all of it, was his lover.

His eyebrows, which were of the same shape as a bow, were the two chamberlains at the door of the sultan, his soul.

When a man’s eye saw the arrow of his eyelashes his heart would yield itself up to that arrow and choose to be a quiver to it.

Who saw the eyebrows of that ravisher of hearts who did not make his heart a bow-case for that bow?

His mouth had joined together thirty gems and confined them within the two lustrous rubies of his lips.

The down on his cheeks issued fatwas for lovers: in beauty it was like his arched eyebrows.

His chin, a ball struck bravely into the field, struck off the heads of brave men.

A woman became distraught with love of that fair one; her heart lamented much and turned to blood.

When separation from him gained the victory over her and thereby made her bewildered and sore of heart,

She spread ashes beneath her and, since she was fire, made them her abode.

All night she wailed for that fair one; now she wept blood, now she heaved a sigh.

If some day that fair one went out into the countryside, the hapless woman would run along on the road.

Like a ball she would run before his horse trailing her plaits like two polo-sticks.

She would gaze backwards upon that fair one; like rain she would scatter tears upon the road.

A hundred sergeants in succession beat her with their staves but she neither cried out nor made a disturbance.

A great crowd of people used to be spectators of this and would point the woman out to the men.

All the men were amazed at her, and the poor woman still remained in her bewildered state.

In the end, when this matter had exceeded all bounds, the prince's heart became grieved with this burden.

He said to his father: 'How much of this mendicity? Deliver me from the disgrace of this woman.'

The lofty king commanded as follows: 'Bring that yearling straight-way on to the square.

Bind her to his hind feet by the hair and make him gallop fast across the crossroads,

So that the wretched woman may be torn to pieces and the world rid of her affair.

The horse will kill her on the highway like a rutting elephant, and the pawn will not again look at the king.'

The king and the prince went on to the square, and a great crowd of people stood watching,

All shedding tears of blood out of sorrow for that woman, and from that blood the ground became like a bed of pomegranate flowers.

When the soldiers rushed together to bind her hair to the horse's feet,

The poor distraught woman fell down before the king, she threw herself down in order to crave a boon.

'Since,' she said, 'you will kill me, and that in cruel fashion, I have one last request—will you grant it?'

The king said to her: 'If your request be that I spare your life, know that I intend to take it.

And if you say; "Do not cause me to be dragged by the hair," I shall not shed your blood otherwise than at the feet of the horse.

And if you say, "Give me grace for a little while," this is not possible without pardon.

And if you ask to be together with the prince for awhile, you shall not see his face.'

The woman said to him: 'I do not ask for my life nor do I ask for grace for a little while.

I do not say, O beneficent king, “Do not put me to death dragged headlong by the feet of the horse.”

If the king of the world will grant it me, I have a request other than these four.

That request is all I ask until eternity.’ The king said: ‘Speak. What is that request? For if you forgo those four you shall have whatever you ask for.’

The woman said to him: ‘If today you must needs put me to death in wretched fashion under a horse’s hooves,

This is my request, O Lord, that you bind my hair to *his* horse’s feet,

So that when the horse gallops for that purpose, *he* will abjectly kill me under the feet of *his* horse,

So that when I am slain by that fair one I shall in that way be alive forever.

Aye, if I am slain by my beloved, from the light of love I shall be above the star Aiyuq.

I am a woman. I have not so much manliness. My heart has turned to blood. It is as though I had no life left.

At such a time grant a woman like me, who deserves it, this small request, which it is easy to grant.’

Because of the woman’s sincerity and devotion the king’s heart was softened. What do I say? From his tears the earth became mud.

He pardoned her and sent her to the palace; like one with a new life he sent her to her loved one.

Come, O man, if you are our companion, learn from a woman what true love is.

And if you are less than women, cover your head. You are not less than a catamite. Listen to this tale.”

Story of the Alid, the scholar and the catamite who were taken prisoner in Rum

“An Alid, a scholar and a catamite were carrying all their goods to Rum.

These three persons were waylaid by the infidels and dragged unexpectedly before the idol.

The infidels said to the three: ‘You must needs worship the idol,

Otherwise we shall shed the blood of all three; we shall give you no grace but shall shed it now.’

Those three masters said to those infidels: 'You must give one night's grace,

So that we may consider in this one night whether it is possible to practice idolatry.'

They gave those three persons one night's grace so that they might each commune with themselves.

The Alid spoke and said: 'I must gird on the Christian's belt before the idol,

For I have full authority from my ancestor; he will intercede on my behalf tomorrow.'

The scholar spoke and said: 'I too cannot bid farewell to body and soul.

If I bow my head before the idol, I shall raise up an intercessor in my learning in the Faith.'

The catamite said: 'I am lost indeed, for I am left without the help of an intercessor.

Since you have an intercessor and I have not, this worship is not lawful for me.

If they cut off my head like a candle, why should I fear? I cannot worship an idol, for that is perdition.

I will not bow my head to the ground before the idol, even though they ruthlessly sever the head from my body.'

When those two preferred life the catamite in such a situation quitted him like a man.

A strange thing that at the time of testing it is the catamite who is to be praised for manliness!

When Qaruns go naked along this road, lions seek the protection of ants.

If you are less than a catamite in your love of what you desire, you are surely not less than an ant upon this road."

Story of Solomon the son of David and the lovesick ant

"Solomon, in the midst of all his occupations, passed by a swarm of ants on the roadside.

All the ants came forward to do obeisance; in an hour many thousands had come.

But one ant did not come quickly before him because there was a mound of earth in front of its home.

With the speed of the wind that ant was carrying out each separate particle of earth so that that mound might be cleared away.

Solomon summoned it and said: 'O ant, I perceive you to be without strength or endurance,

And yet if you were to acquire the lifespan of Noah and the patience of Job, your task would not be accomplished.

This is no task for the arm of your likes; you will not cause this mound to disappear.'

The ant opened its mouth and said: 'O king, by high endeavor one can proceed along this road.

Look not at my constitution and build, have regard to the perfection of my endeavor.

There is a certain she-ant who is invisible to me and who had drawn me into the snare of her love.

She has said to me: "If you remove this mound of earth from here and clear the way,

I will cast on one side the boulder of separation from you and then sit together with you."

Now my lions are girded for this task; I know about nothing except this carrying of earth.

If this earth is made to disappear I can achieve union with her,

And if I die in this endeavor, at least I shall not be an idle boaster and a liar.'—

Friend, learn of love from an ant; learn of such sight from one who is blind.

Though the ant's cloak is very black, yet it is one of the attendants on the road.

Look not with contempt upon an ant, for it too has passion in its heart.

I know not what state of affairs it is upon this road when a lion is chided by an ant."

Story of the Commander of the Faithful Ali and the ant

"Ali was walking one day at noontide when he happened to injure an ant upon the road.

The ant was helplessly kicking its feet in the air and Ali was filled with distress at its impotence.

He was afraid and became exceedingly agitated: such a lion was overturned by an ant.

He wept a great deal and tried many devices to make the ant walk again.

In the night he saw Mohammed in a dream. Mohammed said to him: 'O Ali, hurry not along the road,

Because for two days you have filled the heavens with mourning on account of one ant.

Are you heedless of where you are treading that you should injure an ant upon the way?

—Such an ant as was full of secret meaning and whose activity it was to praise the name of God?'

Ali began to tremble in all his members—the Lion of God fell into a snare on account of an ant.

The Prophet said: 'Be of good heart and do not worry, for that same ant interceded for you with God,

Saying, "O Lord, I had no wish to accuse Haidar. If he was an enemy to me he is so no longer."—

Know, O generous one, that it was from devotion to the Faith that such a lion behaved in such a way towards an ant.

What man, lion-like as Haidar in courage, have you seen bound to the saddlebow of an ant?

Happy is he who is informed of the Truth and lifts and puts down his feet in accordance with God's commandment!

If you walk in absolute ignorance, you are an absolute beggar even though you are the son of kings.

One must look and then take a step, for one cannot take a step in the road without looking.

If you take a step in the road without looking, in the end adversity will be your reward.

When you walk blindly like an ass, you are not distinguished from others by your understanding.

Count your steps as you take them if you are a man of the road, for all is counted from the Moon down to the Fish.

If you take a step without any commandment, many a hurt will you receive without remedy.

If you lift your foot here for a short time, you shall not walk in your grave for an eternity.

Whoever walks here for a time, consider that there he will walk for a hundred ages.

Though you walk here for a single moment, there it will be for a hundred eternities.

If today you take one clean step, you must not walk a hundred parasangs in the dust.

Alas! you do not see the great gain; if you did you would not desist a moment from your work.

For every step that you take today you shall receive from God a delightful gift.

When such profit is possible every moment, why out of heedlessness must one suffer harm?"

Story of Nushirvan the Just and the aged cultivator

"Nushirvan was riding his horse with the speed of an arrow when he saw in the road an old man bent like a bow.

The old man was planting a number of trees. The king said to him: 'Since your hair has turned to milk,

And since you will remain only a few more days, why are you planting trees here?'

The old man replied: 'There is reason enough. Since many have planted for us,

So that today we have the benefit thereof, we too are planting for others.

One should take each step in accordance with one's capacity, for in every step there should be order.'

The king was pleased with the old man's speech. He filled his hand with gold and said: 'Take this.'

The old man said to him: 'O victorious king, already today my trees have borne fruit.

For If I live to be over seventy you know that I have not fared badly by this planting.

The planting did not make me wait ten years; it has borne gold as fruit this very day.'

The king was even more pleased with this reply of his, and he bestowed upon him the land, the village and the water.

You must perform your labor today for without labor you will have no fruit.

You must set your foot on the road of the Faith, you must lay aside vanity.

If you are a man, then like a man make your beard a broom for the privy.

Are you not ashamed with all that strength of arm to place your weight on the scales?

You are less than a dog. Listen to this story if you think yourself more than a dog.”

Story of Master Jandi and the dog

“Someone—and he was afraid of nobody—asked Master Jandi: ‘Are you better or a dog?’

Jandi’s disciples charged openly down upon him to tear him to pieces then and there.

Their master at once prevented them. He said to the man: ‘I am not aware of the decree of Destiny.

I have not ascertained, dear friend, what my case is—how then can I answer you?

If my faith is greater than the rabble’s, then I can say that I am better than a dog.

And should my faith not be greater than the rabble’s, then would that I were even a hair’s breadth better than a dog!’

Since the veil has not yet fallen away, do not regard yourself as being in the least way superior to a dog.

For if the dog’s road is through the dust, yet you too are in the same case.”

Story of Mashuq of Tus, the dog and the horseman

“Mashuq of Tus was walking out along a road one noontide like one beside himself.

A dog came towards him on that road and in his forgetfulness he all at once threw a stone at it.

He beheld in the distance a horseman clad in green coming up behind him, his face all light.

He struck him hard with a whip and said to him: ‘Have a care now, foolish one, have a care!

Do you know whom you are throwing a stone at or that you are by origin of the same nature as he?

Are not you and he of one mold? Why do you consider him inferior to yourself?’

Since the dog is not apart from the mold of Omnipotence, it is not lawful for you to exalt yourself above a dog.

Dogs are concealed behind the curtain, friend. See whether your kernel is purer than this shell.

For although the appearance of the dog is unattractive, yet in him are qualities that ensure him a high position.

The dog is in possession of many secrets, but his outward appearance belies this.”

Shaikh Abu Sa'id's argument with a Sufi over a dog

“A Sufi who was passing by struck with his staff at a dog lying on the road.

The dog was badly hurt in its front leg; it began to howl and went off at a run.

It came howling before Abu Sa'id and threw itself on the ground, its heart boiling with rage.

When it had shown Abu Sa'id its foot, he rose up and sought justice of that heedless Sufi.

The shaikh said to the Sufi: ‘O man without faith, has anyone ever dealt with such cruelty to a dumb creature?

Have you broken its foot so that it has fallen down and become thus weak and helpless?’

The Sufi spoke and said: ‘O master, the fault was not mine but the dog's,

Because it denied my garment it received from my staff a blow not dealt in play.’

Where the dog was lying it continued to howl and wave its legs.

That peerless shaikh said to the dog: ‘For all you have done,

I will gladly take the responsibility. Pass your sentence now and do not postpone it till the Judgment Day.

If you wish me to give him his answer, I will punish him on your behalf here and now.

I do not wish you to become angry; I wish you to be pleased.’

The dog said: ‘O peerless shaikh, since I saw his garb to be that of a Sufi,

I was certain that he would do me no harm. How was I to know that he would burn my limbs with pain?

Had there been someone clad in mail on the road, I should have been on my guard.

Seeing the garb of the people of peace I felt safe; I did not know the full story.

If you will punish him divest him now of this garb such as is worn by true men,

So that all may be safe from his wickedness: the injury he did me was such as I have not endured from drunkards.

Remove from him the cloak of the people of peace and his punishment will suffice until the Day of Judgment.

Since the dog holds such a position upon His road, it is forbidden for you to set yourself above a dog.

If you think yourself better than a dog, be sure that you think so because of your doglike nature.

When they cast you thus abjectly into the earth you must fall head downwards,

Because as long as you continue to rear your head there is no doubt that your head will be bowed down even more.

Why boast so much about what is a handful of earth? For it was for the earth that they cut your navel-string.

Those that are the lowest here be sure that they will be the purest there.

When men made themselves lowly like the earth they made body and soul pure in manliness.

The mighty ones on this road are elevated in rank because they have entirely renounced obstinance.”

Story of Abul Fadl Hasan and his words on his deathbed

“When Abul Fadl Hasan lay on his deathbed, someone said to him: ‘O you, by whom the Holy Law is upheld,

When the Joseph of your soul is saved from the pit, we shall bury you in a place of merit.’

The shaikh spoke and said: ‘Heaven forbid! for that is the place of the great and the pious.

How should I, who am no better than a hundred other wretches, wish to have my grave in such a place?’

They said to him: ‘O pure and good-hearted one, where do you wish your dust to be?’

He opened his mouth with a soul filled with agitation and said ‘On the top of yonder hill my grave must be,

For there lies many a drunkard and likewise a number of profitless thieves.

There are also many gamblers there: all are sinners there.

Bury me also with them: lay my head at their feet.

I have always been a fit companion for them, for essentially I have always been like a thief.

I belong among those sinners; I have not the strength to stand amongst those perfect ones.

For if these people are in great darkness, yet they are near to the light of His mercy.

When in a place there is thirst in the extreme, in the end it attracts water to itself.

For whatever there is weakness the eye of mercy dwells there more often.”

DISCOURSE III



The son said: "The purpose of a wife is that a worthy son should be born,

Because when a man has a peerless son there remains a good memory of him forever.

If my son is enlightened he will intercede for me tomorrow.

If a dutiful son is born he is worth the price of a hundred lives.

Everyone should have such a son; in a son I should have such kin."

Father's reply

The father said: "A son is desirable, but only when a man is not possessed of faults.

Whoever is only a novice in this matter, if he have any child,

He becomes full of faults and is too much occupied; he is deprived of the secret of knowledge.

If you would have the faith of Abraham you must receive instruction from the sacrifice of your son."

Question put by Ibrahim b. Adham to a dervish

"One day Ibrahim b. Adham asked a sorrowing dervish

Whether he had ever had wife and children. He said, 'No.' He said, 'Bravo!'

The dervish said to him: 'O man of men, why do you say thus? Enlighten me.'

Then said Ibrahim: 'O man, whatever unfortunate dervish takes a wife

Embarks on a ship without food or sleep, and if he then has children he will be drowned.'

When your heart has become enchained because of children, then children become a sweet enemy to you.

If you are the lord of the conjunction in polite learning, you are so no longer when children are born to you.

Though you are a revered ascetic, when you have children, you shall be a thorough debauchee."

Story of Shaikh Gurgani and his cat

"That world of truth Shaikh Gurgani, who was the pole of his time in spiritual matters,

Had a cat in his monastery which he used to see several times a day.

They had fitted leather sheaths on to its paws
 So that whenever it went out they should not get dirty.
 Sometimes it would climb on to the shaikh's lap, sometimes it would
 sleep on the prayer rug.

When it had been there a while the shaikh would call out for a servant
 to come before him.

With his own hands he would tie on its boots and send it away from
 there.

It made its home in the kitchen where the meat used not to be hidden
 from it.

It never stole any, raw or cooked, taking only what was given it at the
 proper time.

It was trusted in the monastery and at the table; no one ever saw it
 steal anything;

And then one day in the kitchen at night it suddenly snatched some
 meat from the pan.

Finally the servant found it and punished and chastised it severely.

The cat did not come before the shaikh again but sat angrily in a
 corner.

The shaikh then asked the servant about the cat and the servant told
 him what had befallen.

The pious shaikh sent for the cat and asked why it had acted thus.

The cat had then been pregnant; it went and brought its three kittens,
 making three journeys.

It laid them on the ground before the shaikh. It saw a tree nearby and
 went sadly off.

Because of its anger with the servant it climbed up the tree and sat
 down, opening its eyes wide and closing its mouth to any sound.

When the shaikh saw this he was annoyed with the servant; he was
 filled with surprise and said to himself:

‘Without any doubt the cat has an excuse; it had no thought at all of
 feeding itself.

This act of its was not a breach of good manners, its want was a matter
 of necessity.

When someone is in a position of constraint, then at once that be-
 comes lawful which was forbidden.

For its young ones a creature less than a spider would snatch food
 from the jaws of a lion.

What the cat did is no strange matter, for the relationship with chil-
 dren is a wonderful thing.

Until a child is born to you what conception do you have of worry over a child?

The experienced shaikh said to the servant: ‘This dumb creature has suffered affliction.

Out of anger with you it is sitting on the branch. If you ask its pardon it will be friendly towards you.’

The servant took the turban off his head and stood before the cat, asking its pardon.

His words produced no effect; the cat would not even look at him.

Finally the shaikh himself went and addressed the cat; he interceded on behalf of the servant and called the cat down from the branch.

All of a sudden the cat came down from the tree and rolled on the ground at the shaikh’s feet.

A cry arose from all present; from every heart a fire rose up like a candle.

They were all of one mind on account of a cat; they were neck-and-neck with one another in offering thanks for that fair outcome.

If you have a hundred generations of relations it is not like the relationship with one child.

The only one who is free from the care of children is the pure and incomparable God.”

Story of the Christian lad

“There was a wealthy Christian merchant who was a great man in the land.

He had a handsome son such that that Christian lad was the candle of the world.

The violet had its musk-scattering locks from him; the tender rose had its smiling lips from him.

When the veil fell back from his face day would break in the midst of night.

When he twisted the hook of his musky locks he caused all lovers to gird themselves with the *zunnar*.

From the great crookedness which his locks displayed he was never desirous of any righteous thing.

When his eyelashes made war with their javelins he dealt two blows to the two worlds.

When his eyebrow strung its bow, from its arrow the world went in fear of its life.

To scatter sugar from his lips was his mode of life, for his lips were the capital city of sweetness.

The laps of lovers from his smiling lips became like a sea, from the pearls of his teeth.

That life fell ill and died, in short, in the days of youth.

His father out of sorrow for him almost killed himself; he cast out both life and understanding.

Finally after he had washed and purified him, he became a Muslim and then confided him to the dust.

He spoke thus: ‘Today by my son’s death the True Faith has been revealed to me,

For clearly God has no son: He is unencumbered with wife and family.

For if He had a son how should He consent to my affliction?

I realized that there is nothing but causelessness and that no one is fortunate who is not a believer.”

Story of the old man who had a handsome son

“An old man had a son who was like the moon in beauty and whose character and abilities matched the fairness of his face.

His father thought thus of him and had great hopes of him.

In the end he died and burnt his father’s soul. Shall I say that he burnt his heart? Nay, he burnt a hundred hearts.

Out of his mind the father walked behind his coffin, for he was at once bewildered and stunned.

When he had scattered much dust upon his head in lamentation, he raised it to Heaven with a heart full of sorrow.

He spoke thus: ‘O You who have no kin, You are excused, for You have no son.

You are indifferent to my pain because You are unencumbered with a family.

But for Your infinite self-sufficiency, You would have heard the story of the House of Sorrows.

Here the son is in the pit or prison; there the father is in the House of Sorrows.

Had he had no kin like You there is no doubt that there would have been none like him.’

For forty years the son had been joined to the father—why did not some effort assist him for a moment?

If there was writing it was only a mistake, and if there was a letter that too was not allowed.”

Story of Jacob and Joseph

“When Jacob and Joseph, who loved each other so much, were at last reunited,

Joseph’s father said to him: ‘O my eye and lamp, when you did drain my mind with weeping,

You did set me in the House of Sorrows, you did scatter a whole world of fire upon my soul.

For all those times that you have relaxed pleasantly, you might say you have never seen me one single day.

Why did you treat me thus unjustly? Why did you never send me a letter?

With your father so often filled with sorrow for you, did you find it in your heart to leave him without news of you?’

Joseph said to the servant: ‘O strong one, go, bring me those letters.’

The man departed and returned with more than a thousand letters, all identical.

At the head of each of them was written ‘In the name of God!’ but the rest of each page was as white as snow.

He said to his father: ‘O my lamp to paradise, I wrote all of these to you.

When I had finished each of them, describing the state of my affairs and my health,

Except the name of God at the top of the letter there remained not a line of writing from beginning to end.

Every letter turned to the color of snow for it was left without a single line or word.

Gabriel would then arrive from the Almighty and would say: “Beware lest you send him a single letter,

For if you send that old man a letter the pitch-like writing of the letter will become like milk.”

Now the excuse of your loving son is that this is why I did not send you letters.

Although I wished to do so, God did not so wish, and I was able to do nothing in that matter.”

Although you acquire the love of a son, yet there will be much grieving in your heart.

Though your son may be as handsome as Joseph was yet you will have the sorrow of Jacob.

Who shall find a son like Joseph? And yet Jacob suffered great anguish on his account.

No father will ever be such as Jacob was, and yet he suffered greatly without that handsome Joseph.

If you are a son your father will be heartbroken because of you, and if you are a father your son will make you blind.

You have full proof with respect to this paragon of sanctity, O my son, in this one story.”

Story of Joseph and Benjamin

“When Benjamin came before Joseph he at once seated him beside him upon a golden throne.

Joseph was seated wearing a veil, but who can hide a sun?

How should Benjamin ever know that he had before him his beloved brother?

He thought it was a mighty sultan—how should he know that it was his dear brother?

Had he not been the price of dear ones he would never have been the ruler of Egypt.

Although Joseph seated him beside him, out of respect Benjamin did not raise his head.

Now Joseph addressed kind words to him, now he enquired after Joseph.

He quietly handed him a letter which told of the suffering of Jacob’s soul.

When Joseph took the letter he saw it was addressed to him: he went off with it to his children.

What shall I say? They opened the letter and many times they laid it upon their eyes.

From yearning they were all overcome with agitation; cries and shouts rose from amongst them.

They shed many bitter tears of regret, and because of that regret they were filled with a hundred different kinds of bewilderment.

Finally Joseph returned and mounted his throne with a hundred marks of respect.

Some time passed and servants came in; in the middle of the room trays were laid.

Joseph, the beloved king, gave orders that the sons of Jacob should gather together,

But that each should choose another and two brothers sit at each tray.

They sat together as he had commanded, but Benjamin was seated in mourning.

As he was left alone, he remembered Joseph and he was sad.

He wept much out of grief for Joseph; he suffered great sorrow on account of his separation from him.

Joseph, the king of the noble, asked him: 'Why do you weep so bitterly?'

He answered thus: 'When I was left alone I shed tears of blood because of the grief I bear,

Because I had, O Aziz, a brother of the same father and mother.

Now he has been lost for a long time and no one knows how to find him.

If he too were together with this afflicted one, he would be seated at the same tray as I.'

He spoke and had in front of him a tray filled with tears from his eyes.

So many tears did he weep from his eyes that eyes have not seen so many tears.

When Joseph saw him weeping so much and saw that his heart was as agitated as his own soul,

He said to him: 'Do not weep, young man; accept me for the time as another Joseph,

So that as long as I share your cup, I may be your dear one. Who should be better than I to share your cup?'

The steward then spoke and said: 'This cup is full of his tears, O king.

How will you drink these bloody tears? Do you think it right to eat your bread with blood?'

Then said Joseph: 'Be silent, for my blood is boiling from this same grief.

My heart, as it were, has obtained from this blood sustenance for the soul. Such a meal may one obtain from drinking blood.

He is an orphan and I shall nourish my soul if I drink the blood of an orphan.'

Thus said the sons of Jacob: 'He is but young although he is beloved.

He knows nothing of the etiquette of kings—how should he behave properly in your service?'

Therefore we fear for him and there is ground for our fear, for he is a young child before the punctilious king.'

Then came the answer of the good Joseph: 'A son of Jacob is a proper young man.

Whoever is a son of Jacob, whatever he does is good.' Then he said: 'Come Benjamin, why is your face so pale? Speak!'

He said: 'Joseph has killed me by his absence and made me grow pale with longing.'

Said Joseph: 'If your face is pale, why is your musk-like hair disheveled?'

He answered: 'Since I have no mother, my hair is in disarray and my life also.'

Then Joseph asked: 'How did you last see your father, who, they say, has lost his son?'

He replied: 'He has been left blind; since there is no Joseph he has been left alone.'

A whole world of fire has settled upon his soul: he is seated in the House of Sorrows.

So much bloody water has he shed from his eyes that he is immersed in a whirlpool of blood and water.

When he thinks of Joseph he takes me before him.

How shall I say how bitterly he then weeps in his restlessness?

Were a stone present on such a day it would at once turn to blood without any delay.'

When Joseph heard tidings of Jacob his veil at once became moist with tears.

Joseph hid those tears of grief when the Messenger of God came before him

And said: 'Show your face. Why do you distress him so? You speak sweetly and yet your fist is clenched.'

When the veil was saturated with tears Joseph drew it down from his face.

And when, in short, Benjamin saw it, it was as though his sweet soul had been separated from him.

His heart began to toss like the ocean; he gave out a cry and fell unconscious.

When with a hundred efforts he had been brought back to consciousness Joseph enquired as follows: 'O well-disposed one,

What befell you that you did fall unconscious; that you did grow faint and become agitated?'

He answered: 'I know what it is with you. It is as though you were Joseph and yet you are the ruler of Egypt.

I have chosen you in place of Joseph; it is as though I had seen you before.

By God, you are like Joseph. If you are indeed he, why do you torment me so?

I, who am alone, have not the strength to support it. I do not know how things are; you know—tell me."

Whoever regards this tale of mine as a mere fable, Wisdom considers herself to be a stranger to him.

You have behind the curtain of your soul an acquaintance with whom you once did share an adventure.

If you recognize him again for a single moment you will have gained the lead over the whole of mankind.

And if your heart is a stranger to him, then surely you will be in like case with me.

If your heart hath not this acquaintance with him, then light will be lacking in all your works.

He that has still the scent of that acquaintance is thereby accustomed to the nearness of God.

Since he is with God, God will never withhold the sun from that shadow.”

Story of the young sinner and the angels of hell that were in charge of him

“I have read that on the Day of Judgment a young man will come forth and ask God for pardon.

His sins are exceeding many but the Bounteous Judge is on his side.

The angels hurry him in front of them in order to deliver him up to the torments of hell.

All at once a voice comes from the Court of God saying: ‘Why are you dragging him in this way?’

They reply: ‘We are hurrying off with him in order to cast him into hell.’

The voice comes again but speaking a riddle: ‘We two are together, strange to say.

This you must not hear that we two shall be together.’

The angels have never heard such words; they have never witnessed such generosity.

In awe they are all silent; they tremble and then become unconscious.

The voice comes to the young man: ‘O distressed one, why do you stay? Come, flee from them.’

The young man says: ‘O God, in such a place as this valley, which has neither beginning nor end,

Whither can I go to escape judgment, for here there is nowhere to escape to?’

The voice comes: ‘O you who are drunk indeed, come, flee to Us, you shall escape from everything.’

The young man says: ‘I dare not do this, for I have no coin but my helplessness,

Unless You should exercise Your grace and admit me behind the curtain of secrets!

God covers him in His generosity and hides him from the people of the Resurrection.

He brings him to the blissful place of secrets; He brings him to the sanctum where God is seen.

When the angels recover consciousness they cannot see the young man on the road.

They seek him everywhere but cannot find him; they hurry briskly in every direction.

They say to God: 'Whither is our prisoner gone? Is he lost in the world of eternity?'

We have searched through heaven and earth for him and have given up hope of finding him.

Do You know, O God, whither he has departed? If You will tell us not, our souls will have departed.'

There came a voice saying: 'This is an act of Our wisdom; he is behind the curtain of Our sanctity.

Since he has found rest with Us you have nothing more to do with him.

Now he knows and We know eternally, and you must not interfere.'

Since God's kindness has given succor from Eternity past, how then can strangers intervene?

But first to the Prophet as a guide there appears a sun of kindness.

If kindness chooses you out all your failings will become virtues.

He shows His face to you so that you may have nothing to do but to gaze upon it."

Story of the young man possessed of the knowledge of God entering paradise and meeting with the Almighty

"It is thus related in the Traditions that when Judgment Day comes round and all the heartburning that shall ensue,

There will enter amongst that throng a young man finely decked out surrounded by a thousand men with whips.

They will clear the way for him and everyone will give way to him.

To the guardian there will then come these words from the Almighty: 'Lodge him in that palace.'

They will lodge him blissfully in that palace, and all the houris will utter cries of delight at seeing him.

There will be windows to that goodly palace, a thousand or two thousand on every side for him.

From every window the young man will look straight out and behold his God there.

A thousand doors will open all the time and crowds will enter by every door.

But in every crowd of men and women he will see only his God.

Both words have the wish for union but it is nothing but vain desire.

Not everyone is reached with a waft of that scent; not every polo-stick strikes a ball from that direction.

The heart must both fear and burn for God; the tongue must enquire after and fear the road to Him.

If this be your practice, despite your you-ness, that you fear and enquire always,

Your whole being will be occupied with this idea, the city of your heart will adopt this practice,

So that for a moment it may be possible to smell the scent thereof, but it can be smelt only with the nostrils of the soul.

You will live a real life only when your soul is in the presence of the Beloved

And if your life be outside this reckoning, with every breath there will be a hundred curtains to your reckoning.”

Story of the dervish who asked Majnun how old he was

“A certain dervish asked Majnun: ‘Son, how old are you now?’

That distraught one answered: ‘My age is a thousand and forty years.’

The dervish said: ‘What say you, O thoughtless one? Are you become still madder, O ignoramus?’

Majnun replied: ‘There was once a supreme moment when Laila showed me her face.

I have lived forty years, and all of this is loss, but that moment is equal to a thousand years.

Since during those forty years I was by myself I was poor in the coin of my life.

But that one moment was equal to a thousand years, for together with Laila I had time without measure.’

There thousands of years are but a moment, nay they are less than a moment there.

When both worlds attain to the endless Being, non-existence remains their province.

See, O friend, what a Being this is, before which each individual atom prostrates itself!

That is a Being which became neither more nor less; in it all things will cease to exist.

How lofty a Being in which all these things will vanish with feelings of Joy!

When a man becomes non-existent there, all his loss becomes profit there.

If the whole world stretch out their hands not one will reach the hem of his garment.

Since this person is not nor the hem of his garment, who shall ever lay hold thereof?"

Story of the madman who had a fever

"Someone asked a madman who had a fever: 'Does the fever grip you?' The madman was surprised.

He answered: 'If I die, whom will the fever be gripping then?'"

DISCOURSE IV





