

Rumi: Selected Poems



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Rumi

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You Worry Too Much

Oh soul,
you worry too much.
You say,
I make you feel dizzy.
Of a little headache then,
why do you worry?
You say, I am your antelope.
Of seeing a lion here and there
why do you worry?
Oh soul,
You worry too much.

You say, I am your moon-faced beauty.
Of the cycles of the moon and
passing of the years,
why do you worry?
You say, I am your source of passion,
I excite you.
Of playing into the Devils hand,
why do you worry?
Oh soul,
you worry too much.

Look at yourself,
what you have become.
You are now a field of sugar canes,
why show that sour face to me?
You have tamed the
winged horse of Love.
Of a death of a donkey,
why do you worry?

You say that I keep you warm inside.
Then why this cold sigh?
You have gone to the roof of heavens.
Of this world of dust, why do you worry?
Oh soul,
you worry too much.

Since you met me,
you have become a master singer,
and are now a skilled wrangler,
You can untangle any knot.
Of life's little leash
why do you worry?
Your arms are heavy
with treasures of all kinds.
About poverty,
why do you worry?
You are Joseph,
beautiful, strong,
steadfast in your belief,
all of Egypt has become drunk
because of you.
Of those who are blind to your beauty,
and deaf to your songs,
why do you worry?

Oh soul,
you worry too much.
You say that your housemate is the
Heart of Love,
she is your best friend.
You say that you are the heat of
the oven of every Lover.

You say that you are the servant of
Ali's magical sword, Zolfaghar.
Of any little dagger
why do you still worry?
Oh soul,
you worry too much.

You have seen your own strength.
You have seen your own beauty.
You have seen your golden wings.
Of anything less,
why do you worry?

You are in truth
the soul, of the soul, of the soul.
You are the security,
the shelter of the spirit of Lovers.
Oh the sultan of sultans,
of any other king,
why do you worry?

Be silent, like a fish,
and go into that pleasant sea.
You are in deep waters now,
of life's blazing fire.
Why do you worry?

From: *Hush Don't Say Anything to God: Passionate
Poems of Rumi*
Translated by Sharam Shiva

Cradle My Heart

Last night,
I was lying on the rooftop,
thinking of you.
I saw a special Star,
and summoned her to take you a
message.
I prostrated myself to the Star
and asked her to take my prostration
to that Sun of Tabriz.
So that with his light, he can turn
my dark stones into gold.
I opened my chest and showed her my
scars,
I told her to bring me news
of my bloodthirsty Lover.
As I waited,
I paced back and forth,
until the child of my heart became quiet.
The child slept, as if I were rocking his
cradle.
Oh Beloved, give milk to the infant of the
heart,
And don't hold us from our turning.
You have cared for hundreds,
don't let it stop with me now.
At the end, the town of unity is the place
for the heart.
Why do you keep this bewildered heart

in the town of dissolution?
I have gone speechless, but to rid myself
of this dry mood,
oh Saaqhi, pass the narcissus of the
wine.

From: *Hush Don't Say Anything to God: Passionate
Poems of Rumi*
Translated by Sharam Shiva

There is a candle in your heart...

There is a candle in your heart,
ready to be kindled.
There is a void in your soul,
ready to be filled.
You feel it, don't you?
You feel the separation
from the Beloved.
Invite Him to fill you up,
Embrace the fire.
Remind those who tell you otherwise that
Love
comes to you of its own accord,
and the yearning for it
cannot be learned in any school.

From: *Hush Don't Say Anything to God: Passionate
Poems of Rumi*
Translated by Sharam Shiva

Art as Flirtation and Surrender

In your light I learn how to love.
In your beauty, how to make poems.
You dance inside my chest,
where no one sees you,
but sometimes I do,
and that sight becomes this art.

From: *The Essential Rumi*
Translated by Coleman Barks

Spring Giddiness

Today, like every other day, we wake up
empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the
study
and begin reading. Take down a musical
instrument.
Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel and
kiss the ground.

The breeze at dawn has secrets to tell you.
Don't go back to sleep.
You must ask for what you really want.
Don't go back to sleep.
People are going back and forth across the
doorsill
where the two worlds touch.
The door is round and open.
Don't go back to sleep.

I would love to kiss you.
The price of kissing is your life.
Now my loving is running toward my life
shouting,
What a bargain, let's buy it.

Daylight, full of small dancing particles
and the one great turning, our souls
are dancing with you, without feet, they
dance.

Can you see them when I whisper in your
ear?

All day and night, music,
a quiet, bright
reedsong. If it
fades, we fade.

From: *The Essential Rumi*
Translated by Coleman Barks

Untitled

Don't try to hold onto this
...you'll lose it

Don't pull the curtain
...it will end

This moment with all of us here
...is paradise,

But don't try to leave this way.
...you'll ruin it.

From: *The Hand of Poetry: Five Mystic Poets of Persia*
Translated by Coleman Barks

This World Which Is Made of Our Love for Emptiness

Praise to the emptiness that blanks out
existence. Existence:

This place made from our love for that
emptiness!

Yet somehow comes emptiness,
this existence goes.

Praise to that happening, over and over!
For years I pulled my own existence out
of emptiness.

Then one swoop, one swing of the arm,
that work is over.

Free of who I was, free of presence, free
of dangerous fear, hope,
free of mountainous wanting.

The here-and-now mountain is a tiny
piece of a piece of straw
blown off into emptiness.

These words I'm saying so much begin
to lose meaning:

Existence, emptiness, mountain, straw:

Words and what they try to say swept

out the window, down the slant of the
roof.

From: The Discourses of Rumi quoted from William
C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual
Teachings of Rumi*

I've said before that every craftsman

I've said before that every craftsman searches for what's not there to practice his craft.

A builder looks for the rotten hole where the roof caved in. A water-carrier picks the empty pot. A carpenter stops at the house with no door.

Workers rush toward some hint of emptiness, which they then start to fill. Their hope, though, is for emptiness, so don't think you must avoid it. It contains what you need!

Dear soul, if you were not friends with the vast nothing inside, why would you always be casting you net into it, and waiting so patiently?

This invisible ocean has given you such abundance,
but still you call it "death",
that which provides you sustenance and work.

God has allowed some magical reversal
to occur,
so that you see the scorpion pit
an object of desire,
and all the beautiful expanse around it,
as dangerous and swarming with snakes.

This is how strange your fear of death
and emptiness is, and how perverse
the attachment to what you want.

Now that you've heard me
on your misapprehensions, dear friend,
listen to Attar's story on the same
subject.

He strung the pearls of this
about King Mahmud, how among the
spoils
of his Indian campaign there was a Hindu
boy,
whom he adopted as a son. He educated
and provided royally for the boy
and later made him vice-regent, seated
on a gold throne beside himself.

One day he found the young man
weeping..
"Why are you crying? You're the
companion
of an emperor! The entire nation is
ranged out
before you like stars that you can

command!"

The young man replied, "I am remembering my mother and father, and how they scared me as a child with threats of you! 'Uh-oh, he's headed for King Mahmud's court!

Nothing could be more hellish!' Where are they now when they should see me sitting here?"

This incident is about your fear of changing.

You are the Hindu boy. Mahmud, which means

Praise to the End, is the spirit's poverty or emptiness.

The mother and father are your attachment

to beliefs and blood ties and desires and comforting habits.

Don't listen to them!

They seem to protect but they imprison.

They are your worst enemies.

They make you afraid of living in emptiness.

Some day you'll weep tears of delight in that court,

remembering your mistaken parents!

Know that your body nurtures the spirit,
helps it grow, and gives it wrong advise.

The body becomes, eventually, like a vest
of chain mail in peaceful years,
too hot in summer and too cold in winter.

But the body's desires, in another way,
are like

an unpredictable associate, whom you
must be

patient with. And that companion is
helpful,

because patience expands your capacity
to love and feel peace.

The patience of a rose close to a thorn
keeps it fragrant. It's patience that gives
milk

to the male camel still nursing in its third
year,

and patience is what the prophets show
to us.

The beauty of careful sewing on a shirt
is the patience it contains.

Friendship and loyalty have patience
as the strength of their connection.

Feeling lonely and ignoble indicates
that you haven't been patient.

Be with those who mix with God
as honey blends with milk, and say,

"Anything that comes and goes,
rises and sets, is not
what I love." else you'll be like a caravan
fire left
to flare itself out alone beside the road.

From: Rumi : *One-Handed Basket Weaving*
Translated by Coleman Barks

The Gazals

if the door is shut
right in your face
keep waiting with patience
don't leave right away
seeing your patience
your love will soon
summon you with grace
raise you like a champion

and if all the roads
end up in dead ends
you'll be shown the secret paths
no one will comprehend

.....

ah I better keep silence
I know this endless love
will surely arrive
for you and you and you

from ghazal number 965

if your beloved
has the life of a fire
step in now and burn along

in a night full of

suffering and darkness
be a candle spreading light till dawn

.....

even if you feel
torn to pieces
sew yourself new clothes

your body and soul
will surely feel the joy
when you simply go along

.....

don't say what is the use
of me alone being peaceful
when everyone is fighting

you're not one
you're a thousand
just light your lantern

since one live flame
is better than
a thousand dead souls

from ghazal number 1197

find yourself a friend
who is willing to
tolerate you with patience

put to the test the essence
of the best incense
by putting it in fire

drink a cup of poison
if handed to you by a friend
when filled with love and grace

step into the fire
like the chosen prophet
the secret love will change
hot flames to a garden
covered with blossoms
roses and hyacinths and willow

from ghazal number 994

go my friend
bestow your love
even on your enemies
if you touch their hearts
what do you think will happen

from ghazal number 838

From: *Fountain of Fire* (excerpted)
Translated by Nader Elkhaili