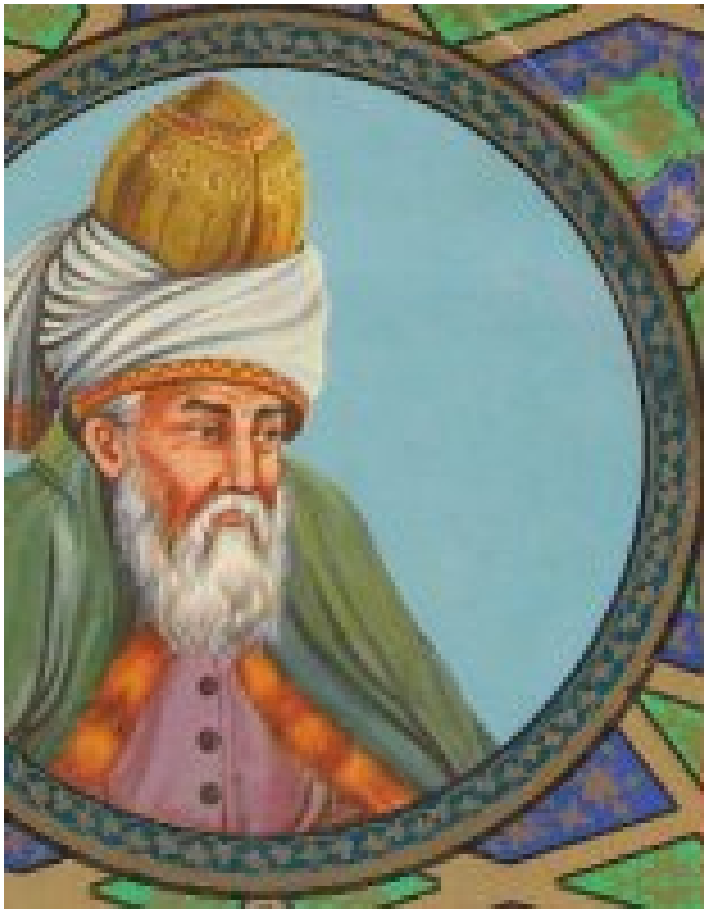


Poetry



By: Faysal Burhan

Published: 2002

Poetry was central to the social, political and spiritual Arab life. A poet was the representative and image-maker of his tribe, the media of broadcast, inflaming and arousing his people for war. He was the hummer and entertainer. Poetry was the media of communication and of history documentation. It was written with conformity and rhythmic patterns describing a seen or a heroic act of a knight, a trip or an animal and expressing passion and love stories.

Arabic literature, biographical and historical books are surprisingly rich with poetry. The case for the Arabic poetry is no less in the Persian and Urdu literature. Persian (now known as Iran) mystic and poet, Rumi, verses are permeated by elements of Sufism, a movement of Islamic mysticism. He was born in Balkh, in what is now Afghanistan.



In 1247 Rumi's friend and religious guide Shams al-Din, a Sufi dervish, disappeared unexplainably. Over the years Rumi composed nearly 30,000 verses expressing his feelings at this loss.

Rumi's epic poem *Spiritual Couplets* (mid-13th century) had an enormous influence on Islamic literature and thought. His followers organized a Sufi sect in 1273 called *Mawlawiyah*, or *Mevlevi*, also known as the *whirling dervishes*.

Rumi's work includes the following: *Divan-e-Shams*, a compendium of poetry in praise of Shams in over 45,000 verses written in Farsi (Persian), *Mathnavi* – Rumi's most famous work in 7 books, and *Fihi ma Fihi*, introductory discourses on metaphysics. He also wrote over 24,660 couplets in Farsi and some Arabic. This work is also commonly referred to as the *Persian Quoran*.

Here are a few of his poems:

Oh Beloved,

take me.

Liberate my soul.

Fill me with your love and

release me from the two worlds.

If I set my heart on anything but you

let fire burn me from inside.

Oh Beloved,

take away what I want.

Take away what I do.

Take away what I need.

Take away everything

that takes me from you.

My heart, sit only with those

who know and understand you.

Sit only under a tree

that is full of blossoms.

In the bazaar of herbs and potions

don't wander aimlessly

find the shop with a potion that is sweet

If you don't have a measure

people will rob you in no time.

You will take counterfeit coins

thinking they are real.

Don't fill your bowl with food from
every boiling pot you see.

Not every joke is humorous, so don't search
for meaning where there isn't one.

Not every eye can see,
not every sea is full of pearls.

My hart, sing the song of longing
like nightingale.

The sound of your voice casts a spell
on every stone, on every thorn.

First, lay down your head
then one by one
let go of all distractions.

Embrace the light and let it guide you
beyond the winds of desire.

There you will find a spring and nourished by its see waters
like a tree you will bear fruit forever.

IF YOU CAN'T GO TO SLEEP

My dear soul for tonight what do you think will happen if you pass your night and merge it with dawn for the sake of heart what do you think will happen.
If the entire world is covered with the blossoms you have labored to plant, what do you think will happen.
If the elixir of life that has been hidden in the dark fills the desert and towns what do you think will happen.
If because of your generosity and love a few humans find their lives what do you think will happen.
If you pour an entire jar filled with joyous wine on the head of those already drunk, what do you think will happen.
Go my friend, bestow your love, even on your enemies, if you touch their hearts what do you think will happen.

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi
(1207? – 1273)

“RUMI, Fountain of Fire”, Ghazal number 838, translated April 16, 1992, by Nader Khalili