

Fakhr al-Dīn 'Irāqī: poems

1.

Seeking life without the Friend's presence,

you didn't spend a moment waiting at love's door.

My God! Sit down and mourn your loss!

That time is gone when you could have been living.¹

2.

The first step in love

is losing your head.

After the petty ego,

you then give up your life

and bear the calamity.

With this behind you, proceed:

polish the ego's rust

from the mirror

of your self.²

3.

[‘You are the cloud over your own sun, so know the true reality of your own self’; if this screen, which is you, is struck from before eyes, the Beloved will find the Beloved, and you will be entirely lost. Then you will hear with the ear of your heart:]

That mystery, so long concealed, is at last opened,

the darkness of your night at last bathed in dawn.

You yourself are the veil of the mystery of the Unseen Heart:

if it were not for you, it would never have been sealed.³

¹ *Love's Alchemy*, trans. David and Sarineh Fideler, p. 74

² *Love's Alchemy*, trans. David and Sarineh Fideler, p. 49.

³ On the lover's direct vision, *Divine Flashes* XXVII, trans. Chittick and Lamborn-Wilson, p. 123.

4.

Beloved, I sought you
 here and there
asked for news of you
 from all I met;
then I saw you through myself
 and found we were identical.
Now I blush to think I ever
 searched for signs of you...
If you lose yourself
 on this path
you will know in certainty:
 He is you, you are He.⁴

5.

The more I gaze
 at Your face, the more
my eyes incline
 towards Your vision
like one who dies of thirst
 by the ocean shore,
lips to the wave,
 thirstier and thirstier.
Seek not, find not –
 except in this one case:
until you find the Friend
 you'll never seek Him.⁵

⁴ On the difference between knowledge of certainty, eye of certainty, and truth of certainty, *Divine Flashes* XXV, trans. Chittick and Lamborn-Wilson, p. 120.

6.

How long will you stick with the monastery's worshipful habits?

For the prisoner of habit, obedience and self-denial are but disbelief.

As long as you cannot jump free of your own embrace,

your worship is bound to a temple of devilish idols.

Pawn your soul at the tavern to buy one sip

but do not try to trade on piety – the coin is debased.

How long will you stand dry-lipped on the shore of desire?

Hurl yourself –now!– into the infinite sea

that the traceless ocean may wash away all trace

and the shark of ecstasy swallow you in one bite.⁶

7.

[Purified of all individuations, the lover's heart is like that landscape where the domes of Might fill the horizon, that place where the seas of the Seen and the Unseen flow together... So vast is this heart that earth cannot contain it, and all the worlds might vanish in its embrace. God hoists the tent of Unity in the courtyard of Oneness...]

Contraction:

He hides what He revealed.

Expansion:

He gives back what He concealed.

An idol so exquisite

the world cannot hold it:

how, how does it make its home

in my narrow heart?⁷

⁵ On the never-endingness of the way, *Divine Flashes* XVII, trans. Chittick and Lamborn-Wilson, p. 105.

⁶ *Divine Flashes*, trans. Chittick and Lamborn-Wilson (intro), p. 56.

⁷ On the scope of the lover's capacity, *Divine Flashes* XIX, trans. Chittick and Lamborn-Wilson, p. 110.

8.

In the world-displaying cup, at first
the image of all creation was reflected.

The cup filled with Love's wine
and the myriad imprints of all things took shape.

Each atom of these prints and images
showed forth a detail of the universe:

one draught and 100,000 cups,
one drop and 100,000 taverns.

Pass by these enslaving images
and all your troubles will vanish.

Put aside these printed shapes
and come to understand
that all this painted display is naught
but the false double seen by a cross-eyed fool.

When in the midst of this astigmatic vision
you see the face of the Painter Himself
you will understand that He alone exists
and all the others are but fancies and reflections.

Do you desire that your heart and eyes
be cooled by the light of this realisation?

Then change your morals, transmute your qualities,
and when they have been transformed

rush to the wineshop, for only there
may your goal be reached at last.

Behold, the half-drunk eyes of the saki
and then, as elegantly as you can

drain a cup, lose your senses, forget

all that can be unified or dispersed
and take a glance at the saki's eyes,
his drunken eyes: this, this is the supreme.

Look: the saki's face
how it swells the soul
the saki's eternal face in the
world-displaying cup

Love, Love is both wine and cup, Love
is a wine that puts all rivals under the table.

That first world-displaying cup is but
a reflection of the purity of Love's glass
and the half-drunk glance of the saki also drinks
from this wine, whose ultimate end is desire.

This cup was drained, and from its outpouring
the water of life drenched the world;
from that water a bubble arose
and was called 'the 18,000 worlds'...

You who have no news of this intoxicating vintage
(never for a second having stepped outside yourself)

how long have you boiled the pot of love-madness
there in your monastery – and still the stew is raw!

Now come to the tavern, for a few days
sit from morning to night;

drink a toast to the desires of the friend of wine
till you're drunk enough to see through *his* eyes.

Look: the saki's face
how it swells the soul

the saki's eternal face in the
world-displaying cup

Before the being and the non-being of the universe
before the 'B' of God's decree – 'Be!'

the Self-manifestation of Love asked from Love
the manifestation of the letters of the Greatest Name.

Love licked its finger instead of a pen,
licked it, then wrote without hesitation

upon its palm a Name – such a Name!
that Adam himself is its talisman-seal.

In the very shape of its letters, Being
and Temporality alike were contained.

Love wrote, then read, then closed its hand
and hid the word from the eyes of all strangers.

O seeker of this Greatest Name,
do you wish to know it now for certain?

Then find the key which unlocks the world
which opens the seal of the talisman

and when at last you've unlocked the lid
you'll find that you yourself are that Name,

that all is related to you
both manifest meaning and secret Word –

the Name which is the essence of the Named.

If this is what you find, then carry on

if not, well, don't take yourself too seriously.

Go knock knock knock on the tavern door
and when at last they suddenly

swing wide the door, open your eyes, rejoice.

Look: the saki's face
how it swells the soul
the saki's eternal face in the
world-displaying cup

[6th stanza]

Love showed His Face from behind the veil;
when I looked, it was my own face.

I prostrated myself before my own face
in that moment, when He showed His Beauty...⁸

⁸ Nafisi, 41 (11.1163-1271), beginning *dar jam-i jahannamāy-i awwal*, translated in *Divine Flashes*, trans. Chittick and Lamborn-Wilson, pp. 51–54; 6th stanza by Baldick, p. 230