

Niyazi Misri – poems¹

1. O Nightingale

O nightingale mad with love, have you come to wail yet again,
Longing for the rose, did you come just to weep bitter tears?
You are always throwing yourself into the fire like the moth does,
Did you come and get burnt before by this love-fire?
If trials descend like rain, you bare your head,
Have you come to sacrifice yourself in the path of the Friend?
Everything and everyone is trying to establish a quality,
Have you come to ruin the whole domain of qualities?
The face of Unity appears in all things
Have you come to this Multiplicity just to walk about?
Nobody has ever been privy to your mystery
I don't know: have you come into this world just as one of a kind?
You indicate a cure for this ailing Niyazi,
Have you come to remedy the pain of one who has fallen into pain?

*Ey bülbül-ü şeyda yine efgâna mı geldin,
Azm-i gül edüp zârıyla giryâna mı geldin.
Pervâne gibi âteşe daim cân atarsın,
Evvelde bu aşk ödüne sen yâna mı geldin.
Yağmur gibi yağarsa belâ sen baş açarsın,
Can vermeğe dost yoluna sen kurbâna mı geldin.
Herşey çalışır bir sıfatı eyleye mâ'mur,
Sen cümle sıfat ilini vîrâna mı geldin.
Vech-i ahadiyet ki şu eşyâda görünmüş,
Bu kesrete ancak seyrâna mı geldin.
Bir kimse senin olmadı hiç râzına mahrem,
Bilmem bu cihân içine yekdâne mı geldin.
Bu hasta Niyâzî ye şifâ remzin edersin,
Derde düşenin derdine dermâna mı geldin.*²

A recording of this poem by the Kudsi Erguner Ensemble can be found on YouTube
www.youtube.com/watch?v=nchNIRbefVg

¹ Translations by Stephen Hirtenstein. For the translations of Niyazi's work, I am indebted to Henry Bayman, who has provided such invaluable help in providing, discussing and refining the translations, and to Ersin Balcı, who has translated almost a third of Niyazi's Diwan on <http://www.architectoflove.net/>.

² *Dîvân*, 119.

2. Since all eternity

It has been my custom since all eternity
that every day I be busy with something³
arising, now gathered together,
now dispersed I am

my road takes me, one by one,
to every single thing of this creation
gathering all those clothes
a clothes bazaar I am

now cloud, now rain,
now hail, now snow,
now plant, now animal,
now human I am

now Christian, now Jew,
now pagan, now fire-worshipper,
now Shi'i, now Sunni
Muslim I am

Now devotional, now ascetic,
now deviating from the way of truth,
now knowing, now known,
now gnosis I am

now I am copper and tin,
now gold and silver,
now a mine for all the minerals
in the world I am

now there is no-one more insignificant
than me in the whole universe,
now Solomon, ruler of all
from Qaf to Qaf⁴, I am

now my home is as narrow as
the space between horseshoe and hoof,

³ Recalling the Qur'anic phrase "Every day He is at work".

⁴ i.e. from A to Z: Mount Qāf was regarded as the mystical centre of the universe, while *qāf* is the final letter in the alphabet.

now a high plain wider than
the Throne and Footstool⁵ I am

Now I am one grain
on this threshing floor of the world,
now a vast arena
encompassing all I am

I am now existent, now non-existent,
now being, now non-being,
now in revelation I am manifest
now hidden I am

now this world, now the hereafter,
now the gathering for judgment day, now the bridge,
now the isthmus, now heaven
now hellfire I am

now the angel Malik, now the fire itself⁶
now the tree of bitterness⁷, now the blazing furnace
now a houri, now a youth in paradise
now the angel Ridwan I am

now an atom, now the sun
now the moon, now the stars,
now the earth, now the heavens,
now the throne of the All-Compassionate I am

now one by one I dress myself up
in all these myriad forms
now stripped of them all
naked I become

today in the world of multiplicity
I am the man called Niyazi,
but in the world of oneness
the secret of God I am.⁸

⁵ The Divine Throne (*'arsh*) was conceived as the circumference of the body of the world, i.e. the limit of our universe and the place of All-Compassion, with the Footstool (*kursī*) as the place where the two feet are placed, i.e. compassionate mercy as distinct from anger.

⁶ The angel Mālik is the one who leads a person to hellfire, while the angel Ridwān leads to paradise.

⁷ Zaqqūm, the cursed tree encountered in hell, mentioned in the Qur'an (37:62; 44:43; 56:52).

3. Nothing left

I used to think that in the world for me no friend was left

Then I abandoned me, and knew that no stranger was left.

In everything I used to see thorns, not a rose in sight

Then the whole world became a rose garden; now no thorns are left

Night and day my heart used to weep and wail

I don't know what happened, no tears and cries are left

Out went multiplicity, in came Unity, seclusion happened with the Friend

The whole world became the Real, no town and marketplace are left

Religion, rules, custom, reputation – all gone with the wind

O Niyazi, what happened? For you no shackles of religiousness are left.⁹

4. Aspozi [=Malatya]

May God bless her, the rose-garden of nightingales is Aspozi

Reminiscent of Paradise, high of place is Aspozi

Of temperate clime, where all pleasures come together

Gathering place for the joyful assembly of saints is Aspozi

Scorning the Elixir of Life, being of the Jesus nature [reviving the dead]

As she flows, like a graceful gliding spirit is Aspozi

She dons her green garment in the days of spring

Surely the abode of the Khidr of this time is Aspozi

Everywhere are fruits, sweet as the lips of a beauty,

A handsome youth decked out in green satin is Aspozi

On her apples are inscribed couplets in red ink

No doubt a clear illustration of God's art is Aspozi

This is why her people are all intellect, intelligence and gnosis

Storehouse of people of knowledge and perfection is Aspozi

It would be fitting to say "Gardens underneath which rivers flow"

A sign of "these are the Gardens of Eden" is Aspozi

O Niyazi, if she were not touched by the winds of mortality,

Who would deny that the Highest Paradise is Aspozi?¹⁰

⁸ *Divân* 113.

⁹ *Divân* 180.

¹⁰ *Divân* 192.