

Poems by Majdūd b. Ādam Sanā'ī (d. 1131)

There is a Witness (*shāhid*) in the world, but we are idle;
 There is a draught left in the cup, but we remain sober;
Arise! Let us set to rest, with the water from our faces,
 The wind blowing from this deceitful heap of earth.
Let us sally forth on a raid, and let us destroy
 The marketplace where this black-faced soul thrives!
The heart (*dil*) is a village (*dih*) when it is filled
 With cattle, donkeys, goods and chattels.

(De Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Literature*, 38)

If coming had been my choice, I would not have come.
 If going were my choice, would I ever go?
Better this ruined abode had never seen me,
 not come, not stay, not go.

(Lewis, *Music from a Distant Drum*, p. 104)

Moslems all! I love that idol
 with a true and jealous zeal;
Not for dalliance, but bewildered
 in amazement here I kneel.

What is love? A mighty ocean,
 and of flame its waters are,
Waters that are very mountains,
 black as night, and swarming far.

Dragons fierce and full of terror
 crouch upon its waveswept rim,
And a myriad sharks of judgment
 in its swelling billows swim.

Grief the barque that sails those waters
 fortitude its anchor is,
And its mast is bent and tossing
 to the gale's catastrophes.

Me they cast in sudden transport
 into that unfathomed sea,
Like the man of noble spirit
 garmented in sanctity.

I was dead; the waters drowned me;
 lo, the marvel, now I live,
And have found a gem more precious
 than the treasured worlds can give.

(Arberry, *Classical Persian literature*, 91–92)

Because of one "Yes" (*balā*) which the soul said in pre-eternity
 the person who said "Yes" is eternally in affliction (*balā*)¹
 (Schimmel, *Two-coloured Brocade*, 58)

¹ Referring to the pre-eternal pact between God and the human being, when God asked: "Am I not your Lord", and they answered: "Yes, indeed!" (*balā*).

You are not a Simurgh that one mentions you without your being there.
You are not a peacock that one looks at you when you are there.
You are not a nightingale that one would tear one's garments due to your melodies—
So, what kind of bird are you, and how can one buy you?
(Schimmel, *Two-coloured Brocade*, 314)

What do I care for the lion of the sky (the constellation Leo)
when I am acquainted with the dog of your lane?²
(Schimmel, *Two-coloured Brocade*, 196)

He constantly weaves for you, in the courtyard (*fanā*)
of annihilation (*fanā*), the tunic (*qabā*) of permanence (*baqā*)
(Schimmel, *Two-coloured Brocade*, 222)

You have grief: consider it a medicine.
Regard difficulties as easy: when you are in love,
consider as one the Leo of the sky
and the lion on the flag
(Schimmel, *Two-coloured Brocade*, 322)

Since my heart was caught in the snare of love,
since my soul became wine in the cup of love,
ah, the pains I have known through loverhood
since like a hawk I fell in the snare of love!
Trapped in time, I am turned to a drunken sot
by the exciting, dreg-draining cup of love.
(Arberry, *Classical Persian literature*, 90)

² The words of Majnun kissing the paw of a street dog in the vicinity of Layla.