Sufi Mystical Poetry

Dedicated to
Sant Kirpal Singh
Rabia Basri
717 - 801

She is one of the first mystic poets whose work has come down to us. Born into a poor family, she became a follower of the famous Sufi Hassan of Basra. She was noted for her absolute asceticism and many legends are told about her life, often citing her devout nature and absorption in God. More interesting than her asceticism, however, is Rabia’s concept of divine love. She was the first to introduce the idea that God should be loved for His own sake and not out of fear, as the earlier Sufis had taught.

(All biographies are from Islamic Mystical Poetry)
You Have Infused My Being

You have infused my being
Through and through,
As an intimate friend must
Always do.
So when I speak, I speak of only You
And when silent, I yearn for You.

Between Heart and Heart

In love, nothing exists between heart and heart.
Speech is born out of longing,
True description from the Real Taste.
The one who tastes, knows;
The one who explains, lies.
How can you describe the true form of Something
In whose presence you are blotted out
And in whose Being you still exist?
Two Loves I Give Thee

Two loves I give Thee: Love that yearns
   And Love because Thy due is Love.
In my yearning my remembrance turns to
   Thee, nor lets it from Thee rove.
Thou hast Thy due whenever it pleases Thee
   To lift the veils for me to see Thee.
Praise is not mine in this, nor yet in that,
   But Thine in this and that.

If I Worship You

O Lord, if I worship You
   Because of fear of hell
Then burn me in hell.
   If I worship You
Because I desire paradise
Then exclude me from paradise.
   But if I worship You
For Yourself alone
Then deny me not
Your eternal beauty.
Your Prayers

Your prayers were Light
And your worship peaceful,
Your sleep an enemy of prayer.
Your life was a test, but you let
It go by without a thought.
It’s ever-passing, slowly vanishes
Before you know it.

The Rarest Treasure

Your hope in my heart is the rarest treasure.
Your Name on my tongue is the sweetest word.
My choicest hours
Are the hours I spend with You.
O God, I can’t live in this world
Without remembering You.
How can I endure the next world
Without seeing Your face?
I am a stranger in Your country
And lonely among Your worshippers:
This is the substance of my complaint.
My Rest is in My Solitude

Brethren, my rest is in my solitude,
And my Beloved is ever in my presence.
Nothing for me will do but love of Him;
By love of Him I am tested in this world.
Wherever I am I contemplate His beauty.
O Thou, ever my joy, my life, from Thee
Is my existence and my ecstasy.
From all creation I have turned away,
For union with Thee my desired end.

Alive in My Heart

O God, another night is passing away,
Another day is rising.
Tell me that I have spent the night well
So I can be at peace, or that I have wasted it,
So I can mourn for what is lost.
I swear that ever since the first day
You brought me back to life,
The day You became my Friend,
I have not slept – and even if you drive me
From Your door, I swear again
That we will never be separated,
Because you are alive in my heart.
Ahmad Jam
1048 – 1141

The Sufi writer and poet Ahmad Jam was born in Iran. He is revered as a saint. In addition to poetry, he also wrote books on theology.
Your Beauty

Each who has seen Your beauty fine
Utters honestly, “I have seen the Divine.”
Everywhere Your lovers wait for grace,
Remove Your veil, reveal Your face!
I am in the ocean and an ocean is in me;
This is the experience of one who can see.
He that leaps into the river of Unity,
He speaks of union with his Beloved’s beauty.

Wherever I Look

Whatever I see, I see the Beloved’s beauty;
Wherever I look, I see His creation.
Wherever I look, I see Goodness;
Whatever is beautiful is the Beloved’s beauty.
Every form that is beautiful in the world
Is only a sign to the Beloved’s beauty.
Of Thy Mercy I am Sure

Though I am a sinner impure,
   Of Thy mercy I am sure.
I am maligned and taunted in the street
   And covered with the dust of sin;
Broken-hearted and discarded
   And a thorn in the eye of humanity.
I am one lost in the way of Love
   And am one whose deeds are poor.
Cast Thy healing glance on me,
   For Thy grace I yearn,
And of Thy mercy I am sure.
Sanai Ghaznavi
1080 – 1131

He is the first of the great Sufi teachers and masnavi (extensive poem) writers of the Islamic world.
Invocation

O Friend, I want Your Sustenance,
O Beloved, I want to serve and obey.
It’s my duty to obey and follow You.
My life, my soul, I bestow on You.
I heard the whisper of Your love once,
I yearn to hear that invocation once again!

The Night of Union

Each night I pray is a happy night for me,
Because the messenger of my Friend is near to me.
Everyone loses his light when night comes.
For me, my Light comes when time for prayer comes.
Day of separation gone, the night of Union arrives;
O day, please end, let the night remain!
O Friend, so long as You abide, no sorrow can I have
So long as I live: You are my Lord and I a slave!
Each moment, Friend, when I come in front of You
Happiness is allowed and pain and sorrow forbidden!
Love’s Command

So long as this world exists, I do not want the pain of Love,
   But I love Love and cannot break the vows of Love!
So long as the story of Love and lovers adorns this world
   My name shall be written boldly in the book of Love.
Their heart is caught in the snare of the Beloved’s curls,
   Those who ride with beauties in the field of Love!
   I will play in this field of Love till eternity.
   I have trapped my heart in the curls of Love!
In this world, my Love is the reason for goodness;
   Since He is the reason for goodness,
   I became the goodness of Love!
One of the greatest mystic poets of Islam, Attar was born and spent most of his long life in north-east Persia. A pharmacist by profession, Attar lived in turbulent times, yet managed to survive and produce an enormous amount of work on a variety of subjects and themes. It is without doubt that his spirituality sustained and inspired all of his writings.
The Fire of Your Love

The fire of Your Love is best inside the soul; 
And the soul burning with Your Love is best of all. 
One who has tasted a drop of Your wine today 
Is happy drunk and dazed till judgment day. 

When You came to be, I was hidden; 
In the Beloved’s presence, it was best not to be. 
Give me pain, and cure me not of my Love, 
‘Cause Your pain is better than any balm. 
Since none hope to meet You in this life, 
This hopeless search for You is best of all. 
Without You, I am witness to dry autumn. 
In such an eye, the rain of tears is best of all. 
Like a candle in separation from You, 
It’s best that Attar weeps all night.
The Pain of Love

Whoever received an atom of this pain of Love,
For him both yesterday and tomorrow become today.
    Everything we see is really One,
The months, the years are all just a day.
    A thousand centuries have passed us by,
Yet this pain forever haunts us in the same way.
Whoever embarks on the search for a Friend
    Must burn in this fire and wait;
But each day he burns, is his day to celebrate.
I see only an atom of this pain whose sweet sting
    Has reached the depth of everything.
This pain is nothing else
Than the one that stokes the fire of Love;
This is the pain of that secret
That offers us a reason to live and love.
Your Beauty

Your beauty overshadows the world’s allure;
It overcomes the desire
To exist, and the universe entire!
He who was so proud of his intellect and sanity,
Your single glance has brought to naught his vanity.
Reflection from Your moon-like face reaches the sun
And lo! the sun is brought low by it, O Beautiful One!
The magicians of Babel were beguiled,
Though they may be clever and wise,
When they saw the magic of Your eyes!
Yearning for You and torn apart,
Separation has broken Attar’s heart!

You Will Not Mourn

You will not mourn the burning or the slaying
As that Sun is your life sustaining;
And he who is entangled in being
Is trapped, unheeding as he is unseeing.
O You Who Have Revealed

O You who have revealed
My hidden sorrow to the world,
Who am I that I received
Your fragrance in my soul?
I am stricken by sorrow.
Cast a glance this way,
For it’s You who know
My secret, and with my heart You play!

O Love of mine,
In the hope of seeing You I roam.
In the valley of separation,
Eternally, I’ve made my home.
It’s You who know the cure
Of my pain.
I’ve reached the limit, give me
The balm of Your Love again.

Attar’s soul is disheveled
Like Your dark hair;
Bring him together, make him whole
And save his scattered weary soul.
What Madness is This?

What madness has seized me because of You? 
What is this tumult in my soul that You have instilled? 
Because of You I am in a state of disarray. 
It’s not my norm to behave this way.
I came pure and chaste from the two worlds, 
Purified by the fire of Your Love divine.
That fire You have lit in my soul
Shall be my guide, eternal and sublime.
Where is the eye that can see You?
The Beloved is there, but the eyes are blind.
We are lost in our own veil, 
While everywhere Your vision prevails.
Mystic Silence

From each, Love demands a mystic silence. What do all seek so earnestly? Tis Love. Love is the subject of their inmost thoughts, In Love no longer "Thou" and "I" exist, For self has passed away in the Beloved. Now will I draw aside the veil from Love, And in the temple of mine inmost soul Behold the Friend, Incomparable Love. He who would know the secret of both worlds Will find that the secret of them both is Love.
Since I Received Your Gift

Since I received Your gift of Love
My task has become difficult, my Love.
   Water pours out of our eyes;
There is a fire in our hearts, my Love.
   Since eternity, before creation,
My soul is lost in Your fascination.
Not just the soul is entranced by You,
The heart, too, stands in line to wait on You.
Followers of the Path are certain of Your Love,
And their destination is Your abode, my Love.
   I arrive empty and seek Your grace,
Reason here has no place in this place!
   Let no one ask why and what this is;
This is a mystery that no answer gives.
   Attar’s heart is lost in You!
He is like a wounded bird for You!
The Path of Love

The path of Love is without end;
If you value life then stay away.
If you give your life, then learn,
A thousand are given in return.
He who shies away and saves his life
Shall be forever regretful of his fate.
Love of the Beloved enters my heart,
Announces that tonight is the night.
If your heart is annihilated for your Beloved,
Then peace is being restless and distraught.
Your first step in the field of Love
Is to be slain or reach the cross!
And then you will be burnt, so you can see
That the Light of Love shines in the fire’s heart.
And when you become ashes and dust,
Then you will dance reflected by the Sun.
In Love

In Love young and old are the same.  
In Love loss and gain are the same.  
In Love the worlds are the same.  
In Love autumn and spring are the same.  
Its down is up and up is down.  
The earth and heavens are the same.  
The place of Love is a circle,  
Each spot is equal to the other.  
If the Beloved scorns you or welcomes you,  
It’s all the same.  
In the tradition of Love to die  
Is the same as gaining eternal life.

In the Dead of Night

In the dead of night, a Sufi began to weep.  
He said, "This world is like a closed coffin, in which  
We are shut and in which, through our ignorance,  
We spend our lives in folly and desolation.  
When Death comes to open the lid of the coffin,  
Each one who has wings will fly off to Eternity,  
But those without will remain locked in the coffin.  
So, my friends, before the lid of this coffin is taken off,  
Do all you can to become a bird of the Way to God;  
Do all you can to develop your wings and your feathers."
Rumi is considered the greatest mystic poet of Islamic literature. The great turning point in his life came when he met the wandering Sufi mystic Shamsuddin Tabrizi, a spiritual guide who aroused Rumi’s passionate devotion. Tabrizi’s mysterious disappearance in 1247 led Rumi to produce some of his most inspired verse.
Enter the Tumultuous Night

Enter the tumultuous night
And from its ocean gather gifts unnamed.
The night hides the Beauty of the hidden;
The day cannot compare with mysterious night.
Sleep he will not want, and sleep unsound
He who has not seen the magical night.

Many pure hearts and minds
Are nothing but slaves to the night.
The night is but an empty black pot
If you want to discover the mystery of the night.
The way is long, God speed, O friends,
If you want to discover the mystery of the night.
The trade of day is in commerce;
It’s quite another trade at night!
You are the Sun, O Shams
Pride of Tabriz,
The desire of day and night!
Seek Out the Source

The Lover’s love is apparent, his Beloved hidden.
The Friend is absent, his signs are everywhere.
Leave this desire for outward forms.
Love should go beyond form and face.
The one you love is not mere form,
Whether it be of heavenly or earthly kind.
Whatever the form that is the object of your love,
You do not forsake it because life leaves it!
The form is still there. Why the disgust at it?
Lover, realize what your true Beloved is.
And since love increases fidelity
How can you fail when form abides beyond the apparent?
When the Sun shines on a wall
The wall is lit up, but by the Sun’s borrowed light.
O ignorant one! Love not the brick or stone.
Seek out the source that lights it up!
Today I Have Found You!

From the beginning of my life I have been looking
For Your face, but today I have seen it!
Today I have seen the charm, the beauty,
The unfathomable grace of the face I was looking for.
Today I have found You, and those who laughed
And scorned me yesterday are sorry
That they were not looking as I did.
I am bewildered by the magnificence of
Your beauty and wish to see You with a hundred eyes!
My heart has burned with passion
And has searched forever for this wondrous beauty
That I now behold!
My arrow of love has arrived at the target.
My soul is screaming in ecstasy.
Every fiber of my being is in love with You!
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My Soul

My soul is mingled with Thee, dissolved in Thee,
A soul to cherish as it has Thy perfume!
Each drop of blood of mine
Is saying to Thy dust,
“I am the color for Your love,
companion of Your affection.
In this house of clay, my heart is desolate
Without Thee!
O Beloved, come into this house
Or else I’ll be gone!”

Don’t Go Back to Sleep

For years, copying other people, I tried to know myself.
From within, I couldn't decide what to do.
Unable to see, I heard my name being called.
Then I walked outside.
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.
Iraqi
died 1289

Iraqi was the pen-name of the Persian poet Fakhruddin Ibrahim. His writings are almost entirely of a mystical and sometimes erotic nature. He was a disciple of the famous Sufi saint Bahauddin Zakariya.
Make Me Happy

Make me happy, my Love, for I am sad.
Have pity on my heart, for I am wretched!
Show Your face so I can marvel at it,
For that is what I yearn for in this world!
Without Your face my Belief is Unbelief.
With Your presence my Unbelief is Belief!
My heart is sad without union with You.
Make me happy as without You I am sad.
Yunus Emre
1238 – 1321

Yunus Emre is the most popular Sufi poet of Turkey. His poetry celebrates love and the common wisdom of Sufi saints and minstrels.
My Fleeting Life

My fleeting life has come and gone –
   A wind that blows and passes by.
   I feel it has been all too brief,
   Just like the blinking of an eye.
To this true word God will attest:
   The Spirit is the body’s guest,
   Some day it will vacate the breast
   As birds, freed from their cages, fly.
Life, my good man, can be likened
   To the land that the farmer sows:
   Lying scattered all over the soil,
   Some of the seeds sprout, but some die.
Amir Khusrow Dehlavi
1253 – 1325

Amir Khusrow is one of India’s greatest Persian language poets. He is an icon of Indo-Persian and Hindu-Muslim cultural synthesis, a great poet and musician who combined Persian with Indian indigenous forms.
I am a Believer of Love

I am a believer of Love.
No need of religion for me!
Each vein of mine throbs with devotion.
No need of the prayer beads for me!
Ignorant doctor, leave me to my fate
And try your medicine in some other place
There is no cure for Lovers’ ills
But the sight of the Beloved’s face!
Do not my weeping eyes
To clouds compare;
They only rain water from the air:
I weep rivers of blood for my beauty fair!
Rejoice, O heart!
You will be to Beauty sacrificed
Though union is denied.
We Have Passed Our Lives in Search

We have passed our lives in search
Of the face of the Friend;
Who can find a moment’s rest
Without seeing the face of the Friend?
It matters not if the whole world
In enmity turns away.
We will from our Beloved’s door
Never turn away.
In the world, Kaaba is the place
Of worship that all Muslims know,
But for the Lovers the place of worship
Is the arch of the Beloved’s Eyebrows.
O morning breeze,
I’ll give my life to you
If you can bring
My Beloved’s fragrance to me.
On Judgment Day
Each goes his own way,
But Khusrow knows none other
But the Beloved’s way.
Khwaja Shamsuddin Muhammad Hafiz is one of the finest lyric poets of Persia. The verse form that Hafiz excelled at was the ghazal, his beautiful lyric poems expressing Sufi themes. His work remains extremely popular in all Persian-speaking countries.
O King of Beauty

O King of Beauty, turn Your gaze
Upon this beggar of Yours.
Have pity on this forlorn,
Helpless devotee of Yours.
The heart of this mystic yearns
And longs for Your life-giving glance.
With Your dark mysterious Eyes
Fulfill his desire, make him dance!
O Friend, take pity on my state.
I’m so alone!
How long will You
Your lovers deny?
For God’s sake, be our friend
And deny us not Your beauty’s
Infinite grace. Listen not to the
Enemy’s accusations and gossip.
Be loyal to Your devotee,
Your friend, Hafiz.
The Great Awakening

What happens when your soul
Begins to awaken your eyes
And your heart and the cells
Of your body to the great
Journey of love?
First there is wonderful laughter and
Probably precious tears and a
Hundred sweet promises and those
Heroic vows no one can ever keep.
But still, God is delighted and amused
You once tried to be a saint.
Beyond the Veil

O pilgrim of the holy place, don’t boast to me,
    For you have only seen His House,
While He has shown Himself to Me!
I yearned to reach and touch sweet beauty’s musky folds;
    It’s merely a fancy, a dream in error that I had.
A burning heart, tears, sighs and weeping, endlessly;
All these are favors that Your Love bestows on me.
    In my mind I see Your image come alive
    And Your memory prevails.
What can I say? What I have seen beyond the Veil!
Yearning for a Drop

Yearning for a drop from my lover’s lips so sweet,
I’ve waited at the door of the tavern, at His feet.
Perhaps He’s forgotten the friendship we once had;
O morning breeze, remind Him of the old days
And make our hearts glad.
Try some other place to find a cure;
Love’s sickness is not cured by the doctor’s medicine.
O Hafiz, mourn not that you have no
Silver or gold; thank God.
What better wealth is there in life
Than pure intent and spiritual health?
You Have Not Danced So Badly

You have not danced so badly, my dear,
Trying to hold hands with the Beautiful One.
You have waltzed with great style, my sweet, crushed angel,
To have ever neared God’s heart at all.
Our Partner is notoriously difficult to follow,
And even His best musicians are not always easy to hear.
So what if the music has stopped for a while.
So what if the price of admission to the Divine
Is out of reach tonight.
So what, my sweetheart, if you lack the ante
To gamble for real Love.
The mind and the body are famous
For holding the heart ransom,
But Hafiz knows the Beloved’s eternal habits.
Have patience, for He will not be able to resist
Your longings and charms for long.
You have not danced so badly, my dear,
Trying to kiss the Magnificent One.
You have actually waltzed with tremendous style,
My sweet, O my sweet, crushed angel.
Shah Niaz
1742 – 1834

Shah Niaz was a Sufi saint born in the Punjab. He wrote poetry in Persian, Urdu and Hindi and he is very popular amongst the Sufis of the South Asian subcontinent.
The Face of Beauty

The face of each beauty is the reflection of His face;
The fragrance and color of each garden are His.
In every heart and soul, the search for Him alone;
Every tongue and every mind, His thought adorns.
The goal of every creed and religion is His abode;
He is the ultimate aim of every sect and nation.
In the Kaaba, in the church and in the temple,
The worshippers are entranced by His eyes.

Though I Am Buried

Though I’m buried in the dust
I yearn for the Beloved, as I must;
Love has gone, yet its pain still hurts.
The spark of Love did my being set afire,
The ashes smolder still with Your desire!
Everything is but illusion, like a mirage;
I know I do not exist, yet the doubt persists.
I need none to say a prayer at my grave;
After me, my Love is there to pray.
Mian Muhammad Baksh
1830 – 1907

Mian Muhammad Baksh is regarded by many Kashmiris as the Rumi of Kashmir.
The Characteristics of Love and Lovers

Those whom Love has chosen as its friend
Remain at peace with this affliction to the very end.

They happily scorn the throne and embrace the thorn,
They rejoice in their Love that has left them forlorn.

Quietly they sip the poisoned wine of Love’s sorrow,
Never afraid of what pain awaits them tomorrow.

In memory of their Beloved they suffer any pain
And drink the wine of sorrow happily from their Beloved’s hands.

Those who have become entranced with their Beloved’s Beauty
Have no desire to be free or remove their chains.

None knows the state of their troubled soul and who to blame;
They are full of the anguish of the moth, but present themselves as
the lighted flame!

On the outside they are dark, but inside carry Light;
Their lips look dry with thirst, yet they bathe in springs of life.

They search far and wide, yet within them the Beloved hides;
They look deaf and dumb and blind, yet in their words meaning
resides.

They embrace their Beloved day and night yet remain unsatisfied;
They cry floods of tears and remain unappeased.
They who are in Love know no respite nor peace nor rest;
They stare in sleep and awakening at their Beloved’s face.

Their belief in their Love consumes them wholly and completely;
Without it nothing seems attractive, neither bazaar nor garden.

Unafraid and unashamed, they openly their Love proclaim;
Those who are with love afflicted care not for fame or name!

If the Beloved demands their heart, they offer it with grace;
If the Beloved wants their life, they give it up in haste.

Immersed in Love for the only one, they forget the whole world:
They cry their life away in yearning for the Beloved One.

Carrying the one Beloved in their hearts they roam town and
wilderness;
Learned doctors find no cure for their healthy, incurable sickness.

Outwardly they are dust and broken twigs; inwardly they are fire!
But their cry of passion could bring down the mountain if they so
desire!

Like the wind they roam across kingdoms, never to be seen;
They are silent yet spread their fragrance far and wide, like the
jasmine.

Consumed by contemplation of their Beloved, unaware,
They know not East or West, nor night or day.

Oblivious of the two worlds, they care for nothing at all;
Like Heer who found her Ranjha and shed her burdens all.
He that has stated “I am closer to you” is here within you,
While you’re searching far and wide for Him who is True!

The heart that’s devoid of Love is worse than guard dogs
Who, despite being hungry and weak, remain forever loyal.

Without Love all the praying and chastity are vain,
Until you burn with Love, you’ll not know friendship.

Those who do not have the sickness of Love will never taste the
fruit of vision.
If you fall sick with the Love of God, no need for any cure.

He who is slain with this sword, he is a martyr!
He who dies for Love lives forever and hereafter!

He who has earned Love’s grace is indeed a special person;
Unless you reach this secret place, you are not really human.

The robe and recitation are vain, unless there’s Light inside;
Unless Love burns your soul, those outward signs are of no use.

Swords may flash and arrows rain, the lover is fearless.
O Muhammad Baksh, Love and restraint never go together.

He never reveals Love’s secret to another, no matter what
Abuse and indignity one suffers, nor what calamity befalls.

If you want to be a lover, grab hold of your Beloved’s hem,
And if He so desires give up your life and limb right there and then.
The body only goes to heaven when it dresses up in death;
In the hope of meeting the Beloved, bear hell and death as necessary.

The lover is never hopeless, with every passing day,
He can be told off a hundred times, but will not go away.

If you desire the way of Love, remove all doubt and fear.
Be hopeful and positive and your goal is very near!

Always be patient and thankful for God’s grace.
There is no other Giver but He and no other door but His.

Even if He removes thee from the throne and makes you a prisoner,
O Muhammad Baksh, you will have to plead with Him in the end.
The Valley of Unity or Oneness

Then comes a valley that is the valley of Oneness. The worshipped meets the worshiper, the disciple and Master are One.

Thousands of heads joined together, come out of one collar; It’s so tight that not even a grain of sand can pass through.

The pre-eternal and eternal are both the garments, and this collar is in-between;
Each one, however, takes its form from the same Master.

He that has not drowned in the river of Unity
May look human, but is not a man.

He who reaches Oneness goes beyond good and bad;
Good and bad are just ways of seeing.

As man reaches into himself and makes a place, Sometimes in happiness he laughs, at others, cries in misery.

Once he comes out of himself, he’s neither happy nor sad, From both hell’s sorrow and heaven’s delight he’s free.

Each man has in his ego hell’s snakes and scorpions, But as he leaves his Self behind, he’s free of all dangers.

Come out of Self, else carry that hell with you, And be bitten by the snakes and scorpions of pain.
When the searcher reaches here, he dies and lives again;
He disappears and appears again as deaf and dumb and blind.

Reason roams outside this city and cannot enter;
Anyone who discovers this mystery is free of care.

He leaves all reason behind and dances wildly
And says he does not know who he is and where he goes.

If you leave your ego behind and forget your Self,
That is the place of Oneness!

O Muhammad Baksh, who can describe it in mere words?
May your soul be happy; journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

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