

The Sigh

Preamble to Masnavi:

In fact whole of Masnavi is sigh of soul, the statement on occurrence taking place in the world of heart of a mystic wayfarer, the Pilgrim of Truth. In other words it could safely be titled as “the travelogue” of soul in its endeavor.

The antecedent of this heavenly adventure, in the Islamic tradition, goes back to the Holy journey titled Me’raj, the Ascension or Night to Heaven of the Holy Prophet Mohammed, body as well as soul, the account of which is well preserved by the Holy Qur’an and Hadis (the saying of the Holy Prophet) which needs no elaboration here. After the Holy Prophet, His followers, the pure of heart and friends of God, and the mystics, throughout succeeding centuries, were also blessed with exaltation but their flight was of soul only, dreaming or through mediation endeavor. Obviously Me’raj of the Holy Prophet presented a theme and scheme for those who were blessed with such journey in “Ittebah”, imitatio Prophetarum. Therefore journey performed by any virtuous soul, as module in similitude, threads back to, and draws allegorical auspiciousness from the same. In Me’raj the Archangel Gabriel is the envoy. Provision of winged mule namely “Burraq”, from the Heavens, was specialty in case of the Prophet in view of His singular status “His Slave” in presence of God. The interpretations of Qur’an go to lead us that in the course of Ascension of the Holy Prophet He met and conversed with earlier Messengers and Prophets, from Adam to Ibrahim Khalil before enjoying the supreme felicity of colloquy with God.

When soul attained ability that to give its expression final shape, setting guidelines for Muslim generations, rather in the larger spectrum for the whole humanity, to rise through self-realization, utilizing the soul’s endeavor as vehicle, with blessings of the same they were blessed with this auspicious hiking. In fact, mission behind this walk (to the world of soul) and this endeavor is always to provide guidance to the family of God, for better.

Now difficulty with the wayfarer is that how should he translate the things he came across there at the station “soul added up”, for understanding of the worldly folks, where all the things were Godly, which could be brought to metaphorical expression, nor could the others be driven home to those situations. Now whatever he came across, after descending, he likes to share with his fellow-beings and there to make the things clear to his fellows he has no choice besides telling the tale in the metaphorical expression availing support of allegories from the metaphor. Sheikh

of Rumi, Sheikh Shams-ud-Din Tabrezi says that the Lover tells the story of such occurrence, to the worldly folks in accordance with his perceptive capabilities. He said:

Lover borrows allegories of hair, cheek and face. He declares Sakeeb, Cup and Goblet to be the essential ingredients of his message. Adorer, the plaintiff, is always to bow before the Adored. What Religion of the Lover is? To be slave of the Beloved! His talk turns here on cheek like Ruby, there like Embers ablaze. Talk turning in intoxication and hilarity imagination there is of the mystic, gone drowned in the Absolute Existence. Lover is free ever; whatever locution, he means the Beloved, the Truth!

The modus operandi derived therefore is to convey the matters concerning spiritual occurrence in the metaphorical expression (word of the worldly folks). It has therefore compulsorily to be of the allegoric face, on the face, and is too difficult to perceive unless one should have full grasp of allegories. Translator's mind urges to give layout of those allegories with each verse but in that eventuality this presentation won't be covered in many huge volumes to accommodate whole of Masnavi. Each verse of message of Rumi is therefore, a matter of perception of allegories!

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Prologue

Listen to the reed-flute, its narrative it likes to explain
And of its banishments, much more, it has to complain!

Says; ever since I have been cleft, from my jungle of reed
With me sighing, men sigh, women sigh, sighs the whole creed!

Interpretation: Word of soul could not be a metaphorical expression. Rumi takes here flute as allegory for soul and jungle of reed allegory for the world of soul. Masnavi Rumi is the narrative of soul, the soul of pure of heart, like Iqbal and Rumi and others. A commoner's soul has nothing to do with complaint. Anyway whole of Masnavi is sigh of soul, in a touchy way!

That breast I want, torn which should be of separation
That of pain of Love, I could give detailed explanation!

Whoso gets staggered away, from his generation and race
In quest there he falls, as to when alliance would take place?

Lamenting there I have been, in each and every crowd

Pairing there I lived, with the fortunate and wicked proud!

Friendly everyone came to me, according to his suspicion
Bothered least but to dig out, secrets of my inner tradition!

Not far away my secret is, from my lamentation and cries
But to catch it there is no light, with apparent ears and eyes!

Not veiled from soul body is, and from body the soul
But no one had way out to see, what basis is of the whole?

Note: Upto this verse it was apparently saying of flute. From next verse saying of Rumi begins. Rumi says that lament of flute, which is saying of the pious folks, is not merely the breath that one should consider it air without effect, rather it is fire, whoso comes across, it burns him also;

Of this flute song is Fire, not that merely it is air
This fire whoso doesn't hail, death to such a player!

Fire it is of Love, to make flute engage with whine
Furor in fact of Love it was, which came there in wine!

Confidant this flute is of that, cut off who is from his friend
Veils of our heart its tunes have rent, not which are to mend!

Like flute, poison who hath seen, and like flute antidote?
Like flute, who saw consoler and lover, not easy to quote?

Flute it is, to tell tale of the dangerous and bloodiest way
Stories of love, toils of Qais Aamri, there it only is to say!

Intent: Flute tells the tale of bloodiest way, the way of endeavored Truth-seeking, which is full of tumults and adversities, and reflects on tale of love of heart where there is nothing left except the reality Beloved, that is to say the Truth.

Like flute two mouths we have, one here, and other there
One of the mouths is concealed, within lips of that Player!

Note: There is a delicate point in this saying and that is; by Player meant here is the Creator, of all songs of the flute that is God. To be clearer it has been said that all the actions appearing at hand of the created (man) are from the Creator factually!

One mouth is mournful, and is directed towards you all
Though facing you, in heavens, its howl and cry is to fall!

This secret but he only knows, donned who is with eye
That song being lifted here is in fact, of the other end, cry!

Song at this end of the flute, is due only to His blowing
Hue and cry of soul is out of His cautioning, and allowing!

Confidant of this sensibleness is, no one but the senseless
Buyer of tongue like ear, as you could find nor could guess!

Analysis: Meant by senseless here is Dervish, who getting clear of rust of worldly awareness is wholly absorbed in and engaged with Truth. Meant from sensibleness is the word of Dervish. Though the world-mongers take it for absurd raving and ranting but it is wholly the sensibleness since it is blown from the other end of the flute. Ear here is the allegory for the wise, who has the ability to weigh the word of Dervish, and tongue is the allegory for flute blower, meaning that capable only could perceive the word of Dervish, which in fact flows from the Truth's end.

Had there not been any effect, of lamentation of flute
Flute won't have filled the world, with sweetness cute!

Many of our days went waste, in grief of separation
Many of days came to end, with agony and frustration!

Yet days if go waste, say go, nothing there to worry
Thou remain, oh that no chaste like Thee, worry we bury!

Besides Fish whoso there was, from His water got satiated
Whoso stayed without His day, his day went waste, eliminated!

Intent: Fish is the allegory of Lover here and ocean that of Truth. Even sipping seven oceans of Love, the Lover is never satisfied. The others may get satisfied!

Of mind, immature cannot catch, state of accomplished man
Hence dialogue needs to cut short; salute him earlier as you can!

For its exuberance, wine is needy of our vehemence
In rotation, sky is prisoner of our senses and conscience!

Note: Meant from sky here is the era comprising of thoughts of millions of wise or unwise.

From me elated the wine is, not that elated I am from wine
Due to me the figure was carved, not predecessor it is of mine!

Not everyone is able to hear virtuous song, and digest
Not morsel of every meek bird is fig, to take and have rest!

Break your bond soon, oh my Son! And get free of the same
For how long you would remain; prisoner of wealth and fame!

If you would like to cast ocean, into a cup, at any rate
How much portion of it would be, contained in it of date?

Interpretation: In elucidation of the previous verse here absurdity of piling up of wealth in the world, more than one's legitimate needs, has been ridiculed. To what extent your needs are? According to Dervish these are; to cover body clothes, to cover head a hut, and to maintain lifeline two breads. Greed beyond that is nonsense. If one would like to add knoll of worldly boon in belly more than two breads, what he could add? Then greed beyond that is ridiculous!

Cup of Eye of the greedy folks, could be filled, never
Until Oyster showed contents, its lap wasn't filled ever!

Whoso got his skirt rent with Love, and with affection!
Totally clear he became there, of greed and imperfection!

Bravo, oh our Love, the whole passion in rendition!
Of all of our diseases and ailments, oh thou Physician!

Oh cure of our egoistic pride, and lust for prestige!
Oh thou our Plato and Galen, physician of our siege!

Due only to Love terrestrial body, had gone over the skies

Mount Sinai also began to dance, glad as if in love of allies!

Love became soul there, of the Mount Sinai, oh Fond!
Mount got elated, Moses fell losing sense of command!

Hidden mystery in our tunes, is there in ebb and tide
That openly if I tell, upsetting the world I would collide!

Interpretation: That mystery concealed in flute is the secret of creation, of man, that is the secret of existence. It could be described in song of the flute, to be perceived by the capable only. If man tries to unveil it “world”, the general public, upsetting, would be destroyed. There has been one who tried to say it openly i.e. Mansoor Hallaj who was there and then crucified.

Of both the states, the ebb and tide, what flute goes to say?
If I opt to tell, destroyed, the world would be scattered away!

Had I been jointed to the lips, of my assenting Friend
Like flute I too would have said, worth saying end to end!

Whoso parted from his friend, that is, confidant and intimate!
Though may have hundreds of means, became helpless, desolate!

When spring season went, and garden got ruined, withered
After that where you would go to hear, the Nightingale’s word?

When spring season went, and garden got ruined in way oblique
Where to find fragrance of rose, there in rose-water should we seek?

Whole of beings is the Beloved, and Lover himself is its veil
Forever to live the Beloved, and last breathe Lover to inhale!

When Love should go unconcerned, and of him careless
Woe unto him, that like wingless bird, he became helpless!

Lasso of His love verily is, our wing and feather, to fly
Catching by the hair which takes, to Friend’s street, as ally!

What I should say that sense I have, of the front and hind?

When Friend's light should not be there, unable I am to find!

His light is all around, above and below, and on left and right
Over my head as crown, and around my neck as fetter very tight!

Passion wants that this issue should be, stated at open place
But when mirror is reflecting no more, how it could be the case?

Do you know why your mirror is not informer, at its place?
Because rust has not yet been deferred away, from its face!

Mirror which is clear of rust, and of smoke of the sort
With brilliance of Sun of God filled, that is on its part!

Go, oh Seeker! Of its rust, first clear its face
And after that get that light, that may God grace!

And listen to this true story, giving it ear of your heart
That wholly you should get rid of, carnal materiality's part!

Comprehension if you have, give way of growth to your soul
With passion after that, step on that way, to achieve your goal!

Interpretation: That is to say if you feel concerned with your well-being in this world and more the Hereafter then protecting your soul from decay, make it attentive towards progress in spirituality and then go on making progress stage by stage on way of mystic initiation.

In fact last five verses are the pith of this Prologue and cover a piece of advice for the reader that he should first clear his heart, of all of the possible worldly pollutions; serious involvement in, and engagement with, complexities of the apparent, fallen in lust for 3Ws (Wealth, Woman and Worldly estate and rank-mongering) making sure that there is enough hoarding space for Masnavi (which he is going to receive from this wholly spiritual inflow) and that it lands in his consciousness safe, and that he is of the mind receptive for this advice!