

THE MATHNAWÍ OF JALÁLU'DDÍN RÚMÍ

EDITED FROM THE OLDEST MANUSCRIPTS
AVAILABLE: WITH CRITICAL NOTES,
TRANSLATION, & COMMENTARY

BY

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VOLUME II

CONTAINING THE TRANSLATION
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PROEM

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IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE.

Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations—

Saying, "Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan.

I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire.

Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it.

In every company I uttered my wailful notes, I consorted with the unhappy and with them that rejoice.

Every one became my friend from his own opinion; none sought out my secrets from within me.

My secret is not far from my plaint, but ear and eye lack the light (whereby it should be apprehended).

Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body, yet none is permitted to see the soul."

This noise of the reed is fire, it is not wind: whose hath not this fire, may he be naught!

'Tis the fire of Love that is in the reed, 'tis the fervour of Love that is in the wine.

The reed is the comrade of every one who has been parted from a friend: its strains pierced our hearts'.

Who ever saw a poison and antidote like the reed? Who ever saw a sympathiser and a longing lover like the reed?

The reed tells of the Way full of blood and recounts stories of the passion of Majnûn.

Only to the senseless is this sense confided: the tongue hath no customer save the ear.

In our woe the days (of life) have become untimely: our days is travel hand in hand with burning griefs.

If our days are gone, let them go!—'tis no matter. Do Thou remain, for none is holy as Thou art!

Whoever is not a fish becomes sated with His water; whoever is without daily bread finds the day long.

None that is raw understands the state of the ripe: therefore my words must be brief. Farewell!

O son, burst thy chains and be free! How long wilt thou be bondsman to^a silver and gold?

If thou pour the sea into a pitcher, how much will it hold? so one day's store.

The pitcher, the eye of the covetous, never becomes full: the oyster-shell is not filled with pearls until it is contented.

Literally, "rent our veils."^a Literally, "(in) the bonds of."

He (alone) whose garment is rent by a (mighty) love is purged of covetousness and all defect.

Hail, O Love that bringest us good gain—thou that art the physician of all our ills,

35 Theremedy of our pride and vainglory, our Plato and our Galen! Through Love the earthly body soared to the skies: the mountain began to dance and became nimble.

Love inspired Mount Sinai, O lover, (so that) Sinai (was made) drunken and Moses fell in a swoon.

Were I joined to the lip of one in accord with me, I too, like the reed, would tell all that may be told;

(But) whoever is parted from one who speaks his language becomes dumb, though he have a hundred songs.

When the rose is gone and the garden faded, thou wilt hear no more the nightingale's story.

30 The Beloved is all and the lover (but) a veil; the Beloved is living and the lover a dead thing.

When Love hath no care for him, he is left as a bird without wings. Alas for him then!

How should I have consciousness (of aught) before or behind when the light of my Beloved is not before me and behind?

Love wills that this Word should be shown forth: if the mirror does not reflect, how is that?

Do not thou know why the mirror (of thy soul) reflects nothing? Because the rust is not cleared from its face.

35 O my friends, hearken to this tale: in truth it is the very marrow of our inward state.

The story of the king's falling in love with a handmaiden and buying her.

In olden time there was a king to whom belonged the power temporal and also the power spiritual.

It chanced that one day he rode with his courtiers to the chase. On the king's highway the king espied a handmaiden: the

soul of the king was enthralled by her. Forasmuch as the bird, his soul, was fluttering in its cage, he

gave money and bought the handmaiden.

40 After he had bought her and won to his desire, by Divine destiny she sickened.

A certain man had an ass but no pack-saddle: (as soon as) he got a saddle, the wolf carried away his ass.

He had a pitcher, but no water could be obtained: when he found water, the pitcher broke.

The king gathered the physicians together from left and right and said to them, "The life of us both is in your hands."

My life is of no account, (but) she is the life of my life. I am in pain and wounded: she is my remedy.

One who is slain by a king like this, he (the king) leads him to fortune and to the best (most honourable) estate.

Unless he (the king) had seen advantage to him (the goldsmith) in doing violence to him, how should that absolute Mercy have sought to do violence?

The child trembles at the barber's scalpel (but) the fond mother is happy in that pain (of her child).

He takes half a life and gives a hundred lives (in exchange): 243

he gives that which enters not into your imagination. You are judging (his actions) from (the analogy of) yourself, but you have fallen far, far (away from the truth). Consider well!

The story of the greengrocer and the parrot and the parrot's spilling the oil in the shop.

There was a greengrocer who had a parrot, a sweet-voiced green talking parrot.

(Perched) on the bench, it would watch over the shop (in the owner's absence) and talk finely to all the traders.

In addressing human beings it would speak (like them); it was (also) skilled in the song of parrots.

(Once) it sprang from the bench and flew away; it spilled 250 the bottles of rose-oil.

Its master came from the direction of his house and seated himself on the bench at his ease as a merchant does.

(Then) he saw the bench was full of oil and his clothes greasy; he smote the parrot on the head: it was made bald by the blow.

For some few days it refrained from speech; the greengrocer, in repentance, heaved deep sighs,

Tearing his beard and saying, "Alas! the sun of my prosperity has gone under the clouds.

Would that my hand had been broken (powerless) at that 255 moment! How (ever) did I strike (such a blow) on the head of that sweet-tongued one?"

He was giving presents to every dervish, that he might get back the speech of his bird.

After three days and three nights, he was seated on the bench, distraught and sorrowful, like a man in despair,

Showing the bird every sort of marvel (in the hope) that maybe it would begin to speak.

Meanwhile a bare-headed dervish, clad in a *jawlmaq* (coarse woollen frock), passed by, with a head hairless as the outside of bowl and basin.

Thereupon the parrot began to talk, screeched at the dervish 260 and said, "Hey, fellow!

How were you mixed up with the bald, O baldpate? Did you, then, spill oil from the bottle?"

The bystanders laughed at the parrot's inference, because it deemed the wearer of the frock to be like itself.

Do not measure the actions of holy men by (the analogy of) yourself, though *shér* (lion) and *shír* (milk) are similar in writing.

On this account the whole world is gone astray: scarcely any one is cognisant of God's *Abdál* (Substitutes).¹

²⁶⁵ They set up (a claim of) equality with the prophets; they supposed the saints to be like themselves.

"Behold," they said, "we are men, they are men; both we and they are in bondage to sleep and food."

In (their) blindness they did not perceive that there is an infinite difference between (them).

Both species of *zanbúr* ate and drank from the (same) place, but from that one (the hornet) came a sting, and from this other (the bee) honey.

Both species of deer ate grass and drank water: from this one came dung, and from that one pure musk.

²⁷⁰ Both reeds drank from the same water-source, (but) this one is empty and that one (full of) sugar.

Consider hundreds of thousands of such likenesses and observe that the distance between the two is (as great as) a seventy years' journey.

This one eats, and filth is discharged from him; that one eats, and becomes entirely the light of God.

This one eats, (and of him) is born nothing but avarice and envy; that one eats, (and of him) is born nothing but love of the One (God).

This one is good (fertile) soil and that one brackish and bad; this one is a fair angel and that one a devil and wild beast.

²⁷⁵ If both resemble each other in aspect, it may well be (so): bitter water and sweet water have (the same) clearness.

Who knows (the difference) except a man possessed of (spiritual) taste? Find (him): he knows the sweet water from the brine.

Comparing magic with (prophetic) miracle, he (the ignorant one) fancies that both are founded on deceit.

The magicians (in the time) of Moses, for contention's sake, lifted up (in their hands) a rod like his.

(But) between this rod and that rod there is a vast difference; from this action (magic) to that action (miracle) is a great way.

²⁸⁰ This action is followed by the curse of God, (while) that action receives in payment the mercy (blessing) of God.

The infidels in contending (for equality with the prophets and saints) have the nature of an ape: the (evil) nature is a canker within the breast.

¹ The saints next in rank to the *Qutb*, who is the head of the spiritual hierarchy.

Whatever a man does, the ape at every moment does the same thing that he sees done by the man.

He thinks, "I have acted like him"; how should that quarrel-some-looking one know the difference?

This one (the holy man) acts by the command (of God), and he (the apish imitator) for the sake of quarrelling (rivalry). Pour dust on the heads of those who have quarrelsome faces!

That (religious) hypocrite joins in ritual prayer with the (sincere) as conformist (only) for quarrelling's sake, not for supplication.

In prayer and fasting and pilgrimage and alms-giving the true believers are (engaged) with the hypocrite in (what brings) victory and defeat.

Victory in the end is to the true believers; upon the hypocrite (falls) defeat in the state hereafter.

Although both are intent on one game, in relation to each other they are (as far apart as) the man of Merv and the man of Ray.

Each one goes to his (proper) abiding-place; each one fares according to his name.

If he be called a true believer, his soul rejoices; and if you say "hypocrite," he becomes filled with fire (rage).

His (the true believer's) name is loved on account of its essence (which is true faith); this one's (the hypocrite's) name is loathed on account of its pestilent qualities.

(The four letters) *mim* and *waw* and *mim* and *nun* do not confer honour: the word *múmin* (true believer) is only for the sake of denotation.

If you call him (the true believer) hypocrite, this vile name is stinging (him) within like a scorpion.

If this name is not derived from Hell, then why is there the taste of Hell in it?

²⁹⁵ The foulness of that ill name is not from the letters; the bitterness of that sea-water is not from the vessel (containing it).

The letters are the vessel; therein the meaning is (contained) like water; (but) the sea of the meaning is (with God)—*win* *Him is the Ummu 'l-Kutb*.

In this world the bitter sea and the sweet sea (are divided)—between them is a barrier which they do not seek to cross.

Know that both these flow from one origin. Pass on from them both, go (all the way) to their origin!

Without the touchstone you will never know in the assay adulterated gold and fine gold by (using your own) judgement.

Any one in whose soul God shall put the touchstone, he will so distinguish certainty from doubt.

A piece of rubbish jumps into the mouth of a living man, and only when he ejects it is he at ease.

When, amongst thousands of morsels (of food), one little piece of rubbish entered (his mouth), the living man's sense (of touch or taste) tracked it down.

The worldly sense is the ladder to this world; the religious sense is the ladder to Heaven.

Seek ye the well-being of the former sense from the physician; beg ye the well-being of the latter sense from the Beloved.

305 The health of the former arises from the flourishing state of the body; the health of the latter arises from the ruin of the body.

The spiritual way ruins the body and, after having ruined it, restores it to prosperity:

Ruined the house for the sake of the golden treasure, and with that same treasure builds it better (than before);

Cut off the water and cleansed the river-bed, then caused drinking-water to flow in the river-bed;

Cleft the skin and drew out the iron point (of the arrow or spear)—then fresh skin grew over it (the wound);

310 Rased the fortress and took it from the infidel, then reared thereon a hundred towers and ramparts.

Who shall describe the action of Him who hath no like? This that I have said (is only what the present) necessity is affording.

Sometimes it (the action of God) appears like this and sometimes the contrary of this: the work of religion is naught but bewilderment.

(I mean) not one bewildered in such wise that his back is (turned) towards Him; nay, but one bewildered (with ecstasy) like this and drowned (in God) and intoxicated with the Beloved.

The face of the one is set towards the Beloved, (while) the face of the other is just his own face (he is facing himself).

315 Look long on the face of every one, keep watch attentively: it may be that by doing service (to Šúfiá) you will come to know the face (of the true saint).

Since there is many a devil who hath the face of Adam, it is not well to give your hand to every hand,

Because the fowler produces a whistling sound in order to decoy the bird¹,

(So that) the bird may hear the note of its congener and come down from the air and find trap and knife-point.

The vile man will steal the language of dervishes, that he may thereby chant a spell over (fascinate and deceive) one who is simple.

320 The work of (holy) men is (as) light and heat; the work of vile men is trickery and shamelessness.

¹ Literally, "in order that the birdcatcher may decoy."

They make a woollen lion for the purpose of begging; they give the title of Ahmad (Mohammed) to Bú Musaylim;

(But) to Bú Musaylim remained the title of *Kadhhdhb* (Liar), to Mohammed remained (the title of) *Ulu 'l-albdb* (Endowed with understanding).

The wine of God, its seal (last result) is pure musk, (but) as for (the other) wine, its seal is stench and torment.