

Delight and Desire¹

(*Zauq o Shauq*)

Muhammad Iqbal

*It made me sad, going back to my friends,
empty-handed
from such a sumptuous garden as this.*

1.

Morning in the desert: the scene
Gives life to the heart, to the eye;
Streams of light flow from the fount of the sun.
Beauty, of Eternity-without-beginning, reveals Itself,
Being's curtain lies in tatters: For the heart,
a thousand gains, and one loss: the power of sight.
Nightcloud has left behind crimson and blue shadows
Draping the Mount of Izam in multi-hued shawls.
The air is free of dust, the date-trees are laved and washed;
The sands around the Kazimah are sable-soft.
Here, there were fires, now quenched,
There, a few pieces of tent-ropes, broken: How many
Have been the caravans that passed by here? Who knows?
The voice of the Angel Gabriel calls to me: This
Is your station: Delight-of-life everlasting for those
Who are the People of Unionlessness.

2.

Are there any to whom I should say: Look,
The wine of life is poison for me? Cosmos
Is an ancient house, events that happen to me
Are new, fully fresh. Are there no more Ghaznavids
In the action-house of life? The idol-houses
Of Ka'bah's people have been waiting, waiting.

¹ Note by the Poet: Many of the verses that follow were written in Palestine.

The songs of the Arabs, when they remember Him—
The fashionings of the non-Arabs, when they think—
Are devoid of the Arab's insights, of the non-Arab's imaginings.
The flowing tresses of the Tigris and Euphrates are still
Bright, enticing, curled around each to each. But there's not
A single Husain in the caravan from Hijaz.
Love is the First Master for reason, for the power of sight,
For the heart. All the laws of religion, all theology
Are the house of idle fancies when there's no Love.
Love is Abraham's truthfulness; it's also
The patient suffering of Husain. On the battle-field of being
Love is the battle of Badr, Love is the battle of Hunain.

3.

You are the late-descried meaning of the sign
That is Cosmos. Caravans of fragrance and colour
Left home and hearth, searching for you.
In schools, accessible to all, sit teachers
Who are purblind, unseeing; in the fastness
Of the tavern are those who are undemanding, whose gourds
Are empty. And I, whose song holds the clue
To the fires that are gone, my story is nothing
But seeking, searching for those who are now lost.
The wave of the morning breeze does nothing
But nourish and foster thorns and grasses;
The waves of my breath nourish and foster
Longing, and the eagerness of desire.
My song is nurtured by heart's blood;
In each string of the instrument courses the blood
Of him who plays upon the instrument.
Do not give to the restless heart more leave
To struggle. Add a couple of rings more
To your curly lustrous tresses.

4.

You are the Secure Tablet, you are also the Pen,
Your person is the Book. This dome of brilliant hues
Is nothing but a puny bubble of your ocean.

This earth, made of dust and water became
Radiant, when you appeared. You gave
The sun-rise to the particles of sand.
The pomp of Sanjar and Salim is but
Your might and state when they become apparent;
The back breaking poverty of Junaid and Bayazid
Is but your beauty unveiled. If your desire
Weren't to lead my prayers, they would be nought
But a shroud: standing erect or prostrating would be
No less than a dividing curtain.
Your enticing eye gave to both their heart's desire:
Reason found absence and seeking;
Love found presence, and anguish.
The sun's going round and round has darkened the whole world;
Renew the nature of time: appear with your radiance unveiled.

5.

My past days and nights, all are open before your eye;
Little did I know that Science is a tree that bears no fruit.
The ancient encounter is now renewed in my heart:
Love is Mustafa through and through; Reason
Is nothing but Abu Lahab. Love sometimes
Takes by artful wile; sometimes it pulls
By main force. Love's beginning is a wonder,
Its end a wonder too. In the world of Love's song and music
Unionlessness is greater than Union. Union causes
Desire's death; separation has the delicious pleasure
Of demanding, seeking. Even in union
I lacked the daring to see, although
My impudent eye sought, and yet sought
Excuses to look. I knew that unionlessness
Powers desire and longing. The waves seek
Unionlessness, the honour of the drop is saved
By being unionless.

*Translated from the original Urdu by Shamsur Rahman Faruqi
Charlottesville, VA, September 21, 2010.*