

## Mathnawi VI 807-887

*Comparison of the covetous man, who does not see the all-providingness of God and the (infinite) stores of His mercy, to an ant struggling with a single grain of wheat on a great threshing-floor and showing violent agitation and trembling and dragging it hurriedly along, unconscious of the amplitude of the threshing-floor.*

The ant trembles for a grain (of wheat) because it is blind to the goodly threshing-floors.

It drags a grain along greedily and fearfully, for it does not see such a noble stack of winnowed wheat (as is there).

The Owner of the threshing-floor is saying (to the ant), “Hey, thou who in thy blindness deemest nothing something,

Hast thou regarded that (alone) as belonging to My threshing-floors, so that thou art devoted with (all) thy soul to that (single) grain?”

**810.** O thou who in semblance art (insignificant as) a mote, look at Saturn; thou art a lame ant: go, look at Solomon.

Thou art not this body: thou art that (spiritual) Eye. If thou hast beheld the spirit, thou art delivered from the body.

Man (essentially) is eye: the rest (of him) is (mere) flesh and skin: whatsoever his eye has beheld, he is that thing.

A jar will submerge a mountain with (its) water when the eye of the jar is open to the Sea.

When from the soul (interior) of the jar a channel is made to the Sea, the jar will overwhelm the Jayhún (Oxus).

**815.** For that reason whatsoever the speech (voice) of Ahmad (Mohammed) may utter, the words are (really) uttered by the Sea.

All his words were pearls of the Sea, for his heart had a passage into the Sea.

Since the bounty of the Sea is (poured) through our jar, what wonder (that) the Sea (itself) should be (contained) in a Fish?

The sensual eye is fixed on the form of the thoroughfare: thou art regarding it as a thoroughfare, but he (the Perfect Man) as a permanent abode.

This dualism is characteristic of the eye that sees double; but (in reality) the first is the last and the last is the first.

**820.** Hark, by what means is this made known (to thee)? By means of the (spiritual) resurrection. Seek to experience (that) resurrection: do not dispute concerning (that) resurrection.

The (necessary) condition of (experiencing) the Day of Resurrection is to die first, for (the word) *ba'th* (resurrection) is (signifies) “to raise to life from the dead.”

Hence all the world have taken the wrong way, for they are afraid of nonexistence, though it is (really) the refuge (in which they find salvation).

Whence shall we seek (true knowledge)? From renouncing (our false) knowledge. Whence shall we seek (true) peace? From renouncing peace (with our carnal selves).

Whence shall we seek (real) existence? From renouncing (illusory) existence. Whence shall we seek the apple (of Truth)? From renouncing the hand (of self-assertion and self-interest).

**825.** O best Helper, only Thou canst make the eye that regards the non-existent to regard that which is (really) existent.

The eye that was produced from non-existence regarded the Essence of (real) Being as wholly non-existent; (But), if (thy) two eyes are transformed and illumined, this well-ordered world becomes the scene of the Last Judgement.

These realities are shown forth imperfectly (here) because the apprehension of them is forbidden to these raw (ignorant) ones.

Although God is munificent, the enjoyment of the delightful gardens of Paradise is forbidden to him who is destined for Hell.

**830.** The honey of Paradise becomes bitter in his mouth, since he was not (destined to be) one of them that faithfully keep the covenant of everlasting life.

Ye (worldly folk) also (who are engaged) in commerce—how should your hands move (to sell anything) when there is no buyer?

How should (idle) looking-on be capable of buying? The fool's looking-on is (not for buying, but merely for) loitering.

(He strolls about) continually asking, “How much is this?” and “How much is that?” for the sake of pastime and mockery.

(’Tis only) from boredom (that) he asks you (to show him) your goods: that person is not a buyer and customer.

**835.** He inspects the article a hundred times and hands it back (to you): when did he (ever) measure a piece of cloth? He measured wind (and nothing else).

What a distance between the approach and bargaining of a purchaser and the pleasantries of a silly joker? Since there is not a mite in his possession, how should he seek (to buy) a coat except in jest?

He has no capital for trading: what, then, is the difference between his ill-favoured person and a shadow? The capital (required) for the market of this world is gold; there (in the next world) the capital is love and two eyes wet (with tears).

**840.** Whoever went to market without any capital, his life passed and he speedily returned in disappointment.

“Oh, where hast thou been, brother?” “Nowhere.” “Oh, what hast thou cooked to eat?” “No (good) soup.” Become a buyer, that my hand may move (to sell to thee), and that my pregnant mine may bring forth the ruby.

Though the buyer is slack and lukewarm, (yet) call (him) to the (true) religion, for the (command to) call hath come down (from God).

Let the falcon fly and catch the spiritual dove: in calling (to God) take the way of Noah.

**845.** Perform an act of service for the Creator's sake: what hast thou to do with being accepted or rejected by the people?

*Story of the person who was giving the drum-call for the sahur at the gate of a certain palace at midnight. A neighbour said to him, "Why, it is midnight, it is not (yet) dawn; and besides, there is no one in this palace: for whose sake are you drumming?"—and the minstrel's reply to him.*

A certain man was drumming at a certain gate to announce the *sahur*: 'twas a court-house and the pavilion of a grandee.

(Whilst) he was beating his drum vigorously at midnight, some one said to him, "O thou who art seeking (the means of) support,

Firstly, give this call to the *sahur* at daybreak: midnight is not the time for (making) this disturbance;

And secondly, observe, O man of vain desire, whether in fact there is any one inside this house at midnight.

850. There is nobody here except demons and spirits: why art thou trifling thy time away?

Thou art beating thy tambourine for the sake of an ear: where is the ear?

Intelligence is needed in order to know (thy purpose): where is the intelligence?"

He replied, "You have said (your say): (now) hear the answer from your (humble) servant, that you may not remain in bewilderment and confusion.

Although in your opinion this moment is midnight, in my view the dawn of delight is near at hand.

In my sight every defeat has been turned to victory, in my eyes all nights have been turned to day.

855. To you the water of the river Nile seems blood; to me it is not blood, 'tis water, O noble one.

In regard to you, that (object) is iron or marble, (but) to the prophet David it is (soft as) wax and tractable.

To you the mountain is exceedingly heavy (solid) and inanimate, (but) to David it is a master-musician.

To you the gravel is silent; to Ahmad (Mohammed) it is eloquent and making supplication (to God).

To you the pillar of the mosque is a dead thing; to Ahmad it is (like) a lover who has lost his heart.

860. To the vulgar all the particles of the world seem dead, but before God they are possessed of knowledge and submissive (to His commands).

As for your saying, "There is nobody in this house and palace: why art thou beating this drum?"—

(I reply that) this (Moslem) people are giving (large) sums of gold for God's sake, founding hundreds of pious institutions and mosques,

And, like intoxicated lovers, gladly risking their property and lives on their way to (perform) the distant Pilgrimage:

Do they ever say, "The House (Ka'ba) is empty"? Nay, (they know that) the Lord of the House is the Spirit invisible.

865. He that is illumined by the Light of God deems the House of the Beloved to be full (of Him).

In the eyes of those who see the end, many a palace filled with a crowd and throng (of people) is empty.

Seek in the (spiritual) Ka'ba whomsoever you please, that he may at once grow (rise into view) before your face.

How should the form (of the Perfect Man), which is splendid and sublime, (ever) be absent from the House of God?

He is (always) present (there), exempt from exclusion, (while) the rest of mankind (are there only) on account of (their occasional) need.

**870.** Do they (the pilgrims) ever say, ‘We are crying *Labbayka* without (receiving) any response. Pray, why (is this)’?

Nay, the Divine blessing which causes (their cries of) *Labbayka* is (in truth) a response (coming) from the One (God) at every moment.

I know by intuition that this pavilion and palace is the banquet of the soul, and that its dust is an elixir.

I will strike my copper on its elixir unto everlasting in the mode of treble and bass,

That, from (my) playing the *sahúr* tune in this fashion, the seas (of Divine mercy) may surge (and be roused) to scatter (their) pearls and (lavish their) bounty.

**875.** Men hazard their lives in the line of battle and in fighting for the Creator's sake.

One is like Job in tribulation; another like Jacob in patience.

Hundreds of thousands of people, thirsty and sorrowful, are doing some sore toil for God's sake in desire (of pleasing Him).

I too, for the merciful Lord's sake and in hope of Him, am drumming the *sahúr* call at the gate.”

(If) you want a customer from whom you will get gold, how should there be a better customer than God, O (my) heart?

**880.** He buys a dirty bag from your (stock of) goods, and gives (you in return) an inner light that borrows (its splendour from Himself).

He receives the (dissolving) ice of this mortal body, and gives a kingdom beyond our imagination.

He receives a few tear-drops, and gives a Kawthar (so delicious) that sugar shows jealousy (of its sweetness).

He receives sighs full of melancholy and vaporous gloom, and gives for every sigh a hundred gainful dignities.

Because of the wind of sighs that drove onward the tearful cloud, He hath called a Khalíl (Abraham) *awwáh* (sighful).

**885.** Hark, sell your old rags in this brisk incomparable market, and receive the sterling (real and genuine) kingdom (in exchange).

And if any doubt and suspicion waylay (assail) you, rely upon the (spiritual) traders, (namely), the prophets.

Inasmuch as the (Divine) Emperor increased their fortune exceedingly, no mountain can carry their merchandise.