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Father of Persian Verse

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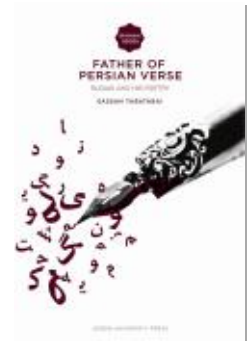
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Panegyric poems

The mother of wine

You must sacrifice the mother of wine,
 Take away and imprison her child.
 But you cannot take away her child
 Before crushing her and taking her life.
 It is not just to separate
 A baby from its mother's breast,
 Before it has suckled for seven months,
 From early spring until late fall.⁶
 Then, in all fairness, it is just
 To imprison the child, kill the mother.
 Once securely locked away, the child
 Roams, confused for seven days and nights.
 When it realizes what has happened,
 It will froth. It will moan from heartache,
 Sink to the bottom with sadness,
 Boil to the surface in sorrow.
 To purify gold you must boil it
 In fire, but it will not boil from sorrow.
 A camel drunk with rage
 Foams at the mouth, throws its rider.
 The guard will wipe away the froth,
 Remove the darkness, reveal its brilliance.
 Finally, when it has stopped struggling,
 The guard will secure the lid.

⁶ Ordibehesht and Ābān are the second and eighth months, respectively, of the Persian calendar.

مادر می را بکرد باید قربان
 بچه او را گرفت و کرد به زندان
 بچه او را ازو گرفت ندانی
 تاش نکوبی نخست و زو نکشی جان
 جز که نباشد حلال دور بکردن
 بچه کوچک ز شیر مادر و پستان
 تا نخورد شیر هفت مه به تمامی
 از سر اردیبهشت تا بن آبان
 آنگه شاید ز روی دین و ره داد
 بچه به زندان تنگ و مادر قربان
 چون بسپاری به حبس بچه او را
 هفت شباروز خیره ماند و حیران
 باز چو آید به هوش و حال ببیند
 جوش بر آرد، بنالد از دل سوزان
 گاه زیر زیر گردد از غم و گه باز
 زیر زبر، هم چنان زانده جوشان
 زر بر آتش کجا بخواهی پالود
 جوشد، لیکن ز غم نجوشد چندان
 باز به کردار اشتیری که بود مست
 کفک بر آرد ز خشم و راند سلطان
 مرد حرس کفک هاش پاک بگیرد
 تا بشود تیر گیش و گردد رخشان
 آخر کارام گیرد و نچخذ تیز
 درش کند استوار مرد نگهبان

When completely calmed and clear,
 It becomes red like a ruby, like coral,
 Red like a carnelian from Yemen,
 Or a precious ring from Badakhshān.⁷
 If you smell it you would say it is a rose
 Scented with ambergris, myrobalan and musk.
 Inside the jar it will ferment
 Until mid-April, early spring.⁸
 Remove the lid at midnight,
 You will see a burning sun.
 And when you see it in a glass, you will say
 Moses, son of Amram, holds a gem in hand.
 The miser becomes generous, the weak becomes brave.
 After one sip, a rose garden will bloom on pale cheeks.
 And he who drinks a cup with joy
 Will feel no pain or sorrow.
 Ten-year-old sorrow will be banished to Tanjeh.⁹
 New hope will arrive from Ommān and Ray.¹⁰
 With such wine, so well aged,
 Its shirt worn threadbare for fifty years,
 We will have a feast fit for kings,
 Adorned with mallow, jasmine and roses.
 Heaven spreads its grace in all directions,
 Builds something no one can copy:

⁷ Badakhshān, currently in Afghanistan, was known for its rubies.

⁸ Nisān is the first month of the Syrian calendar, corresponding roughly to April.

⁹ Tanjeh, a port in current Morocco was considered at the time to be one of the farthest western inhabited places in the world.

¹⁰ Ray is a city near current Tehran. Ommān is in the south-eastern Arabian Peninsula.

چون بنشیند تمام و صافی گردد
 گونهء یاقوت سرخ گیرد و مرجان
 چند ازو سرخ چون عقیق یمانی
 چند ازو لعل چون نگین بدخشان
 ورش ببویی، گمان بری که گل سرخ
 بوی بدو داد و مشک و عنبر با بان
 هم به خم اندر همی گدازد چونین
 تا به گه نوبهار و نیمهء نیشان
 آنگه اگر نیم شب درش بگشایی
 چشمهء خورشید را ببینی تابان
 ور به بلور اندرون ببینی گویی
 گوهر سرخست به کف موسی عمران
 زفت شود رادمرد و سست دلاور
 گر بچشد زوی و روی زرد گلستان
 و آن که به شادی یکی قدح بخورد زوی
 رنج نبیند ازان فراز و نه احزان
 انده ده ساله را به طنجه رماند
 شادی نور را زری بیارد و عمان
 بامی چونین که سالخورده بود چند
 جامه بکرده فراز پنجه خلکان
 مجلس باید بساخته، ملکانه
 از گل و از یاسمین و خیری الوان
 نعمت فردوس گستریده ز هر سو
 ساخته کاری که کس نسازد چونان

Clothes of golden threads, newly-woven rugs,
 Exotic flowers, and seats in plenty;
 ‘Isā’s harp, which makes the heart blush,
 Madaknir’s lute, Chābak-e Jānān’s fife.¹¹
 Seated in rows are the Amirs, Bal’ami,
 The nobles, and respected elders.¹²
 Up front, on his throne sits the king,
 Lord of all kings, Amir of Khorāsān.
 A thousand Turks stand ready to serve,
 Each, a dazzling two-week moon.
 Each wears a scented wreath,
 Has cheeks of rosy wine, and hair in braids.
 The cup bearer is fairer than the fair,
 Child of a Turkish beauty and the Khāqān.¹³
 The wine is happily passed around,
 The king of the world is content, he laughs,
 Taking wine from a dark-haired, angel-faced Turk,
 With the body of a cypress, and hair in waves.
 He raises a glass of wine,
 Salutes the king of Sistān.
 He drinks and cheers, as do his friends.
 All are happy with wine in hand.
 They drink to the health of Ahmad ibn Mohammad,
 The greatest of free men, the pride of Iran,
 The lord of fairness, the sun of his times
 Through whom justice thrives and brightens the world.

¹¹ Apparently, ‘Isā, Madaknir and Chābak-e Jānān were court musicians. There is no mention of their names in any of the histories.

¹² It is unclear whether “Sāleh” is a name or is used as “righteous” or “noble.” Abolfazl Mohammed ibn Abdollāh Bal’ami (d. 937) was the vizier (minister) to the Sāmānid Amirs Ismail ibn Ahmad, Ahmad ibn Ismail and Nasr ibn Ahmad.

¹³ Khāqān is the Turkik title for “ruler” or “leader” (used by the Chinese and Mongols).

جامه زرین و فرش‌های نو آیین
 شهره ریاحین و تخت‌های فراوان
 بربط عیسی و فرش‌های فوادی
 چنگ مدک نیرو نای چابک جابان
 يك صف میران و بلعمی بنشسته
 يك صف حران و پیر صالح دهقان
 خسرو بر تخت پیشگاه نشسته
 شاه ملوک جهان، امیر خراسان
 ترك هزاران به پای پیش صف اندر
 هر يك چون ماه بر دو هفته درفشان
 هر يك بر سر بساک مورد نهاده
 رؤس می سرخ و زلف و جعدش ریحان
 باده دهنده بتی بدیع ز خوبان
 بچه خاتون ترك و بچه خاقان
 چونش بگردد نبیذ چند به شادی
 شاه جهان شادمان و خرم و خندان
 از کف ترکی سیاه چشم پریروی
 قامت چون سرو و زلفکانش چوگان
 زان می خوشبوی ساغری بستاند
 یاد کند روی شهریار سجستان
 خود بخورد نوش و اولیاش همیدون
 گوید هر يك چو می بگیرد شادان
 شادی بو جعفر احمد بن محمد
 آن مه آزادگان و مفخر ایران
 آن ملك عدل و آفتاب زمانه
 زنده بدو داد و روشنایی گیهان

There has been no man like him, and will never be
(If you don't accuse me of boasting).

He is proof of God. He is God's shadow.

"Submit to him," says the Koran.

Man is made of earth, water, fire and wind.

This king is from the sun of the line of Sāsān.¹⁴

This dark land has found glory through him.

This wrecked world has become Eden through him.

If you have a way with words, speak of his grace.

If you write well, write only his praise.

If you are a philosopher and seek his path,

Then know his nature, learn his creed.

When it comes to wisdom, you will say

Before you stand the Greeks: Plato and Socrates.

If you profess to be a man of God,

Before you stand Shāf'i, Abu Hanifeh and Sofyān.¹⁵

If he talks of science or philosophy,

Listen to the wisdom of Loqmān.¹⁶

A literate man gains knowledge and wisdom.

A wise man will gain manners and faith.

If you are looking for an angel,

Before you stands Rezvān, that is clear.¹⁷

Look closely at his soft, beautiful face,

You will see the proof of what I say.

¹⁴ Sāsān is the grandfather of Ardashir Bābakān, founder of the Sāsānian dynasty in the third century.

¹⁵ Faqīh is a religious authority who is versed in Islamic jurisprudence. Sharia is Islamic law. Mohammed ibn Idris, known as Imām Shāf'i (767-820) was a theologian and a founder of the Shāf'iyah sect. Abu Hanifeh No'mān ibn Sābet (696-767) was the founder of the Hanafī school of Islam. Sofyān ibn Sa'id Suri (713-778) was a theologian.

¹⁶ Loqmān is a man known for his wisdom and piety. His name appears several times in the Koran.

¹⁷ Rezvān is heaven's door keeper.

آنکه نبود از نژاد آدم چون او
 نیز نباشد، اگر نگویی بهتان
 حجت یکتا خدای و سایه‌ء او ی بست
 طاعت او کرده واجب آیت فرقان
 خلق ز خاک و ز آب و آتش و بادند
 وین ملک از آفتاب گوهر ساسان
 فربرد و یافت ملک تیره و تاری
 عدن بدو گشت تیر گیتی ویران
 گر تو فصیحی همه مناقب او گوی
 ور تو دبیری همه مدایح او خوان
 ور تو حکیمی و راه حکمت جویی
 سیرت او گیر و خوب مذهب او دان
 آن که بدو بنگری به حکمت گویی
 اینک سقراط و هم فلاطن یونان
 ور تو فقیهی و سوی شرع گرای
 شافعی اینکت و بو حنیفه و سفیان
 گر بگشاید زفان به علم و به حکمت
 گوش کن اینک به علم و حکمت لقمان
 مرد ادب را خرد فزاید و حکمت
 مرد خرد را ادب فزاید و ایمان
 ور تو بخواهی فرشته ای که ببینی
 اینک او ی است آشکارا، رضوان
 خوب نگه کن بدان لطافت و آنروی
 تا تو ببینی برین که گفتم برهان

He is kind-hearted. He is real.
 He is noble and forgiving.
 If his words fall upon your ears,
 It will reverse the bad luck of Saturn.
 If you see him sitting on his throne,
 You will say Solomon has come to life.
 He rides like Sām, and while stars still shine,
 No horse shall see a rider like him.¹⁸
 On the day of battle, of hate, of bravery,
 When you see him clad in helmet and armor,
 He will make an elephant seem small,
 Even one that is roaring and drunk.
 During battle, even Esfandiyār
 trembles and runs from his spear.¹⁹
 At times of peace, his mountain of a body
 Is Mount Siyām; nobody sees him move.²⁰
 Facing his spear, even a dragon
 Melts like wax, as if facing fire.
 Even Mars if he comes to his battle,
 Will become a meal for his sword.
 Then again, when he takes the wine in hand,
 No spring cloud could rain like him.
 Spring clouds only shower dark rain,
 He rains parcels of silk and sacks of gold.
 He gives and gives, with both hands,
 Making the storm seem mundane.
 It is surely his grace
 That gives value to praise.

¹⁸ Sām was the father of Zāl and the ancestor of Rostam, the mythical Persian hero. Sām is known for being an expert rider.

¹⁹ Esfandiyār is a mythical Persian hero.

²⁰ Mount Siyām is in Transoxiana.

پاکی اخلاق او و پاک نژادی
 با نیت نیک و با مکارم احسان
 ور سخن او رسد به گوش تو یک راه
 سعد شود مر ترا نحوست کیوان
 ورش به صدر اندرون نشسته ببینی
 جزم بگویی که زنده گشت سلیمان
 سام سواری که تا ستاره بتابد
 اسب نبیند چنو سوار به میدان
 باز به روز نبرد و کین و حمیت
 گرش ببینی میان مغفر و خفتان
 خوار نمایند ژنده پیل بدانگاه
 ورچه بود مست و تیز گشته و غران
 ورش بدیدی سفندیار گه رزم
 پیش سنانش جهان دویدی و لرزان
 گرچه به هنگام حلم کوه تن اوی
 کوه سیام است که کس نبیند جنیان
 دشمن ار ازدهاست، پیش سنانش
 گردد چو موم پیش آتش سوزان
 ور به نبرد آیدش ستاره بهرام
 توشهء شمشیر او شود به گروگان
 باز بدان گه که می به دست بگیرد
 ابر بهاری چنو نبارد باران
 ابر بهاری جز آب تیره نبارد
 او همه دیبا به تخت و زرّ به انبان
 با دو کف او، ز بس عطا که ببخشد
 خوار نماید حدیث و قصهء توفان
 لاجرم از جود و از سخاوت اوی است
 نرخ گرفته مدیح و صامتی ارزان
 شاعر زی او رود فقیر و تهیدست
 با زر بسیار بازگردد و حملان

The poet, poor and empty-handed,
 Goes to him and returns with much gold.
 He caresses the poet with praise.
 A learned man gets hired at court.
 As for fairness and justice,
 There is no one like him, so honest and fair.
 Both weak and strong get justice from him.
 He displays no tyranny or hatred.
 His grace is spread all over the world,
 From which no one is deprived.
 Those troubled by the world find comfort in him.
 The heart-broken find a remedy in him.
 The mercy of this glorious king,
 Like a rope, binds all deserts and fields.
 He accepts remorse, pardons sin,
 Will not anger, and strives to forgive.
 He is lord of Sistān, a victorious king.
 His is the tiger's luck, his foe, a moaning deer.
 Amr Lays is reborn in him,
 With his entourage and times.²¹
 The name of Rostam is grand, but
 Rostam, son of Dastān lives because of him.²²
 O Rudaki, put aside praise of all others.
 Praise him and receive prosperity's seal.
 No matter how hard you try
 Or sharpen your wit on a file,
 You cannot write poems worthy of him. Go, bring
 What you have, however inadequate.

²¹ Amr Lays is the second Saffārid king (887-900).

²² Rostam is perhaps the most famous mythical Persian hero.

مرد سخن را ازو نواختن و بر
 مرد ادب را ازو وظیفه دیوان
 باز به هنگام داد و عدل بر خلق
 نیست به گیتی چنو نبیل و مسلمان
 داد ببايد ضعيف همچو قوی زوی
 جور نبینی به نزد او و نه عدوان
 نعمت او گستریده بر همه گیتی
 آنچه کس از نعمتش نبینی عریان
 بسته گیتی ازو بیابد راحت
 خسته گیتی ازو بیابد درمان
 با رسن عفو آن مبارك خسرو
 حلقه تنگست هر چه دشت و بیابان
 پوزش بپذیرد و گناه ببخشد
 خشم نراند، به عفو کوشد و غفران
 آن ملك نیمروز و خسرو پیروز
 دولت او یوز و دشمن آهوی نالان
 عمروین اللیث زنده گشت بدو باز
 با حشم خویش و آن زمانهء ایشان
 رستم را نام اگر چه سخت بزرگ است
 زنده بدوی است نام رستم دستان
 رود کیا برنورد مدح همه خلق
 مدحت او گوی و مهر دولت بستان
 ورچه بکوشی به جهد خویش بگویی
 ورچه کنی تیزفهم خویش به سوهان
 گفت ندانی سزاش و خیز و فراز آر
 آنک بگفتی چنان که گفتن نتوان

Here is a eulogy, it's the best I could do.
 It has good words and is easily understood.
 But I don't know words that befit the Amir,
 Although my poems rival Jarir's, Tā'i's and Hassān's.²³
 Praise the Amir. May the whole world praise him.
 Beauty, virtue and order spring from him.
 I complain because my poems reveal my weakness
 Although I have the gift like Sari and Sahbān.²⁴
 At this time, I present his eulogy,
 I, who am expert at praising kings.
 There is a limit to praising all men
 But praising him has no limit, no end.
 It is no surprise that at a time like this,
 Rudaki becomes lifeless and confused.
 Had Bu 'Omar not given me the courage,
 Had Minister Adnān not allowed me,²⁵
 How could I find the nerve to praise the Amir,
 For whose sake God has created the world?
 If I were not weak and helpless. If I
 Didn't have orders from the Amir of the East,
 I myself would run like a page
 To his presence, with the poem in my teeth.
 This poem will apologize for me.
 The word-wise Amir will realize:
 Your servant's excuse is frailty and old age.
 That's why yours truly has not come as your guest.

²³ Jarir ibn 'Attieh (d. 727), Abu Tammām Tā'i (d. 727), and Hassān ibn Sābet Ansāri (d. 670) were famous Arab poets.

²⁴ Sari Alghavāni (d. 814) was an Arab poet. Sahbān Vā'el (d. 670) was an Arab orator.

²⁵ Bu 'Omar and Adnān were among the notables in the Sāmānid court, possibly nobles or ministers.

اینك مدحی چنانكه طاقت من بود
 لفظ همه خوب و هم به معنی آسان
 جز به سزاوار میر گفت ندانم
 ورچه جریرم به شعر و طایی و حسان
 مدح امیری که مدح زوست جهان را
 زینت هم زوی و فر و نزهت و سامان
 سخت شکوهم که عجز من بنماید
 ورچه صریع ابا فصاحت سحبان
 برد چنین مدح و عرضه کرد زمانی
 ورچه بود چیره بر مدایح شاهان
 مدح همه خلق را کرانه پدیدست
 مدحت او را کرانه نی و نه پایان
 نیست شگفتی که رودکی به چنین جای
 خیره شود بیروان و ماند حیران
 ورنه مرا بو عمر دلاور کردی
 وانک دستوری گزیده عدنان
 زهره کجا بودمی به مدح امیری
 کز پی او آفرید گیتی یزدان
 ورم ضعیفی و بی بدیم نبودی
 وان گه نبود از امیر مشرق فرمان
 خود بدویدی بسان پیک مرتب
 خدمت او را گرفته چامه به دندان
 مدح رسولست، عذر من برساند
 تا بشناسد درست میر سخندان
 عذر رهی خویش و ناتوانی و پیری
 کو به تن خویش ازین نیامد مهمان

May the glory of my Amir always soar,
That of his enemies always fall.
May his head reach as high as the moon,
His enemies, buried under the fish.
May his face be more brilliant than the sun,
His grace more lasting than Mount Judy and Sahlān.²⁶

²⁶ Judy is Mount Ararat in Turkey, where Noah's Arc is supposed to have landed. Sahlān is a mountain in Arabia.

دولت میرم همیشه باد برافزون
دولت اعدای او همیشه به نقصان
سرش رسیده به ماه بر به بلندی
و آن معادی بزیر ماهی پنهان
طلعت تابنده تر ز طلعت خورشید
نعمت پاینده تر ز جودی و ثهلان