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## Father of Persian Verse

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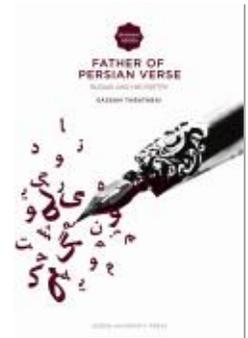
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## Poems of complaint

*What my soul was like*

My teeth are all worn down and falling out.  
They weren't just teeth, they were as bright light,  
Rows of white silver, coral and pearl,  
Bright as raindrops or morning star against night.  
They have all worn down, each in its turn.  
Such bad luck! The bad luck known as Saturn's.  
Was it Saturn or the long years? I will  
Tell you what: It was surely divine will.  
The world's like an eye, round and rolling,  
Ruled by an axiom, the cycles revolving.  
It's the cure that alleviates our pain, or  
The pain yet again supplanting the cure.  
It makes old what was new, rejuvenates  
What's been worn down with the years and with age.  
Many lush gardens are dry deserts now,  
And lush gardens grow where desert once sprawled.  
My dark-haired beauty, you can't possibly know,  
What shape I was in a long time ago!  
You can stroke your lover with your curls,  
But never saw him with curls of his own.  
The days are past when his skin was silken-soft.  
The days are past when his hair was raven-dark.  
Beauty and charm were once his darling guests,  
Guests who will not come back, nonetheless.  
There were many beauties who bewildered all,  
And their beauty always bewildered my eyes.

مرابسود و فرو ریخت هرچه دندان بود  
 نبود دندان لابل چراغ تابان بود  
 سپید سیم رده بود در و مرجان بود  
 ستاره سحری بود و قطره باران بود  
 یکی نماند کنون زان همه، بسود و بریخت  
 چه نحس بود همانا که نحس کیوان بود  
 نه نحس کیوان بود و نه روزگار دراز  
 چو بود منت بگویم قضای یزدان بود  
 جهان همیشه چو چنین گرد گردان است  
 همیشه تا بود آیین گرد، گردان بود  
 همان که درمان باشد، به جای درد شود  
 و باز درد، همان کز نخست درمان بود  
 کهن کند به زمانی همان کجا نو بود  
 و نو کند به زمانی همان که خلقان بود  
 بسا شکسته بیابان که باغ خرم بود  
 و باغ خرم گشت آن کجا بیابان بود  
 همی چه دانی ای ماهر روی مشکین موی  
 که حال بنده ازین پیش برچه سامان بود  
 به زلف چوگان نازش همی کنی تو بدو  
 ندیدی آنگه او را که زلف چوگان بود  
 شد آن زمانه که رویش بسان دیبا بود  
 شد آن زمانه که مویش بسان قطران بود  
 چنان که خوبی، مهمان و دوست بود عزیز  
 بشد که باز نیامد، عزیز مهمان بود  
 بسا نگار که حیران بدی بدو در چشم  
 به روی او در چشم همیشه حیران بود

Gone are the days when he was happy,  
When joy was plentiful and sorrow was slight.  
When he found Turks with pomegranate breasts,  
He appraised and counted out the dirhems.  
Many a lovely slave girl sought him out  
And came to him by night, hidden from all,  
Who dared not come to him by light of day,  
For fear of their masters and fear of jail.  
Costly was the wine and each lovely face,  
But they were always inexpensive for me,  
For my heart was a treasury of riches,  
Of words we call Love and Poetry.  
I was happy, my soul was a meadow  
Filled with joy, never having known sorrow.  
My songs served to soften many a soul  
That before was hard and heavy as stone.  
My eyes watched for sweet, delicate curls,  
My ears listened to the words of the wise.  
No wife, no child, and no expenses,  
I was weighed down by none of these burdens.  
My sweet, you've seen only Rudaki of late,  
You never saw him in his greater state,  
Never saw him when he used to tell tales  
And sang songs that rivaled the nightingales'.  
He's no longer the friend of nobles. The days  
Are past when he was favored by princes.  
At the king's court, his volumes of verse  
Were held in high esteem, when he held sway.  
Gone are the days when everyone knew his lines  
And he was the poet of Khorāsān.

شد آن زمانه که او شاد بود و خرم بود  
 نشاط او به فزون بود و بیم نقصان بود  
 همی خرید و همی سخت بی شمار درم  
 به شهر هر که یکی ترک نار پستان بود  
 بسا کنیزک نیکوکه میل داشت بدو  
 به شب زیاری او نزد جمله پنهان بود  
 به روز چون که نیارست شد به دیدن او  
 نهیب خواجه او بود و بیم زندان بود  
 نبیذ روشن و دیدار خوب و روی لطیف  
 اگر گران بد، زی من همیشه ارزان بود  
 دلم خزانهء پرگنج بود و گنج سخن  
 نشان نامهء ما مهر و شعر عنوان بود  
 همیشه شاد و ندانستمی که غم چه بود  
 دلم نشاط و طرب را فراخ میدان بود  
 بسا دلا، که بسان حریر کرده به شعر  
 از آن پس که به کردار سنگو سندان بود  
 همیشه چشمم زی زلفکان چابک بود  
 همیشه گوشم زی مردم سخندان بود  
 عیال نه، زن و فرزند نه، معونت نه  
 ازین همه تنم آسوده بود و آسان بود  
 تو رودکی را، ای ماهرو، کنون بینی  
 بدان زمانه ندیدی که این چنینان بود  
 بدان زمانه ندیدی که در جهان رفتی  
 سرود گویان، گویی هزارستان بود  
 شد آن زمان که به او انس رادمردان بود  
 شد آن زمانه که او پیشکار میران بود  
 همیشه شعر و را زی ملوک دیوان است  
 همیشه شعر و را زی ملوک دیوان بود  
 شد آن زمانه که شعرش همه جهان بنوشت  
 شد آن زمانه که او شاعر خراسان بود

When the noble dehqan<sup>33</sup> was still of this world,  
 I received much gifts and silver at his house.  
 However came honor and riches for some,  
 For him they came from the house of Sāmān:<sup>34</sup>  
 Forty thousand from the Amir of Khorāsān,  
 Another five from the Amir of Mākān.<sup>35</sup>  
 And from his retinue eight thousand for me.  
 Life was good then. Those were the days.  
 When my words fell on the Amir's ears,  
 He gave generously, as did the others.  
 But times have changed, so have I. Bring me my staff.  
 It's time for the cane and the beggar's purse.

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<sup>33</sup> A prominent landowner.

<sup>34</sup> The house of Sāmān refers to the Sāmānids who ruled Khorāsān in the 10th century.

<sup>35</sup> Amir of Mākān refers to Mākān-e Kāki (d. 945) who ruled part of Tabarestān.

کجا به گیتی بودست نامور دهقان  
 مرا به خانه او سیم بود و حملان بود  
 کرا بزرگی و نعمت زاین و آن بودی  
 ورا بزرگی و نعمت ز آل سامان بود  
 بداد میر خراسانش چل هزار درم  
 درو فزونی، یک پنج میر ماکان بود  
 ز اولیاش پراگنده نیز هشت هزار  
 به من رسید، بدان وقت، حال خوب آن بود  
 چو میر دید سخن، داد داد مردی خویش  
 ز اولیاش چنان کز امیر فرمان بود  
 کنون زمانه دگر گشت و من دگر گشتم  
 عصا بیار، که وقت عصا و انبان بود