



by
Sheikh Muslih-uddin Sa'di Shirazi (1258)

Translated by
Sir Edwin Arnold (1899)



World Famous Persian Poet of 13th Century



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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Chapter 3



On the Excellence of Contentment

Story 1

A Maghrabi (western) supplicant said in Aleppo in the row of linen-drapers:

'Lords of wealth, if you were just and we contented, the trade of begging would vanish from the world.'

ای قناعت ! توانگرم گردان
که وراى تو هیچ نعمت نیست
گنج صبر، اختیار لقمان است
هر که را صبر نیست ، حکمت نیست

O contentment, make me rich
For besides thee no other wealth exists.
Luqman selected the corner of patience.
Who has no patience has no wisdom.



Story 2

Two sons of Amirs were in Egypt, the one acquiring science, the other accumulating wealth, till the former became the Ulema of the period and the other the prince of Egypt; whereon the rich man looked with contempt upon the Faqih (religious scholar) and said: 'I have reached the sultanate whilst thou hast remained in poverty as before.'

He replied: 'O brother, I am bound to be grateful to the most high Creator for having obtained the inheritance of prophets whilst thou hast attained the inheritance of Pharaoh and of Haman, namely the kingdom of Egypt.'

I am that ant which is trodden under foot
Not that wasp, the pain of whose sting causes lament.
How shall I give due thanks for the blessing
That I do not possess the strength of injuring mankind?



Story 3

I heard that a dervish, burning in the fire of poverty and sewing patch upon patch, said to comfort his mind:

به نان قناعت كنيم و جامه دلچ
که بار محنت خود به ، که بار منت خلق
'We are contented with dry bread and a patched robe
For it is easier to bear the load of one's own trouble than that of thanks
to others.'

Someone said to him: 'Why sittest thou? A certain man in this town possesses a benevolent nature, is liberal to all, has girded his loins to serve the pious and is

ready to comfort every heart. If he becomes aware of thy case, he will consider it an obligation to comfort the mind of a worthy person.'

He replied:

خاموش که در پسي مردن ، به که حاجت پيش کسي بردن

'Hush! It is better to die of inanition than to plead for one's necessities before any man.'

همه رقعہ دوختن به و الزام کنج صبر
کز بهر جامہ ، رقعہ بر خواجگان نیشست
حقا کہ با عقوبت دوزخ برابر است
همسایہ در بهشت رفتن به پایمردی

It is better to patch clothes and sit in the corner of patience
Than to write petitions for robes to gentlemen.
Verily it is equal to the punishment of hell
To go to paradise as a flunkey to one's neighbor.



Story 4

One of the kings of Persia had sent an able physician to wait upon the Mustafa, the benediction of Allah and peace be on him; and he remained for some years in the Arab country without anyone coming to him to make a trial of his ability or desiring to be treated by him.

He went to the Prophet, salutation to him, and complained that although he had been sent to treat the companions, none of them had up to this time taken notice of him or required the services incumbent upon him.

The Apostle, salutation to him, replied:

این طایفه را طریقتست که تا اشتها غالب نشود نخورد و هنوز اشتها
باقی بود که دست از طعام بدارند

'It is a law with these people not to eat until appetite overpowers them
and when some of it yet remains they withdraw their hands from food.'

The doctor said: 'This is the cause of health', and kissing the earth of service
departed.

سخن آنکه کند حکیم آغاز
یا سر انگشت سوی لقمه دراز
که ز ناگفتنش خلل زاید
یا ز ناخوردنش به جان آید
لاجرم حکمتش بود گفتار
خوردش تندرستی آرد بار

The sage begins to speak
Or points his fingers to the dish
When silence would be dangerous
Or abstinence would bring on death.
No doubt his wisdom is in speaking
And his eating bears the fruit of health.



Story 5

A man often made vows of repentance but broke them again till one of the
sheikhs said to him:

'I think thou art in the habit of eating a great deal and that thy power of
restraining appetite is more slender than a hair, whilst an appetite such
as thou nourishest would rupture a chain and a day may come when it
will tear thee up.'

A man brought up a wolf's whelp.
When it was brought up it tore him up.



Story 6

It is narrated in the life of Ardeshir Babekan that he asked an Arab physician how much food he must consume daily.

He replied: 'The weight of one hundred dirhams will be enough.'

The king queried: 'What strength will this quantity give me?'

He replied:

'This quantity will carry thee, and whatever is more than that, thou wilt be the carrier of it.'

خوردن برای زیستن و ذکر کردن است
تو معتقد که زیستن از بهر خوردن است

Eating is for living and praying.

Thou thinkest living is for eating.



Story 7

Two Khorasani dervishes traveled together. One of them, being weak, broke his fast every second night whilst the other who was strong consumed every day three meals.

It happened that they were captured at the gate of a town on suspicion of being spies; whereon each of them was confined in a closet and the aperture of it walled up with mud bricks. After two weeks it became known that they were guiltless.

Accordingly the doors were opened and the strong man was found to be dead whilst the weak fellow had remained alive.

The people were astonished but a sage averred that the contrary would have been astonishing because one of them having been voracious possessed no strength to suffer hunger and perished whilst the other who was abstemious merely persevered in his habit and remained safe.

چو کم خوردن طبیعت شد کسی را
چو سختی پیشش آید سهل گیرد
وگر تن پرور است اندر فراخی
چو تنگی بیند از سختی بمیرد

When eating little has become the nature of a man
He takes it easy when a calamity befalls him
But when the body becomes strong in affluence
He will die when a hardship overtakes him.



Story 8

One of the philosophers forbade his son to eat much because repletion keeps people ailing.

The boy replied: 'O father, it is hunger that kills. Hast thou not heard of the maxim of the ingenious that it is better to die satiated than to bear hunger?'

He rejoined:

اندازه نگهدار، کلو و اشربو و لا تسرفوا

'Be moderate. Eat and drink but not to excess.'

نه چندان بخور کز دهانت برآید

نه چندان که از ضعف، جاننت برآید

Eat not so much that it comes up to thy mouth

Nor so little that from weakness thy soul comes up.

در وجود، طعام است عیش نفس با آنکه

رنج آورد طعام که بیش از قدر بود

گر گلشکر خوری به تکلف، زیان کند

ور نان خشک دیر خوری گلشکر بود

Although maintenance of life depends upon food

Victuals bring on disease when eaten to excess.

If thou eatest rose-confectionery without appetite it injures thee

But eating dry bread after a long fast is like rose-preserve.



Story 9

A sick man having been asked what his heart desired replied: 'That it may not desire anything.'

معدہ چو کج گشت و شکم درد خاست

سود ندارد همه اسباب راست

When the bowels are full and the belly pains

There is no use in all other things being right.



Story 10

A grain dealer to whom Sufis (Saints) were owing some money asked them for it every day in the town of Waset and used harsh language towards them.

The companions had become weary of his reproaches but had no other remedy than to bear them; and one of them who was a pious man remarked:

'It is more easy to pacify a hungry stomach with promises of food than a grain dealer with promises of money.'

ترك احسان خواجه اوليتر

كاحتمال جفاى بوابان

It is preferable to be without the bounty of a gentleman
Than to bear the insults of the gate-keepers.

به تمنای گوشت ، مردن به

که تقاضای زشت قصابان

It is better to die wishing for meat
Than to endure the expostulations of butchers.



Story 11

A brave warrior who had received a dreadful wound in the Tatar war was informed that a certain merchant possessed a medicine which he would probably not refuse to give if asked for;

but it is related that the said merchant was also well known for his avarice.

گر بجای نانش اندر سفره بودی آفتاب
تا قیامت روز روشن ، کس ندیدی در جهان

If instead of bread he had the sun in his table-cloth
No one could see daylight till the day of resurrection.

The warrior replied:

'If I ask for the medicine he will either give it or refuse it and if he gives it maybe it will profit me, and maybe not. At any rate the inconvenience of asking it from him is a lethal poison.'

هرچه از دو نان به منت خواستی
در تن افزودی و از جان کاستی

Whatever thou obtainest by entreaties from base men
Will profit thy body but injure thy soul.

And philosophers have said:

آب حیات اگر فروشند به آب روی ، دانا نخرد که مردن به علت ، به از
زندگانی بمذلت

'If for instance the water of life were to be exchanged for a good reputation, no wise man would purchase it because it is preferable to die with honor than to live in disgrace.'

اگر حنظل خوری از دست خوشخو
به از شیرینی از دست ترشروی

To eat coloquinth from the hand of a sweet-tempered man
Is better than confectionery from the hand of an ill-humored fellow.



Story 12

One of the Ulema had many eaters to provide for and only a slender income. This fact he communicated to a great man of whose character he entertained a very favorable opinion but his expectations were disappointed because the man made a wry face and averred that according to his opinion applications from respectable persons for aid are unbecoming.

ز بخت روی ترش کرده پیش یار عزیز
مرو که عیش بر او نیز تلخ گردانی
به حاجتی که روی تازه روی و خندان رو
فرو نبندد کار گشاده پیشانی

With a face made sad by misfortune, to a dear friend

Do not go because thou wilt embitter his life also.

For the needful for which thou appliest, go with a fresh and smiling face.

The man of joyful countenance will not be unsuccessful in his affairs.

It is related that the great man augmented his stipend a little but considerably diminished his familiarity towards him and when he perceived after some days that it was not as usual, he recited:

'Evil is the food which the time of degradation acquires.

The kettle is indeed placed but the dignity is lowered.'

نانم افزود آبرویم کاست
بینوایی به از مذلت خواست

He increased my bread but diminished my honour.

Poverty is better than the degradation of asking.



Story 13

A dervish wanted something and a man told him that a certain individual possessed untold wealth who, if he were made aware of his want, would not consider it proper to fail in supplying it forthwith.

The dervish answering that he had no acquaintance with him, the man proposed to show him the house and when the dervish entered he caught sight of a person with hanging lips and sitting morosely.

He returned immediately and being asked what he had done replied: 'I excused him from making me a present when I saw his face.'

مبّر حاجت به نزد ترشروی
که از خوی بدش فرسوده گردی
اگر گویی غم دل با کسی گوی
که از رویش به نقد آسوده گردی

Carry not thy necessity to a sour-faced fellow
Because his ill-humor will crush thy hopes.
If thou confidest thy heart's grief, tell it to one
Whose face will comfort thee like ready cash.



Story 14

A year of dearth set in at Alexandria so that even a dervish lost the reins of patience from his hands, the pearls of heaven were withheld from the earth and the lamentations of mankind ascended to the firmament.

نماند جانوری از وحش و طیر و ماهی و مور
که بر فلک نشد از بی مرادی افغانش

عجب که دو دل خلق جمع می نشود
که ابر گردد و سیلاب دیده بارانش

There was no wild beast, fowl, fish or ant
Whose wailings prompted by distress had not reached the sky.
For a wonder the heart-smoke of the people did not condense
To form clouds and the torrents of their tears rain.

In such a year there was an hermaphrodite. I owe it to my friends not to describe him because it would be an abandonment of good manners, especially in the presence of great men. On the other hand, it would likewise be improper and in the way of negligence not to mention anything about him because certain people would impute it to the ignorance of the narrator.

Accordingly I shall briefly describe him in the following two distiches because a little indicates much and a handful is a sample of a donkey load.

اگر تتر بکشد این مهنت را
تتری را دگر نباید کشت
چند باشد چو جسر بغدادش
آب در زیر و آدمی در پشت

If a Tatar slays that hermaphrodite
The Tatar must not be slain in return.

How long will he be like the bridge of Baghdad
With water flowing beneath and men on the back?

Such a man, a portion of whose eulogy thou hast now heard, possessed in that year boundless wealth, bestowed silver and gold upon the needy and laid out tables for travelers.

A company of dervishes who were by the presence of distress on the point of starvation were inclined to accept of his hospitality and consulted me on the subject but I struck my head back from assenting and replied:

نخورد شیر نیم خورده سگ
ور بمیر به سختی اندر غار

A lion does not eat the half of which a dog consumed
Although he may die of hunger in his lair.

گر فریدون شود به نعمت و ملک

بی هنر را به هیچ کس مشمار

Though getting rich in wealth and property like Faridun
A worthless man is to be considered of no account.



Story 15

Hatim Tai, having been asked whether he had seen in the world anyone of more exalted sentiments than himself, replied:

'Yes, one day I slaughtered forty camels to entertain Arab Amirs. I had occasion to go out on some business into a corner of the desert, where I noticed a gatherer of briars, who had accumulated a hillock of thistles, and I asked him why he had not become a guest of Hatim since many people had come round to his banquet but he replied:

هر که نان از عمل خویش خورد

منت حاتم طائی نبرد

"Who eats bread by the work of his own hand
Will not bear to be obliged to Hatim Tai."

Then I saw that his sentiments were more exalted than mine.'



Story 16

Moses, to whom be salutation, beheld a dervish who had on account of his nudity concealed himself in the sand exclaiming: 'O Moses, utter a supplication to God the most high to give me an allowance because I am, on account of my distress, on the point of starvation.'

Moses accordingly prayed and departed but returning a few days afterwards he saw that the dervish was a prisoner and surrounded by a crowd of people. On asking for the reason he was informed that the dervish had drunk wine, quarreled, slain a man and was to be executed in retaliation.

گر به مسکین اگر پر داشتی
تخم گنجشک از جهان برداشتی
قوت یابد عاجز باشد که دست
برخیزد و دست عاجزان برتابد

If the humble cat possessed wings
He would rob the world of every sparrow-egg.
It may happen that when a weak man obtains power
He arises and twists the hands of the weak.

And if Allah were to bestow abundance upon his servants, they would certainly rebel upon earth.

ماذا اخاضك يا مغرور في الخطر
حتي هلكت فليت النمل لم يطير

What has made thee wade into danger, O fool,
Till thou hast perished. Would that the ant had not been able to fly!

بنده چو جاه آمد و سیم و زرش
خواهد به ضرورت سرش سیلی
آن نشنیدی که فلاطون چه گفت
مور همان به که نباشد پرش؟

When a base fellow obtains dignity, silver and gold,
His head necessarily demands to be knocked.

Was not after all this maxim uttered by a sage?
'That ant is the best which possesses no wings.'

The heavenly father has plenty of honey but the son has a hot disease.

آن کس که توانگرت نمی گرداند
او مصلحت تو از تو بهتر داند

He who does not make thee rich
Knows better what is good for thee than thyself.



Story 17

I noticed an Arab of the desert sitting in a company jewelers at Basra and narrating stories to them. He said:

'I had once lost my road in the desert and consumed all my provisions. I considered that I must perish when I suddenly caught sight of a bag full of pearls and I shall never forget the joy and ecstasy I felt on thinking they might be parched grain nor the bitterness and despair when I discovered them to be pearls.'

در بیابان خشک و ریگ روان
تشنه را در دهان ، چه در چه صدف
مرد بی توشه کاو فتاد از پای
بر کمر بند او چه زر، چه خزف

In a dry desert and among moving sand

It is the same to a thirsty man whether he has pearls or shells in his mouth.

When a man has no provisions and his strength is exhausted

It matters not whether his girdle is adorned with pearls or potsherds.



Story 18

An Arab suffering in the desert from extreme thirst recited:

'Would that before my death
I could one day enjoy my wish
That a river's waves might strike my knee
And I might fill my water-bag.'

In the same manner another traveler lost himself in an extensive region having neither any strength nor food left but he possessed some money and roamed about and the road leading him nowhere he perished from exhaustion.

Some people afterwards discovered his corpse with the money in front of it and the following written on the ground:

گر همه زر جعفری دارد
د بی توشه برنگیرد کامهر
در بیابان فقیر سوخته را
شلغم پخته به که نقره خام

If possessed of all the Ja'feri gold,
It will avail nothing to a hungry man.
To a poor man burnt in the desert
Boiled turnips are more valuable than pure silver.



Story 19

I never lamented about the vicissitudes of time or complained of the turns of fortune except on the occasion when I was barefooted and unable to procure slippers. But when I entered the great mosque of Kufa with a sore heart and beheld a man without feet I offered thanks to the bounty of God, consoled myself for my want of shoes and recited:

مرغ بریان به چشم مردم سیر
کمتر از برگ تره بر خوان است
و آنکه را دستگاه و قوت نیست
شلغم پخته مرغ بریان است

'A roast fowl is to the sight of a satiated man
Less valuable than a blade of fresh grass on the table
And to him who has no means nor power
A burnt turnip is a roasted fowl.'



Story 20

A king with some of his courtiers had during a hunting party and in the winter season strayed far from inhabited places but when the night set in he perceived the house of a Dehqan (farmer) and said: 'We shall spend the night there to avoid the injury of the cold.'

One of the viziers, however, objected alleging that it was unworthy of the high dignity of a Padshah (King) to take refuge in the house of a Dehqan and that it would be best to pitch tents and to light fires on the spot.

The Dehqan who had become aware of what was taking place prepared some food he had ready in his house, offered it, kissed the ground of service and said:

'The high dignity of the sultan would not have been so much lowered, but the courtiers did not wish the dignity of the Dehqan to become high.'

The king who was pleased with these words moved for the night into the man's house and bestowed a dress of honor upon him the next morning.

When he accompanied the king a few paces at the departure he was heard to say:

ز قدر و شوکت سلطان نگشت چیزی کم

از التفات به مهمانسرای دهقانی

کلاه گوشه دهقان به آفتاب رسد

که سایه بر سرش انداخت چون تو سلطانی

'Nothing was lost of the sultan's power and pomp

By accepting the hospitality of a Dehqan,

But the corner of the Dehqan's cap reached the sun

When a sultan such as thou overshadowed his head.'



Story 21

It is related that a sultan thus addressed a miserly beggar who had accumulated great riches: 'It is evident that thou possessest boundless wealth and we have an affair on hand in which thou canst aid us by way of a loan. When the finances of the country are in a flourishing condition it will be repaid.'

The miser replied: 'It is not befitting the power and dignity of a Padshah (King) to soil the hands of his noble aspirations with the property of an individual like myself who has collected it grain by grain.'

The king replied: 'It does not matter because the money will be spent upon infidels: The wicked women should be joined to the wicked men.'

If the water of a Christian's well is impure
What matters it if thou washest a dead Jew therein?

They said: 'The lime-mortar is not clean.'
We replied: 'We shall plug therewith the privy holes.'

I heard that he refused to comply with the behest of the king, began to argue and to look insolently; whereon the king ordered the sum in question to be released from his grasp by force and with a reprimand.

If an affair cannot be accomplished with gentleness
He forsooth turns his head to impudence.
Who has no regard for himself
It is proper that no one should pay him any.



Story 22

I met a trader who possessed one hundred and fifty camel loads of merchandise with forty slaves and servants.

One evening in the oasis of Kish he took me into his apartment and taking all night no rest kept up an incoherent gabble, saying: 'I have such and such a warehouse in Turkestan, such and such goods in Hindostan; this is the title-deed of such and such an estate and in this affair such and such a man is security.'

He said: 'I intend to go to Alexandria because it has a good climate', and correcting himself continued: 'No, because the African sea is boisterous. O Sa'di, I have one journey more to undertake and after performing it I shall during the rest of my life sit in a corner and enjoy contentment.'

I asked: 'What journey is that?'

He replied: 'I shall carry Persian brimstone to China because I heard that it fetched a high price. I shall also carry Chinese porcelain to Rum and Rumi brocade to India and Indian steel to Aleppo, convey glass-ware of Aleppo to Yemen, striped cloth of Yemen to Pares. After that I shall abandon trading and shall sit down in a shop.'

He had talked so much of this nonsense that no more strength remained in him so he said: 'O Sa'di, do thou also tell me something of what thou hast seen and heard.'

I recited:

آن شنیدستی که در اقصای غور
بار سالاری بیفتاد از ستور
گفت : چشم تنگ دنیا دوست را
یا قناعت پر کند یا خاک گور

'Thou mayest have heard that in the plain of Ghur
Once a leader fell down from his beast of burden,
Saying: "The narrow eye of a wealthy man
Will be filled either by content or by the earth of the tomb."



Story 23

I heard about a wealthy man who was as well known for his avarice as Hatim Tai for his liberality. Outwardly he displayed the appearance of wealth but inwardly his sordid nature was so dominant that he would not for his life give a morsel of bread to anyone or bestow a scrap upon the kitten of Abu Hurairah or throw a bone to the dog of the companions of the cave.

In short, no one had seen the door of his house open or his table-doth spread.

درویش بجز بوی طعامش نشنیدی
مرغ از پس نان خوردن او ریزه نجیدی

The dervish got nothing of his food except the smell.
The fowl picked up the crumbs after his bread-dinner.

I heard that he was sailing in the Mediterranean with the pride of Pharaoh in his head-according to the words of the most high, Until drowning overtook him-when all of a sudden a contrary wind befell the ship, as it is said:

ند هر که نسازد؟ با طبع ملولت چه ك
شرطه همه وقتی نبود لایق کشتی

What can thy heart do to thy distressed nature for the wind is not fair?
It is not at all times suitable for a ship.

He uplifted the hands of supplication and began to lament in vain but Allah the most high has commanded: When they sail in a ship they call upon Allah, sincerely exhibiting unto him their religion.

دست تضرع چه سود بنده محتاج را؟
وقت دعا بر خدای ، وقت کرم در بغل

Of what use is the hand of supplication to a needy worshipper
Which is uplifted to God in the time of prayer but in the armpit in the time of
bounty?

از زر و سیم ، راحتی برسان
خویشتن هم تمتعی برگیر
وآنکه این خانه کز تو خواهد ماند
خشتی از سیم و خشتی از زرگیر

Bestow comfort with gold and with silver
And thereby also profit thyself.
As this house of thine will remain,
Build it with a silver and a gold brick.

It is narrated that he had poor relations in Egypt who became rich by the remainder of his wealth, tearing up their old cloths and cutting new ones of silk and of Damiri.

During the same week I also beheld one of them riding a fleet horse with a fairy-faced slave boy at his heels. I said:

وہ کہ گر مردہ باز گردیدی
بہ میان قبیلہ و پیوند
رد میراث ، سخت تر بودی
وارثان راز مرگ خویشاوند

'Wah! If the dead man were to return
Among his kinsfolk and connections

The refunding of the inheritance would be more painful
To the heirs than the death of their relative.'

On account of the acquaintance which had formerly subsisted between us, I pulled his sleeve, and said:

بخور، این نیک سیرت سرہ مرد
کان نگوںبخت گرد کرد و نخورد

'Eat thou, O virtuous and good man,
What that mean fellow gathered and did not eat.'



Story 24

A weak fisherman caught a strong fish in his net and not being able to retain it the fish overcame him and pulled the net from his hand.

کہ آب جوی آرد شد غلامی
جوی آب آمد و غلام ببرد
دام هر بار ماهی آوردی
ماهی این بار رفت و دام ببرد

A boy went to bring water from the torrent.
The torrent came and took the boy away.
The net brought every time a fish.
This time the fish went and carried off the net.

The other fishermen were sorry and blamed him for not being able to retain such a fish which had fallen into his net.

He replied: 'O brothers, what can be done? My day was not lucky but the fish had yet one remaining.

'Moral:

رد و ماهي بي اجل بر خشك نميردصياد بي روزي در دجله نكي

A fisherman cannot catch a fish in the Tigris without a day of luck and a fish cannot die on dry ground without the decree of fate.



Story 25

A man whose hands and feet had been amputated killed a millipede and a pious passer-by exclaimed:

'Praised be Allah! In spite of the thousand feet he possessed he could not escape from a man without hands and feet when his fate had overtaken him.'

چون آيد ز پي دشمن جان ستان
بيندد اجل پای اسب دوان
در آن دم که دشمن پياپی رسيد
کمان کيانی نشايد کشيد

When the life-taking foe comes in the rear
Fate ties the legs of a running man.
At the moment when the enemy has slowly arrived
It is useless to draw the Kayanian bow.



Story 26

I have seen a fat fool, dressed in a costly robe, with a turban of Egyptian linen on his head, riding on an Arab horse. Someone said: 'Sa'di, what thinkest thou of this famous brocade upon this ignorant animal?'

I replied: 'It is like ugly characters scrawled with gold-water.'

قد شابه بالوري حمار

عجلا جسدا له خوار

Verily he is like an ass among men,
A calf, a body which is bleating.

به آدمی نتوان گفت مانند این حیوان
مگر دراعه و دستار و نقش بیرونش
بگردد در همه اسباب و ملک و هستی او
که هیچ چیز نبینی حلال جز خونش

This animal cannot be said to resemble a man
Except in his cloak, turban and outward adornment.
Examine all his property and belongings of his estate
Thou wilt find nothing lawful to take except his blood.

If a noble man becomes impoverished imagine not
That his high worth will also decrease.
But if into a silver threshold golden nails are driven
By a Jew, think not that he will thereby become noble.



Story 27

A thief said to a mendicant: 'Art thou not ashamed to stretch out thy hand for a grain of silver to every sordid fellow?'

He replied:

دست دراز از پی يك حبه سيم
به كه ببرند به دانگى و نيم

'To hold out the hand for a grain of silver
Is better than to get it cut off for one dane and a half.'



Story 28

It is related that an athlete had been reduced to the greatest distress by adverse fortune. His throat being capacious and his hands unable to fill it, he complained to his father and asked him for permission to travel as he hoped to be able to gain a livelihood by the strength of his arm.

فضل و هنر ضایع است تا ننماید
عود بر آتش نهند و مشک بشایند

Excellence and skill are lost unless exhibited.

Lignum aloes is placed on fire and musk rubbed.

The father replied: 'My son, get rid of this vain idea and place the feet of contentment under the skirt of safety because great men have said that:

happiness does not consist in exertion and that the remedy against want is in the moderation of desires.

کسی نتواند گرفت دامن دولت به زور
کوشش بی فایده است ، وسمه بر ابروی کور

No one can grasp the skirt of luck by force.

It is useless to put vasmah (hair-dye) on a bald man's brow.

اگر به هر مویت دو صد هنر باشد
هنر به کار نیاید چو بخت بد باشد

If thou hast two hundred accomplishments for each hair of thy head

They will be of no use if fortune is unpropitious.

What can an athlete do with adverse luck?

The arm of luck is better than the arm of strength.

The son rejoined: 'Father, the advantages of travel are many, such as recreation of the mind entailing profit, seeing of wonderful and hearing of strange things, recreation in cities, associating with friends, acquisition of dignity, rank, property, the power of discriminating among acquaintances and gaining experience of the world, as the travelers in the Tariqat (Mystic way of life) have said:

تا به دکان و خانه در گروی
هرگز ای خام ! آدم نشوی
برو اندر جهان تفرج کن
پیش از آن روز که ، کز جهان بروی

As long as thou walkest about the shop or the house

Thou wilt never become a man, O raw fellow.

Go and travel in the world

Before that day when thou goest from the world.'

The father replied: 'My son, the advantages of travel such as thou hast enumerated them are countless but they regard especially five classes of men:

firstly, a merchant who possesses in consequence of his wealth and power graceful male and female slaves and quick-handed assistants, alights every day in another town and every night in another place, has recreation every moment and sometimes enjoys the delights of the world.'

منعم به کوه و دشت و بیابان غریب نیست
هر جا که رفت خیمه زد و خوابگاه ساخت
آن را که بر مراد جهان نیست دسترس
در زاد و بوم خویش غریب است و ناشناخت

A rich man is not a stranger in mountain, desert or solitude.
Wherever he goes he pitches a tent and makes a sleeping place;
Whilst he who is destitute of the goods of this world
Must be in his own country a stranger and unknown.

Secondly, a scholar, who is for the pleasantness of his speech, the power of his eloquence and the fund of his instruction, waited upon and honored wherever he goes.

وجود مردم دانا مثال زر طلای است
که هر کجا برود قدر و قیمتش دانند
بزرگ زاده نادان به شهر واماند
که در دیار غریبش به هیچ نستانند

The presence of a learned man is like pure gold
Whose power and price is known wherever he goes.
An ignorant fellow of noble descent resembles Shahrúa,
Which nobody accepts in a foreign country.

Thirdly, handsome fellows with whom the souls of pious men are inclined to commingle because it has been said that:

a little beauty is better than much wealth.

An attractive face is also said to be a slave to despondent hearts and the key to locked doors, wherefore the society of such a person is everywhere known to be very acceptable:

شاهد آنجا که رود، حرمت و عزت بیند
ور برانند به قهرش، پدر و مادر خویش

A beautiful person meets with honor and respect everywhere
Although perhaps driven away in anger by father and mother.

پر طاووس در اوراق مصاحفدیم
هر کجا پای نهد دست نداشتش پیش

I have seen a peacock feather in the leaves of the Quran.

I said: 'I see thy position is higher than thy deserts.'

It said: 'Hush, whoever is endowed with beauty,
Wherever he places his foot, hands are held out to receive it.'

چو در پسر موافقی و دلبری بود
شه نیست گر پدر از وی بری بوداندی
او گوهر است، گو صدفش در جهان میباش
در یتیم را همه کس مشتری بود

When a boy is symmetrical and heart-robbing

It matters not if his father disowns him.

He is a jewel which must not remain in a shell.

A precious pearl everyone desires to buy.

Fourthly, one with a sweet voice, who retains, with a David-like throat, water from flowing and birds from soaring. By means of this talent he holds the hearts of people captive and religious men are delighted to associate with him.

My audition is intent on the beautiful melody.

Who is that performing on the double chord?

چه خوش باشد آهنگ نرم حزین
به گوش حریفان مست صبح
به از روی زیباست آواز خوش
که آن حظ نفس است و این قوت روح

How pleasant is the gentle and melancholy lay

To the ear of the boon companions who quaff the morning draught!

Better than a handsome face is a pleasant voice.

The former is joy to the senses, the latter food for the soul.

Fifthly, the artisan, who gains a sufficient livelihood by the strength of his arm, so that his reputation is not lost in struggling for bread; as wise men have said:

گر به غریبی رود از شهر خویش
سختی و محنت نبرد پنبه دوز
ور به خرابی فتد از مملکت
گرسنه خفتد ملک نیم روز

If he goes abroad from his own town
The patcher of clothes meets with no bardship or trouble
But if the government falls into ruin
The king of Nimruz will go to bed hungry.

The qualities which I have explained, O my son, are in a journey the occasion of satisfaction to the mind, stimulants to a happy life but he, who possesses none of them, goes with idle fancies into the world and no one will ever hear anything about his name and fame.

هر آنکه گردش گیتی به کین او برخاست
به غیر مصلحتش رهبری کند ایام
کبوتری که دگر آشیان نخواهد دید
قضا همی بردش تا به سوی دانه دام
He whom the turning world is to afflict
Will be guided by the times against his aim.
A pigeon destined not to see its nest again
Will be carried by fate towards the grain and net.

The son asked:

'O father, how can I act contrary to the injunctions of the wise, who have said, that although food is distributed by predestination the acquisition of it depends upon exertion and that, although a calamity may be decreed by fate, it is incumbent on men to show the gates by which it may enter?

رزق اگر چند بی گمان برسد
جستن از درها شرط عقل است
ورچه کس بی اجل نخواهد مرد
تو مرو در دهان اژدرها

'Although daily food may come unawares
It is reasonable to seek it out of doors
And though no one dies without the decree of fate
Thou must not rush into the jaws of a dragon.

'As I am at present able to cope with a mad elephant and to wrestle with a furious lion, it is proper, O father, that I should travel abroad because I have no longer the endurance to suffer misery.

چون مرد در فتاد ز جای و مقام خویش
دیگر چه غم خورد، همه آفاق جای او است

'When a man has fallen from his place and station
Why should he eat more grief? All the horizons are his place.

شب هر توانگری به سرایی همی روند
درویش هر کجا که شب آمد سرای او است

At night every rich man goes to an inn.
The dervish has his inn where the night overtakes him.'

After saying this, he asked for the good wishes of his father, took leave of him, departed and said to himself:

هنرور چو بختش نباشد به کام
به جایی رود کش ندانند نام

'A skilful man, when his luck does not favor him,
Goes to a place where people know not his name.'

He reached the banks of a water, the force of which was such that it knocked stones against each other and its roaring was heard to a farsang's (mile's) distance.

سهمگین آبی که مرغابی در او ایمن نبود
کنارش در ربود کمترین اوج، آسیا سنگ از

A dreadful water, in which even aquatic birds were not safe,
The smallest wave would whirl off a millstone from its bank.

He beheld a crowd of people, every person sitting with a coin of money at the crossing-place, intent on a passage. The youth's hands of payment being tied, he opened the tongue of laudation and although he supplicated the people greatly, they paid no attention and said:

زر نداری نتوان رفت به زور از دریا
زور ده مرده چه باشد، زر یک مرده بیار

'No violence can be done to anyone without money
But if thou hast money thou hast no need of force.'

An unkind boatman laughed at him and said:

'If thou hast no money thou canst not cross the river by force.
What boots the strength of ten men? Bring the money for one.'

The young man's heart was irritated by the insult of the boatman and longed to take vengeance upon him. The boat had, however, started; accordingly he shouted: 'If thou wilt be satisfied with the robe I am wearing, I shall not grudge giving it to thee.'

The boatman was greedy and turned the vessel back.

بدوزد شره دیده هوشمند
در آرد طمع، مرغ و ماهی ببند

Desire sews up the vision of a shrewd man.
Greediness brings fowl and fish into the snare.

As soon as the young man's hand could reach the beard and collar of the boatman, he immediately knocked him down and a comrade of the boatman, who came from the vessel to rescue him, experienced the same rough treatment and turned back.

The rest of the people then thought proper to pacify the young man and to condone his passage money.

چو پرخاش بینی تحمل بیار
که سهلی ببندد در کار زار

When thou seest a quarrel be forbearing
Because gentlemen will shut the door of strife.

Use kindness when thou seest contention.

A sharp sword cannot cut soft silk.

به شیرین زبانی و لطف و خوشی
وانی که پیلی به مویی کشیت

By a sweet tongue, grace, and kindness,
Thou wilt be able to lead an elephant by a hair.

Then the people fell at his feet, craving pardon for what had passed. They impressed some hypocritical kisses upon his head and his eyes, received him into the boat and started, progressing till they reached a pillar of Yunani (Greek) workmanship, standing in the water.

The boatman said: 'The vessel is in danger. Let one of you, who is the strongest, go to the pillar and take the cable of the boat that we may save the vessel.'

The young man, in the pride of bravery which he had in his head, did not think of the offended foe and did not mind the maxim of wise men who have said:

'If thou hast given offence to one man and afterwards done him a hundred kindnesses, do not be confident that he will not avenge himself for that one offence, because although the head of a spear may come out, the memory of an offence will remain in the heart.'

چو خوش گفت بکتاش با خیل تاش
چو دشمن خراشیدی ایمن مباش

'How well,' said Yaktash to Khiltash,

'Hast thou scratched a foe? Do not think thou art safe.'

مشو ایمن که تنگ دل گردی
چون ز دستت دلی به تنگ آید
سنگ بر باره حصار مزن
که بود از حصار سنگ آید

Be not unconcerned for thou wilt be afflicted
If by thy hand a heart has been afflicted.
Throw not a stone at the rampart of a fort
Because possibly a stone may come from the fort.

As soon as he had taken the rope of the boat on his arm, he climbed to the top of the pillar, whereon the boatman snatched it from his grasp and pushed the boat off.

The helpless man was amazed and spent two days in misery and distress. On the third, sleep took hold of his collar and threw him into the water. After one night and day he was cast on the bank, with some life still remaining in him.

He began to eat leaves of trees and to pull out roots of grass so that when he had gained a little strength, he turned towards the desert and walked till thirst began to torment him. He at last reached a well and saw people drinking water for a pashizi but possessing none he asked for a coin and showed his destitute condition.

The people had, however, no mercy with him, whereon he began to insult them but likewise ineffectually. Then he knocked down several men but was at last overpowered, struck and wounded:

پشه چو پر شد بزند پیل را
با همه تندی و صلابت که او است
مورچگان را چو بود اتفاق
شیر ژیان را بدرانند پوست

A swarm of gnats will overpower an elephant
Despite of all his virility and bravery.
When the little ants combine together
They tear the skin of a furious lion.

As a matter of necessity he lagged in the rear of the caravan, which reached in the evening a locality very dangerous on account of thieves. The people of the caravan trembled in all their limbs but he said: 'Fear nothing because I alone am able to cope with fifty men and the other youths of the caravan will aid me.'

These boastful words comforted the heart of the caravan-people, who became glad of his company and considered it incumbent upon themselves to supply him with food and water.

The fire of the young man's stomach having blazed into flames and deprived his hands of the bridle of endurance, hunger made him partake of some morsels of

food and take a few draughts of water, till the dev of his interior was set at rest and he fell asleep. An experienced old fellow, who was in the caravan, said:

'O ye people, I am more afraid of this guard of yours than of the thieves because there is a story that:

a stranger had accumulated some dirhams but could not sleep in the house for fear of the Luris. Accordingly he invited one of his friends to dispel the terrors of solitude by his company. He spent several nights with him, till he became aware that he had money and took it, going on a journey after spending it. When the people saw the stranger naked and weeping the next morning, a man asked:

"What is the matter? Perhaps a thief has stolen those dirhams of mine?"

He replied: "No, by Allah. The guard has stolen them."

رگز ایمن ز مار ننشستم
که بدانستم آنچه خصالت او است
ستزخم دندان دشمنی بتر ا
که نماید به چشم مردم دوست

I never sat secure from a serpent

Till I learnt what his custom was.

The wound from a foe's tooth is severe

Who appears to be a friend in the eyes of men.

'How do you know whether this man is not one of the band of thieves and has followed us as a spy to inform his comrades on the proper occasion? According to my opinion we ought to depart and let him sleep.'

The youths approved of the old man's advice and became suspicious of the athlete, took up their baggage and departed, leaving him asleep. He knew this when the sun shone upon his shoulders and perceived that the caravan had started. He roamed about a great deal without finding the way and thirsty as well as dismayed as he was, he sat down on the ground, with his heart ready to perish, saying:

Who will speak to me after the yellow camels have departed?

A stranger has no companion except a stranger.

درشتی کند با غریبان کسی
که نابود باشد به غربت بسی

He uses harshness towards strangers
Who has not himself been exiled enough.

The poor man was speaking thus whilst the son of a king who happened to be in a hunting party, strayed far from the troops, was standing over his head, listening.

He looked at the figure of the athlete, saw that his outward appearance was respectable but his condition miserable. He then asked him whence he had come and how he had fallen into this place.

The athlete briefly informed him of what had taken place, whereon the royal prince, moved by pity, presented him with a robe of honor and a large sum of money and sent a confidential man to accompany him till he again reached his native town.

His father was glad to see him and expressed gratitude at his safety.

In the evening he narrated to his father what had befallen him with the boat, mentioned the violence of the boatman, the harshness of the rustics near the well and the treachery of the caravan people on the road.

The father replied: 'My son, have not I told thee at thy departure that the brave hands of empty-handed persons are like the broken paw of a lion?'

چو خوش گفت آن تهی دست سلحشور
جوی زر بهتر از پنجاه من زور

How well has that empty-handed fighter said:

'A grain of gold is better than fifty mann (weight) of strength.'

The son replied:

'O father, thou wilt certainly not obtain a treasure except by trouble, wilt not overcome thy foe unless thou hazardest thy life and wilt not gather a harvest unless thou scatterest seed. Perceivest thou not how much comfort I gained at the cost of the small amount of trouble I underwent and what a quantity of honey I have brought in return for the sting I have suffered.

گرچه بیرون ز رزق نتوان خورد
در طلب کاهلی نشاید کرد

Although not more can be acquired than fate has decreed
Negligence in striving to acquire is not commendable.

غواص اگر اندیشه کند کام نهنگ
هرگز نکند در گرانمایه به چنگ

If a diver fears the crocodile's throat
He will never catch the pearl of great price.

The nether millstone is immovable, and therefore must bear a heavy load.

چو خورد شیر شرزہ در بن غار؟
باز افتاده را چه قوت بود
ه صید خواهی کردتا تو در خان
دست و پایت چو عنکبوت بود

What will a fierce lion devour at the bottom of his den?
What food does a fallen hawk obtain?
If thou desirest to catch game at home
Thou must have hands and feet like a spider.

The father said to his son:

'On this occasion heaven has been propitious to thee and good luck helpful so that a royal person has met thee, has been bountiful to thee and has thereby healed thy broken condition. Such coincidences occur seldom and rare events cannot be reckoned upon.'

دنه هر بار شگالی ببردصیا
افتد که یکی روز پلنگی بخورد

The hunter does not catch every time a jackal.
It may happen that some day a tiger devours him.

Thus it happened that one of the kings of Pares, who possessed a ring with a costly beazle, once went out by way of diversion with some intimate courtiers to the Masalla of Shiraz and ordered his ring to be placed on the dome of Asad,

promising to bestow the seal-ring upon any person who could make an arrow pass through it.

It happened that every one of the four hundred archers in his service missed the ring, except a little boy who was shooting arrows in sport at random and in every direction from the flat roof of a monastery. The morning breeze caused his arrow to pass through the ring, whereon he obtained not only the ring but also a robe of honor and a present of money.

It is related that the boy burnt his bow and arrows and on being asked for the cause replied: 'That the first splendor may be permanent.'

گه بود از حکیم روشن رای
بر نیاید درست تدبیری
شد که کودکی نادان گاه با
به غلط بر هدف زند تیری

It sometimes happens that an enlightened sage
Is not successful in his plans.
Sometimes it happens that an ignorant child
By mistake hits the target with his arrow.



Story 29

I heard that a dervish, sitting in a cave, had closed the doors upon the face of the world, so that no regard for kings and rich persons remained in the eyes of his desire.

هر که بر خود در سوال گشود
تا بمیرد نیازمند بود

Who opens to himself a door for begging
Will till he dies remain a needy fellow.

آز بگذار و پادشاهی کن
گردن بی طمع بلند بود

Abandon greediness and be a king
Because a neck without desire is high.

One of the kings of that region sent him the information that, trusting in the good manners of the respected dervish, he hoped he would partake of bread and salt with him.

The sheikh agreed because it is according to the Sunnah to accept an invitation. The next day the king paid him a visit, the a'bid. (pious) leapt up, embraced him, caressed him and praised him.

After the monarch's departure the Sheikh was asked by one of his companions why he had, against his custom, paid so many attentions to the Padshah (King), the like of which he had never seen before.

He replied: 'Hast thou not heard that one of the pious said:

هر که را بر سماط بنشستی
واجب آمد به خدمتش برخاست

"In whose company thou hast been sitting
To do him service thou must necessarily rise.

گوش تواند که همه عمر وی
ف و چنگ و نی نشنود آواز د
دیده شکبید ز تماشای باغ
بی گل و نسرين به سر آرد دماغ

Possibly an ear may during a lifetime
Not hear the sound of drum, lute or fife.
The eye may be without the sight of a garden.
The brain may be without the rose or nasrin.

ده پرور نبود بالش آگن
خواب توان کرد خزف زیر سر

ور نبود دلیر همخوابه پیش
دست توان کرد در آغوش خویش

If no feather pillow be at hand
Sleep may be had with a stone under the head
And if there be no sweetheart to sleep with
The hand may be placed on one's own bosom,

بی هنر پیچ پیچ وین شکم
صبر ندارد که بسازد به هیچ

But this disreputable twisting belly
Cannot bear to exist without anything."



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