



meet in the mountain mist:
still looking for shams

poetry by
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Introduction

The minute I heard my first love story I started looking for you, not knowing how blind that was. Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along.

Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against love.

quotes from Mevlana Jalaludin Muhammad Balkhi, also known as Rumi

The present popularity of Rumi, is quite interesting, one that welds him as a great, passionate mystic who spews poetic on love's ecstasy with a creative -- sometimes bombastic -- wit. The bold courage of his words and his unyielding dive into the inner depths (of the heart, of reality) are qualities that draw many modern readers to him. Yet the filters of this modern popularity censor, perhaps unintentionally, certain very important aspects of Rumi; aspects that flesh out the fuller context of what he conveys. Often lost in the praise of Rumi is the deeper story of his immense personal transformation after encountering, communing with, and then suffering the unexplained

disappearance of his spiritual master, Shams of Tabriz. Rumi's time with Shams was essential to his later destiny of outpouring a vastness of rich mystical poetry, stories, and teachings. And in particular, the period of facing Shams' absence became the transforming cocoon of despair that opened to the precious harvest of enlightening poetry Rumi is known for today.

Some might be surprised to learn that the path of Rumi's poetic witnessing of love begins with the loss of his spiritual master. Rumi's immersion into love became so deep some might not be able to see how his arrival to the valleys of mystical bliss, freedom, and uninhibited expression of love treaded through the hard road of extreme sadness, intense suffering, and immense pain. This stripping of all barriers to love, including the annihilation of Rumi's ego, lays in the hands of his submission to Shams: a transformation began in the presence of Shams that evolved to great maturation in suffering his absence.

Many oral traditions give varying versions of the story of Shams and Rumi, which occurred in the mid-1200s (AD). And given the mysterious unfolding of human history, a mystery that becomes even more obscure when dealing with things mystical, few elements of the various versions can be declared definitive. But I will share aspects of these versions that drew me to embrace the task of sharing the following collection of poems that explore Rumi's painful transformation in face of the disappearance of his master, Shams.

Firstly, it should be stated that Rumi and Shams were Muslims. Their embrace of Islam is essential to

understanding the fullness of their story. Islam means “submission to Allah (the Absolute)” and remains the essence of the religion. As Muslims, ones who submit to Allah, the path of their destinies treads the continuing example of Muhammad (peace be upon him). As the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad remains a perfect example of a human’s complete surrender to Allah, which is no different than Truth, which is no different than Love. Muhammad’s ways continue to serve as guides for how to live this most intimate surrender as a daily way of life. This forms the basis of Islam, as well as the invitation to go deeper into the mysticism of such complete surrender.

The modern embrace of Rumi’s poetry, at times, emphasizes his mysticism over his living the religion of Islam. But as Muhammad’s life displays, Rumi and Shams’ immersion into mysticism is the religion, an immersion that went beyond the social practices that stopped short of going deeper into complete surrender to Allah. Yet, we remain fortunate that Rumi and Shams lived in a society that was open to and receptive to their mystical immersion. This allowed the story of Rumi and Shams, and the poetry that spins out of such, to be spread throughout the world even centuries later.

As with most things mystic, the beginning actually begins before the beginning. It is told that Shams of Tabriz was a wandering Sufi (Islamic mystic) for most of his life. His name, Shams, can be translated as “sun,” and there is certainly a deeper symbolism to this name, particularly for those who become part of the discipleship line that flowed through him. As a person of immense wisdom and

knowing (beyond knowledge), Shams lived his surrender to Allah as a path of union in the heart: by surrendering all aspects of his individual self, the inherent love (which dwells in each of our hearts) emerged to bring him (or his dissolved self) closer to Allah. Such an approach clearly falls within the living example of Muhammad, who continued to embrace the mystical aspects of his surrender to Allah throughout his life. Thus, he continued to engage in practices essential to the mystic path even as he served his duties in building the Ummah (the Muslim community): he took periods to be alone in meditative retreat, looked beyond the letter of Allah’s guidance to the spirit of it, and sought to purify his mind and humble his ego to be servants to the throne of the heart where Love sits as the sovereign. Shams, continuing this tradition, sat as a disciple of Sufi masters to learn and apply these practices. And when he became a master himself and took on disciples, he taught them in ways that emphasized the path of the mystic over the widespread conventional approaches to Islam that minimized the path of the heart.

Shams’ surrender to the path of the heart was such that he gave up his claims to a “worldly life” to accept the destiny of a wandering mystic. He gave up the home life to fulfill his destiny of ever deepening intimate surrender to Allah. This put many aspects of his life and learning in a realm beyond words and logic. And these became even less accessible to many given Shams’ rebellious, rambunctious, and sometimes antisocial demeanor. Yet he wanted to share this ecstasy with others and saw it as a duty to do so, just as Muhammad had a duty to share the

revelations which became the Qur'an even when he had fears about doing so. Thus, came the need for a master disciple for Shams: one who could be a bridge of the realized heart to a world that minimized the relevancy of the heart, even in religion.

Some traditions relate that Shams, cognizant of the need for a master disciple, was asked by "a voice" what would he be willing to give for such an one? Shams replied, saying, "I would give my head" -- and some accounts hold that was the price he later paid. This price might seem high to some but Shams understood how a rare person he needed: one who would have the enduring courage to bear the annihilation of one's ego and not run away from this intensely painful process. Shams lacked the education, the demeanor, and social status to do what Rumi would later do. Think about it: how many of us today would pay attention to a wandering bum on the street declaring that the heart full of love is more important than anything else? That such is essential to fulfilling the purpose of life and drawing us closer to Allah. Most of us ignore bums even when they speak of things that affirm our present approach to life; and most people, including Rumi before submitting to his master, dismissed Shams and his message as irrelevant.

But Shams' need for a master disciple would require patience. Some accounts tell of how he saw Rumi fifteen years before their first encounter. And upon seeing him, Shams knew Rumi was "that one." He knew even then that Rumi was destined to become a great spiritual teacher and master who would leave an undeniable

impression upon the sea of humanity. Yet Shams did not approach Rumi because he was not yet ready to receive what Shams would bring. Praise be to the wise spiritual master who knows not to pick the fruit of a disciple not yet ripe. Shams displayed great restraint even as he saw that Rumi would be drawn further away from the path of the heart, nurtured to be a scholar and upholder of the more conventional approach to Islam. That he would walk the path of fame, wealth, and intellectualism, building upon the social status and reputation of his wealthy father. And that Rumi would even become a disciple of other Sufi masters who would approach but not immerse themselves in the endless path of the heart.

By the time Shams and Rumi met, Rumi had become an internationally known scholar, teacher, and judge of Shariah (Islamic law). He taught at an university and held an influential position there. He was also a Sufi master who attracted disciples from throughout the world. He was known not only for his wealth and fame, but also for his impeccable ethics and morality. He lived a prosperous life with his wife and children, and was deemed an extremely success person in the prime of his life (his late 30s). So when he was approached by this lesser known, seemingly arrogant, old bum from out of town, we can imagine the reaction Rumi had toward Shams.

There are two main versions of Shams' first encounter with Rumi. One version involves Shams approaching Rumi and some of his disciples on the street to pose a question: who was greater, Bayazid Bastami (a Sufi and Islamic saint) or Muhammad the Messenger? On the

surface this seemed like an idiotic question posed by a stupid, old bum because clearly Muhammad is the greatest of all humans in the Islamic tradition. But Shams revealed a deeper meaning in the question, a path to go further in what seemed obvious. Bayazid is known for saying “I have achieved knowing Allah,” whereas Muhammad said, “I am incapable of knowing You (Allah) the way You deserve.” (It should be understood that “knowing” in this sense goes beyond all knowledge and logic to a deeper, more intimate realization which is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to put into words.) So who “knew” more: Bayazid or Muhammad? Shams, in the wisdom of the knowing mystic, revealed that Bayazid only drank a glass of “knowing Allah” whereas Muhammad, in his complete surrender to Allah, was immersed in an unending flow of the river of knowing Allah. The metaphor was profound for Rumi: for he had, in many ways, followed the example of Bayazid in drinking the fullness of finite cups of knowing Allah. He was a great teacher, scholar, judge, and spiritual master but these roles had become finite glasses, not the unending river Muhammad submerged himself within. In truth, Allah is without end; therefore, there can be no ending to knowing Allah. Shams’ question, empowered with the master’s transmission of power, revealed to Rumi that he was only drinking limited glasses while the endless river of knowing Allah is at hand.

The other main version of their first encounter involves Islamic books. In this version, Shams approaches Rumi and his disciples on the street. Rumi was carrying Islamic books. There are varying accounts about what was

said but one account relates that Shams asked Rumi what he was carrying. Rumi looked at Shams, an apparent illiterate, and said the books contained things he could not understand. Shams immediately grabbed the books and tossed them into a nearby fountain. Books in those days were written by hand with ink and, unlike many press-printed books of today, submerging them in water would ruin them, the ink smearing into indecipherable markings. The replacing of such books may have proved timely since it could take months to recopy one by hand. But there is also an additional affront to Shams throwing the books in the water: any books addressing Islamic matters, especially if containing portions of the Qur’an or Hadiths (sayings of Muhammad) would have been treated with extreme care. In some traditions, one would wash one’s hands and mouth before picking up these books and reading them. (In those days, many readings of books would have been done aloud for the benefit of those who did not read, since learning to read was an opportunity usually reserved to few). So any mishandling, let alone acts that could destroy the books would have been viewed as a great offense. But the stakes were even higher since this destructive act was being committed by an old, wandering bum to someone of very high social status and fame.

Suffice it to say, Rumi was furious but sought to reclaim the books from the fountain before having Shams beaten severely by his disciples. Yet to Rumi’s great surprise, when the wet books were recovered and opened, he saw that not a single ink mark was smudged or smeared. (There is also another version of Shams setting these books

on fire and Rumi recovering the books from the ashes completely unblemished.) Thus, Rumi comes to realize Shams is a great spiritual master. But there is also a very serious message in this course of introduction: that it is time for Rumi to go beyond the letter and intellectualism of his surrender, to embrace a path that is beyond words, thoughts, and scholarly logic. And certainly someone with powers such as Shams displayed is capable of guiding him there.

Great praise be that Rumi was open to receiving Shams. As the two began to discourse, it became clear to Rumi that Shams is his spiritual master. Rumi basically retired from public life, abandoning his duties as teacher, scholar, judge, and spiritual master to spend the whole of his days and nights in communion with Shams. This included spending days upon days alone with Shams, Rumi neglecting even his family and disciples -- duties held in very high esteem in those days. Very little is said of what occurred between the two during their times of isolated communion, and tradition holds that even those who know what was shared would not speak such publicly. But it most likely involved a lot of praying, chanting, ecstatic singing and dancing, meditation, fasting, and personal instruction. Shams catered his approach to the specific needs of Rumi to have him annihilate his ego and mind to surrender completely to the call of Love in the heart. Shams was clear in his objective, to nurture Rumi to be able to have direct experience of Allah. As a great spiritual master, he could impart tastes of this experience through direct transmission from the heart of the knowing master to

the heart of the submissive disciple. But even this was done only to clear the way for Rumi to engage the path of the heart, so he could embrace and receive the continuous, unending river of such direct experience himself. In this way, Rumi would be able to convey what Shams could share but would be rejected by others -- who's going to listen to an old, wandering bum? Rumi, on the other hand, would be received for the sake of his social status, wealth, achievements, reputation, and fame.

There are accounts of Rumi saying about Shams: 'I have seen Allah which I have been worshiping all my life in human form.' Rumi was completely devoted to Shams, a genuine disciple humbled to his spiritual master. And Shams too was completely devoted to Rumi, stating that he never approached Rumi to be his spiritual master: that there was not one on earth who could be Rumi's master because he was more than human. Shams referred to Rumi as his "friend," a great compliment given the nature of their relationship as master and disciple. There is also a mystical connotation to the use of the word friend: many Sufis hold that the only one who can be a true friend is Allah, who never fails, abandons, or betrays us. But in a world where most friends (and relatives and loved ones) will do more to keep you from Allah by validating and appeasing your ego, the wise cherish those friends of the Friend who spare nothing in reminding us to remain devoted in our surrender to Allah. A friend of The Friend will not appease your ego, but work toward its annihilation that it no longer be a barrier to directly experiencing Allah, which is no different than Truth, no different than Love. As such friends, the

bond between Shams and Rumi was such that it revealed the oneness that always existed between them. And Rumi was pulled beyond the soberness of his previous approach to Islam into an intimate intoxication of love between master and student that brought them both closer to Allah.

Rumi's complete devotion to Shams did not come without costs: namely the intense jealousy Rumi's family and disciples developed for Shams. Some accounts hold that the tension and hostility increased to a point where Shams left or was driven away by Rumi's family and disciples. This put Rumi into a great depression and his family and disciples, out of concern for his well-being, brought Shams back. In an attempt to ease tensions, as well as create a socially justifiable reason for Shams to stay, Rumi arranged for Shams to marry his niece; a proposal Shams accepted since he fell in love with the young woman. But Shams' return also meant the return of Rumi's neglect of his family and disciples. Their jealousy and dislike of Shams only increased. And these were exacerbated by the death of Shams' young wife, which some attributed, in part, to her grief about being married to a strange old man.

The jealousy of Rumi's relatives and disciples was not completely without cause: his neglect of them meant the loss of a pious family member and great teacher -- precious pearls in the sea of humanity tormented by the storms of ignorance and immorality. His seclusion also meant the society's loss of a great scholar and judge, spurring others in the community to despise Shams. Do not neglect that most of these persons were not given audience

to the mystical power of Shams. Even in instances when they were granted audience to Shams' teaching, he was selective about what he taught because they did not meet the measure of being master disciples. So most of Rumi's family, disciples, and community members did not see Shams' magical cultivation of Rumi's transformation. To most, Shams remained a crazy old bum who somehow cornered the attention of Rumi, a danger many prayed would end.

One night, Shams was called to the back door; he exited to never be seen again. Various traditions hold Shams was murdered by either one of Rumi's relatives or disciples, or by a community member come to end the spell Shams held over Rumi so he could return to his former roles. Other traditions hold that Shams left voluntarily, seeing his work done: that his master disciple was ripe and now had to be released from the tree of the master; and since Rumi would not release Shams of his own accord, Shams had to leave to allow the rest of Rumi's destiny to unfold. Either way, Rumi became extremely depressed and held Shams responsible for his departure; that even if he was murdered, such could only occur to Shams if he allowed it to be, given the great mystical powers he had. Rumi was thrown into a despair indescribable: only devout disciples who have "lost" their spiritual masters can understand. For Rumi, Shams' disappearance was more than just the loss of a teacher and friend since their bond was one of pure love.

Rumi did not give up on being reunited with Shams and, thus, embarked on a "search" for him. This search

wasn't limited to just conventional means of visiting physical locations, it was also a search of calling and seeking to draw Shams back to his heart. The periods of separation from his spiritual master unleashed an unending river of poetry that became a trademark of his life. Rumi is reported as citing spontaneous revelations of poetry aloud during Shams' first temporary departure, something Rumi had not done previously in his life. But the final disappearance of Shams led Rumi to wander in the streets like a drunk ecstatic, sometimes mourning, other times dancing and praising in verse his devotion to his master. These poetic outbursts went beyond the previous reserve of his life. One may infer this ecstatic outpouring was probably learned from his master Shams, and that Rumi's displays were another way of "searching" for Shams by mystically calling for him through such expression.

The following collection of poetry, written in the voice of Rumi, is an exploration of him struggling with the final disappearance of Shams. As much as the words seek to capture Rumi's despair, there is much more to his suffering than words can convey. There is an apparent cruelty in Shams' disappearance, something he most likely knew needed to occur to allow for Rumi's full maturation into the path of the heart. But in Shams' presence, Rumi was brought by grace beyond the finite cups of knowing Allah he had become accustomed to. His unending gratitude to Shams for bringing him, via the master's transmission, to the unending river of knowing Allah cannot be fully expressed in words. And thousands upon thousands of Rumi's verses praising Shams or reflecting

what he learned from Shams are testament to this -- including a vast amount of poetry Rumi signed with Shams' name. But in Shams' presence, Rumi was immersed in the unending river of knowing Allah and having direct experience of Allah, which is no different than Truth, no different than Love. But such was only a taste to remind Rumi of his innate, unending appetite for this bliss: a taste to reveal the always-present remembrance of dwelling in the heart, where this river flows. The final task of the spiritual master, after seeing the master disciple has been adequately prepared, is to withdraw one's transmission to allow the disciple to realize the unending river within. In a world immersed in suffering and sadness, most master disciples move toward such realization through great pain and despair. The spiritual master cannot interfere with such, for the sake of the master disciple the spiritual master must relinquish all attachments to the disciple. It is up to the disciple to endure whatever avails to honor the teachings of the master and arrive at this most sacred realization.

This is the seed of Rumi's poetry, what made a man who previously did not write poems open to an vast flow of deep, intuitive, free, sometimes provocative poetry. It wasn't poetry written for the sake of creativity or to display his genius: it was the despairing call of a disciple deeply longing for his spiritual master so he could bask again in the unending river of knowing Allah. Rumi's early poems were part of his search for his master, which he later realized was a search for something deeper. This search moved Rumi from one who became discontent with finite

cups of knowing Allah to being immersed in the unending river of knowing Allah. This journey became the bridge that fulfilled the spiritual master's wish and destiny: to have a master disciple who could convey to the world the path of the realized heart, a surrender to Allah (and Truth and Love) which goes beyond words and logic.

The story of Shams and Rumi is a story of a spiritual master finding a friend of The Friend in one's master disciple. And such a story, regardless of who the specific persons may be, is a story of Love. But not love in the modern context, which usually reduces this pure blessing to egotistical expressions dancing in the desires of selfishness to give us joy or pain or both. The path of the heart, which Shams and Rumi embraced, calls for the annihilation of the ego and its selfish tendencies because these can prove to be the greatest barriers to love. Allah is no different than Truth, no different than Love; so in this sense, Love (its sharing, expression, cultivation, etc.) is a direct experience of Allah. So much of the vastness of Love goes beyond the reach of words and ideas, and some masters will only use these as ways to move beyond the finite glasses of Love to approach the endless ocean of Love.

The Love shared between Shams and Rumi encompassed their minds and bodies on the relative plane, but only as a meeting point to dive into the deeper vastness of Love shared between their surrendered hearts. And Shams, as a spiritual master, would have used his powers of transmission to assist his master disciple in realizing the unending river of knowing Allah. Again, this goes beyond

words and ideas of Allah to a direct knowing that transcends knowledge: to feel Allah beyond a feeling and, thus, be brought to the timeless remembrance of who and what we truly are. Even these words fail, but hopefully they convey the depth and purity of Love Shams and Rumi shared in their two years together. Such a relationship of Love has become exceedingly rare in human relationships, for it sheds all desires and barriers to completely surrendering to Allah (Love) that we may find ourselves in direct experience with The Absolute.

But enough words and explanations. Let those who are ripe enough to receive the transmission within this story be open to realizing the path of the heart and immerse themselves within the unending ocean of Love. The following poems are shared as little rays of light to honor the example Rumi's search for Shams. Although it is a search made in sadness, don't be bound to the sadness; for if faced with sincerity, as Rumi did, it only becomes a passing road to a greater valley of bliss. Perhaps then we may see the call within the words that lead beyond the realm of words, into the vast wordless, thoughtless, selfless abode of directly experiencing Love...

*rumi points to shams
shams points to muhammad
muhammad points to allah (the absolute)
allah points to you*

*who will you point to
who will unfold you to
the complete unfolding of your heart...*

0.
jalaludin muhammad
i hear your whispers again
to tell the never ending story
of the master and the disciple
what my ears may color
forgive me as i relay this story of love
the details as only fragrances pointing
to the blossom of the pure rose
whose roots and petals meet in the heart

1.
i once had the courage to question
why the sun rose in the morning
but after meeting the sun of the sun
i would welcome its appearance
at any time of day or night
the mere mention of the sun
leaves me too dumbfounded to speak
to think
my heart now dwells in shadows of despair
i being the object that creates these shadows
in the absence of your light

oh light of my light
why have you disappeared
wading through the tears of my heart
i seek the rays of your light
of any sun
that i may follow them beyond the horizons
to where suns set
in hopes of finding you
in that place where suns rest

when you came
i was a budding rose
with a sweet and fragrant scent
upon your arrival
my petals were burst to the ground
and scattered everywhere
and my perfume turned into a skunk's stench

when you came
i was prized silk
so soft to the touch
but your spinning has spun me into mixed thread
that always splits at the ends
and i sit in a refuse bin because of my poor quality

when you came
i was a warm and stable candle flame
steady in my light
but when you appeared
the mere shadow of your light extinguished me
and a cool breeze has hardened the wax
that used to support my burning and consuming

when you came
i was an enchanting lyrical poem
tickled by the world's praise, basking in fame
but just your whispers
have reduced me to a nonsensical alphabet
and your spoken prayers
have diminished me to ashes of dust

when you came
i was a decorated warrior
who never took a single blow to my chest
but your wisdom has exposed me
to be a cowardly schoolboy fumbling to hold a stick
afraid to fight my harmless shadow

when you came
i was a flowing stream
savored and sweet to the taste
but when you bowed to drink from me
i turned to withering mist
yet even in my vapors i tried to hold your reflection
but was incapable

when you came
i was an eloquent scholar of devotion
revered for my moving sermons and profound teachings
but hearing you read my books
has left me a tongue-twisted illiterate
unsure of my own language
even unsure of my own name

when you came
i was so much more than what i am now
you have devalued me
making me less and less
to be almost nothing
although most in this world would mourn losing
what you took from me
you have brought me to my greatest value:
a priceless treasure wrapped in spiritual poverty
i am a seed recovered from the soil of hypocrisy
recovered by you in you
i knew my surrender of all
 was necessary to attain the best harvest
yet i kept a little for myself while seeking cultivated fruits

a venture doomed to failure
but you recovered me from the soil of my hypocrisy
and no seed is to be taken lightly
in this age of famine
laying in your light
i broke myself open even upon the surface of the soil
extending my roots into your sun rays
and my stem into your love

but now
my sustaining sun is gone
although i wither in the departure of your light
you have not left me to ruin
i would wager my life that your absence
is more painful than death
more painful than torturous dying
because at least in death
there is an ending or new beginning
i see neither in mourning your disappearance
but prove me wrong and reappear
give my roots a home again
and my stem, a destination
let the abyss of my despair
be changed into the ecstasy of reunion
with the sun of the sun
the light of my light
the love of my master

oh shams
where are you
that i may live the fullness of life again



2.
oh shams
where are you
that i may live the fullness of life again
how can i distinguish
day from night from non-existence
in the perpetual absence of your light
after basking in the sun of the sun
which made even midnight
brighter than the most brilliant day
every moment now is a dreary shade
and every second bears the extinction of love
or so it feels

it was you who taught me
what love is
without a single word
looking deep in your eyes
with innocence and sincerity
you reflected my ignorance back to me
with just your gaze
yet your grace conveyed
this is the beginning of my unfolding
of enlightenment
no one else had the courage to be so honest with me
not even i had the courage to face my own ignorance
i only sought to cover it up with knowledge
and masquerade it with acts of piety
yet your light was such
that it offered no place to hide

and love demands no less:
that i hide nothing

despite the pain of such honesty
having to face the lies i lived with yet ignored and
concealed
and with even the risk of me running from your exposing
light
you ceased not the slightest
in shining your light upon me
burning away my veils
not compromising in any way
what love demands
you had faith that i would not run from love's crucible
even as others violated such faith
over and over again
by abandoning you in the storm of love's purging
am i much different from those who ran away
although i did not run
i must humbly confess
many times did i consider abandoning you
it is only by grace that i did not leave
did this grace come from you

you left me not
when i demonstrated the greatest risk of fleeing
but now you disappear
when i'm determined to never leave you
how ironic
yet the paint of my sadness contains not a drop of anger

i remain indebted to you
because
it was you who taught me
what love is
an enfolding silence
where even the suggestion of separation
dissolves into complete union
where you are you in me
and i, me in you
to become the truth of who we are in ourselves
and beyond and beyond
(internally and externally)
an intimacy that bridges all separation
yet now you challenge me with this greatest of separations
your unexplained disappearance

if this is to teach me more about love
i will swear, even falsely
that i have learned so you may return
or let my learning be incomplete
for the sake of our reunion

oh shams
where are you now
that i may live the fullness of life again
without you
my life is in search of meaning



3.
what is it about us
that makes us seek
meaning in others
even this tendency
(which i dare call a fallacy)
drew me closer to you
but in our emerging union
you reflected
my sought meaning (in you) back to me
declaring:
“all i want from you
is for you to see your (true) self
then you won’t look to me
or anything else
to complete you”

i am amazed
by my every memory
of your love for me
even as you constantly chastised me
to stop living in the past
be present

4.
presently
i can hear nothing
but the wailing of my own heart
a song of despair that ends not
since you disappeared without a trace
yet still i turn the earth upside down
looking for any sign of you
and have cursed the heavens
since i have not wings to fly
to search for you there

the whole world has gone mad
insane
yet i’m just crazy enough to seek truth
the wisdom of life is within us
but we sell it for (illusions of) certainty
and then become mad when the world fails us
yet again
that’s why i took such solace in your love
not that it has gone, but in your absence
i am uncertain about how to live this love

in your presence
to be audience to your love was enough
but now i feel i am the show
a tragedy in search of an audience
but the watching eyes of a million friends will not suffice
for the audience of the one
i seek to place myself before

oh shams
i seek your light
to escape this unwanted loneliness

5.
oh sun of the sun
i sought your light to escape my loneliness
but instead your light reflected back to me
my own solitude
its inner depths revealed
absent of the desires and concepts i held to
the nakedness of my aloneness placed before my eyes
by a light i could not run from

how many people run from themselves to their own
detriment
even if their running is reflected in running from others
many are the inner canvases we project outward
and rare is the courage to face the inner portraits
of our inadequacies
yes, i did run from myself by running from others
painting blame upon exterior surfaces
when the proper place for such blame was myself
conflict with others chosen over introspection and
responsibility
abandoning the ruins of my destructiveness
instead of correcting the harm i inflicted
i was a coward, and maybe still am
the absence of a powerful light made for easy hiding
but now having faced what could not be hidden
in your light
i not only seek not to hide, but to expose all that i am
that there be not the slightest shadow within (me)

not a single space to hide
for awareness brings its own transformation

oh shams
what a wonder that your light's purity
has penetrated beyond my surface
to reflect back to my awareness
the landscape of (my) solitude
an abode of beauty
a haven of peace
a state of wholeness
only in my selfishness are these scattered
or destroyed
but your light has a way of erasing (my) selfishness
even if only for a moment
to dwell in your light is to dwell within
the beauty of (my) solitude
its peace and wholeness
beckoning me to release all those things i held myself to be
needless objects that only cast shadows of confusion
but your light had a way of making even these disappear
that i may see myself as myself
no distortions or colorings
no taints of the past, my desires, or others' opinions of me
that in your light, your presence
i was
alone with you
with you and alone

i long to be alone again
but your absence has proven to be
an unescapable companion
that and my whispering tears



6.
when whispers dance with silence
sounds become insignificant
yet what you conveyed to me
is beyond words
how to make the faithless understand
that communion is communication
even if nothing is expressed
yet they have fallen in love
with the imitation of words
and other lesser indications
of separation

you have shown me your soul
and i mistook it for my corpse
for how could i live after such revelation
how small-minded i had become
in my quest for understanding
and being understood

the universe is as big as one indivisible song
but in my quest to devour it all
i have reduced it to only desirable notes
i have brought my own confusion
chasing distinctions
when the oneness of the universe
has it all
why reduce the all of the universe

you have shown me your soul
and i mistook it for happiness
but the minute i turned from you
sadness was upon me
what i cherish, what i favor
what i admonish, what i dislike
what i am glad to avoid
none of these are you
only impressions of my perception of you
if i truly want to see you
i must drop all impressions
and move beyond perception
to just be
with you

but how can the day
be with the sun
when the sun has disappeared
and refuses to return



7.
oh shams
where does the sun go when it doesn't return
does it burn out to nothingness
if so, tell me where to find its ashes in the celestial ether
that i may search for any glowing embers
and cherish such light

or does such a sun change into a moon
if so, i will reflect all my memories of you upon it
in hopes that it will give me shades of your light
i know the moon emits no light of its own
but i will surrender my consciousness
to this illusionary deception
i'll honor it with holy ceremonies when it is full
to dwell in vigils of remembrance and appreciation
i'll curse the moon when it fades to an unseen orb
and seek its forgiveness when it begins to appear anew
i know i'll be forgiven
because forgiveness lives in you

or does the sun that does not return
scatter itself into countless stars
if so, the night shall be my daily altar
and the constellations, my book of prayers
i'll fast for the sun's descent
and wail in despair when the clouds obscure the night sky
and savor every little glimpse of light that reaches me
from the galaxies afar
in many ways i feel you are farther away

even if you are standing directly behind me
such is the bitterness of your disappearance
which won't succumb the slightest to anything sweet



8.
why this cup of forsaken bitterness
was not my devotion devout, my sincerity sincere
was not my purity pure and unblemished
and my heart given in wholeness willingly
did i unknowingly pollute the sacred temple of love
or was my humility as a student lacking in any way
did i not yield to austerity to be cleansed
 by alchemical fires
or did i withhold a single tear, or hide a single laugh
did i not stop and wait for the ants to cross my path
honoring the wisdom of solomon
did i offer any resistance to the blowing of the wind
or seek to change the direction of any stream i was floating
 upon
have i not done all demanded and heeded all that was
necessary
why then am i delivered this torturous burden
i cannot even lift my soul which used to be as light as light
and relief is now a dream far away in a land where my
insomnia is barred

oh shams
you taught me that love is eternal bliss
but now your absence teaches me that love is pain
please come and tell that i have misunderstood this lesson
i am your willing student, correct me of this flaw

oh shams
i have never feared your correction
and i won't fear it now

9.
they seek that which they are afraid to find
but i'm not afraid to find (true) love
that it may dissolve me completely
especially my ego
into the nothingness of reality's essence

many people when they find love
run from it or destroy everything around it
because they are afraid to pay love's cost
the surrender of everything that brought them to love's door
no desires, no needs, no things to be
no displays or proclamations
not even words or shams' light
everything but love itself is worthless to love
but after wearing clothes and costume jewelry for a lifetime
few have the courage to walk naked through love's
 threshold
the light of love
refuses to penetrate even the thinnest, most transparent
 cloth
and without the light of love covering your entire body
you know not love
even if it completely surrounds you

i am not afraid to seek
i am not afraid to find
i am not afraid to sustain and embrace
to lose and search again
to rest with, to reunite with

love
the treasure of all treasures
the light of all lights
revealed to me by the light of my light
that i may see to give and receive
a bounty so huge it reduces me to insignificance
but if i hold myself to be even the slightest measure
the vastness of love dissipates
or disappears

i wonder
if i unknowingly held myself to be
any measure in your presence
and made the light of my light
disappear

imagine
if the sun disappeared
how could anything be seen
beyond the projections of blindness
yet i know
that what i see now i see not
it is an imagining i have not the strength to subdue
your disappearance has rendered me blind
in the memory of sight
yet even this is flawed
for the past does not meet what exists now
even if we imagine such an encounter
what was, what is, and what will be
never meet in reality

only what is is what is
and you taught me to only deal with what is

oh shams
why has your love brought me to this present circumstance
and for how much longer must i be lost in the memory of
 love
while being blind to the present reality of love
this confusion consumes me
you told me the world is full of cowards
am i one
now that i wish to flee
this painful episode of love

10.
meet me in the mountain mist
in the space between my tears and the cries of the heights
where the clouds kiss the treetops with such a luscious
 embrace
it makes the mountains stream with flowing waters,
 pure and rich
even as the clouds surround me, i keep my feet planted
firmly on the ground
and seek the silence beyond nature's calls
i know there is a beauty beyond this display of untouched
 terrain
the world is a veil and my mind its accompanying song

they say the mountains hold all the secrets of the universe
that there are no secrets: only veils hidden in veils
but love has nothing to hide, even as it stands fully exposed
before ignoring eyes
and lovers are called to follow the example of love

i looked for you in the nectar of colorful flowers
and did not find you cuddling eggs in the nest of birds
you were absent from the foxes' holes, no trace of you
 in the caves of bears
the valleys held not your footprints nor the rivers' shores
everywhere i looked became a search in vain
to seek but not find yet be impelled to seek further
and after searching all the forms and places i knew
 to search
i turned to the mist in hope that i would find you there

it was you who taught me
if i want love and want to love
i must meet my beloved in truth
if i wish to keep these desires pure
but what desires can remain pure for long

it was you who taught me
i will never see you with my eyes
but if i watch carefully with these lying eyes
the forms you are not, yet occupy
i can observe how these paint the edges of who you are
and after that must trust what is beyond the edges
beyond observation
but not beyond realization
it is within such realization that i never doubt your love

it was you who taught me
what love removes from me
i should not seek to hold on to or pursue
is it love that removed you from me
and if so, will i be doomed by seeking you
in the ether of my longing
i still feel i belong with you

this world is crazy
and within it many forms of insanity are deemed functional
there must be a space within this world
for me to be crazy enough
to love you

or simply
to love

11.
this world is crazy
and within it many forms of insanity are deemed functional
the world is falling apart a person at a time
so what's the point of trying to save the entire world
the past embraces us with chains
and we embrace such embrace while crying for freedom
a slave to memories, others' opinions of us, others' values
yet who we truly are remains entombed in a cocoon of
 ignorance

if i was a fool i wouldn't care
but your teaching and love
has made me too wise to ignore where i stand
the masquerades of sanity are more crazy than obvious
 insanity
and most intelligence is really stupid
and most seeking is very selfish
i can only be honest after facing the lies that were my life
and with no lies there was nothing to hide
then i was ready to love
but prior to that
i only had confused proclamations of love
that i wore as adornment over lust
selfishness, pain, and desires
i was a fool dressed in reverent robes
a mirage sustained by other fools
looking for fool's love or someone to admire or adore
but none of us were ready for love

oh shams
it is a wonder that the light of your wisdom
shined upon my ignorance and made it disappear
that disappearance i embraced with tears
that transformed into smiles of such bliss
it is this bliss, produced by your love
that broke open the cocoon of my ignorance
that my (true) self, true being
was able to emerge
without the chains i wore when my life was false
then fear struck
and i was tempted to run back to the familiar sufferings
 of ignorance
to embrace again the cycles of cycles that render existence
to the pains of illusion
but your patience with me stayed the uncertainty
your encouragement inspired my courage
until i realized
that if i could bear the hardships of bondage
why not also bear the hardships of freedom
and be free
that in freedom, hardships dissolve to peace
once all the embers of the false life
have burned to fine ashes that blow away in the wind
again nothingness
again fulfillment
again life remembered
and life made complete

oh shams
what wondrous grace
that you have bestowed on me
your light and love
when i was a wretch not worthy of love
but now being empty-handed and worthy
may i never regress to the cycles of suffering
to disown what lovers should always possess
(love)
but your disappearance tempts me strongly
to be a pauper to spiritual poverty
and seek again the distractions of insanity
to suppress the pains of this sweet cup of love
you are my reflection but my mirror has been lost
and even still water doesn't show me the image of me
because i walk without the light of my light

12.
if all this before me
is a reflection of my mind
that externalizing beast
what am i supposed to see
in it

if all this before me
is not my reflection
why is it before me

i'm going to the toilet
to see
if i can throw up
my perceptions and questions

13.
is the question
what is the purpose of my life
oh wait,
that question is already too selfish
i'll start again

is the question
what is the purpose of life
still a relevant question

no answer
this silence doesn't quell the confusion
or at least it has yet to
if such confusion is an entry point
to understanding
i hope to quickly progress
to a point beyond all confusion
and to never regress
but it seems that is an achievement
that has long been extinct
in the school of human learning

they say we start in blindness
to gain a glimpse of sight
that we should quickly become blind to again
that if we remain in the scope of sight too long
our very own eyes will lead us astray
into abominable pits of destruction and pain
where even what is sacred can be abused and destroyed

but don't confuse the blindness of ignorance
with the blind sight of wise indifference
don't mistake indiscriminate acceptance
with the settled reserve that is not moved by the world
this world will hesitate not to put you in chains
but i seek the freedom of love
which paints its completion with virtuous restraint
a restraint that leads to freedom



14.
in the freedom of love
and the unrestrained disclosure of honesty
it was you who told me
desire me not
i do not want to be reduced
to a figment of your imagination

the mind is a cunning device
that will make you see while seeing not
with how many people
do i stand before their eyes
yet am virtually invisible to them

it was you who told me
wake up
it is one thing to know
that true life exists beyond the dreams
but awakening lays oceans beyond knowing
and oceans can seem to go on forever
especially when everywhere you look
you only see water and horizons of water
but your light crossed the great beyonds
with a velocity that surpassed the speed of sound
and penetrated deeper than the meaning of all words
you reached me
the essence of my being
when everyone else remained oceans away
and now that i have been truly encountered

the imagined companionship and intimacy i once cherished
with others
has become so artificial and meaningless
your love is my awakening
and your light, the escort within my dream
to bring me to the place of awakening
that i may
wake up
it was you who pushed me
beyond the edge of dreams
to face my nightmares in my awakening
that i may transcend this transition
from sleep to wakefulness
and
wake up
to be fully awake
to be fully in life

but in your absence
and the diminishing twilight of your light
i tarry at the place
where dreams end and wakefulness begins
praying and fasting for your return
that i may dwell in the light of my light
and take repose again under the sun of the sun

oh shams
i have discarded the imaginings of intimacy
for true union with you
i have left the dreams of love

for the reality of love's truth
now i walk upon the waters of endless oceans
searching for your light
that it may lead me to you
i will never reduce love to a dream again



15.
all the beauty of the dream worlds
amount not to the smallest sliver of the beauty of love
those who chase the animation of this world's illusions
they think this is life but it's not
if they only realized
love is one of the rare few keys
that open the doorway to life
there are other keys
but shams has swore me to a vow of silence regarding them
and that's a vow i will keep
until silence breaks its vow and sings over the cosmic
sound

you will always be loved by me
because love is eternal
and also because
your love has brought me into love's domain
my awareness has been changed forever
by your luminous radiance
when i looked into your eyes
and saw my reflection in your pupils
you revealed to me
your reflection in my pupils
and even deeper
that i exist in you
and you exist in me
because we exist in we
true unions are eternal
it is only we who are late to discover what always is

because we chase illusions of time
true unions are eternal
because they always breathe anew in the present
that eternal one moment that is changeless in its apparent
changes
that is indivisible in its illusive distinctions
that is whole even if we imagine experiencing it in
separate fractions
true unions are eternal
and in realizing my union with you
i have been introduced to eternity again
a remembrance recovered
reality realized

oh shams
you will always be loved by me
because you are
my beloved

16.
oh shams
you will always be loved by me
because you are
my beloved
i cry your name
and cry for your light
amidst the wind howling through the summits of the
mountains
but just as most of the world hears not the wind
only sometimes its howling
my cries go unheard
perhaps that is just as well
because the world is full of cowards
who are too afraid to be brave
but not afraid to be scared

love demands courage
a quality not understood by most
therefore they will not understand my cries for you

having realized the eternity of love through you
i realize how few people
attempted to genuinely love me
and of those few
none achieved except you
but i too
in my ignorance
rarely sought to genuinely love others
and loved no one

not even myself
until i surrendered to you

to claim to love and then not love someone
is a lie
is, was, and will always be a lie
because love is eternal
it has no beginning or end
even if our realization, embrace, and surrender to love
has a beginning or ending in our selfish imagining of life
but i have shed my selfishness to realize
that which always is, was, and will be
which is love
you came into my life already loving me
intent on showing me our eternity
and even in your absence
i know you still love me
it is only i
who struggle with accepting this expression of love



17.
your absence is an expression of love
since it is eternal
love must be even now
in this pain
in this longing

it was you who taught me
that union is an indispensable reality of love
that the more the light of love shines on the illusion of
the self
the more this illusion disappears
along with its imagined separations and distinctions
to reveal the pervading reality of oneness
which wise ones embrace as intimate union
the expression of such union informed
by measures of virtue and wise restraint
love needs to destroy the illusion to be expressed
within the space the illusion appears to occupy
love refuses to be bound by the illusion
and in releasing the illusion
the fullness of love can be realized
love has little to do with forms, concepts, and
self-imaginings
even if these become means to be introduced
to the expansive wonder of love

but the ecstasy of love diverts me again
as i was saying
it was you who taught me

that union is an indispensable reality of love
but where is this union in your absence
i feel more separate from you now
than when we were strangers
and this is after experiencing the bliss
that we are one
shams and i, one
master and disciple, one
but these are feelings
i love you therefore i cannot be separate from you
because we have never been separate
will never be separate
are not separate now
even in your absence our union lives
it is my imagining that we are apart
even as we seem apart in this illusion

some will say i am crazy to say
that we are in union even in your absence
what love has bonded the world cannot separate
even as the world seeks to convince me that i'm crazy
to live love's reality over the world's ignorance
it is the world that is crazy
i will not reduce myself to the world's insanity
you are here
even in your absence
we remain in union although i feel so separate from you

oh shams
i must embrace your love more deeply

even in your absence
so that my feelings not overcome
my awareness of love's reality



18.
oh shams
i return to remembrance of you
to strengthen my fading awareness
of love's reality
you
who taught me
not to fear or avoid
that which may at first be painful
but comes to dwell in peace
such is often the path
of being born into love from the womb of ignorance
and if after birth there are still pains
it is because i am seeking the apparent comforts of
 the womb
instead of living as a child of love

oh shams
what a horrible realization
in a moment of complete despair regarding your absence
i wiped my eyes to dry my tears
and found pieces of old placenta still on my hands
but i do not want to wash my hands
because the placenta reminds me
that although the womb was a place of bondage
my painful birth into your love
was joyous, beautiful, and liberating
and i seek to hold on to these in your absence
even if they are no longer real
they are figments of the past

and the past no longer exists
even if i seek to impose my imagination of it
upon the present
if you were here you would chastise me
for thinking this way

you
who taught me
just because a thought enters my mind
doesn't mean i need to embrace and claim it
especially since i am not yet able
to control what thoughts enter my mind
but a virtuous mind embraces virtuous thoughts
and allows unvirtuous thoughts to pass unclaimed
but even beyond a virtuous mind
is a more complete virtue
which doesn't need thoughts to be
this is the playground of love
even the most pure and open mind
is too small
to play with the big kids who play there

the wise shed their minds
when being born from the womb of ignorance
or have it cut off
when the umbilical cord is severed
hopefully in a way that leaves a very small belly button

oh shams
you would still be ashamed of me

i washed my hands
but i did not use any soap
so the stench of old placenta is still upon me
a chosen reminder of
joy, beauty, and liberation
as if these need reminders
i have forgotten you
and forgotten my true being
i have made myself weak in forgetfulness
and it's convenient to blame your absence as the reason

you
who spoke little of joy and beauty
because joy is the twin brother of sadness
and these two are never far apart
you said
since you do not wish for me to be sad
you would not speak of joy
but there is a peace of contentedness
that exists beyond both
and of beauty
what is there to say of beauty
that will not be discovered
by surrendering to love
and living love
but you did speak of liberation
when in bondage i lay
giving the perception of my reality
power over reality
giving my fixation with what is finite

power over the infinite eternity
i was so confused
and regressed in part back to such confusion

you
who taught me
that the mind is a barrier to love
but the unresolved mind is very difficult to release
and is the root of so much bondage
therefore to resolve the mind
liberation is necessary -- in the mind
but once free from bondage
there is no need for liberation
so be free from liberation too
because it too is in the mind
just as an illusion persists
only as long as we succumb to it
the mind we attach to only exists
as long as there are conflicts and dilemmas before it
but none of these are real
even if we treat them as real
the fullness of reality is
beyond all illusions and minds
and love expands beyond all comprehension
into the infinite eternity of reality
yet by naming it
i have already reduced it
to a sign pointing to the fullness it is
but if i did not name it
would you have the openness of being

to realize it without being named
is your being such
that it is with that which is
and needs not
words nor observations or explanations
to be
and be realized without being called

oh shams
within your presence
within those moments of silence
i was that which is
and had no needs
i was able to be without being called
but now, oh shams
my thoughts leave me no space for silence
and at times i must even speak aloud
to calm
this tempest of unending thoughts
that my feelings may be acknowledged
by calling out my despair
i call to you
because i have forgotten who i am
your presence was my reminder
but with your absence has returned my amnesia

oh shams
please return, i beg you
even your silent presence will restore my remembrance
you remain more who i am than i being who you are

oh shams
i know i should not be so dependent upon you
will you forgive me if i claim to still be a student
not the teacher of love you have groomed me to be

19.
the sun of the sun taught me
as my beginning steps upon the path of love
to search for love
with the deepest and fullest
sincerity, commitment, and perseverance
and to search for love until its depth
fully dissolves me
that who i am
who i was
who i seek to be
no longer exist
only the infinite eternity of love

i have tasted the eternity of love
oh shams
in your love for me
but i have not surrendered completely to its infinity
because when i look at myself
or who i hold myself to be
it is not all love
is my calling for you
my hunger for you in your absence
part of this search for love i must continue
or is it a residue of my selfishness
that i have yet to resolve and release

if you were here
i know you would answer me
with a sustaining certainty

yet even this observation reveals
that i have regressed to an imagined separation
in place of the truth of our union
why am i making illusions more real than truth again

before this absence overtook me
in the presence of your love
i was love
i am love because love can only be in the present
many admonishments you delivered me
for allowing the past to interfere with the eternal present
of love

the eternal presence of love
but within your presence
being only love
you told me
to search for love no more
the search is only necessary
when love is not realized
but once realized, drop the search
for in any search is craving
and love needs not desires
the infinite eternity of love is sufficient to itself
dwell in this infinite eternity
and be peacefully content in its grace

oh shams
now that in your absence i am not peacefully content
is this an indication that i should resume the search for love
which to me means search for you

or is this reduction of the search
another residue of my selfishness
the infinite eternity of love
which you deemed universal
i only found in you
so is it wise or selfish
to seek you in order to find it again
even you said
rare are those who live the language of love
a language that is not boastful
that is eloquent in its reserve
even if the beauty of such language is not seen
by those who receive but don't speak it
(this world is sustained, in part, by love)
even you said
those who live this language
honor and cherish them
never abandon them even if their ways be hard
the roots of such hardship lay in the fact
that we are not attuned to love
but those who live this sacred language
greater companions than these will be so very hard to find
they are treasures irreplaceable
abandon the whole world if need be
to dwell in the love of such an one

remembering these teachings within your absence
i can surely state: truer words have yet to be spoken
for i have found no greater companion than you
i abandoned the world to be with you

only you
i honor and cherish you even in your absence
but you have abandoned me
or so it seems
does this mean you have dishonored me and cherish me not
or is it because i do not yet live this language in full
that i am not afforded the same standard
even if you have denied me what should be granted
i will search for you and forgive you these wrongs
just as you forgave my immense ignorance
it was you who taught me
forgiveness has a permanent home in love

oh shams
in you i have found all that you taught me to search for
and in your presence
i dropped the search for love
to peacefully dwell in its infinite eternity
that your love may attune me to love
and transform me to live the language of love completely
and eventually join the ranks of the great companions
but oh
how much has diminished in your absence
to be replaced by pains which make me regard
the grave as a place of possible comfort
one way or another
this suffering must come to an end
and i know you know
that i prefer to be in your presence again
❁ ❁ ❁

20.
oh shams
where are you
why do you abandon me
in the midst of these cowards
and confused and ignorant beings
with you i was content in our aloneness
but your absence has diminished me to loneliness
even in the midst of all i once held to be friends and family
there is no comfort
i cry and their words bring more tears
i hurt and their embrace intensifies my pain
i tell them to leave me to my loneliness
but the compassion i extended to them in the past
makes them ignore my pleas
they are concerned for me
but know no remedy to my suffering
because only love can replace the loss of love
and they, like most people, are ignorant of love

the room in darkness
cannot replace the light of my light
oh shams
i would rather close my eyes
than have them be open and not able to see
yet this the world calls life

the world is grand portrait
if you could see behind the canvas
you would know it is not real

but these people are consumed
with imagining this painting as real
and adding their life force to the colors of the canvas
i would dare not disturb their imagining
lest they turn their insanity on me
but your light was so pure
it not only cut through the canvas
it made all the colors invisible
my eyes have been forever changed
baptized in your light
i am colorblind to the imaginings of the world
absolutely nothing appeals to me
except love
which i seek to dwell within again
i will seek you until eternity ends
even if i never find you

oh shams
why have you left me in a world groomed to delusion
after transforming me to seek only love
the world was already falling apart when i was in your
presence
but in your absence, the torturous madness has increased
in your presence i had patience with the world
but in your absence
i pray daily for the world's complete destruction
or my peaceful removal from this world

i know this world, caught up in delusion
is a cauldron of misery and pain

after being found by your love, this world is no place
for me
my home is where my heart is
and my heart lives in the bliss of love

yet in your absence
my heart has disowned its place within me
and left me lonely among this collage of humans
most who have never even encountered the scent of love
let alone held its sweetness on their tongues
or with the openness of their hearts
they have been groomed in the spiritual disease of
ignorance
passed on from generation to generation to generation
in the name of love
what a lie
because love never puts people in bondage
although the road from ignorance to love
may progress through difficult trails

oh you humans
who were born to sing a verse in the song of love
but have instead betrayed your purpose
to make your lives moanings of destruction
if you knew love
you would not seek to comfort me into accepting its
absence
but instead tear your robes
and toss your riches into blazing fires
to cry and wail with me

for the disappearance of the sun of the sun
instead you try to comfort me
with futile efforts that only seek to distract me
from the light of my light
i don't even see the colors of your illusionary light
i am blind to you
yet you insist on disturbing my loneliness



i would rather cry in sobriety
than take part in a nauseous stupor
with people who imitate true intoxication
simply to relate to other strangers
who masquerade as something else
it was you, oh shams
who made me realize
i have lost nothing of (true) worth
by not pursuing the companionship of illusion
such pretenders are caught in a web of ignorance
that masquerades their loneliness even as it destroys
and those who carry destruction carry death
but love has brought me to the abode of life

oh shams
i can't stop crying
in my own misery i have made myself
a prisoner to finite illusions
if i continue to mourn your absence
i will cause myself to fall
into the fold of the self-destructive
if i have not already done so
perhaps that is why they surround me
and now bring flutes to mock me
with sounds that imitate calmness
yet even in the midst of this external chaos
my own heart chastises me
for remaining in this pitiful state

oh shams
was it not you who told me
if not to be an instrument of love
for what purpose does the heart exist
was it not you who told me
make the human heart a temple
and this life an altar of love



22.
i prostrate myself before the altar of love
for with my head bowed to the ground
i rediscovered my purest beauty
in the depth of humility
the emergence of emptiness emerged in me
a gift received
that i could not manifest as i am
the more of this beauty i sought to possess
the more i denied myself
the truth of who i am
is
forgetfulness, initiative, and exertion are my faults
if my life is an altar of love
everything i need to do or be
will be revealed
everything i need to see
will be shown
for love always provides for those who love
even if in the last of appropriate moments

i close my eyes
for what benefit have i found
in coloring the sky with my shades of grey
my sight being colorblind
to the passions and actions of this world
or even if i imposed a shade of blue
upon the blue hue of the sky
it is all illusions
even if a subtle illusion

and illusions only appear alive
in the realm of the mind

what have i to see
in an illusion that only deceives me
what have i to find
in an universe that places its nakedness right before
my eyes
in my ignorance i have only sought
my desires, my ideas, my beliefs
and others' influences and opinions of me
i have made the smallness of me larger than the universe
knowing this me exists more in the universe
than the universe exists in me
and i have made illusions
larger and more appealing than both
a mirage in a facade of ignorance
that i empower to hide reality

oh shams
i hope i did not disappoint you
by becoming a fool again
you have taught me better
and even your lessons won't let me remain a fool
instead i will remain in this prostration
to face this little me
that interferes with (my) absolute reality



23.
my life has been diminished again
to a state of me
when in your presence
the light of my light diminished me
to turn my life over to eternity
the universal has regressed to the personal
the smallness of me resurrected from the death of my
 identity
or so it seems in this personal tragedy
i blame the world for falling apart
but i am the one who is falling apart
and know no way to escape this gravity
i am consumed again in pain

escape
who needs to escape
only fools
and usually things they've done
or attracted to themselves
or ourselves
since i have returned to the domain of fools
and now include myself in my own criticism

the path of love
the path of what
i am on the path of forgetfulness
even as i know what is worthy of remembrance
i once had love but now it seems lost
and everything in my life feels worthless

even life itself
there is no escape from this despair
there is no escape from this suffering
why have i embraced again these unnecessary burdens

i still suffer
for the ignorant
our suffering is the reward of our stupidity
on the path of love
suffering is a means of purification
in my confusion
can i fulfill both sufferings simultaneously
and be purified of my ignorance
to return to the path of love

in our ignorance
we choose what is less than best constantly
and in our constant choices
we are the bringers of our own suffering
we are the bringers of our own destruction
we are the roots of the weeds
that suck our lifeforce from our lifeforce
and bring pain upon pain into our lives
and the lives of others

you did forewarn me
oh shams
that the path of love is not an escape from suffering
and may even bring new types of suffering to courageous
 lovers

the root of all suffering is ignorance
but this toxin cannot long be tolerated
on the path of love
love will wring the impure through many purifying fires
burning the scabs of scabs without hesitation
that the scum of impurity may be completely burned away
with the chains of suffering
that bind us to cycles of endless pain
but the road to freedom from unending pain
may be very painful
but at least this road has a peaceful destination
and purity is a beauty enlightening to itself

i did not run away before
but this time i see the purifying fires
and wish to flee
even knowing this will return me to unending cycles of
 pain
and more suffering than i will face
if i bear these present pains with courage

oh shams
i know these truths you told me
yet hesitate to live them now
instead of being forgetful of truth
i should be forgetful of (my) ignorance
and forgetful of (my) fear



24.
i was once evil
even as i masqueraded it in righteousness
because i submitted my being to selfishness
i used to be a coward
veiled in superficial bravery
because i submitted to fear
with just these two qualities alone
i rendered so much destruction
even if i made my deeds seem small
in comparison to other destructiveness
but this is an illusion that only assuages
those who surrender to illusion
destruction is destruction
and is a poison to the soul
a danger to be avoided for the quality of what it is
not the measured quantity of its impact

if a drop of poison is enough to kill you
why argue about who is drinking jars of it

selfishness and fear
with these two qualities alone
the world has been thrown into such suffering
but with just two qualities
my whole life was indescribably transformed
i cannot say all the blessings that became of me
and came through me
by submitting my being to
selflessness and courage

it was your light that showed me
how these were sitting upon my fingertips
even when i was a selfish coward

despite the apparent ease of being such
few things are harder to live than selfishness and fear
yet i rejected what was easier and beneficial
for reasons that never made sense

in my despair
i am face to face with my selfishness and fear again
yet i do not turn away from the temptation of embracing
these
my despair has made me blind to wisdom
and numb to better judgement
i am unrecognizable to the person you showed me to be
i wade in a cocoon of sadness
and have lost all concern for my well-being
in my eyes i am nothing
not even worthless dust
i regret the day i was born
and only break my silence to make my prayers
i have made my prayer rug a mausoleum
where i reiterate sacred prayers that are now dead to me
i no longer know what these holy words mean
because life itself now has no meaning
all there is is despair
and these calling idols of selfishness and fear
i could just run and run away
and find something to want

something in the abundance of distracting destruction
that would make me feel satisfied
even as i know that is a lie

is it not you who told me
wherever i go, i take my mind
and has not this despair
made a home for itself in my ailing mind

oh shams
in this moment
i am too weak to protect myself from my selfishness
and i have become too afraid to address this despair
if there is anything you can do
to keep me from forsaking you
and forsaking myself
please help
even in your absence
i surrender myself to you
right now, i am a great danger to myself

25.
oh shams
my great master
please forgive me
i have forsaken you
and in my rebelliousness
veiled as despair
i have asked you to do for me
that which i can do for myself
how foolish
a student shouldn't dishonor one's teacher in such a way
for you would not have taught me
if you felt i was incapable of living the lessons you gave
why have i surrendered myself to your absence
and not the continuing presence of your teachings
why have i surrendered myself to despair
and not the continuing flow of love
that even now sustains me
why have i settled before a well without water
when nearby rivers call me with their currents
poor men want to be rich
but you taught me that i can never be a pauper
as long as i continue to give love
and give love
and give love
until there is no more of me left to give
such is the precious wealth of love

it was you who taught me
that even if my love is rejected

even if abused
or abandoned
i am the one with the treasure
if i continue to love
a wealth the world cannot take from me
not even in death
not even in deep despair
and how you carried such prosperity
even in owning no possessions
even if you were destitute in dirty rags
you would remain the wealthiest person i know
because you love deeply
i would give the whole world over and over
to have what you have
because you have love overflowing endlessly in love

but i instead
have tortured myself with my own doubts
and self-centered despair
i have made myself a victim of the glory of your love
rendering that which is eternal to the past
to your apparent absence
you taught me to be naked before truth
why have i dressed myself in despair and fear
i must cease living the illusion of despair
in place of the reality of love
i must disown the inheritance of fear
for the providence of love before me

oh shams
if i destroy myself by neglecting what you taught me
i have no one to blame but myself
if i bring myself to my own suffering
by forgetting (your) love
i have no one to blame but myself
it is not your job to stop me
from manifesting my own harm
or to rescue me from my own ignorance
the only thing you had to do
you have done
and that is to love me
with a love that is always forever eternal

26.
oh shams
you have given me love eternal
yet i have put you and this love in a box
you never said that you would be with me always
but you promised me love eternal
a promise that continues fulfilled
yet i have foolishly limited these
to my preference for your presence
but neither you nor love are limited to such
i must accept you and love
even in your absence

however you and love manifest in my life
i must humbly accept
it is not for me to put conditions on how this should be
or to fall into despair because you and love fulfill not my
preferences
let me burn away all preferences
let me be without wanting or expectations
in this way
i can always appreciate
your light and your love

oh light of my light
i have forsaken you long enough
if i will continue to forsake you
it would be better that i never knew you
but having tasted your love
i would be a fool to disown it

by surrendering the truth of love to my ignorance
i must live what you taught me
i must honor what you have given me
otherwise i was a fool to ever study under you
and to receive your love
in my ignorance
in my selfishness
in my fear
in my self-centered preferences and desires
i have made myself the root of my hardships
the root of my suffering



27.
in my ignorance
i thought love would bring more people into my life
but instead
i am without a friend in the world in the midst of your
absence
even those who come to see my present suffering
or came to witness the wonder of our communion
when i was in your presence
remain so very far, far away
because they are spectators of love
not livers of love's eternal sweetness

i would rather have one second of love with you
instead of centuries of love's imitation
i would rather have one millisecond of being in love
instead of an eternity of love's spectatorship

it is me who has removed myself from them
because i sought your love
and your love removed me from the world
for my own benefit
they are to me strangers
asking for directions to a destination
they unknowingly stand within
love is everywhere
and in every moment
and beyond all places in timelessness
but they insist on searching for it elsewhere

what exists beyond everywhere
and beyond all time
only that which is beyond
all perception and conception

even in this diminishing suffering
i have blamed on your absence
they come to offer me comfort
but i am beyond their words
they utter the language of selfishness
as if to make my pain so great
that it warrants comfort
but has not this world been cursed by hardship
over and over again
who am i to think i would be exempted
especially if i perceive your absence as a hardship

but they speak and i do not hear them
yet upon their every word
i am on the verge of tears
they have become the mirror of my despair
and i have made a home for such despair by carrying
 sadness
at the expense of forgetting love
but in awakening to the awareness of such ignorance
i realize the necessity of beneficence
for me to embrace the depths of my present pain
not to be comforted nor suffer needlessly
but to release the wounds

to be free from the wounds that will scar me as a child
 of pain
how can i be a child of love if i am a child of pain
how can a broken vase hold the nectar of life
and offer it to others without cutting them
or polluting the nectar with the debris of my brokenness
pain will reduce one's soul to many broken shards
that cut even your eyesight
and leave you bleeding for that which you sought to see
and things can become worse
if you seek to touch those broken shards with bleeding
 blindness

it is by no fault of their own that they cannot be
 my companions
they flow with the oceans of the world
i am a teardrop ascending to the heavenly realms
to shine with the sun of the sun
which means i must evaporate into mist
and maybe even nothingness
to travel free throughout the celestial ethers
to arrive before the burning sphere of your light
i live to surrender my form to love
they live to retain their forms which cannot receive love
nor bear to hold or be in its presence long
on the basis of this fundamental contrast
i cannot share who i am with them
or receive of the portions they offer

oh shams
it was you who told me
rare is the genuine seeker of love
and such rarity means much aloneness
as most humans are
they will run from the crucible of your light
and if they do
we remain as far apart as light and darkness
that only sometimes meet in degrees
but never share intimacy



28.
you have proven closer to me
than the chains of my ignorance
why then do i stare at those rusted shackles
in the shadow of your light

when i allow you to be my teacher
even in your absence
i become a student fulfilled
a devoted lover on the path of love's bliss

when i live the remembrance of love
i cannot do anything against love
may i always live this blessed remembrance
whether in your presence or absence
the invitation to live the remembrance of love stands
and in the fulfillment of the invitation
is peace and beauty unending

just as a mirror does not reflect the bounties in my heart
i know not to expect this world
to reflect the glory and order of love
what love would dissolve ignorance seeks to retain
what love deems worthless, this world often regards as
great
the insight of love has shown me
that gravestones, no matter how well sculpted
often only adore dead things in decay
the fullness of life is beyond cemeteries
and a world that binds itself to death

even if glimmers of life can be found in this world
like the sun of the sun shining its light here and beyond

what finite words can serve as metaphors
for that which is infinite
for that which is love
even as i fall apart
i must dwell in appreciation
not dissatisfaction and wanting
which are bondage

yes, i am falling apart
seeking to retain the beauty of your love
but the more i hold to it
the more i seem to lose it
how foolish am i
to seek to hold to that which is everywhere
if it is everywhere
all i need to do is be with it wherever i am
there is nowhere i can be where it is not
therefore why should i not move freely
through life
or even this illusionary world
yet the promise to always be in your love
was not a promise to dwell forever in bliss
the changes of this world will affect me
as long as i continue to identify with this world
but if i surrender completely to love
i will never be separate from love's bliss
never

if i surrender completely to your love
i will never be separate from you

how peculiar
that i seek to separate myself
from my separation from you
how insane this is
when love demands union of lovers
i may be surprised what i find
if i embrace union within your absence



29.
you have given me a gift eternal
yet i have reduced it to longing
in your absence
although you never said it
i realize now
that although i am alone
i am never alone
that when i cease to be
who i hold myself to be
or what others think of me
i dwell so easily
effortlessly
in the union of our love
the union of love

there is nothing i can do to earn your love
there is nothing i can do to love
it calls for total surrender
to receive it
to be a vessel of its giving
my whole orientation of life
is completely transformed
when i honor the humility
that placed me before love's eternity

i am in you
and you in me
and we in we
(in love)

what love bonds in union
not even ignorance separates
even if we humans separate ourselves
from those we are bonded to in love
(what does that say about us humans)
but i will not betray myself
by betraying you
or betraying love
the covenant that binds us in oneness
is life
all else is a wanting illusion

let the world betray itself thousands of times over
let the world betray me thousands more
i will remain true to us
i will remain true to you
i will remain true to myself

in my forgetfulness
i brought such suffering upon myself
by reducing myself to less than ignorance
but in remembrance, any pain i encounter
only purifies and expands and deepens
my embrace of love
my embrace of you
my embrace of myself

i am who i am
because after humbling myself
before the sun of the sun

the light of my light has dawned on me
an eternal dawn
that forever calls me to rise
and live the prayers of love
☼☼☼

30.
the light of my light has dawned on me
how blind i have been
the light of my light is my light
that not only shines upon me
but also emits from within me
i have become so caught up in receiving your love
i neglected the love that emanates from me
love makes no such distinctions
because those who honor and surrender to love
effortlessly give and receive
love
and so much more
they cannot refrain from giving and receiving
what love places in their lives
even if they are abused and betrayed
lovers are lovers
and will always love
and surrender to love

i have been seeking you
for the light you shine upon me
when that very same light
already shines within
how else could you say
that i am in you and you in me
although you have said that countless times
it is as if i have heard it now
for the very first time
you told me from the beginning

that i am in you and you in me
but i did not fully understand
enamored in receiving your love
but now, dwelling in your absence
challenged to embrace this seeming void
i finally dropped all
and surrendered completely to love
no longer restraining the flow of love within me
i gave forth my love to you
even in your absence
and this filled the void
and in giving i see
i am in you
and you are in me
the light of my light shining
from within and beyond

i am in you
and you in me
oh how foolish of me
to suffer the illusion of your absence
when by and through love
you are already in me
forgetful of love
i have been looking for myself in you
when you have been within me all along
when you have been me all along
i already am what i have been searching for
but in my ignorance
i covered truth with deluding things

love annihilated us into each other long ago
even before we met
in fact, our so-called meeting
was only a sign in illusion
reality timelessly proclaims
we are always one
indivisible oneness

why have i been looking for myself
even as i am myself
the question is irrelevant
in this eternal moment of love's redemption
you are not separate from me
nor i separate from you
we are always one
we are always love
i am shams
and shams is me
forget the veils and their dance of illusive separation
forget my identification with the distinctions of our oneness
love washes over oceans of forms to be an ocean of love
i am who i am
who is you
who is we
there is no need to feel absent from (our) reality
there is no need to search for you or for me
only surrender to love and be
the life of love's everlasting being

i will not long for you in your absence
but instead
dwell within the presence of you within me
which is me
i will sing praises of myself
to sing praises to you
i have become too forgetful
of our eternal oneness
which subsides not the slightest
in these apparent passing moments of time
love is the eternal one moment
therein our union always is

no one can ever take you from me
just as i can never be taken from myself
but if i identify as just a wave
and not the ocean of love
we will seem to be eternities apart
even if you are in me
even if you are me
will i forget the ocean you showed me to be
and imagine the hardship of your absence
while within the bliss of our eternal presence
let me not be such a fool to myself
and the wondrous beautiful grace of love
☼☼☼

31.
oh the beauty of love
it is the same as we
as i am the same as you
and you, the same as me
our essence speaks our oneness
and i hear it now forever
there is nothing for me to look for
when i am who i am

it is you who taught me
it is not enough to know truth
but to live truth
even if such living leads me to the grave
if i surrender myself to love
to the humble extent of your surrender
in our surrender
i too will realize
i am the sun of the sun

these thoughts are not my thoughts
i ascribe them to your surrender
these words are not my words
i refuse to sign my name to them
i stumbled upon meeting you
when we were in each other all along
and in the humility of your awareness
you laid the path for my living
that from ignorance

i may return to the abode of life
which radiates in the eternity of love

although there is nothing to prove in love
let the student prove worthy of the master's grace
let me not miss a single prayer
let me not withhold a single prostration
let me read the sacred books over and over again
until i have finally heard all the words
in everything i examine and engage and encounter
to make the breath and breadth of my life
a living testament
of that which makes the sacred books sacred
everything for me is a testimony
of the eternal eternity of love
and love for me is everything
i have been baptized into the glory
of only seeing love

although there is nothing to prove in love
let me prove worthy of your grace
and surrender my forms to the light of my light
and then, when dwelling within such penetrating light
even surrender my surrender
to just be in love
to just be love
to just be
not by my will, but by love's reality
even if such breaks the hold of my apparent forms
the vase that breaks holds not to its beauty

yet to reduce its beauty to its form is a mistake
it was beautiful long before it occupied a form
before it was a clump shaped in the sculptor's hands
or blown into dust from nothingness
or realized as a thought in creation's imagination
and that same vase is still beautiful
even if its beauty is not bound to its broken form
let me be that vase that breaks
and yet holds not to its beauty
for if i come to love without beauty
it will seek to fill me with all its endless beauty
so that regardless if i walk with forms or not
my beauty cannot be denied
just as you are to me eternally beautiful
whether you grace me with your presence
or disappear to appear absent

it was you who taught me
a mystic is born many times in one lifetime
yet this doesn't reduce the pain
of being expelled from another womb
yet i should not hasten my impatience
in wanting to be fully born into the eternity of love
each birth is a treasure
beholding its own order and purpose
i would be wise to honor these in each birth
and the path of life each birth points to



32.
oh shams
how can i say that i have genuinely learned what you
 taught me
if i don't surrender myself completely, unendingly
to the eternity of love
let me be thrown into the fire
let me be burned, let me be cooled
let me be expelled from another womb
let me be shaped as unresisting clay
within the sculptor's hands
let me be met, let me reside in union
let me be abandoned and betrayed
let me be lost that i may find and be found
let me be called or thrust into apparent loneliness
let me laugh, let me cry, let me smile
let me pray or meet peace in silence
let me be humble but not afraid
let me be wise but without cowardice
let me chant the names of love within the tombs of
 uncertainty
let me lose to gain what cannot be given
let me be placed face to face with my selfishness
let me suffer the fruits of my ignorance and hypocrisy
let me be ashamed, let me be corrected
let me be blind until i open my eyes to what is in plain sight
let me be thrust between loss and abundance
until i realize that which can never be gained or taken away
let me taste the richness of life
let me drink from the cup of tragedy

let me drown in the rivers of persecution
let me suffer when i need to suffer
and be healed when i will receive the blessings of healing
let me be confused by illusion
let me be tortured by my own passions
let me be tormented by horror
and dance in the winds between safety and danger
let me be torched by hell's fires
until i develop a heartfelt hunger for the heavens of love
let me be beaten by despair until i bleed hope
let me be condemned by my own guilt
until i wash in the waters of innocence
let me be whatever it is i need to be
barring i do not destroy myself or unnecessarily harm
 others
but whether i meet fulfillment or mistakes
let me be whatever it is i need to be
that will bring me to realize
without the slightest doubt
that i must surrender myself completely, unendingly
to the eternity of love

all else fails to meet the true measure of life
everything else is so small when love is certainty
all else is inconsistent to love's consistency
and leaves me open to the affliction of evil
all that happens to me on the journey to love's full reality
means nothing if i don't make a complete, unending
 surrender
even your love for me means nothing if i don't surrender

completely and unendingly
to the eternity of love



33.

in my complete, unending surrender to love
i abandon my finite concepts of love
for the reality of eternity
i will no longer place myself
in the captivity of ignorance
and then plead for another hand
to remove me from the hardship i placed myself within
although the sacred is not bound to this world
i will not let anything in this world part me from the sacred
i will take refuge in the proximity of what is sacred
until what is sacred has dissolved me into sacredness
i will be persistent without doubt
walk with everlasting faith without pride
abide in complete humility without fear
abound in resolute courage without inconsistency
i will dwell in the home of love without hatred
and settle my heart in its peace, to transcend all conflict
i will be the word of that which is wordless
and proclaim love's silence

there is a path which no follower knows
yet when love is your home
this path becomes your journey
it is ever pure
where one heart radiates the truth
that i am nothing but love
and even this humble proclamation
fails to capture the reality these words infer
but will never reach

the full expanse of love
dwells within what can be understood
and beyond all understanding

there is a path which no follower knows
that exposed the truth of my heart to me
i am ashamed to have ever thought i had a heart of my own
there is only one heart
which can only be realized in the eternity of love
i have chased fairy tales of love
which ventured far from love's maturity
and the selfishness of my imagination went deeper than i
realized
until i released everything
to completely, unendingly surrender to love
that eternity may take its place in my finite forms

oh shams
i now understand
why you never said you loved me
even to say such words
which point to the reality of your love for me
feels like uttering insufficient lies
now that i have opened my eyes
by surrendering completely, unendingly
to love
no words prove adequate
to convey the fullness of love
and
partial perceptions of love's fullness

only confuse the deluded
like having me seek to dwell in the receipt of your love
but not give this same indwelling love back to you
silence is better than such inadequate words
because when one comes to realize the fullness of love
such an one will be moved to an unrelenting silence
that no words or expressions can ever convey
yet this wordlessness or inexpression
in no way hampers the reality of love

what can i say to say what will not be said
yet is what it is in its fullness
within the absolute abode of silence
within the eternity of love



34.
i am you
and you are me
such distinctions don't even exist in love's eternity
yet your teachings challenge me
to live this reality
in a world that is oblivious to love

everywhere i look
i see people surrendering in selfishness
to illusions of separation
they live hatred even as they cry for love
they are curses unto themselves
when the blessings of love pervade the universe
yet even as they attack me
and abuse me
and reject love
i must not surrender the virtues of love
by responding to ignorance with ignorance

love is my way
there is no other way for me
because love would have it no other way

i am a child of love
there is no greater parent
even if i remain an abandoned orphan to this world
even if death claims me
my parent is my life
my devotion my breathless breath

truth is my guide
and surrender to love my providence

oh shams
i have only suffered my imaginings
for when i released the confusion of your absence
and separation
and all the pains i derived from such
when i released these to suffer no more
i realized they were not real
and why suffer things that are not real
when the love of reality is bliss

oh shams
what could i ever do
to fulfill the sense of gratitude
i have for you
i know your answer
just be love
may my obedience to this precious lesson
be everlasting
with deepening sincerity
and faith increasing

oh shams
i will to see to it
that the whole world comes to know your name
because you have served as my portal
to the eternity
of love

i will sign these poems
of love's rediscovered revelation
as being written by
the light of my light
the sun of the sun
shams of tabriz



meet in the mountain mist: still looking for shams.
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