

**The Poetry of Rumi:
A Path to Prayer
& Spiritual Growth**

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The Price of Kissing

I would love to kiss you.
The price of kissing is your life.

Now my loving is running toward my life shouting,
What a bargain, let's buy it.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Year with Rumi, p. 34,
rendered by Coleman Barks

So, you want union?

Union is not something found on the ground,
or purchased at the marketplace.
Union comes only at the cost of life.
Otherwise, everyone and his brother
would have this unions.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Garden Beyond Paradise, p. 82,
translated by Jonathan Star & Shahram Shiva

God has said,
"The images that come
with human language
do not correspond to me, but
those who love words
must use them to come near."

from One-Handed Basket Weaving,

translated by John Moyne and Coleman Barks

My poems resemble the bread of Egypt,
one night passes over them
and you can't eat them anymore.
So gobble them down now,
while they're still fresh
before the dust of the world settles on them.
Where a poem belongs is here,
in the warmth of the chest.
Out in the world, it dies of cold.
You've seen a fish; put him on dry land.
He quivers for a few moments, and then he's still.
And even if you eat my poems
while they're still fresh,
you still have to bring forward
many images yourself.
Actually, my friend, what you're eating
is your own imagination.
These poems are not
just a bunch of old proverbs.

The You Pronoun

Someone once asked, What is love?

Be lost in me, I said. You will know love
when that happens.

Love has no calculating in it. That is why is said to be
a quality of God and not of human beings.

God loves you is the only possible sentence.
The subject becomes the object so totally
that it can't be turned around.

Who will the *you* pronoun stand for if you say, *You love
God?*

by Rumi, 1204-1273,
from A Year With Rumi, p. 87

Take someone who doesn't keep score,
who's not looking to be richer, or afraid of losing,
who has not the slightest interest even
in her own personality. She's free.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from Open Secret, p.8,
rendered by Coleman Barks

There Is Some Kiss We Want

There is some kiss we want
with our whole lives,
the touch of spirit on the body.

Seawater begs the pearl
to break its shell.

And the lily, how passionately
it needs some wild darling.

At night, I open the window
and ask the moon to come
and press its face against mine.
Breathe into me.

Close the language-door
and open the window.

The moon won't use the door,
only the window.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from [A Year with Rumi](#), p. 80,
rendered by Coleman Barks

Music Master

You that love lovers,
this is your home. Welcome.

In the midst of making form,
love made this form that melts form,
with love for the door
and soul for the vestibule.

Watch the dust grains
moving in the light near the window.

Their dance is our dance.

We rarely hear the inward music,
but we are all dancing to it nevertheless,
directed by the one who teaches us,
the pure joy of the sun,
our music master.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from [A Year with Rumi](#), p. 158,
rendered by Coleman Barks

Move Within

Keep walking, though there's no place to get to.
Don't try to see through the distances.
That's not for human beings. Move within,
but don't move the way fear makes you move.

Walk to the well.
Turn as the sun and the moon turn,
circling what they love.
Whatever circles comes from the center.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from Unseen Rain, p. 20,
rendered by Coleman Barks

A Piece of Wood

I reach for a piece of wood. It turns into a lute.
I do some meanness. It turns out helpful.
I say one must not travel during the holy month.
Then I start out, and wonderful things happen.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Year with Rumi, p.
22, rendered by Coleman
Barks

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
English rendering
by Coleman Barks

On Fasting

There's hidden sweetness in the stomach's
emptiness.

We are lutes, no more, no less. If the soundbox
is stuffed full of anything, no music.

If the brain and belly are burning clean
with fasting, every moment
a new song comes out of the fire.

The fog clears, and new energy
makes you run up the steps in front of you.

When you fast, good habits gather
like friends who want to help.

Fasting is Solomon's ring. Don't give it
to some illusion and you're your power;
but even if you have,
if you've lost all will and control,
they come back when you fast,
like soldiers appearing out of the ground,
pennants flying above them.

A table descends to your tents, spread with other
food, better than the broth of cabbages.

Bismillah

It's a habit of yours to walk slowly.
You hold a grudge for years.
With such heaviness, how can you be modest?
With such attachments, do you expect
to arrive anywhere?

Be wide as the air to learn a secret.
Right now you're equal portions clay
and water, thick mud.
Abraham learned how the sun and moon
and the stars all set.
He said, "*No longer will I try to assign partners for God.*"

You are so weak. Give up to grace.
The ocean takes care of each wave
till it gets to shore.
You need more help than you know.
You're trying to live your life in open scaffolding.
Say *Bismillah*, "In the name of God",
like a priest does with a knife
when he offers an animal.

Bismillah your old self,
to find your real name.

Rumi₁ 1207-1273,
translated by John Mayne
& Coleman Bar

If you want money more than anything,
you will be bought and sold.

If you have a greed for food,
you will become a loaf of bread.

This is a subtle truth.
Whatever you love, you are.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Year with Rumi, p. 403,
rendered by Coleman Barks

Invoking Your name
does not help me to see You.
I'm blinded by the light of Your face.
Longing for Your lips
does not bring them any closer.
What veils You from me
is my vision of You.

Rumi, 1207-1274,
from Rumi: Hidden Music, p. 48,
translated by Azima Melita Kolin & Maryam Mafi

Childhood Friends (4)

Put your vileness up to a mirror and weep.
Get that self-satisfaction flowing out of you.

Satan thought, I am better than Adam,
and that *better than* is still strongly in us.

Your stream-water may look clean,
but there is unstirred matter on the bottom.

Your guide can dig a side channel
that will drain that waste off.

Trust your wound to a teacher's surgery.
Flies collect on a wound. They cover it,
those flies of your self-protecting feelings,
your love for what you think is yours.

Let a teacher wave away the flies
and put a plaster on your wound.

Don't turn your head. Keep looking
at the bandaged place.

That is where the light enters you.
And don't believe for a moment
you are healing yourself.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from [A Year with Rumi](#),
September 29, pp. 311-

Someone Digging in the Ground

An eye is meant to see things.
The soul is here for its own joy.
A head has one use: For loving a true love
Legs: To run after.

Love is for vanishing into the sky. The mind,
 for learning what [people] have done and tried to do.
Mysteries are not to be solved. The eye goes blind
 when it only wants to see *why*.
A lover is always accused of something.
But when he finds his love, whatever was lost
 in the looking comes back completely changed
On the way to Mecca, many dangers: Thieves,
 the blowing sand, only camel's milk to drink.
Still, each pilgrim kisses the black stone there
 with pure longing, feeling in the surface
 the taste of the lips he wants.

This talk is like stamping new coins. They pile up,
 while the real work is done outside
 by someone digging in the ground.

Birdwings

Your grief for what you've lost lifts a mirror
up to where you're bravely working.

Expecting the worst, you look, and instead,
here's the joyful face you've been wanting to see.

Your hand opens and closes and opens and closes.
If it were always a fist or always stretched open,
you would be paralyzed.

Your deepest presence
is in every small contracting and expanding,
the two as beautifully balanced and coordinated
as birdwings.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from *A Year with Rumi*, p.
17, rendered by Coleman
Barks

I tried to think of some way
to let my face become his.

"Could I whisper in your ear
a dream I've had? You're the only one
I've told this to."

He tilts his head, laughing,
as if, "I know the trick you're hatching,
but go ahead."

I am an image he stitches with gold thread
on a tapestry, the least figure,
a playful addition.

But nothing he works on is dull.
I am part of the beauty.

RUM!, 1207-1273
from These Branching Moments, # 40,
translated by John Mayne, version by Coleman Barks

HEY

The grass beneath a tree is
content and silent.

A squirrel holds an acorn in its
praying hands, offering thanks, it
looks like.

The nut tastes sweet: I bet the
prayer spiced it up somehow.

The broken shells fall on
the grass, and the grass
looks up
and
says,
"Hey."

And the squirrel
looks down and says,

"Hey."

I have been saying "Hey"
lately too, to God.

Formalities just
were not working.

When I see Your Face, the stones start spinning!
You appear; all studying wanders.
I lose my place.

Water turns pearly.
Fire dies down and doesn't destroy.

In Your Presence I don't want what I thought
I wanted, those three little hanging lamps.

Inside Your face the ancient manuscripts
seem like rusty mirrors.

You breathe; new shapes appear,
and the music of a Desire as widespread
as Spring begin to move
like a great wagon.

Drive slowly:
some of us walking alongside
are lame!

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from Like This,
translated by Coleman Barks &
John Mayne

The Essence of Ritual

Pray the prayer that is the essence
of every ritual. *God, I have no hope.
I am torn to shreds. You are my first,
my last and only refuge.*

Do not do daily prayers like a bird
pecking its head up and down.

Prayer is an egg.
Hatch out
the total helplessness inside.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Year with Rumi, p. 221,
rendered by Coleman Barks

Night Prayer

Now I lay me down
to stay awake.

Pray the Lord my soul to take
into your wakefulness,

so that I can get this one bit
of wisdom clear.

Grace comes to forgive
and then forgive again.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Year with Rumi,
April 24, p. 136,
rendered by Coleman Bar

Betrayal into Trust

When school and mosque and minaret
get torn down, then dervishes
can begin their community.

Not until faithfulness
turns to betrayal
and betrayal turns into trust
can any human
being become part of the truth.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from *A Year with Rumi*,
July 23, p. 233,
rendered by Coleman Barks

I entered the Sacred City,
And took an oath of loyalty;
Wearing a white pilgrim's garb,
I wrapped the Ka'be with cloth.

But the moment I saw your face,
I broke every vow I ever made.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from *A Garden Beyond Paradise*, p. 23
translated by Jonathan Star & Shahram Shiv

Love Dogs

One night a man was crying,
Allah! Allah!

His lips grew sweet with the
praising, until a cynic said,
"So! I have heard you
calling out, but have you ever
gotten any response?"

The man had no answer to that.
He quit praying and fell into a confused sleep.

He dreamed he saw Khidr, the guide of
souls, in a thick, green foliage.
"Why did you stop praising?"
"Because I've never heard anything back."
"This longing
you express *is* the return message."

The grief you cry out from
draws you toward union.

Your pure
sadness that
wants to help is
the secret cup.

Listen to the moan of a dog for its
master. That whining is the connection.

There are love-dogs
no one knows the names of.

Give your life
to be one of them.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from **Say I Am You**, p. 13,
rendered by Coleman Barks

The Far Mosque

The place that Solomon made to worship in, called the Far Mosque, is not built of earth and water and stone, but of intention and wisdom and mystical conversation and compassionate action.

Every part of it is intelligent and responsive to every other. The carpet bows to the broom. The door knocker and the door swing together like musicians. This heart sanctuary *does* exist, though it cannot be described.

Solomon goes every morning
and gives guidance with words,
with musical harmonies, and in actions,
which are the deepest teaching.
A prince is just a conceit,
until he does something with his generosity.

Rumi, 1207-1273.
from *A Year with Rumi*, p. 301,
September 23

Your Eyes

I am so small I can barely be seen.
How can this great love be inside me?

*Look at your eyes. They are so small,
But they see enormous things.*

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from *A Year with Rumi*, p. 319
October 9

Love's Confusing Joy

If you want what visible reality
can give, you are an employee.

If you want the unseen world,
you are not living with your truth.

Both wishes are foolish,
but you'll be forgiven for forgetting
that what you really want is
love's confusing joy.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from A Year with Rumi, p.
60, rendered by Coleman
Barks

Let the Beauty We Love

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways
to kneel and kiss the ground.

Rumi, 1207-1273, from A Year with Rumi, p. 60,
rendered by Coleman Barks

A Just-Finishing Candle

A candle is made to become entirely flame.
In that annihilating moment
it has no shadow.

It is nothing but a tongue of light
describing a refuge.

Look at this
just-finishing candle stub
as someone who is finally safe
from virtue and vice,

the pride and the shame
we claim from those.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from *A Year with Rumi*, p. 13,
rendered by Coleman Bar

One Song

Every war and every conflict
between human beings has happened
because of some disagreement about names.

It is such an unnecessary foolishness,
because just beyond the arguing
there is a long table of companionship
set and waiting for us to sit down.

What is praised is one, so the praise is one too,
many jugs being poured into a huge basin.
All religions, all this singing, one song.

The differences are just illusion and vanity.
Sunlight looks a little different
on this wall than it does on that wall
and a lot different on this other one,
but it is still one light.

We have borrowed these clothes,
these time-and-space personalities,
from a light, and when we praise,
we are pouring them back in.

Rumi, 1207-1273,
from [A Year with Rumi](#), p. 214,
rendered by Coleman Barks

Partial Bibliography *

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*** There are many other volumes of Rumi's poems put out by Maypop Press. There are also other translators of Rumi, but in the US, none so prolific as the collaboration of Moyne & Barks.**