

**KHVAJA MIR DARD**

## Twelve Ghazals from the *Divan*

**I**

*(first ghazal with radif ending in letter alif)*

What power have we to proclaim you?  
The Lord's is the might of tablet and pen.

The radiance that streams from your throne  
Lights a path for the footfall of understanding.

Sheikh and Brahmin are clasped to your shade.  
The house is yours. The temple and the Ka'ba are yours.

You visit the soul in anger  
Or dwell there as amnesty, in mildness.

Like a bubble Dard's eye was pierced.  
Yet the rhythm of his verse has not faltered for a  
moment.

**2**

*(second ghazal in letter alif)*

You fill the world with light. All we behold,  
All that appears to us, is bathed in your light.

Want and dependence shape our needs.  
We are and are not. Being and certainty are yours.

O Reason, bereft of truth, powerless to emerge  
From the self—we have found what you are worth.

Your splendor hides: yet it blazes forth.  
Your heaven is far: yet all we can know of you is here.

Our hearts will not yield in any direction.  
We abound with your pride.

His perfections—O Dard—are showered  
On all. It takes you to detect a fault.

3

*(third ghazal in letter alif)*

In mosque school, monastery or temple  
We lodged for a season. But you were the proprietor of  
the building.

All we beheld and heard  
Till death's hour broke on us, was a dream.

A waste autumn field was this garden.  
An alien plant here, too, was my friend.

This empty heart, which you cherished  
And made your own, is tenanted by a thousand griefs.

Was this a friend? What then? Can it matter?  
Forget. What are they worth, Dard?—things of yore.

4

*(fourth ghazal in letter alif)*

Mouth to mouth, Saqi—from the wineskin!  
Pour with a practiced hand. Revive this drunk.

She who once tastes delight—though hidden from the  
world—  
Must make herself known, like a perfume. The veil  
cannot hold her.

Our lives shower like sparks.  
To works of haste heaven appointed us.

Whoever I approach in my grief  
Comes out with the story of his own troubles.

See, the sky's wheel, a mount that will unseat any rider!  
By the new moon this defect was shown.

Dard, you have watched the life's blood of every drinker  
Swilled in the dust: the downpour of the age.

5

*(sixth ghazal in letter alif)*

Let the alchemist boast of his art.  
Better the chemistry that will soften a heart.

One who encounters grief at heart,  
A heart grief-stricken like his own, will resound with its  
grief.

Should the testimony of the heart reach the mouth ...  
O tear, you are only a child. Confess nothing.

With your own hand you worked this estrangement.  
O jewel of the undiscerning, discern for once.

What the Ka'ba may be we know not,  
Dard. Where that eyebrow bends, there we pray.

6

*(ninth ghazal in letter alif)*

Your lover, that heartless one, drew breath,  
For as long as he drew breath, at the point of a knife.

On him, hot sighs had some effect.  
Before I could reach the spot, he was burned to ashes.

But for his greed, which prompts these thievish tricks,  
Each beggar you see would be a lion on his own mat.

My tears roll a river in spate  
So wide, what else could bridge these sands?

The sheikh to the Ka'ba came, to the synagogue of the  
Jews  
Came I. The House is one, Dard. But the road winds.

7

*(thirteenth ghazal in letter alif)*

Night after night I hid my grief.  
Nothing came of it.

Crowd pleaser, generous to a fault—  
You never passed this way, never.

O spare me your reproach, kind one.  
When have I not disarmed my breast?

Those lives you ruined—did you fear  
God? Not even a little?

We longed to see you,  
But you set no store by us.

Where is the heart, home-breaker,  
Safe in your home, where you did not play house?

I endured your harshness  
With no thought of the danger to myself.

Such were your skills, O Dard,  
Bereft of skills: you saw the good in everyone.

*(omitted verse, the sixth:*

We had crossed the bounds of the self,  
But when? No one saw us move.)

8

*(first ghazal in letterbē)*

Torpid, extinct—but a knife turns.  
Like a wave of the mirage, let me be troubled.

The glittering folk travel light.  
Their fountain is the sun: they must beg for water.

The comfort of the fallen is death.  
The reverie of the footprint is to wear away.

Is there no shame on earth?  
A flow of tears is not a mean thing.

Fine vessels are misplaced in this company.  
The wine-cup is not an ornament.

Let the bold keep their footing,  
Lest the wine-jar totter on its stand.

The dead may not laugh. But the grave  
Hides a smile. What accounts for it?

Hard work!—the banqueters warm to their task.  
The heart of friends—O Dard—is a mouthful.

9

*(first ghazal in lettertē)*

Somewhere a veil was shed. The night,  
Spilled like her dark locks, disheveled the heart.

Where can I show my face? Outcast by day,  
Like the candle I plead: let night come.

Pitiless idol, to your street by night  
As if by day, I bore a heart despised.

You'll have found peace, fast work. What can I say?  
Here I endured a night of anguish.

When that blaze vanished from the evening,  
A night without sleep broke on my eyes.

O Dard, I have imposed on your life,  
For your faults without number, a night to count them.

IO

*(first ghazal in letter ĉe)*

Why do you go to the tavern? Whatever it takes  
To get drunk, O Dard, you have it—in the wine-bowl of  
your heart.

Stupid as a mirror, which retains nothing,  
Throw the doors wide. Look who has come to your  
house.

We can stroll among flowers when we wish.  
Let there be an hour for the fakir in the waste.

It alarms you—our taste for death.  
But who can know this rapture of ours in dying?

Undo the knot of your heart. How long in ignorance  
Will it go blundering like a cipher between food and  
water?

To a tangled curl, this heart  
Of a thousand rents owes all its pain.

I meant to hide a spell in this tale  
Dard, but my luck, mixed with sleep, put the listener to  
sleep.

II

*(second ghazal in letter baṛī yē)*

Spring is a seller of flowers. In spring  
Our hearts soar with the leaven of his beauty.

Misfortune huddles in its blanket, the color of night.  
The candle itself burns low. (Do we have one?)

The senses gore the solitude of the heart.  
Beauty perturbs. Music is havoc to the ear.

Remove yourself, if you will. I have no burden  
But one. My own head is a weight on my shoulders.

Lament and sigh. Drain even the liver of its blood.  
Youth is the time, they say, for eating and drinking.

Since peace is your goal, be guided by the wisdom of  
madness  
Good sense is the dacoit on the road.

When the drummer's hand descends—O Fate, withhold  
Your stroke from the ignorant! The commotion is  
earsplitting.

Other than grief, O saint, what has your abstention to  
offer?  
There—where hearts are in bloom—lives the wineseller.

To the dervish his cloak of rags! If you must wear a gown  
O Dard, let it conceal the fault of others.

12

*(forty-third ghazal in letter baḥī yē)*

We have laid such wild misdeeds to our name.  
For this we came. The account is full.

By the wrack of this storm,  
This life, call it what we will, we perish.

Kind wind, what are flowers to us?  
We came, we were dispersed hither and thither.

We have seen what there is.  
Friend, gaze your fill, stay on. I have a home.

Ah, grief, don't burn. We will know  
All, when you have cast your spell on it.

Such a wound at heart  
As mine, have you ever known to heal?

Like the candle that lights this feast  
Our eyes stream, our garments are wet.

You seek him far beyond your selves,  
Far from your homes, devout ones.

We knew we had not to move  
A step. He awaited us.

Friendless into the world, like all our kind  
We came, but left with him—not as we came.

Being of unbeing! A spark  
Soars and is gone. We are gone!

Saqi, this bustle of leave-taking that never stops—  
Pour, while you can. May the cup live!

All these good folk, Dard, coming and going,  
Why? To what end? Something must be known about  
them.

—Translated by Ian Bedford

The poems by first lines:

- 1 *Maqdūr hamēñ kab terē vaṣfōñ kē raqm kā*
- 2 *Māhiyatōñ kō rausban kartā hai nūr tērā*
- 3 *Madrassa, yā dair thā, yā ka‘ba, yā butkhāna thā*
- 4 *Kabhō kbush bhī kiyā hai dil kisī rind-e sharābī kā*
- 5 *Iksīr pe muhavas! itnā na nāz karnā*
- 6 *‘Ashiq-e bē-dil terā, yāñ tak tō jī sē sēr thā*



- 7 *Ham nē kis rāt nāla sar na kiyā*  
 8 *Thā ‘adam mēñ bhī mujhē ik pēč-o-tāb*  
 9 *Voh mū-kamar kabīñ tō hu’ā bē-ḥijāb rāt*  
 10 *Jā’ē kis vāṣṭē aē Dard maikhānē kē bīč*  
 11 *Us kī bahār-e ḥusn kā dil mēñ hamārē jōsh hai*  
 12 *Tubmat-e čand apnē zimmē dḥar čalē*

There are variants between different bookseller’s editions of the poems. My translations were made from the Majlis-e Taraqqī-e Adab edition (Lahore 1988). But the Delhi edition with an introduction by Rashīd Ḥasan Khān has different lines in a number of places. Even among the ghazals translated here, for ghazal number 2 the Lahore edition has (for the line given above) “*Dōnōñ jajāñ kō rausban kartā hai nūr tērā.*” The fourth *bayt* differs markedly in the two versions. I have translated (for the second line of that couplet) “*Jī mēñ bḥarā hu’ā hai az bas gburūr tērā,*” but the Delhi edition has “*Jī mēñ samā rahā hai az bas gburūr tērā.*” For ghazal number 6, my Lahore version had as the first line “*‘Ashiq-e bandal terā,*” which had me stumped until I found the Delhi version.

I have not defended here any of my choices in translating lines. I should say that ghazal number 4, with its packed couplets, particularly the second, has proved the hardest of all to put into acceptable English while retaining what I take to be the sense of Dard’s ghazal.