



# RUMI'S

## Little Book of Wisdom

MARYAM MAFI

foreword by Narguess Farzad



"We need constant reminders of Rumi's conviction that fear is only subjugated by hope. And this is the message that Maryam Mafi delivers so clearly in *Rumi's Little Book of Wisdom*."

—from the foreword by Narguess Farzad

**I**n this compelling new translation, Rumi talks directly to us, just as he did to his contemporaries eight hundred years ago. The wisdom includes no-nonsense statements, observations, and facts, ranging from matters of the heart, to understanding human nature, to embracing the nature of the divine. The end result is an extended meditation on how to live one's life with meaning, productivity, and kindness.

This new translation of Rumi's wisdom is fresh, contemporary, and practical. It will appeal to the many who have loved his poetry, those who need a daily dose of inspiration, spiritual seekers, and those looking for traditional Sufi wisdom.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Rumi (Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī)** was a 13th-century Persian Sunni Muslim poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian, and Sufi mystic.

**Maryam Mafi** was born and raised in Iran. She graduated from Tufts University in 1977 and, while reading for her master's degree in international communications at American and Georgetown Universities, she began translating Persian literature and has been doing so ever since. Maryam lives in London.

**Narguess Farzad** is a senior fellow in Persian studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

# Wisdom & Hope from *Rumi's Little Book of Wisdom*

*Let us never lose hope in Truth! Hope is your only security on the path you choose, and if you decide not to walk that path at all, may you still never abandon your hope.*

*When you feel joy in your heart without reason, know that somewhere, sometime, you may have brought happiness to someone. Likewise, if you feel sadness suddenly clouding your heart, it's because, at some point in your life, you must have caused someone grief. These feelings are gifts from beyond that allow us to learn much from very little.*

*When God chooses to be generous, an insignificant coin will prove as valuable as a thousand pieces of gold. But should He decide to withdraw His goodwill, all those gold coins will prove worthless.*



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ISBN 978-1-64297-025-8



# *Rumi's Little Book of Wisdom*

Rumi

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## **Life-changing wisdom from the popular Persian sage and poet**

This is a collection of inspirational wisdom for living a meaningful and productive life. The selection of quotations is chosen to reflect Rumi's inspiring and uplifting approach to life and address the inevitable issues that we encounter during our lifetimes.

Here, Rumi talks directly to us, just as he did to his contemporaries 800 years ago. The wisdom includes no-nonsense statements, observations, and facts, ranging from matters of the heart, to understanding human nature, to embracing the nature of the divine. The end result is an extended meditation on how to live one's life with meaning, productivity, and kindness.

This new translation of Rumi's wisdom is fresh, contemporary, and practical. It will appeal to the many who have loved his poetry, those who need a dose of daily inspiration, spiritual seekers, and those looking for traditional Sufi wisdom.

**Selections from *Rumi's Little Book...***

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Cover artwork: Private Collection

© Tim Hayward / Bridgeman Images

Cover and interior design by Kathryn Sky-Peck

Typeset in Weiss

Hampton Roads Publishing Company, Inc.

Charlottesville, VA 22906

Distributed by Red Wheel/ Weiser, LLC

[www.redwheelweiser.com](http://www.redwheelweiser.com)

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ISBN: 978-1-64297-025-8

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data available upon request.

Printed in the United States of America

M&G

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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MARYAM MAFI

foreword by Narguess Farzad



*For Niloufar Bayani*







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# FOREWORD

An online search for the name “Rumi” quickly returns tens of millions of results, offering links to a multitude of sites presented in a variety of languages. These sites are devoted to, or focus on, a 13th-century Persian poet whose social-media presence and ever-increasing number of groupies would be the envy of many a celebrity or public figure. The sheer quantity of just the English-language search results stands as a testament to the attraction that Rumi’s philosophy and ecstatic poetry have for his followers and devotees, as well as for those who, in times of strife, seek solace and rectitude in his words and beliefs. When ordinary lives are wrenched apart by unanticipated crises, pandemics, acts of violence, and other disasters brought about by humankind’s actions, more and more people are turning to this Islamic jurist, teacher, scholar, and mystic for guidance and inspiration.

Quotable fragments are routinely drawn from Rumi’s longer narrative poems to become memorable nuggets that are shared and tweeted and uploaded on popular social-media platforms. Even Beyoncé and Jay-Z, arguably the most powerful couple in the world of entertainment, named one of their daughters Rumi—for no more beguiling reason than that he is their favorite poet. So who is this extraordinary figure who, more than 800 years after his birth in Central Asia, continues to be revered? And which country or culture can rightfully claim him as its own?

Born Jalal ad-Din Balkhi, he is known in the West as Rumi, which means “the man from Rum,” a region that lay on the eastern edges of the Byzantine Empire. His devotees, to whom he is known as *Mowlana* (“Our Master”), place his birth in the year 1207 in the northeastern corner of the Perso-Islamic Empire in the province of Vakhsh in modern-day Tajikistan, which is located by one of the tributaries of the magnificent Amu Darya, the River Oxus. The historical cities of his childhood, Samarqand and Balkh, are now located in present-day Uzbekistan and Afghanistan respectively. Yet Rumi’s discourses, poetry, and lyrical songs were written in Persian, and he spent most of his adult life in Konya, in modern-day Turkey, where he is buried.

All this leads to the assertion that no country or culture can exclusively claim Rumi’s legacy and heritage as its own. He is truly a universal poet and thinker. Furthermore, the innumerable translations of his works into more than thirty languages, with more in the pipeline, have made it possible for people from widely diverse cultures to enjoy the profundity of his writings and

the richness of his imagination. Indeed, readers from across the globe have forged an affinity with Rumi's evocative reflections on life and faith. Rumi's poetry remains the touchstone for mystical compositions in the Islamic world, and his teachings remain as relevant and captivating today as they were in medieval times.

Academic discussions of Rumi's writings and the genesis of his Sufiistic philosophy fill innumerable bookshelves in research libraries around the world. They are pored over and debated at conferences and are the frequent topic of university lectures and courses. But it is thanks to devoted and scholarly translators like Maryam Mafi, who lovingly selects the best and the most life-affirming examples of his work, that Rumi has now become accessible to a wider discerning public. In *The Little Book of Mystical Secrets*, Mafi focused on the teachings and inspirations of Shams of Tabriz, Rumi's teacher, confidant, and soulmate. In *The Book of Rumi: 105 Stories and Fables*, she selected from the six-volume magnum opus the *Masnavi*, the *Spiritual Couplets*. In *Rumi's Little Book of Wisdom*, Mafi has finally turned her attention to a much lesser-known work, the *Fihe-ma-Fih*, a compendium of Rumi's monologues, discussions, and reflections on a life of writing and worship, as recorded by his followers.

There is much debate about the meaning and origins of the title of this work. Although the book is written in Persian, the title—in keeping with the traditions of the time—is an Arabic spiritual expression that means “in it what is in it.” Finding an exact English equivalent for this ambiguous title has been a challenge for many translators over time. While some have opted for “It Is What It Is,” others have simply chosen a generic title like “Discourses of Rumi” that describes the content of the book. Harvard professor Annemarie Schimmel (1922–2003), the indomitable German Orientalist and scholar of Islam and Sufism, preferred to interpret the title in its original sense, as a kind of spiritual “potluck”—a meal of simple fare assembled for unexpected or uninvited guests that can be shared in any circumstance or at any time.

Primary authorship of the *Fihe-ma-Fih* is attributed to Rumi's eldest son, Sultan Walad, who was assisted by other unnamed pupils and disciples of the Master. These devoted followers are believed to have recorded the reminiscences of their Master faithfully and accurately, and to have noted all his answers to questions posed at gatherings, as they would the revelations of a saintly figure. What remains today of what must originally have been a much larger volume consists of an introduction and seventy chapters of anecdotes, exchanges, and amplifications of ideas that date from approximately 1260 until after Rumi's death in 1273.

Professor Badiozzaman Forouzanfar (1904–1970), one of the most prominent Iranian Rumi scholars and editor of the *Fihe-ma-Fih*, believed that the title was, in all likelihood, inspired by a line in Book 5 of the *Masnavi* (lines 2683–2685), where Rumi tells the story of a sage named Shiekh Mohammad Sar-Razi of Ghazni, a city in modern Afghanistan. According to the tale, this Sufi sheikh had fasted for seven years, only breaking his fast once every evening by chewing on some vine leaves. This lengthy period of meditation and abstinence sharpened his senses and powers of perception to such an extent that he claimed he could fathom the might and glory of the Divine as reflected in the minutiae of the natural world. Despite his sense of proximity to the Divine, however, he longed desperately for more, aspiring to see the visage of his Lord.

One day, feeling utterly bereft, the sheikh climbed a mountain and called out to the Lord, begging Him to show His face and threatening to throw himself off the mountain in his despair. A voice replied that it was not yet time for him to be in the presence of the Divine, and that he would not die even if he were to jump. Undiscouraged by the reply, the sheikh threw himself off the cliff. As promised, he survived the fall by landing in a deep pool of water. As he picked himself up, he heard the voice once more. It told him: “Break your fast for good and return to the city; devote your life to asking the rich for their gold so that you can give it to the poor.” Rumi explains the meaning of the story like this: “There are many questions and many answers that are exchanged between the Divine and the abstinent ascetic, and the heavens and the earth are illuminated by their intensity; and all that is compiled in the discourses.”

*Fihe-ma-Fih*, which is written in rather elaborate prose, is a crucial key to deciphering several of the stories that appear in the *Masnavi*. Another remarkable facet of the book is found in the glimpses it offers of the social history of Anatolia in the 13th century, and the dynamics of the relationships between mystics, patrons, and their retinues. The book also provides a fascinating window into the more laid-back side of Rumi—for instance, his tendency to resort to profanities common in his childhood homeland of Khorasan when he is cross or exasperated.

In *Rumi’s Little Book of Wisdom*, Maryam Mafi has captured the subtle humor of Rumi, his unique turn of phrase, and his love of innuendo. This is nowhere more evident than in her selection and translation of stories of everyday life—like the greengrocer who fancies a woman who is above his station in life and pleads with her maid to deliver his passionate message to her mistress. Another anecdote tells of a king who, while hunting deer, learns an unexpected lesson from his prey. And then there is the story of a pilgrim who, lost in the desert, seeks aid and comfort from strangers. After being received in their tattered tent and invited to share their meager repast, the

pilgrim offers the couple advice on how to better their lot. In an ironic twist typical of Rumi, they mistake his kindness for jealousy, much to their own detriment. Another favorite is the humorous tale of the village teacher who, thinking he has found a sheepskin to keep him warm, finds himself in the clutches of a bear.

The stories in *Fihe-ma-Fih* further illustrate the multicultural, multi lingual, and multiethnic world that was inhabited by this extraordinary, larger-than-life character and his circle of devotees and friends. Rumi's own obliquely autobiographical references, which are scattered throughout the pages of the *Masnavi*, as well as the ecstatic lyrical odes collected in the *Divan of Shams*, give us tantalizing and poignant glimpses into his life and attachments. His kinsmen had the good fortune to migrate westward with their families in 1216 and escape the later devastations wrought by the Mongols on the cities of Rumi's childhood. Is there any wonder, then, that we find such poignancy in Rumi's hymns to partings? Is it surprising that his sonorous words still serve as a balm for the wounded souls of migrants and refugees and those who are exiled and wrenched from their homelands? His is the haunting song of the Persian reed flute, whose ethereal sighs were serendipitously entwined with the whispers of the *aulos* pipes of the eastern edges of the Byzantine Empire, where Rumi and his family, driven from their homeland, finally settled after a journey of some thirteen years. The unimaginable horrors of these experiences, however, did not diminish Rumi's capacity for love or joyousness, nor dampen the spiritual buoyancy that emanates from all his writings.

Rumi's worldview is grounded in the imperative never to lose faith in hope. He reminds us, however, that hope is never far from fear: "Show me a fear without hope, or a hope without fear. The two are inseparable." And these simple words are more potent now than ever as we are assaulted each day by messages of death and doom in our media-saturated lives. We need constant reminders of Rumi's conviction that fear is only subjugated by hope. And this is the message that Maryam Mafi delivers so clearly in *Rumi's Little Book of Wisdom*.

—NARGUESS FARZAD

Senior Lecturer in Persian Studies, SOAS,  
University of London

# INTRODUCTION

**F***ihe-ma-Fih*, or *The Discourses*, is a collection of talks, conversations, lectures, and commentary by Jalal ad-Din Balkhi, known in the West as Rumi. Written in prose, these discourses reflect conversations he had with his followers, friends, and disciples during his lifetime. *Rumi's Little Book of Wisdom* is a selection of quotations from this work that have been chosen specifically to reflect Rumi's inspiring and uplifting approach to life and the issues that we inevitably encounter during our own lifetimes. People who frequented Rumi's gatherings were not only Sufi students and *murids* (devotees), but also the local residents of Konya, in present-day Turkey. They included tradesmen like butchers and grocers, as well as rich and powerful businessmen, and even high-ranking ministers in the Seljuq court like Amir Moineddin Parvaneh. Indeed, Rumi's home was a place where people mixed and socialized on equal terms, regardless of their religion, class, or creed.

The wide spectrum of subjects covered at Rumi's Sufi gatherings (*majlis*) was varied and intellectually and spiritually challenging. Points of interest included not only Sufism and spirituality, but also moral, social, political, theological, behavioral, and psychological matters that affected people everywhere equally. In the past, it was customary to scribe a master's lessons and later use them as textbooks. The *Fihe-ma-Fih*—whose Arabic title means “in it what is in it,” implying a miscellaneous collection of disparate pieces—is such a book. Known to Sufis as the “scribes of secrets,” a number of Rumi's close devotees were adept at scribing, especially his older son Sultan Walad. Together they managed to save most everything Rumi uttered, even during his ecstatic states while doing *sama*.

The *Fihe-ma-Fih*, however, is not a classically conceived book with an introduction followed by consecutive chapters; rather, it's a fluid account of talks that took place during these gatherings in Rumi's lifetime, only bound together into a book after his passing. The writings have a warm and advisory tone, often mixed with sly humor but always embracing and heartfelt. Nonetheless, it's inevitable that some of the teachings are more harsh, as Rumi had to embrace the strict teaching methods of the times—especially since some aspirants expected him to teach them something new at every session.

When we look more closely at the lessons contained in the intimate encounters described in the *Fihe-ma-Fih*, we realize that, in fact, their roots

had already been firmly established in Rumi's great work the *Masnavi*, where his infinite wisdom flourishes at its best. The numerous stories he relates here—while often humorous and sometimes superficial—are their most enlightening as they maneuver between the banal and the transcendental. The short, often sharp, comments he regularly throws into a long tale frequently turn out to be exactly the answers we are seeking.

I intend this compilation of stories, lessons, and anecdotes to stand as an invitation to serious students of Sufism, and to Rumi lovers in particular, to enter Rumi's *majlis*, sit at his feet, and absorb every word he utters as he explains the intricacies of life. As you read the words of the Master, allow them to penetrate your heart, where you can welcome him and take advantage of his infinite wisdom.

1.

No matter where you are in life and what your state of mind may be, dare to fall in love and let yourself be loved! When love becomes your realm of being, you are as beloved in life as in death.

2.

Words are simply a cover; what really attracts people to one another is what lies in their hearts.

3

You carry a lamp, foolishly thinking: "I'll see the sun better with this light." But what's the use of a lamp when the sun already reveals itself in its full glory?

4.

Let us never lose hope in Truth! Hope is your only security on the path you choose; and if you decide not to walk that path at all, may you still never abandon your hope.

5.

You complain endlessly, feeling guilty about something you did wrong. Why not redeem yourself by doing the right thing now? Your miscreant acts may never touch the Divine; they only hurt you. Once you earn back your honor, in time, your iniquitous actions will gradually fade from memory.

6.

What a shame finally to reach the open sea, but settle for a modest jug of water!

7.

Man's essence is God's astrolabe. When man has been graced with divine knowledge, God can look into the astrolabe and see His own beauty reflected in every instant. This is how, when we truly know ourselves, we know the Divine!



8.

Why would I need to speak aloud with someone with whom I don't need words to communicate?

9.

You searched the whole world, but it wasn't to find Truth! So now you have to start all over again and rediscover the world.

10.

I have a soft heart; I cannot bear to upset my guests. Fearing that they may become weary, I recite poetry for them; otherwise, what business do I have with poetry? I swear to God I abhor it!

11.

Parvaneh [a minister in the Seljuk court] once told me that "action" was the essence of life. I looked at him and replied: "Show me this man of action with whom you're so impressed who's seeking *real action*, so I can show him what action truly means! I can see that you're eager to hear me speak and that, if I don't, you'll be upset. When you start looking for real action, I'll show you what that truly entails! I seek men of action, but can only find men who care for words; thus, I engage them with talk. Where is *your* action? You can only understand real action through action itself, knowledge through knowledge, superficiality through superficiality, and truth through Truth."

12.

When a mystic yearns for more light, it's not for his own sake; he seeks it for the benefit of others. To him, whether there's more light or less light means nothing, for he's the essence of all light; he's, in fact, the eternal sunshine!

13.

Hunger, thirst, anger, and happiness may not be perceptible physically, but they couldn't be more real. You may not see them, but you can't deny their existence. Your conscience is the same.

14.

Some people come to eat from my hands, but others come just to watch and learn from me—and then they go off and sell what they've learned.

## 15.

When someone has perturbed thoughts, conversations with that person will likewise be perturbed, as if he has a speech impediment that becomes obvious after he has spoken for a while.

## 16.

A physician takes your pulse because he has a question. The answer to his question lies wordless in the beat of your pulse. To plant a seed in the ground carries a question, while the growth of the resultant tree is the answer, without words. When answers are without words, the leading questions must also be wordless.

## 17.

To experience even the slightest taste of bliss, we endure onerous trials, unaware that all we need is one glance from God!

## 18.

Our world can be compared to a mountain where everything we say, whether kind or malicious, echoes back to us. Don't presume that you have spoken politely if the mountain responds rudely! That's impossible. How can a nightingale's sweet song echo back as a crow's harsh caw? Or a man's eloquent voice be mistaken for the bray of a donkey? You can be certain that, if you do hear a braying sound, it's the sound of your own voice and not that of the beast!

## 19.

A young man was stopped outside his home by a friend who noticed he was wandering about aimlessly with bloodied hands. When asked what had happened, the young man confessed to killing his mother.

“Why did you kill your mother?”

“I witnessed an act unworthy of recapitulation!”

“You should've killed that stranger instead.”

“Then I would've had to kill someone every day!”

Tame your wild ego unless you wish to go to war with a different person each day.

## 20.

Remember that all bad character traits—like cruelty, jealousy, hatred, greed, heartlessness, and pride—exist in all of us. However, we choose to remain blind to this until we spot these traits in another person, and then we quickly take flight. Yet we are only taking offense at ourselves and fleeing from our own true nature.

## 21.

There are many people in the world who are blessed with immeasurable wealth and power beyond our imagination, but their souls cringe with revulsion for having such gifts!

## 22.

A student asked: “When we act and succeed, is the fortuitous result due to our initiative or to the grace of the Divine?”

“It’s indeed due to God’s grace. But because He’s so magnanimous, He allows you to believe that it’s due to your own efforts!”

## 23.

Phenomena become recognizable when they appear in the context of their opposites. God, however, does not have an opposite. Therefore, He created the world, which was enveloped in darkness, so that His light would become apparent.

## 24.

When you entrust a garden of roses to a gardener and you detect only foul odors rising in the air, whom do you blame? The garden, or the gardener?

## 25.

When you feel joy in your heart without reason, know that somewhere, sometime, you may have brought happiness to someone. Likewise, if you feel sadness suddenly clouding your heart, it’s because, at some point in your

life, you must have caused someone grief. These feelings are gifts from beyond that allow us to learn much from very little.

## 26.

When God chooses to be generous, an insignificant coin will prove as valuable as a thousand pieces of gold. But should He decide to withdraw His goodwill, all those gold coins will prove worthless.

## 27.

I beg you to hear my words, not so much with your ears but with your heart, for that's how you'll benefit most. An army of a thousand thieves outside a castle can't open the gate without the help of the one thief inside. You may be an exceptional orator, but what's the use when your eloquence doesn't stem from inner truth?

## 28.

If your inner eye is sealed shut, how will you ever know about light, even if the whole world is basking in it?

## 29.

There are two sides to humans. One is our animal nature, consisting of our hopes and desires; the other is our essence, from where the nourishment of our spirit comes. Our essence perpetually yearns for the wisdom to meet the Divine. So while our animal nature desperately seeks escape from the Divine, our essence invariably flees from the material world.

## 30.

My words may not impress you now, but when you grow up and become a mature adult, their footprints will begin to emerge.

## 31.

Regardless of wealth and stature, everyone experiences frustration, restlessness, pain, yearning, longing, and love.

## 32.

They call the Beloved *Delaram*, or “the heart warmer!” Do you know why? Because where else could the heart ever find solace but in Him?

### 33.

Joyful pleasures in life can be thought of as a ladder; like the rungs of a ladder, they're not stations at which to linger, but rather stages through which we pass.

### 34.

Our actions are questions, while our reactions are the responses, whether joyous or sad. When you pose a question and the response is fortuitous, you can consider yourself lucky for having asked the right question. However, if the response is troubled and negative in substance, you'd better apologize and never repeat that question again.

### 35.

I say what comes to my mind, and, if God wills it, the little that I say shall infiltrate your heart and bear you much fruit. And if He doesn't wish it, no matter how much I speak, none of it will penetrate your heart; my words will pass and be forgotten in no time at all.

### 36.

Light fades as the sun sets. But if you can't bear to live without light, you've no choice but to become the sun itself!

### 37.

Tyranny, oppression, cruelty, and ruthlessness are like a hard-packed snowball with ice at the center, ready to freeze up the soul. Nothing other than the sun of conscience can melt this frigid ball!

### 38.

The essence of man is like musk, while the world with all its joy is a delectable scent that is impermanent and inevitably fleeting. You're lucky if you're not simply content with the scent, but continue to search for the essence. Many of us, however, are quickly gratified with the mere scent that this world offers. Ultimately, we'll be the losers, for we clutch at something that we're unable to hold onto for long. Let's not forget that the enticing scent

of this world is only an attribute of the musk. As long as the musk survives, it lasts and reaches us uninterruptedly. Once the scent begins to fade, all those whose lives depend on it shall vanish along with it. In due time, the most fortunate of us are those who grow to become one with the musk.

## 39.

When you feel your heart contracting and darkness closing in all around you, it's time to reflect on whether, in the past, you've inflicted cruelty on another being. Although you may not remember the details, you know that you must have done awful acts in your life that you may not have recognized as evil. Either you did these things out of ignorance, or you kept company with false friends to the point that committing a sin became the norm for you and you failed to perceive it as wrong.

## 40.

A young elephant majestically approached a freshwater spring, desperate to quench his thirst. Seeing his own reflection in the water, he suddenly panicked and took flight as fast as he could, believing that he had come face-to-face with an enormous wild beast! Little did he know that he had seen his true self for the very first time.

## 41.

At first, God engaged Mohammad entirely alone. But soon after, He sent him out into the world to guide the masses back to Him. Mohammad was distraught and couldn't bear to be separated from his Creator. He begged unremittingly to be told what he had done wrong to be punished in such a cruel manner. How was he to survive among the masses, let alone guide them? Soon, he heard a response:

“Mohammad! Don't grieve; I will not leave you alone with the masses. While you tend to them, I'll be standing next to you and engaging with you so that not a hair's breadth of separation shall come between us. In everything you do, you'll always remain connected to Me!”

## 42.

Someone asked me:

“Do God's original mandates ever change?”

And I replied:

“What’s right and what’s wrong never changes. However, the reward and punishment for doing good or evil deeds may change with time. The essence of the original mandate, however, is always the same.”

## 43.

To find your real purpose in life, you must strip the ego of its insatiable desires, so that you can free yourself from the dark prison of its entanglements.

## 44.

Sages and holy men love everyone and see everything in the world as good simply because they don’t wish to allow a single uncouth thought to tarnish the purity of their consciousness.

## 45.

When you’ve been blessed with eternal truths and invaluable spiritual secrets, keep them to yourself! Don’t readily share what I confide in you with others; especially never divulge any of it to the uninitiated. Let me give you an example: If you have a beautiful lover and she implores you not to expose her to strangers’ eyes, would you take her to the marketplace, put her on a pedestal, and scream: “Come everyone, come closer; come and see this beauty who belongs to me!”

How do you think she’d feel? Wouldn’t she be furious with you?

## 46.

The Prophet was speaking to his devotees one day when a group of adversaries slowly began to join them. Discerning this, he told his men:

“There are times when you are required to act swiftly, making sure that all jars, pots, bowls, cups, and jugs are safely covered. For there are creatures about, venomous and abominable, that could easily fall into your vessels, and you may unknowingly drink from them and become infested.”

Thus were sages commanded to guard their wisdom and hold back their tongues before strangers, for they could be vermin, unworthy of wisdom and fortune!

## 47.

Exhibiting good manners and respect toward others is noble, but it's also imperative to know where and when to practice them. It may not be the best time to pay respects and try to engage in conversation while the subject of your attention is in the middle of prayer. In fact, ignoring a person while he's engaged in prayer may be the highest respect you can pay him.

## 48.

It's best not to feel powerful all the time, even though you may be in a position of high authority, lest you forget that the power of Truth is greater than all of us.

## 49.

How can we conceive of true generosity when our imagination only extends as far as our own merit and initiative, both of which are insanely limited? God's generosity, however, parallels His might and does not depend on illusion and miscomprehension, which belong to the domain of man.

## 50.

The galaxies, the planets, and the sky that envelops them—in effect, all of existence—have come into being because of one thing: the original will of the Creator. If ever His true light shines without its multitude of veils, nothing that we know will remain—no earth or sky, neither moon nor sun. Except for the King, nothing shall remain.

## 51.

A king once told a darvish [Sufi mystic]:

“Remember to think of me when you feel the divine presence.”

The darvish replied honestly:

“If God's light ever shines on me, you can be certain that I won't be conscious of myself, let alone of you!”

## 52.

It's said that, when God selects a person to immerse in His light and people approach that person for help, God grants them their wishes, even before they ask.



## 53.

There was once a devoted man who loved his king more than life itself. One day as he left his village to return to the king's palace, a number of his neighbors pleaded with him to give the king their letters of complaints and requests. He graciously took the letters from them and promised to do his best to present their demands to his beloved master. As he entered the great hall where subjects were received, he took one look at the king and could no longer contain the surge of love in his heart. He passed out cold! Having witnessed this from his throne, the king approached his loving subject and, knowing him to be a true servant, reached inside the man's jacket and removed a small leather bag filled with the villagers' letters. He dealt with the appeals meticulously and extremely generously, without missing a single demand. There were many other subjects in the hall that day who made similar appeals, but, since none of them had demonstrated their devotion and pure love as the unconscious man lying before them had, the king dealt with only one out of a hundred of their appeals, and not half as generously.

## 54.

The night is long; it's a time to tell secrets and ask for what we need without being afraid of others. The dark curtain of night creates a sanctuary for truth to be told without reservation. In the light of day, all things are visible and clear; but at night, everything is secured under the blanket of darkness, except for the criminal who believes that he's immune and thinks no one can see him while he commits his misdeeds. Little does he know that we're always under the eye of universal Truth and that every action will eventually meet its consequence.

## 55.

The ego is your ultimate challenge in life; you must always keep watch over it and never let it wreak havoc. For as long as it's busy dealing with its own pain, your untainted self can blossom freely and radiate, gaining more inner strength every day.

## 56.

In spring, people come out into the fields to grow their crops, or they travel to faraway places or build new homes. All of this is possible because of the grace of spring; otherwise, people would still be confined to their cold homes, trapped helplessly inside. People, however, only comprehend the obvious.

They've no concept of what or who is behind the creation of spring; they're simply grateful for it. Masters, however, are very much aware that spring is only a veil that lets the Architect behind it remain hidden.

## 57.

I've successfully developed a routine for my daily needs, for it's not in my nature to exert my energies unnecessarily and bring needless suffering upon myself. Indeed, for my earthly needs like money, food, clothing, and other basics, if I just stay put and remain patient, they come my way. When I chase after them, my life becomes a suffering hell and I feel diminished. When I wait, however, everything comes to me painlessly and graciously, for those needs are also seeking me and pulling me toward them. If they can't pull me, then they come to me; and if I can't properly attract them, I eventually go after them.

## 58.

Holy sages and divine messengers were not motivated by hunger for bread or fame; they were intent on serving the Divine. They earned their bread honestly and laboriously, securing their reputations. And, in time, their names became sacred.

## 59.

If God were not your companion, then enthusiasm for Him wouldn't flourish in your heart—just as there's no scent of a rose without a real rose, or aroma of musk without the actual musk.

## 60.

Our conversation has no end. And even if it did, it would be unlike any other! In life, we experience long nights of darkness, but we're confident that they'll eventually pass. The light emanating from our talks, however, is endless; it never dims, but rather grows stronger and more refined every day, prompting us to remember how the light of our divine prophets' teachings never paled after their passing, but grew ever stronger!

## 61.

Wherever you are, you're right where you need to be!

## 62.

Fattening our bodies with delicious meals that are laid out before us on a daily basis, we forget that there's another type of food that we truly ought to be consuming. Your body is your steed and its stable is this world; food for the horse is not fit for the rider!

## 63.

Scholars today have successfully studied the sciences and many other fields, mastering them perfectly. Nevertheless, it's unfortunate that they generally remain completely unaware of the closest, most important thing to them—their inner selves!

## 64.

A man who had heard my praise sung many times found himself one day in my company. Unable to contain his delight, he blurted out that someone he knew had spoken highly of me, to which I simply replied:

“Alright then, let's first see who this man is who sings my praise. Does he know me from my words? If he does, then he knows nothing! Has he ever glimpsed my essence? If yes, then he's able to speak in praise—a praise of which I'm worthy!”

## 65.

I'm a bird. I could be a nightingale or a parrot, but I can only sing birdsong, for that's my innate language. I'm unable to make any other sound, unlike the crafty imposter who's learned to imitate our song. He's no bird, but rather an enemy and a hunter of all birds! He's learned to sing in order to cajole us, pretending to be one of us. He manages to borrow our songs, but can never own one. If you ask him to make some other sound, he's easily capable of doing so, for he's a thief who's learned to steal from every house the little that he can carry away.

## 66.

Speaking kindly about others and praising them when praise is due will only reflect positively on you. When we become accustomed to thinking well of others, we live much like the man who plants beautiful flowers and shrubs around his home. Every time he looks outside, he feels as if he's entered paradise.

67.

To be thinking of your beloved is to be in a garden of roses where your soul perpetually bathes in bliss.

68.

When we look at everyone with eyes of suspicion, we place ourselves in the midst of a garden of thorns infested with venomous snakes. Why not try to love as many people as you possibly can? Perhaps you'll see how it feels to be among exquisitely scented roses every day!

69.

We're gifted with tools that make it convenient for us to conduct our lives, but they're only a pretext to occupy the minds of the masses while veiling the real workings of our Creator.

70.

The things we say and do, whether in praise or in defiance of others, will one day come back to either haunt us, or inspire us with hope.

71.

When our minds decide to go to a new place, our hearts travel there first to check out the terrain, later returning to convey our bodies there.

72.

Our purpose in life and our broad intentions are the most important elements in our lives. When we're focused on our intent, doubt cannot creep in. Mystics around the world may look and act differently from each other, but their purpose is one and the same: to seek Truth!

73.

Trust yourself in God's hands to avoid danger; no one's true need has ever gone unheard.

74.

The mind is a necessary tool for guiding you to the King's palace. But once you're there, you must divorce yourself from your mind, for it'll turn against you and become your most vicious enemy. In the King's presence, you must surrender without question, for this was your original will. Let me give you a simple example: An ill person is in need of a sound mind so he can get himself to a physician. In the presence of the physician, the patient's mind is no longer of use to him, and he must give himself up into the hands of medical authority, which he has willingly sought.

## 75.

Your secret screams of spiritual longing, hidden in your soul for so long, are clearly heard by the Masters. The loud and tumultuous roars that you hear erupting from them result because they've understood everything from just one word from you.

## 76.

There are endless explanations of love, and undoubtedly you've read many of them and have perhaps grasped a few secrets. Nonetheless, you're a novice, still learning literal meanings. You should know that a lengthy, winding road still lies ahead—a road you must negotiate before you can experience the intensity of the invaluable spiritual insight that comes with true love.

## 77.

It's imperative to regard one another with positive and well-meaning eyes, for the traits that we often associate with people are not truly representative of them. I once heard a story about a man who claimed to know another person really well and could point out his specific characteristics. He was invited by friends to describe the man:

“He owns two black cows, which he rents out!”

People claim to have close friends, yet they can only describe them with information like how many cows they own! But this kind of information is nonessential to the person; it's only useless facts. In order to discover your friends' true selves, you must pass beyond what seems apparent and delve deeper into their essence to catch a glimpse of the untainted gem in their hearts. This is how you ultimately achieve genuine familiarity with another person.

## 78.

People always fall in love with what they can't have. They readily give up freedom in order to own what they truly can't understand, and they never fully appreciate what they've rightfully owned from the beginning.

## 79.

A new convert to Islam was utterly exasperated and approached the Prophet downheartedly, complaining loudly:

“I don't want this religion of yours. I swear to God I don't want it; here, take it back! From the moment I turned to your religion, I haven't had a single day of peace. My wealth disappeared in a flash; my wife promptly abandoned me; my children left me one after the other! I no longer hold any respect in this town and, with no strength left to hold my head up, I can't even boast about my manhood!”

The Prophet replied solemnly: “Silence! Don't you know that once my religion enters a man's heart, it never departs? It severs his roots and sweeps his house clean of everything he ever fathomed he possessed. My religion never releases anyone until they've found their ultimate purpose in life. You're the perfect example!”

## 80.

Sometimes in life, we find God by first discovering his holy book, the Koran. However, there are also a few of God's special creations who first encounter Him directly through spirit and then come around to discovering His book on earth.

## 81.

While you still harbor even a trace of attachment to your interfering ego, don't expect to meet the Friend. He won't show His face, nor will you be able to approach Him. Only when you learn to lose interest in what this passing world offers and disengage from your “lower self” may the Friend reveal Himself to you.

## 82.

In order to pitch a tent, first the tribe's chieftain must order spinners to spin the yarn and weavers to weave the cloth and the cords. Then the cutters must cut the fabric to size for seamstresses to sew. Only then can the tent be handed over to strong tribesmen, who nail down the ropes to secure it firmly in the ground. There are many people involved in achieving this one task,

but, because they share the same purpose, in essence they're all one. When you look closely at the affairs of the world, you see how everyone serves a purpose and provides a service—from the adulterer to the pious, from the rebel to the dutiful, as well as all the angels and demons.

## 83.

It's time to stop grieving! There's abundant joy awaiting us with no sorrow in view! No need to be sad; the rose without thorns is in sight.

## 84.

You occupy yourself day and night seeking worldly comforts and contentment, fully aware that they're impossible to maintain. Yet you still don't give up. Let me assure you that the little gratification you find in this life passes in a flash—as fast as lightning. And what a blast of lightning! A calamity of insufferable rain, snow, and hail!

## 85.

In life, there's no escape from suffering and pain, so why not try to spend some of your time working toward the afterlife?

## 86.

For the masses who feign piety, the Kaaba is the house of God; but for lovers, the house of God means union with the Beloved!

## 87.

A penniless village teacher whose only possession was a thin cotton jacket he used in all seasons was walking home one day at the height of winter with his students in tow. There had been a flash flood and a bear had been swept up in the fierce waters of the river, his head fully submerged. The students noticed the floating mass of fur and quickly called out to their teacher:

“Sir, look, there's a sheepskin in the water; why don't you try and grab it for yourself?”

The teacher, desperate for warmth, braved the floodwaters and jumped on top of what he imagined was only a sheepskin. Instantly, the bear raised his head and clenched the teacher in his paws, and the two of them began to float together on the rough waves. The students called out to their teacher, encouraging him to get out of the water:

“Sir, either bring the fur back with you, or, if you can’t, just let it go. Save yourself!”

“I’ve let go of the fur,” the poor man yelled back, trying hopelessly to disentangle himself. “But the fur doesn’t want to let go of me!”

## 88.

I thank God every day that He hasn’t left me to my own devices, but holds me tirelessly in His own hands!

## 89.

When you encounter a vice in your brother, take heed, for the fault may lie in you! Be aware that it could be your own shortcoming that you’re projecting onto him. The world’s a mirror that reflects everything back—and it never lies. Work on your faults in order to distance yourself from them. And remember: Often when you feel upset with your brother’s flaws, it’s truly yourself who disquiets you.

## 90.

When Majnun was asked why he was so madly in love with Laily, who wasn’t such a great beauty, he replied solemnly:

“I don’t love Laily because of her beauty! Laily’s not just a face, but an exquisite vessel in my hand from which I drink wine. I cherish the vessel because I savor the wine it holds. But you, my friend, are entirely unaware of the treasure inside it. If you want to love, you must first be enthusiastic about loving! It’s only then that you can distinguish between the wine and the vessel. We discover true love only when we genuinely hunger for the wine of love. I don’t see your eagerness; where’s your zeal? Don’t become besotted with only what your eyes can see; allow the Beloved to become apparent to you in *everything!*”

## 91.

When you see men standing with their backs turned to the graves of great men, it’s not out of disrespect or ignorance. In fact, it’s out of respect that they turn their backs to the earthly bodies of the sages and resolve to come face-to-face only with their now-freed souls.

## 92.



Words come to life because of our need for them. You were keen to hear my words; therefore, they were formed! Hence, *need* is ultimately the mother of words.

## 93.

Things must first be sought in order for them to be found—except for the Friend! Until you find Him, you won't be seeking Him!

## 94.

We continuously seek what we haven't yet found because we crave something new all the time. To continue to yearn for something that we've already found is unusual. Yet there's one thing for which people perpetually search, even when they believe they've found it. Truth.

## 95.

Once you join our circle of friendship and become blissfully drunk on our spiritual wine, it no longer matters where you go or with whom you socialize, for you'll always be with us; our essence has become one.

## 96.

If you have never experienced the sting of bitterness, how can you truly know the value of sweetness?

## 97.

We rush around senselessly as if in fear of something terrible, and the whole world hustles along with us. Yet everyone and everything races the way it suits them best. Men run through life differently from the way plants do. And this hurrying is, in turn, altogether different from the footrace in the spirit world, which is entirely traceless and undetectable.

## 98.

It's said that, when we die, all our prayers, fasts, and deeds of charity will be weighed on a scale. But when kindness is measured in heaven, it confounds the scales and proves impossible to quantify! So make kindness the most important feature of your life. If you find even a slight trace of it in yourself, nurture it so that it becomes abundant in you.

## 99.

My friend, we're no less than the earth! We regularly toil at the soil and seem barely to disturb it. Yet, in time, the earth offers us its fruit. Had we left the earth untouched, surely it would lie barren. So, like the earth, when you detect a need in your heart, don't doubt yourself and ponder: "What's the use of all this effort I'm making?" Don't stop engaging, even if the results are negative. In time, the reason for your labor will become apparent.

## 100.

There are many people who don't have the strength to be present spiritually and are better off staying absent from sight. It's evident that our precious daylight is the gift of the sun. But if you stare endlessly into its bright light, you will soon go blind and subsequently find yourself unable to perform many tasks that you previously could do.

## 101.

If you must beg, then beg from God; you can be certain that your entreaties won't go to waste.

## 102.

My Beloved, You present us with something that seems exquisite but is, in reality, quite repulsive, and something else that appears hideous but is actually formidable! Please, I implore You to show us everything as it truly is so that we're not deceived and lured into traps that will forever misguide us.

## 103.

It gives me immeasurable pleasure to spend time with my friends. I enjoy their company and I hope that they take just as much pleasure in mine—especially because, these days, people lose their friends far too easily. It's imperative to make the effort to see one another, regardless of the negative or positive qualities that we ascribe to ourselves, for these are borrowed traits that, in reality, have very little to do with our true essence.

## 104.

They were desperate to catch the cat, but the task proved impossible. Then one day, the cat caught a bird and, while he was busy with that, they got

him. The moral of the story is never to get involved with the affairs of this world to the exclusion of everything else.

## 105.

When God wishes to solve our problems, He will not do it one by one, but rather all at once so that no questions remain.

## 106.

The sound of our sighing is pleasant to the Savior's ears, so don't be surprised if you're told:

“My faithful servant, fulfilling your wishes is a simple task for Me, but it brings Me immense joy to hear the lamenting sound of your prayers and sighs, for they rise from the bottom of your heart. I'll delay fulfilling your wish so that I may enjoy hearing your melodious voice a little longer, just for My delight.”

## 107.

A bird who wishes to touch the sky doubtless knows that she'll never reach it. Nevertheless, she flies farther and farther away from the earth until she overtakes all other birds in flight, and the only thing lying before her is the expanse of the sky. In *zikr*, we repeat the ninety-nine names of God in prayer, trying to get closer to His essence, perfectly aware that we may never reach it, but still confident in our hearts that the process itself will be of tremendous spiritual benefit.

## 108.

Our Creator's generosity and kindness are limitless; but to experience them, we must first trust Him whole-heartedly!

## 109.

If you truly want to know people, then get them to converse with you! It's only from their words that you can learn who they really are.

## 110.

The Prophet Mohammad frequently went into trance and uttered what he called God's words. On the surface, it may have seemed that he was the one

speaking, but truly he was not even there; only God was present. Divine language is unsullied by words and sounds; it is beyond our comprehension. Yet, if He chooses, He can express His will in every word of every language known to man.

## 111.

God can have anything He chooses, but what He prefers most of all is a clear heart full of light in which He can see His own reflection!

## 112.

Prophets speak with the Divine without words or sounds all the time, but our little minds, with their limited imagination, are incapable of conceiving this.

## 113.

The Creator has made certain that both good and evil thoughts are reflected in our facial expressions. This is reminiscent of the life of plants, whose roots, undetected by our eyes, secretly nourish them, and the effect becomes apparent in their leaves, flowers, and fruits. No one knows what hides in your conscience, but how can you hide the appearance of your face?

## 114.

A sage was once asked: “Of all the places in the world, which is the best?”

He answered simply:

“The best place is undoubtedly where one’s beloved lives, be it in the depths of the earth or even in a tiny mousehole!”

## 115.

People’s imaginations differ vastly. For example, an architect and a builder both may imagine a house, but the two pictures they have in mind may be an ocean apart.

## 116.

People are easily impressed with others’ miraculous acts, like traveling to Mecca in one day when the trip should normally take a month. To me, that’s not such a great miracle; the wind also travels anywhere in no time! A real miracle, on the other hand, is when you’re able to help someone out of their

misery and show them how to attain a peaceful state of mind. If you can guide someone out of ignorance and introduce them to wisdom from which they can benefit, or drag them out of their inanimate state and help them return to real life, that's a true miracle!

## 117.

When there's a need for a new phenomenon to appear in the world, be it bizarre or gloriously astounding, God will create the desire for it in His people's hearts.

## 118.

For God, nothing is strange.

## 119.

To be in love is bliss, but it can also be a trap! To catch prey, your trap has to work properly; and for that to happen, your love must be true. Exaggerating your feelings in friendship or in enmity only renders the trap meaningless and ultimately useless. It's best to keep to the middle path in all things in life, which most certainly will result in the best of relationships.

## 120.

Our world is safely standing because of ignorance! If ignorance didn't exist, there'd be no world as we know it today. In fact, if we were able to see everything as it truly is, we'd probably prefer to relocate to the afterlife, our other home! Our Creator, however, prefers us to live here and be present now on earth and not elsewhere. Therefore, He appointed two caretakers, ignorance and awareness, so that both our homes are always properly guarded.

## 121.

Those in hell are happier there than they would be if they were still in the world, because there, they remember God every instant, while in life they were completely unaware of Him. And nothing is sweeter than the thought of the Beloved.

## 122.

Human beings are a culmination of their thoughts; the rest is just skin and bones.

## 123.

A man once asked me: “What is better than prayer?” I had two answers for him. First, the spirit of prayer is better than prayer itself. And second, I believe true faith is better than prayer! We pray five times a day and it’s our duty to do so. Yet our prayers can easily be interrupted and, with the slightest excuse, we delay them, promising ourselves to return to them later. True faith, however, isn’t interrupted by frivolous excuses; there’s no room for hesitation or postponement. Our faith brings us much comfort and benefit without prayer, but praying without faith is useless and only for hypocrites.

## 124.

A keen listener is like flour in the hands of a baker, and words are like water added to the flour. The baker is the expert; he will use the appropriate amount of each ingredient as he deems necessary.

## 125.

Imagine that the sun that lights up our world disappeared from view. It would still be the same sun, even with us unable to see it, but the earth would be clad in darkness. We, therefore, can deduce that the sun isn’t up there for its own sake, but, indeed, for the benefit of others, like us.

## 126.

Knowing that divine will is different from ours, we still act according to our own selfish desires. Take a look at how many different interpretations there are of the holy book—and in so many volumes! The only intention these writers hold sacred is to show off their so-called knowledge.

## 127.

We must take care not to ask that things be given to us promptly, especially since we constantly hunger for so many things that we believe to be beneficial for us, while generally they only bring us misfortune.

## 128.

People come from afar to hear me speak and, if I don't, they get upset, take offense, and walk away criticizing me. I wish to speak of a subject worthy of them, but, if I do, it's *I* who'd be offended. They imply that I avoid their company, but let's be honest: When has fire ever fled the pot? It's usually the pot that runs away, because it can no longer stand the heat. When I keep away, it's because people can't tolerate my words, for I'm a mirror in which they see *all of themselves* with no chance of escaping.

## 129.

Exaggeration is not healthy, not even when it comes to modesty! To exercise modesty gradually and in small doses is ultimately the best policy, in both friendships and enmities. This is generally how the affairs of the world are conducted. Have you noticed the peaceful camaraderie of spring? At first, she slowly turns a little warmer; then she picks up the pace and eventually becomes blazingly hot. Notice the trees, how they smile at first, and then gradually put out their leaves and bear their fruit, which eventually they offer to us self-lessly for our utter delight, like the perfect Sufi.

## 130.

Atheists and pious men each praise the Creator in their own way. We're taught that, if we live honestly and according to the way of the prophets, we shall experience immense joy and light in our lives. And, as miscreants, if we don't adhere to those principles, we'll face immense fear and darkness, and insurmountable disasters will befall us. But both atheists and pious men do as God has ordained them to do. So, in reality, both are praising Him equally—each in their own manner.

## 131.

Thoughts are delicate and fine; they were created by the Divine, so no one can get angry with them or try to rule over them.

## 132.

A thief was caught and duly hanged. He serves as the perfect example for the masses, as his predicament demonstrates that whoever steals will suffer a similar fate.

## 133.

There are divine messengers who have beheld many worlds in addition to ours and have traveled far and beyond. That's why our world must seem rather meager to them. What a wonder to imagine that someone from among us could achieve such an exalted status as to be able to behold the entire universe!

## 134.

When I need to seek approval, I turn to the Divine, not to people, because their love, kindness, and caring are only temporary—and are borrowed from God!

## 135.

To be entirely engrossed in the affairs of this world is surely unwise. Why not try to take life easy and avoid getting entangled with petty problems, like relentlessly worrying about how not to offend one person or another?

## 136.

My body may be standing on the shore, but my spirit is itself the endless sea!

## 137.

Proudly you claim that you've filled your bottle with seawater, and that the entire sea fits perfectly inside! Would it not have been more appropriate if you had confessed that your inconsequential bottle had disappeared into the sea?

## 138.

Anything that causes separation between the Creator and ourselves should not be tolerated. Although everything comes from God, not everything is always good to God.

## 139.

The soft fluttering of the leaves, the lush flowers, and the new greenery in the meadows all signal the arrival of spring as the breeze wafts through them. This is how we enjoy the beauty of springtime. But if we try to understand the essence of the spring breeze, we detect nothing of these sublime elements.



## 140.

When I say that the Creator isn't in the sky, what I mean is that the sky, as we know it, is unable to contain the Creator. In fact, it's the Creator who contains the sky.

## 141.

To mingle with the rich and mighty is not dangerous *per se*. At times, it is true that such company may be life-threatening and you can risk losing your head at any moment, but then everyone dies eventually. The danger actually lies in the fact that the egos of powerful people have been pumped up so dramatically that, inevitably, it affects those with whom they socialize—especially if these associates readily accept favors. It's only natural that, once you accept gratuities, you tend to speak favorably of the donors and don't want to cross them, even if you know they are telling lies. When you side with such people, you're bound to create distance between yourself and the Beloved; the more you're drawn to them, the more the Beloved will turn His face from you. The more you make peace with these worldly men, the more you raise His wrath! As mentioned in a Hadith: "When you aid an evil person, God will allow him to rule over you."

## 142.

The Creator of *thought* is infinitely more subtle than *thought* itself.

## 143.

In winter, our breath becomes visible in the cold air, but this doesn't mean that in summer our breathing ceases. The breath is subtle, like summertime, and our essence—as well as all our qualities—is as delicate as the summer and remains invisible unless it is revealed through an action.

## 144.

To speak the truth with the full knowledge that it will create animosity between two brothers, or to unnecessarily expose someone's fault to his friends, is regarded in Islam as gossip and is strictly forbidden.

## 145.

I'm upset because my words are not under my command! I wish to address my friends, but my words don't obey me! At the same time, I'm content that my words have overpowered me and made me their captive, for they've become the words of the Creator. And where His words are spoken, new life always springs into being.

## 146.

Ignorance must be welcomed and hailed as a life-saving phenomenon! If we humans only had intelligence and not ignorance, we'd soon burn up and die. Ignorance, in effect, safeguards the human race; in fact, we're dependent on it for our very existence. It's imperative to realize that opposites support, maintain, and complete each other—like day and night, which seem to be opposites but which, in essence, both support the same objective. If it were always night and darkness enveloped everything, very little would be achieved. Likewise, if it were always light, we'd all be staring agape into the distant sun, slowly going blind and mad. To us, opposites may seem contrary, but, in the grand scheme of the universe, they're perfectly harmonious companions.

## 147.

I wonder: What evil act doesn't, in some sense, involve an element of virtue and what honest act doesn't contain a trace of evil? For instance, a man has planned to murder someone; but, prior to committing the act, he engages in adultery and forgets about the murder! In this instance, adultery, considered a sin, prevents the spilling of blood. Therefore, sometimes committing a sin may, in effect, prevent a greater crime later on.

## 148.

One morning, King Ebrahim of Adham went hunting. As he fiercely chased a deer, he got separated from his entourage. He continued to chase his prey, ignoring his horse's exhaustion as the poor beast became increasingly drenched in sweat. He recklessly pushed the pursuit beyond the point of reason, until, all of a sudden, the deer stopped, turned to face him, and began to speak:

“Ebrahim, you were not created to hunt me. I'm not the reason why you were brought into this life! Let's imagine for a moment that you catch me; then what? What was it all for?”

When the king heard these words, he shrieked uncontrollably and hurled himself off his horse onto the stony ground, losing consciousness. After a

while, when he came around, he spotted a shepherd nearby and called him over. He took off his royal robes, his jewelry, and his precious armor and gave them all to the poor shepherd, along with his invaluable horse, saying:

“Take all of these; they’re yours to keep. Give me your felt vest instead, and never, ever mention to anyone that you saw the king in such a state!”

He contently put on the dirty old vest and disappeared into the distance, without ever looking back.

How different Ebrahim of Adham’s original intention was from what the Creator had intended for him that day! He simply wanted to hunt a deer, but the Lord made him the deer’s catch!

## 149.

People become ungrateful when they can’t satisfy all their desires, because greed has shut their eyes to that with which they’ve already been graced.

## 150.

We’re like a bowl brought to the water’s edge. The bowl has not willed itself to be there; rather, the water has willed the bowl to be there. Some of us know this, while others remain totally in the dark.

## 151.

In life, everything happens because God wishes it!

## 152.

We all harbor a secret desire to show off our beauty! Many women, who are obliged to cover themselves, from time to time sneak out and display their faces just to test their desirability.

## 153.

Allah is subtle; His wrath is subtle and even His dismissal of us is subtle! His subtlety, however, reveals itself most of all when He solves our enigmatic problems. When one day I’m released from this material world, I shall not blame illness or old age. Instead, I shall be grateful because, due to His pure kindness, the veils that have blinded me all my life will finally have been lifted from before my eyes, revealing the divine court He holds in the next world.

## 154.

Striving hard to achieve your purpose is one means of accomplishment; being the recipient of grace is another. Prophets throughout history didn't reach their stature through spiritual toiling; rather they found their revered position through kindness and patronage of the Divine.

## 155.

Not every gallows is built of wood. Position and status, reputation and wealth, can also be mighty gallows. When God wishes to test us, He bestows upon us greater kingdoms, limitless wealth, and an enviable position in life.

## 156.

To be a darvish [Sufi mystic] is to be one with darvishes everywhere! When one limb suffers, so does every other part.

## 157.

A true friend sacrifices himself for a friend and doesn't hesitate to throw himself into utter turmoil for his friend's sake.

## 158.

The pious give up their lives for the Beloved, so why should they worry about danger or losing a limb? Their ultimate destination is to reach the Divine, so what need have they of appendages that were originally given to them to walk in this world? Once they return to the *giver of life*, why should they worry if they lose them?

## 159.

Our paths in life are varied, but the destination is always the same. To reach Mecca, for instance, you may follow an infinite number of roads, each entirely different from the other. Yet, if you shift your vision and truly look closer at the purpose of those roads, you see that they're all connected. In fact, they're united in that, ultimately, they all lead to the Kaaba—the house of God. Once inside the Kaaba, pilgrims see that all contradictions vanish instantly; they recognize that all the arguments and fights, the blaming and the defaming of one another that occurred throughout the journey, belong to the road and

have no place at the final destination. Every pilgrim comes to the realization that everyone's intention and purpose has always been one and the same.

## 160.

When you rush and overdo at the beginning of a task, your work will remain unfinished and the end result will be unsatisfactory.

## 161.

Pilgrims tell each other they're bound for Mecca, but among them are those who quietly say: "God willing, I'm meant to go to Mecca." The latter are the lovers who never perceive themselves in control of their destiny. Rather, they see the Beloved at work at all times and simply admit that it's only when He wills it that they'll be welcomed in His house.

## 162.

After banishing Adam from heaven, God asked him:

"Adam, why didn't you challenge me when I caused you so much suffering? You certainly had every reason to and would have been well within your rights. You could've argued that everything that happens in this world is My doing and because of My creations. You could've confronted Me, saying that it's always My wish that is manifested in the world and what I don't wish for never happens! You had good cause to demand justice, but you didn't! Why?"

"My Beloved, my love for You forbids me even to conceive of correcting You. I knew I had the right, but I chose not to forget my manners before You!"

## 163.

Thoughts are like gliding birds and wild deer; it's not your place to catch them and imprison them in a cage or try to sell them! As long as our thoughts remain in our minds, they can't be labeled and are impossible to govern. Have you ever heard of a judge condemning someone for thoughts that were not acted upon?

## 164.

When you find yourself in the presence of the perfect guide, keep silent, give yourself up to him, and wait. Listen carefully, for he may suddenly offer you guidance by uttering just one word. You may also find yourself entertaining an unfamiliar thought, or a word may roll involuntarily off your tongue that

may give you a hint about your guide's spiritual state. You can be certain that it's your guide's high state of consciousness that you're experiencing, because he has imprinted himself onto you.

## 165.

What is the true purpose of words? Is it to illuminate us through discussion and exchange of ideas? Actually, the purpose of words is not only to bring us to the object of our desire, but to *excite* us and create *yearning* in our hearts to seek Truth.

## 166.

Bread is not really the reason we're alive, but it's considered to be nutritious and life-sustaining. Yet, as it's an inanimate entity and has no life of its own, how can it be nutritious? If it really had any life force, it would give itself life!

## 167.

While in a state of ecstasy, people may scream *An al Haq*, meaning "There's no one but God." They may also express their devotion by saying *An al Abd*, which means "I'm God's servant, slave, and worshipper." When you are in the spiritual state of *An al Haq*, you are in the highest state of humility, because you have forgotten yourself completely and can only envision the Beloved. In this state, there's no longer duality; there's no more "You" or "I." There's only "You." When you are in the state of *An al Abd*, however, in which you claim to be God's servant, slave, and worshipper, there's still "You" and "I"—two separate entities, encompassing duality. In *An al Haq*, there's no "I"; everything is Him. Other than God, there's nothing else. This is the ultimate state of humility.

## 168.

Once, when important guests arrived at the king's palace, he ordered his staff to set the table with the court's best dishes and cutlery, which were inlaid with precious gems. At mealtime, the servants, each with a bowl or platter in hand, lined up ready to serve the guests. As the king walked into the parlor, his favorite and most devoted servant, who was also holding a dish, took one look at the king and, overwhelmed by the power of the pure love he felt for his master, suddenly lost his composure and dropped the exquisite porcelain onto the floor. The other servants followed his example automatically. In the blink of an eye, the most precious royal serving dishes were shattered into

millions of shards scattered all over the dining room floor. The king was furious and scolded them harshly.

“But your highness,” they muttered humbly, “we followed your favorite’s example. He dropped the dish first!”

“You idiots, he didn’t drop it; I did!”

## 169.

“What would you like to have?” God asked the mystic Bayazid.

“I want not to *want!*” he replied instantly.

## 170.

We hear words of wisdom from the lips of different masters and guides who couldn’t be more different from one another. Their messages, which seem disparate on the surface, are nonetheless always one and the same in essence, because absolute Truth is constant and never changes. And the path to find Truth is truly just the one path.

## 171.

When you find a venomous snake coiled up on a treasure chest, you do better to shift your attention away from the danger it poses and focus instead on the valuable gems inside that it’s guarding!

## 172.

“Purify your thoughts, my subjects!” said the Creator. “For they’ve taken up the space that belongs to Me!”

## 173.

Jesus of Nazareth laughed all the time, while John the Baptist only cried! One day, John asked Jesus:

“Is it because you are sure that you’re safe from God’s unrivaled craftiness that you laugh so freely?”

“Have you so completely lost touch with the Beloved’s unlimited benevolence that you cry incessantly?” replied Jesus.

A wise sage who was within earshot and overheard their conversation quietly turned to God and asked:

“Which of these two men has a higher standing with You, my Lord?”

The Creator solemnly replied:

“I’m present where my subject thinks I am, because everyone is different, with a different understanding of Me. Whatever My subjects imagine Me to be, I am that. Thus, cleanse your thoughts, My servants, for that’s where I reside.”

## 174.

I’m the slave of that thought which embraces the Truth. I abhor anything true in which the Divine is not present!

## 175.

There’s a pain in my friend’s heart that nothing can relieve—no known medicine or nourishment, nor any fun, not even peaceful sleep—nothing but the hope of meeting with the Friend!

## 176.

There’s only God and nothing else, and until we grasp this reality and die to our ego-ridden selves, His light will not reveal itself. Until then, He will not become one with us, so that finally an end can be put to all duality.

## 177.

When I connect with a friend, I’m consciously present and always in communication with him, even when we’re silent or physically apart. We remain connected as one and continue to converse even when we fight and land blows to hurt one another. We don’t fixate on the blows, for we know that, hidden inside them, are precious gems unlike any other. Others may sing my friend’s praise in various ways; one may write poetry for him while another may compose pages of compliments in prose. Such admirers abound, but my friend knows where my intentions lie, and he loves me deeply because he sees something beyond what he finds in the others. At last, he has discovered a different light.

## 178.

All suffering arises from desiring something that’s impossible to have. When you want nothing, then there’s no unnecessary suffering.



179.

A worthy mind is one that can hold secrets; otherwise, what's the use of the mind?

180.

When nature offers you her breast, overflowing with the milk of abundance, you must drink to your delight! The breast may be full, but unless you take advantage and suckle, the milk will not flow freely.

181.

The educated are weary of approaching us because they fear that they may lose all that they've so arduously learned. Little do they know that it's only when they come to our gatherings that their knowledge will truly blossom!

182.

Conversations in the spirit world occur without words or sounds, which our little minds find hard to conceive.

183.

A flash of light appeared, laid a kiss on a soul waiting to be illuminated, and then vanished! It had fulfilled its purpose.

184.

When we come across a hefty gate with a substantial lock, we naturally assume that there are precious objects inside that must be secured. We can therefore conclude that, the more precious the gems, the more considerable the veils of protection.

185.

A mystic doesn't see the phenomenon of life as logical and rational; rather, he sees life through the eyes of insight and intuition!

186.

For sinners, hell becomes a house of worship, because it's there that they're reminded of the existence of the Divine!

187.

How valuable are the words of a speaker who can't hold his audience's attention?

188.

To reach the light that exists within us, we need to take a leap of faith to free ourselves from the yoke of our destructive anxiety. Once we've seen that light, all superficial affairs of this world pale before our eyes.

189.

Following in God's way, we too must test our friends from time to time so that we're not left with an agonizing sense of regret in the end.

190.

Sometimes I notice that someone has fallen asleep during my talk. Instinctively, I know that it's not due to ignorance; rather, they feel comfortably safe in my presence. My words nourish the soul because they arise from a safe place, as I'm simply recounting wisdom from great masters. When souls come across familiar knowledge, they lose their fear and feel secure knowing that they'll soon be enveloped in a state of pure bliss.

191.

Words are limitless, but only dawn on us according to our capacity. Wisdom, like rain, is immeasurable at its source, but is communicated discerningly.

192.

The wise and mindful understand everything from just a few words; from hearing one phrase, they know the entire book!

193.

When you gild your words, their original purpose is lost.

## 194.

We live in a dreamworld and can only know its meaning in the next world!

## 195.

We can't hope to discover a pearl by staring endlessly into the sea. It requires an able diver who is quick and lucky to enter the murky depths to fetch the gem.

## 196.

Trees may not have leaves or bear fruit in the winter, but don't for a moment imagine that they're asleep, because they're perpetually at work. Winter is a time for saving, while summer is a time for spending. What's spent is obvious to us, but we remain unaware of how anything is originally saved.

## 197.

Majnun began to write to his beloved Laily:

“On my eyes, rest your thoughts. On my tongue, rolls your name. In my heart, your love is eternally alive. To whom should I be writing this letter, then, when you're always present with me?”

At that point, his pen broke and the paper tore.

## 198.

A man traveled a great distance to visit his old friend, the prophet Joseph. After exchanging initial courtesies, Joseph asked his friend what he had brought him as a souvenir from his country. The friend replied:

“I thought long and hard about a gift for you, my friend. What could you possibly need that you don't already have? There's no one more beautiful than you in the world, so I brought you a simple mirror! Every time you look at it, you can study your perfect face, the embodiment of Beauty.”

What would the Almighty need that He doesn't already have? He wishes for a clear heart in which He can see His own reflection.

## 199.

When we see lush and healthy leaves and fruits on trees, we know that the roots have had quality nourishment—the very same thing that's absent in a

tree with withered leaves. It's hard to conceal.

## 200.

From where do our thoughts and imagination stem if not from the Creator of all thoughts and images? Could it be that, because He's so close to us, we're unable to see Him?

## 201.

Someone asked the Prophet:

“I understand that the spirit of each thing is unique, but can I approach this spirit through the physical phenomenon it inhabits?”

The Prophet replied:

“Before you lies the expanse of the physical earth and the sky; let's try to comprehend the meaning of the universe through them. When you observe the organization behind the earth's cycles—like the seasonal rainfall during both winter and summer or the changing of night into day—do you suppose it all occurs haphazardly? Don't you realize that someone must be responsible? You may encounter that 'someone' through the physical elements of this world and seek proper guidance. In the same fashion that you learn about people's essence by encountering their physical selves, you can comprehend the meaning of the universe via its actual phenomena.”

## 202.

The Beloved has many traits, two of which are wrath and kindness. While those who believe in Him exemplify His kindness, those who don't, personify His wrath. Divine messengers, however, are the embodiment of both.

## 203.

My language is similar to the ancient Soriyani language, which no one speaks anymore, so don't presume you can understand it. No matter how much you've studied, you're still far from genuinely understanding me. To truly grasp my thoughts, you must learn *not* to understand! What you may have understood up until now has only served as a chain to hold you back. Indeed, it's the cause of all your pain and discontent and has left you empty-handed. If you want to be effective, you must free yourself from all that you've believed up until now!

## 204.

When the Creator manifests His veiled glory on a mountain, it's covered in beautiful lush greenery and colorful flowers. But were He to reveal His glory unveiled, nothing on the mountainside would remain, as everything would be singed and blown into a million tiny pieces, unable to withstand the sheer power of it!

## 205.

A mirror has no image of its own. So when you see a reflection, it's that of the "other."

## 206.

There are a very few extraordinary men among us who excel in good works, helping the needy and performing the most arduous tasks in the most unforgiving situations. However, they conceal their true faces, as they consider their endeavors and achievements insignificant compared to what the Creator does regularly.

## 207.

Jesus was wandering in the desert when a flash rainstorm suddenly broke out. He took refuge in the corner of a cave where a lynx had dropped her litter. All the cubs were asleep. Soon he got a message:

"Leave the lynx's home! Her cubs cannot rest with you present."

Jesus thought quietly to himself:

"My Beloved, even the lynx's cubs have a home and a refuge, and the son of Mary has neither; nor do I have any position in this life to uphold!"

Calming Jesus's worry, the Lord replied:

"The offspring of the lynx may have a home, but they certainly don't have a Lover such as Me who guides them in all things!"

## 208.

Pain can serve as a guide while we strive to achieve our endeavors! Unless we initially experience the pain of love and longing, we will not move to achieve our goals.

## 209.

The body is like the Virgin Mary, and we each carry a Jesus within us. When labor pains begin, it's time for our Jesus to be born. But if we never feel the pain, Jesus will return to his original abode via the same hidden way that he came, denying us the glory of his existence.

## 210.

On his way to Mecca, a pilgrim was separated from his caravan and soon became lost in the desert. Thirsty and exhausted, he was about to lose consciousness when he suddenly spotted a tattered tent in the distance. Laboriously, he dragged his feet in its direction. As he got closer, he saw a woman walk out of the tent. Careful not to scare her, he waved feebly and whimpered:

“I'm a pilgrim and I'm lost! Please help me.”

He approached the woman slowly, sat down, and begged for some water. She graciously brought out a full jug and handed it to him. He drank gratefully, not reacting at all to the fact that the water was saltier than salt itself! As he swallowed, his lips, his mouth, and his entire insides were on fire, but he didn't complain out of politeness. Instead, he offered the destitute woman some valuable advice:

“I'm immensely indebted to you for saving my life and would very much like to offer you information that could bring much comfort to your household. Not far from here are prosperous cities like Baghdad, Kufa, and many others that you can easily reach within a day, even if you are ill and have to crawl to get there. You're guaranteed an unlimited supply of sweet drinking water in all of these cities and would never have to suffer unnecessarily again.”

A few minutes later, the woman's husband arrived, proudly holding a few desert rats that he had caught for dinner. They shared their meager meal with the pilgrim, who graciously accepted their hospitality, albeit reluctantly. Later that evening, after the guest had fallen asleep outside their tent, the woman relayed to her husband the information that the pilgrim had entrusted to her. When he heard her, he sniggered wryly and said:

“Woman, don't listen to this nonsense! The world's full of jealous people who can't bear to see others living comfortably, having achieved a high position in life! Their only intention is to dislodge us in order to take advantage of us!”

Some people are strange; they easily mistake kindness for jealousy, much to their own detriment.

## 211.

It's daunting at first to embrace spiritual life fully; yet the longer you persevere, the sweeter the challenge becomes. Our earthly attachments, however brilliant and desirable, will lose their luster in time and gradually begin to fade away. And the longer we linger with them, the colder our souls become.

## 212.

To be in love is a priceless gift, because we receive our strength and the will to live from our loved ones. If the thought of an earthly lover can bestow life on us, imagine what the love of our Beloved can do!

## 213.

Picture a toothless old woman with rough, wrinkly skin like a crocodile's, confidently approaching to challenge you:

“Young man, you call yourself handsome and able-bodied! I'm offering you the chance of a lifetime! Come and take me right now, like a rider taking control of the reins of his horse, and show me your true manhood!”

Even if you were a saint, you'd reply:

“God forbid! You've got it wrong; I'm not a man! What you may have heard of my manhood is only a tale! No truth to it, I promise you! In a place where you're the only woman available, it's best not to be a man at all!”

## 214.

Despite his unsurpassed qualities, the Prophet was well aware of the importance of humility. No one ever managed to greet him before he had first greeted them, and always with his eyes lowered modestly.

## 215.

People everywhere are different. Some live simply and contently, focusing only on today, while others circumvent today and fix their eyes on the end of life's journey. The latter are commendable because they exercise foresight and are concerned about the afterlife, but the former are even more special because they don't worry about the future at all. They know that they've planted wheat and are certain they won't reap barley!

Still, there's another group who are entirely unconcerned with either the present or the future, for they're totally occupied with the love of God. They're unphased by their counterparts, who may be equally unconcerned with now or later, but whose detachment is due to their ignorance and their total engrossment in material life. These are the ones who serve as weeds for the fires of hell!

## 216.

We all work for Spirit, although we're totally ignorant of this fact. We occupy ourselves with the daily routine of our lives, adhering to our chosen aims while remaining entirely unaware of the Creator's original intention for us. God truly wishes us to survive and flourish, but we mostly choose to delve into matters of the flesh, sleeping with women for pleasure and unnecessarily conceiving even more children. Yet, as a result of feeding his desires, man indeed contributes to the survival of humanity and the continuation of the world order—albeit with a different original intention.

## 217.

A simpleton boasted:

“I've managed at last to prove the existence of God rationally!”

Shams [Rumi's guide and mentor] teased him:

“I wondered last night why so many angels descended from heaven to earth celebrating and praying for only *you*! Now I see that you have indeed managed to prove the existence of God! May He grant you a long life, for you've rendered a great service to humankind!”

After a short pause, Shams continued:

“God is absolute and needs no proving, little man. To be useful, try raising your own consciousness to a level worthy of Him. Without a shadow of doubt, I repeat, God is absolute and needs no proof of existence, especially not from a human!”

## 218.

Our thoughts are safe in our minds as long as they're not exposed. They can't be traced or stigmatized, and no other person can rule over them.

## 219.



What carries us through life is our belief, much like the sail of a ship. When the sail is functioning properly, we will be carried for great distances; but, if it's impaired, words must replace the wind.

## 220.

The purpose of prayer is not for people to bend, kneel, prostrate themselves, and straighten up time and time again, day after day. The essential purpose of prayer is for people to maintain the state they *achieve* during prayer, all day and all night, while sleeping and while awake, when writing and when reading, so that we never neglect to remember God.

## 221.

Mystics equate joy, openness, and spiritual expansion with springtime, while autumn is exemplified by sorrow and closure. What possible resemblance is there between joy and spring, or between autumn and sorrow? Obviously, there's no likeness, which only goes to prove the weakness of language, for the mind can't conceive of things without the aid of symbols.

## 222.

When I speak, my words are cash in hand. When others talk, it's just talk!

## 223.

You hear that an altruistic man in a faraway land regularly makes generous donations to the needy, and you suffer the arduous journey to benefit from his charity. Before you set out, however, you don't for a moment first consider to beg at the door of the Creator, of whose boundless generosity you're well aware! You console yourself by idly repeating that, if God wished, He'd already have helped you. If you must beg, then beg at the right door!

## 224.

When you feel guilty, it's natural for your heart to shrivel and eventually close up. The innocent have no fear that their hearts will ever desiccate, however, for they have their prayers as guarantee.

## 225.

A Sufi sheikh runs away from the world like a mouse runs from a cat.

## 226.

A darvish was sitting quietly in a corner minding his own business when a pompous man, claiming to be a grammarian, plonked himself down next to him and immediately blurted out:

“Speech is nothing but a combination of verbs, nouns, and prepositions.”

The cunning mystic shot up to his feet, tore off his shirt in frenzy, and shrieked:

“Oh my God, then I’ve wasted twenty years of my life struggling in vain! I was hoping that there was much more to life than just these three words! You’ve now succeeded in forever destroying my one and only hope in life!”

## 227.

There’s never a moment when we’re not in love. Every hour there may be a new love: love of sleep, love of rest, love of the harp, or simply love of beauty. When we feel enveloped by these feelings, we know we’re enveloped by Love.

## 228.

Human beings are incredible creatures in whom everything in the universe already exists. We, however, are unaware of this hidden treasure because layers of veils effectively cover this truth. These veils are no other than the myriad activities and attachments that we create for ourselves, believing them to be the norm of living. I wonder what marvel we may find underneath this vast complexity once the veils are fully lifted!

## 229.

A darvish happened to be passing by the royal court when the king saw him and addressed him as an ascetic. Instantly, the darvish spat out:

“I’m not an ascetic; you are!”

The king sneered:

“Why would I be an ascetic? I own the whole world.”

“Not really! You’re seeing things in reverse! I’m holding this world and the next, in fact the entire universe, in my hands. You’ve been satisfied with only a morsel of food and bejeweled garb!”

## 230.

I never wish to upset anyone. When my devotees scold those who bump into me during *sama* [Sufi whirling], it saddens me, and I've warned them a hundred times never to tell anyone anything remotely upsetting on my behalf. I've no problem with these folks; I've so much love in my heart that, when friends come to visit, I entertain them by reciting poetry so that they don't get bored. This is for their sake; otherwise, what business do I have with verse? I swear to God that I despise poetry and regard nothing to be lower in my esteem. Reciting verse is like plunging your hands into the guts of an animal and emptying it out in order to serve a delectable meal to your guests because that's what they want. You have to observe what seems to be necessary at any given time—what's for sale and what's purchased most often, even if it's an item of the lowest quality!

## 231.

The Creator has chosen to shut the eyes of a certain group of people to His existence, thus freeing them from matters of spirit and encouraging them instead to tend to the matters of the world. Otherwise, nothing would ever get physically built on our planet.

## 232.

The purpose of the Kaaba, the house of God, is to reach and appeal to the *hearts* of great masters, sages, and prophets, for it's there that divine revelations appear. What good is the Kaaba without the heart?

## 233.

To have faith involves both hope and fear, and neither of them is possible without the other. For instance, a farmer plants wheat and doesn't worry that he may harvest barley, but he still fears drought, pests, and innumerable other calamities. When he has hope in his heart, however, he strives harder to reach his aim, and that hope becomes his wings. The stronger his wings, the higher his flight, with no time for laziness, like a patient who tolerates the bitter taste of medicine in the hope of a speedy recovery.

## 234.

A local grocer had fallen in love with one of the neighborhood ladies. As he rarely got a chance to see her in person, he decided to relay an elaborate message expressing his love through her maid, who came to the shop every day. He began by saying how much he loved the lady and how he was burning inside day and night, suffering as if he were terminally ill. In fact, he

claimed, the day before he'd been in a very bad way and had spent the night on the brink of literally dying! He went on and on, lamenting the lady's absence. The maid finally managed to free herself from his grasp and quickly returned home. She went directly to her mistress and reported:

“The grocer sends his regards and also says: ‘Come to me so I can do this and that to you!’”

The lady was astonished and asked:

“What do you mean? He said it in so many words?”

“No, he said it in a long soliloquy, but this is essentially what he meant.”

Your intention is what's important; the rest is simply unnecessary wrangling.

## 235.

When the heart speaks, who needs language?

## 236.

Our animal nature is inherent in us, and so is our unique power of speech, neither of which can be separated from us. When a friend appears speechless on the surface, you can be certain that he's ceaselessly conversing inside.

## 237.

Discourse between people depends on the capacity of the listener. Wisdom only reveals itself as long as it's accepted and understood. When a person is unable to hear the truth, he may complain that nothing is being said, thus remaining blind to his own lack of competence. In effect, He who denies the listener the capacity to hear properly also prevents the speaker from conversing in the first place.

## 238.

A local mullah was giving a sermon:

“The most important thing is first to see the Divine, and then to hear and speak with Him. Everyone sees the Sultan, but only very special subjects get to speak with him.”

Rumi responded:

“These words are erroneous and misleading! Moses first heard and spoke to God, and then was graced with seeing Him. The gift of speech belonged to Moses and that of sight was bestowed upon Mohammad. Therefore, your words don’t carry the faintest grain of truth!”

## 239.

A breeze wafts through the door and gently lifts the corner of the carpet, creating a movement. As a result, a further disturbance among the floor coverings occurs. Dust rises in the air; small, regular wavelets roil the water in the pool, and the leaves and branches begin to dance to an invisible tune. All these events seem to happen independently of each other, yet they share a single purpose, because their essence is the same. Their movement has been caused by the same element—the wind.

## 240.

Parvaneh [a Seljuk minister] once recounted that my eldest son from time to time turned him away from seeing me. It’s true! I had asked him to do so, because sometimes I wasn’t in a state to receive anyone and didn’t wish to upset the gentleman by making him wait unnecessarily. My state of mind sometimes allows me to be talkative, but sometimes not. At times, I am open to discussion; at other times, I may be in a meditative mood. Nevertheless, I didn’t wish to appear impolite and preferred to pay the minister a visit myself, when I was in the proper state of mind.

When Parvaneh heard this, he told my son: “I don’t come here so that Mowlana will occupy himself solely with me; I come to kiss his hand like everyone else who’s devoted to him. When he keeps me waiting, in fact he’s teaching me a lesson: to treat people who come to me with their affairs with respect, and not keep them waiting unnecessarily, causing them unbearable inconvenience. Mowlana has made me taste the bitterness of patience in order to teach me courtesy and civility, so that I don’t end up offending anyone needlessly.”

In fact, it’s always been out of kindness and high esteem that I’ve made Parvaneh wait in the past!

## 241.

Nothing is more difficult in God’s realm than tolerating mistakes! Imagine that you’ve worked hard on a book, laboriously correcting all its mistakes. Then you see someone sitting next to you reading the book and taking its meaning in the wrong way. How can you possibly tolerate it?

## 242.

When a Sufi says “all’s well,” he speaks the truth, because he means that everything related to the Divine is well and good. But that doesn’t necessarily pertain to us as human beings.

## 243.

The ruler of the town summoned Majnun to his court and asked him:

“What has happened to you? Why have you made yourself homeless, without a comfort in the world, roaming around like a madman? Who’s this Laily and what’s so special about her? Come to me so I can introduce you to a multitude of beautiful women who’ll be more than happy to accompany you! I’ll gift them to you instantly; just chose one!”

The ruler’s assistants brought forth many astoundingly beautiful women, all lined up before Majnun waiting for him to lift his head to at least take a look at them. But Majnun stood before the ladies with his head cranked to the side, unable to turn his gaze upon them.

The king ordered him:

“At least lift your face and take a simple look!”

“I’m afraid!” said Majnun innocently. “Laily’s love has drawn its sword, ready to slice off my head should I try to lift it!”

Majnun was utterly consumed by his love for Laily, unable to see the beauty of other women. One wonders what he could possibly have seen in Laily that had turned him completely blind to others!

## 244.

How fortunate to have complete unpretentiousness between a lover and a beloved. For them, everything other than love is prohibited.

## 245.

To immerse yourself in spiritual life may not prove pleasant at first, but the more you submit, the sweeter the process. This is contrary to our daily superficial pursuits, which seem delectable at first, but which gradually lose their attraction the more time we spend with them. Just look at us! What possible connection is there between a man’s body and his spirit? Surely you’ve noticed how, when someone dies and his spirit departs his body, the

living can't wait to get rid of his corpse as soon as they possibly can, unable to tolerate the dead thing in their homes for even one night.

## 246.

Men battle day and night with women in order to purify their temperament; little do they know that all they're doing is wiping the women's sins clean and adding them to their own! A man ought to approach a woman humbly and accept her demands, even if they're contrary to his will and may at first seem impossible to satisfy. Men must learn to give up their pride and stop banishing their women to a far corner of the house, imprisoning them for nothing!

## 247.

To have faith is to distinguish a false friend from a true one.

## 248.

Fishermen don't catch a fish all at once. First they hook it, and then they pull it in to bleed it, making it weak and limp. Then they relax the line a little and suddenly pull the hook more vigorously to weaken the fish further before reeling it in. The hook of love is similar; the Creator pulls us gradually so that we're able to discard our contemptible traits and habits one by one.

## 249.

Although the Almighty has promised that we'll face the consequences of our actions after resurrection, yet every instant in this lifetime we experience their reverberations.

## 250.

God re-creates man anew every second, implementing something fresh in his soul that doesn't resemble anything that was there before. Yet man is completely unaware of this process.

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# About the Authors

**Rumi (Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī)** was a 13th-century Persian Sunni Muslim poet, jurist, Islamic scholar, theologian, and Sufi mystic.

**Maryam Mafi** was born and raised in Iran. She graduated from Tufts University in 1977 and, while reading for her master's degree in international communications at American and Georgetown Universities, she began translating Persian literature and has been doing so ever since. Maryam lives in London.

**Narguess Farzad** is a senior fellow in Persian studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.