



THE SECRET ROSE GARDEN

SA'D UD DIN MAHMUD SHABISTARI

Global Grey ebooks

**THE SECRET ROSE
GARDEN
OF SA'D UD DIN MAHMUD
SHABISTARI**

**RENDERED FROM THE PERSIAN WITH AN
INTRODUCTION
BY
FLORENCE LEDERER**

1920

The Secret Rose Garden By Florence Lederer.

This edition was created and published by Global Grey

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You, who are a man, arise and pass on,
 Wait not day or night at the halting-stages,
 Tarry not behind your fellow-travellers and the caravans.

THE TWO STEPS OF THE JOURNEY

THE journey of the pilgrims is two steps and no more:
 One is the passing out of selfhood,
 And one towards mystical Union with the Friend.

FEAR

As the Arab racer needs not the whip,
 So you will not need to fear
 When on your journey you have started.

When purified are your soul and body,
 You will not fear the fires of hell.
 Throw pure gold into the fire;
 If it contains no alloy, what is there to burn?

LOGIC

IF God guides you not into the road,
 It will not be disclosed by logic.

Logic is a bondage of forms;
 A road that is long and hard.
 Leave it for a season. Like Moses
 Cast away that staff
 And enter for awhile "The Valley of Peace."

THE INFANT AND THE YOUTH

THE young infant in the cradle
 Stays at his mother's side,
 But when he is grown manly
 He goes forth with his father.

So you remain with your mother,
 The fleshly elements,
 Until you join your Father up on high.

THE ALMOND-TREE

As the kernel of an almond is spoilt utterly
If it is plucked from its husk while unripe,
So error in the path of the pilgrim
Spoils the kernel of his soul.

When the knower is divinely illumined,
The kernel ripens, bursts the husk,
And departs, returning no more.

But another retains the husk,
Though shining as a bright sun,
And makes another circuit.

From water and earth springs up into a tree,
Whose high branches are lifted up to heaven;
Then from the seed of this tree
A hundredfold are brought forth.

Like the growth of a seed into the line of a tree,
From point comes a line, then a circle;
When the circuit of this circle is complete,
Then the last is joined to the first.

INTERMINGLING

You are plurality transformed into Unity,
And Unity passing into plurality;
This mystery is understood when man
Leaves the part and merges in the Whole.

PART 5. TIME AND THIS DREAM-WORLD

TIME

THE past has flown away,
The coming month and year do not exist;
Ours only is the present's tiny point.

Time is but a fancied dot ever moving on
Which you have called a flowing river-stream.

I am alone in a wide desert,
Listening to the echo of strange noises.

THE DREAM OF LIFE

You have heard much of this world,
Yet what have you seen of this world?
What is its form and substance?

What is Simurgh, and what is Mount Kaf?
What is Hades and what is Heaven and Hell?
What is that unseen world
A day of which equals a year of this?

Come and hear the meaning.

You are asleep, and your vision is a dream,
All you are seeing is a mirage.
When you wake up on the morn of the last day
You will know all this to be Fancy's illusion;
When you have ceased to see double,
Earth and Heaven will become transformed;
When the real sun unveils his face to you,
The moon, the stars, and Venus will disappear;
If a ray shines on the hard rock
Like wool of many colours, it drops to pieces.

THE PHENOMENAL WORLD

THE world is an imaginary figure,
 A diffused shadow of the Infinite;
 One breath created the worlds of command
 And all living things.

As they appear to come forth, so they appear to go.
 Though there is no real coming and going.
 For what is going but coming?

. . . All are one, both the visible and the invisible.
 God most high, the Eternal One,
 Creates and destroys both worlds.

. . . The varied forms you see are but phantoms of your fancy,
 And by revolving quickly in a circle
 Appear as one.

THE REAL AND THE UNREAL

THE imagination produces phenomenal objects
 Which have no real existence,
 So this world has no substantial reality,
 But exists as a shadowy pageant or a play.

All is pervaded by Absolute Being
 In its utter perfection.

There are many numbers, but only One is counted.

THIS WORLD A MIRAGE

THE house is left empty, save for the Truth,
 For in a moment the world has passed away;
 Then you, rid of self, fly upwards
 And are united to the Beloved.

Union is yours when this dream-world
 Fades and dies away.

PART 6. REFLECTIONS

SUN-REFLECTIONS

SUN-REFLECTIONS from the unseen world
 Are all the objects of this mortal sphere,
 As curl, down, mole, and brow on a fair face.
 For Beauty absolute reigns over all.

. . . When the ears first hear these words
 They seem to denote sensual objects.
 But as there is no language for the Infinite,
 How can we express its mysteries
 In finite words?
 Or how can the visions of the ecstatic
 Be described in earthly formula?
 So mystics veil their meanings
 In these shadows of the unseen,
 The objects of the senses.

. . . As a nurse to an infant,
 So is the Infinite to the finite.

. . . Once these words were used in their proper sense,
 But now are concealed lest the vulgar should profane.

Annihilation, intoxication, the fever of love
 Are the three states of the mystic,
 And those who abide in these states
 At once comprehend the meanings
 Veiled in the words.
 But if you know them not,
 Pretend not you understand like an ignorant infidel,
 For all cannot be mystics or grasp the mysteries.
 No mere illusions are the mystic's dreams,
 And a man of truth does not vainly talk.
 To comprehend requires revelations or great faith.

Briefly have I explained these words and their meanings
 So that you may apply them in their right intent,
 Remembering the attributes of each.
 Compare them in a right manner,
 And refrain from the wrong comparisons.

Now that these rules are understood
 I will show you more of their application.

THE MIRROR

YOUR eye has not strength enough
 To gaze at the burning sun,
 But you can see its brilliant light
 By watching its reflection
 Mirrored in the water.

So the reflection of Absolute Being
 Can be viewed in this mirror of Not-Being,
 For non-existence, being opposite Reality,
 Instantly catches its reflection.

Know the world from end to end is a mirror;
 In each atom a hundred suns are concealed.
 If you pierce the heart of a single drop of water,
 From it will flow a hundred clear oceans;
 If you look intently at each speck of dust,
 In it you will see a thousand beings,
 A gnat in its limbs is like an elephant;
 In name a drop of water resembles the Nile,
 In the heart of a barley-corn is stored an hundred harvests,
 Within a millet-seed a world exists,
 In an insect's wing is an ocean of life,

A heaven is concealed in the pupil of an eye,
 The core in the centre of the heart is small,
 Yet the Lord of both worlds will enter there.

EVIL

BLACKEN the back of a mirror
And it will reflect your face,
So the dust of the earth reflects
The rays of the sun in the seventh heaven.

THE REFLECTION IN THE MIRROR

HOLD up a mirror before you
And gaze on that other person.

. . . Again look and consider;
Your proper self is here, not there.
What, then, can be this reflection,
This shadow of your face?

In the same way as light and dark are not connected,
Being is not joined to Not-Being.

PART 7. DIVINE INEBRIATION

TAVERN-HAUNTERS

THE tavern is the abode of lovers,
 The place where the bird of the soul nests,
 The rest-house that has no existence
 In a world that has no form.
 The tavern-haunter is desolate in a lonely desert,
 Where he sees the world as a mirage.
 The desert is limitless and endless,
 For no man has seen its beginning or ending.
 Though you feverishly wander for a hundred years
 You will be always alone.
 For the dwellers there are headless and footless,
 Neither the faithful nor infidels,
 They have renounced both good and evil,
 And have cast away name and fame,
 From drinking the cup of selflessness;

Without lips or mouth,
 And are beyond traditions, visions, and states,
 Beyond dreaming of secret rooms, of lights and miracles.

They are lying drunken through the smell of the wine-dregs,
 And have given as ransom
 Pilgrim's staff and cruse,
 Dentifrice and rosary.

Sometimes rising to the world of bliss,
 With necks exalted as racers,
 Or with blackened faces turned to the wall,
 Sometimes with reddened faces tied to the stake.

Now in the mystic dance of joy in the Beloved,
 Losing head and foot like the revolving heavens.
 In every strain which they hear from the minstrel
 Comes to them rapture from the unseen world.

For within the mere words and sounds
 Of the mystic song
 Lies a precious mystery.

From drinking one cup of the pure wine,
 From sweeping the dust of dung-hills from their souls,
 From grasping the skirts of drunkards,
 They have become Sūfis.

THE WINE OF RAPTURE

THE wine, lit by a ray from his face,
 Reveals the bubbles of form,
 Such as the material world and the soul-world,
 Which appear as veils to the saints.
 Universal Reason seeing this is astounded,
 Universal Soul is reduced to servitude.

Drink wine! for the bowl is the face of the Friend.
 Drink wine! for the cup is his eye, drunken and flown with wine.
 Drink wine! and be free from heart-coldness,
 For a drunkard is better than the self-satisfied.

The whole world is his tavern,
 His wine-cup the heart of each atom,
 Reason is drunken, angels drunken, soul drunken,
 Air drunken, earth drunken, heaven drunken.

The sky, dizzy from the wine-fumes' aroma,
 Is staggering to and fro;
 The angels, sipping pure wine from goblets,
 Pour down the dregs on the world;
 From the scent of these dregs man rises to heaven.
 Inebriated from the draught, the elements
 Fall into water and fire.
 Catching the reflection, the frail body becomes a soul,
 And the frozen soul by its heat
 Thaws and becomes living.
 The creature world remains giddy,
 For ever straying from house and home.

One from the dregs' odour becomes a philosopher,
 One viewing the wine's colour becomes a relater,
 One from half a draught becomes religious,
 One from a bowlful becomes a lover,
 Another swallows at one draught
 Goblet, tavern, cup-bearer, and drunkards;
 He swallows all, but still his mouth stays open.

WINE, TORCH, AND BEAUTY

TRUTH'S manifestations
 Are wine, torch, and beauty;
 Wine and torch are the light and shining of the "knower,"
 Beauty is concealed from none.
 Wine is the lamp-shade,
 And torch the lamp;
 Beauty is the Spirit-light,
 So bright, it kindles sparks
 In the heart.
 Wine and torch are the essence of that blinding light,
 Beauty is the sign of the Divine.

Drink this wine and, dying to self,
 You will be freed from the spell of self.
 Then will your being, as a drop,
 Fall into the ocean of the Eternal.

INTOXICATION

WHAT is pure wine?
 It is self-purification.
 What sweetness! what intoxication! what blissful ecstasy!

Oh! happy moment when ourselves we quit,
 When fallen in the dust, drunken and amazed,
 In utter poverty we shall be rich and free.
 Of what use then will be paradise and houris?
 For no alien can find entrance to that mystic room.

I know not what will happen after
 I have seen this vision and imbibed this cup,

But after all intoxication comes headache,
Anguish drowns my soul remembering this!

PART 8. REASON AND FREE-WILL

REASON

LET reason go. For his light
 Burns reason up from head to foot.
 If you wish to see that Face,
 Seek another eye. The philosopher
 With his two eyes sees double,
 So is unable to see the unity of the Truth.
 As his light burns up the angels,
 Even so doth it consume reason.
 As the light of our eyes to the sun,
 So is the light of reason to the Light of Lights.

KNOWLEDGE

LEARNING is only the outer wrapping
 Of the letter;
 The dry husk that covers the nut,
 Not the kernel concealed within;
 Yet must the husk exist
 To ripen the kernel.
 So from learning comes the sweet knowledge of Faith.

Oh! soul of my brother, hearken,
 Strive to gain knowledge of faith,
 For the "knower" in both worlds
 Has a high place.
 Knowledge loves not this world of form
 Which is void of Reality.

Begin to till your field
 For next year's harvest.
 Knowledge is your heritage,
 Be adorned with the principle of all virtues.

THE BLINDNESS OF REASON

As the man blind from his birth
 Believes not nor understands
 Your description of colours,
 Even if you show him proofs for a century,
 So blind reason cannot see the future state.

But beyond reason man has a certain knowledge
 Which God has placed in his soul and body
 Whereby he perceives hidden mysteries.
 And like the fire in flint and steel
 When these are struck together,
 The two worlds for him are lit up in a flash.

FREE-WILL

You say, "I myself have Free-will,
 For my body is the horse and my soul the rider,
 The reins of the body are in the hands of the soul,
 The entire direction is given to me."

Oh! foolish one, these are falsehoods and delusions
 That come from an illusory existence.

As your essence is nothingness,
 How can you have Free-will?
 Seeing that your being is one with not-being,
 Whence comes this Free-will of yours?

Imagination distributes actions
 As in a play or a farce,

For when your actions were planned,
 Before your existence,
 You were created for a certain purpose,
 By the desire of the Truth.
 Therefore is man predestined, before his existence,
 To certain appointed work.
 . . . (Oh, wondrous ways of Thine, without how or why!)

The honour of man consists of slavery,
 In having no share of Free-will.

Of himself man has nothing,
Yet of good and evil God asks him,
Man has no choice, he is under control.
Oh! poor soul, he seems free, yet is a slave.

Give yourself up to the Truth,
For you are helpless in his grasp;
Freedom from self you will find in the All,
And, O Dervish! in the Truth you will find riches.

PART 9. MAN: HIS CAPABILITIES AND HIS DESTINY

TO THE SŪFĪS

You are bound by a chord
 To the soul of the creatures before you,
 Therefore they are subject to your dominion,
 And the soul of each is hidden in you.
 In the midst of the world you are the kernel,
 The centre of the world.
 . . . The world of reason and mind is your fortune,
 Earth and heavens your garments.
 . . Your natural powers are ten thousand
 Transcending limits and reckonings.

"I" AND "YOU"

"I" AND "you" are but the lattices,
 In the niches of a lamp,
 Through which the One Light shines.

"I" and "you" are the veil
 Between heaven and earth;
 Lift this veil and you will see
 No longer the bond of sects and creeds.
 When "I" and "you" do not exist,
 What is mosque, what is synagogue?
 What is the Temple of Fire?

REFLECTED FORMS OF HABIT

REPEAT an action several times
 And you master it;
 Habit makes dispositions
 As fruits become ripe by time.
 By practice man learns a trade,
 By habit he collects his thoughts.

Remember at the last day
 All your habits and actions
 Will be clearly seen,
 For the garment of the body
 Will be stripped. And the form left
 Will reflect your vices and virtues,
 As objects are reflected in pure water.

Again, your dispositions will be embodied,
 Made manifest as lights and fires;
 For all phenomenal limitations will be removed.
 You who are pure from earthly form,
 Illumined by the Truth,
 Will appear all heart,
 From your stainless love.
 Then will you be possessed by intoxication,
 Scattering in confusion the two worlds.

THE LOWEST NECESSARY

IF there were no sweepers in the world
 The world would be buried in dust.

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

To become a faithful servant,
 Cultivate faith and sincerity,
 Renew your belief every instant
 While unbelief dwells in your heart.

Abandon the wish to be seen of men,
 Cast off the blue-patched robe
 Of the dervish
 And bind on the Magian girdle.

Be a believer, be a believer, be a believer!

"FAR" AND "NEAR"

IF He sheds His Light on you,
 You become near to Him
 And far from your own existence.

For by nearness to Him
You become far from yourself.

What profit is there to you
In your non-existent existence?

THE SAGE

VIRTUE and equity,
Courage and temperance,
Are the four qualities of the sage.

He is not over-cunning or a fool,
His appetites are under control,
From cringing and boasting he is free,
And from foolhardiness and cowardice.

All virtues lie between
Excess and defect,
A narrow path betwixt
Hell's bottomless abyss,
Fine and sharp as a sword blade,
Which permits no lingering
Or turning round.

Equipose is the summit of perfection,
Becoming like a simple essence.

As the rays of the sun
Shine upon the earth,
So the Light from the Spirit World
Shines brightly on him
Who has attained this equilibrium.

THE PROPHET AND THE SAINT

THE prophet, resplendent in his perfection,
Is as the sun's bright light,
And the saint, concealing his saintship,
Is as the subdued light of the moon.
By fellowship, the saint
Is intimate with the prophet,

And finding entrance to that secret chamber,
He loves and is beloved by the Truth.

THE FIRST AND THE LAST

THE two worlds produced the soul of Adam,
Which, though first in thought, was created last.

In man's self is disclosed the final cause,
For there is none beyond him.

O first, who are also the substance of the last!
O hidden, who are also the essence of the manifest!
You, who day and night are wondering about yourself,
Think of self no more,
For the end of such thought is confusion.

ANNIHILATION OF PHENOMENA

THE heavens and the stars
At the appointed time will disappear.
A wave will strike the earth,
And lo! it vanishes.

Only the Truth will remain Unchangeable.

And you at that moment,
Passing from this dream-life,
With self discarded,
Will be one with the Beloved.

Oh! Master, ponder on your coming and your going,
And the thousand existences that lie before you!

THE WRITTEN FAITH

READ the writing on your heart,
And you will understand whatever you desire,
For on the day he kneaded the clay,
He wrote on your heart, by grace, the faith.

THE PERFECT MAN

IN spite of his inheritance,
The perfect man is a slave
And does the work of a slave.
The law is his outer garment,
Though his inner is the mystic path.
He is famed for knowledge and devotion,
But he is far from all these,
For he is absorbed in the contemplation of the One.
. . . When his pilgrimage is over
He receives the crown of Khalifate.

PART 10. THE ONE

THE NAME

EACH creature has its being
 From the One Name,
 From which it comes forth,
 And to which it returns,
 With praises unending.

THE BELOVED GUEST

CAST away your existence entirely,
 For it is nought but weeds and refuse,
 Go, clear out your heart's chamber,
 Arrange it as the abiding-place of the Beloved.
 When you go forth, He will come in,
 And to you, with self discarded,
 He will unveil His beauty.

THE SHADOWLESS

ON the narrow path of Truth,
 On the Meridian line, He stands upright,
 Throwing no shadow before or behind Him,
 To the right hand or the left.

East and west is His Kibla cast,
 Drowned in a blaze of radiant light.

Hail, O Light of God, O Shadowless Divinity!

THE UNKNOWABLE

PONDER on God's mercies,
 But not on His essence.
 For His works come forth from His essence,
 Not His essence from His works.
 His light shines on the whole universe,
 Yet He Himself is hidden from the universe.

THE BOOK OF GOD

THE universe is God's book,
 And he to whom the vision of the Divine
 Has been vouchsafed
 Reads therein and understands.
 Substance is its consonants and accidents its vowels,
 And different creatures are its signs and pauses.
 The first verse is "Universal Reason,"
 The second "Universal Soul," the "verse of light,"
 And this is as a brightly shining lamp.
 The third is the "Highest heavens,
 The fourth "The Throne."
 After there are seven transcendent spheres,
 The "chapter of the seven limbs,"
 And forms of the four elements,
 Then Nature's three kingdoms
 Whose verses none can count.
 And last of all came down the soul of man.

THE UNCHANGING LIGHT

You fancy this world is permanent of itself
 And endures because of its own nature,
 But really it is a ray of light from the Truth
 And within it the Truth is concealed.

And this light alters not nor varies
 And is void of change or degree.
 If the sun tarried always in one spot,
 And ever shone in the same degree,
 None would know that the light comes from him.

FUTURE REWARD

PONDER here and now on His qualities,
 That you may behold Him Himself to-morrow.

PART 11. THE SELF

THE GAMBLE OF THE SELF

REAL prayer can only be yours
When you have staked and gambled yourself away
And your essence is pure.
Then "a joy of the eyes" are your prayers
And no separation remains,
For knower and known are one and the same.

TRANSCEND SELF

RISE above time and space,
Pass by the world, and be to yourself your own world.

SELFLESSNESS

IN the empty heart, void of self
Can be heard the echoing cry,
"I am the Truth."
Thus is man one with the Eternal,
Travelling, travel and traveller have become one.

PART 12. IDOLS, GIRDLES, AND CHRISTIANITY

ARE you still turning to great and small?
 Pondering on religion and piety,
 Teachership and discipleship?
 Which mean hypocrisy and bondage.
 Then idols and girdles
 And Christianity are still yours.

IDOLS

THE idol's real being is not vain
 Because God created it,
 And all things from Him are good.
 Being is pure good, if it contains evil
 That comes from "other."
 Truth is idol-worship,
 If the Mussulman only knew;

But he sees in idols
 Only the visible creature,
 Not the Truth hidden in the idol.
 Idol-worship is unification,
 Since all things are the symbols of Being.

By counting beads, repeating prayers,
 And reading the Koran,
 The heathen becomes not a Mussulman.
 The man to whom true infidelity becomes revealed
 With pretended faith becomes disgusted.

Within every body a soul is hidden,
 And true faith conceals infidelity.

Who adorned the face of the idol
 With such beauty?
 And who becomes an idol-worshipper
 Unless God wills it?

In all things
See but One, say One, know One,

THE GIRDLE

THE mark of service
Is the knotted girdle.
So gird your loins, like a valiant man
With manliness.
Cast aside vain tales,
And mystic states and visions;
Dream not of lights,
Of marvels, of miracles,
For your miracles are contained
In worshipping the Truth;
All else is pride, conceit,
And illusion of existence.

CHRISTIANITY

I SEE the desire of Christianity
Is purification from self,
And liberty from bondage.

There is a sanctuary of the soul,
The blessed portal of unity,
The nest of the Eternal.
God's Spirit (Jesus),
Who proceeds from the blessed Spirit,
Taught this doctrine.

In you is placed a soul,
Which is a sample of this blessed Spirit.
Find release from humanity's carnal desire
And you will enter the Divine Life.
And he who is pure as the angels are
Will be carried up to the fourth heaven.

THE MOSQUE AND THE CLOISTER

IF "other" and "others" are before your eyes,
Then a mosque is no better
Than a Christian cloister;
But when the garment of "other" is cast off by you,
The cloister becomes a mosque.

Or, like His curl, I am waving;
Sometimes, alas! from habit or nature,
I am lying on a dust heap.
Sometimes, at a glance from Him,
I am back in the Rose Garden.

EPILOGUE

THIS bouquet of scented blossoms
I have plucked from that garden,
And have called it "The Secret Rose Garden."
In it are blooming
Roses of the mysteries of the heart
Untold before;
In it the tongues of the lilies are all singing,
And the eyes of the narcissus behold all, far and near.
Gaze on each one of these with your heart's eyes
Till your doubts melt away.
You will see tradition, earthly and mystical truths,
All arranged clearly in knowledge of detail.
Do not seek with cold eyes to find blemishes,
Or the roses will turn to thorns as you gaze.
Ingratitude is a sign of ignorance,
For those who know the truth are thankful.
When you remember me, breathe "Mercy be upon him."
I am ending with my own name,
"O Allah, grant me a 'Lauded' end."⁷

⁷ I.e. Mahmud.