



# Caravan of the Message

Winter/Spring 2008

## Translating Poetry without a License

By Amir O'Loughlin

It is natural to not want to question translations. When we pick up, for example, the best-selling poet in the English language (the Persian mystic/poet we call "Rumi"), we want to *believe* that we're reading Rumi. When we pick up the Bible, or the *Bhagavad Gita*, we want to believe that we are holding the 'real thing'. It is natural to be somewhat in denial that everything we read which originated in another language is filtered at least once across ("trans") a secondary author's mind to make it to English. In many cases, we are actually taking in translations of translations.

Overcoming our denial of this question, however, can lead one on an invigorating search towards authenticity, truth, and depth. In the following paragraphs, I would like to share something of my own halting steps into what is becoming a profoundly rich area of interest for me. When we begin to question translation, we do not merely open up an academic question of accuracy and scholarship. The student of translation must make a study of *consciousness* and relate that to one's understanding of the very being of the original author. The Sufis call this contemplation '*tassawuri*', such as '*tassawuri-sheikh*', identifying and absorbing oneself in the being and consciousness of the teacher.

Of course, it is nearly impossible to avoid a projection of self. One might argue that even reading material in the original language lends itself to a 'translation'



Rumi.

through the reader's own consciousness.

There is, in fact, very little that is truly original in this world... To play Bach, even on a period instrument such as the clavichord, is not original but rather a translation. For the original you would have to travel back in time and listen to the master himself play. Likewise, when someone tells you a story they have heard somewhere else, you are listening to a translation and when you go on to retell the tale there will be *ipso facto* a new translation. If one looks at images from a camera, it portrays something after it's been filtered through a digital

or film impression and presented in one of an infinite variety of image configurations — all translations of the reality at which the camera was pointed.

Even something as seemingly direct and original as telling someone about a feeling you are having at that moment (e.g. "I feel lonely") can only attempt to translate a visceral, sensorial experience into the symbols that we call *words*.

If one continues to reflect on this, it becomes apparent that our lives are surrounded and imbued by images, sounds, ideas, and all manner of information which have been removed from the original entity or experience by at least one degree. Usually, it's *many* degrees of separation. When the opposite is contemplated, i.e. those experiences that are direct and untranslated moments of life, we can perceive the effect of 'direct contact' — sitting in nature immersed in one's surroundings; the embrace with a friend; striking the strings of the instrument. This direct experience of Reality is the very foundation of the mystic's attention. It is the unmediated, unadulterated communion with God in both its imminent and transcendent states towards which the mystic travels and yearns to find.

There is a dialectic to be considered, however. In art, for example, one finds a counter-proposal to the above thesis. The artist (not only visual arts but also the poet and musician etc.) would maintain that through the use of symbol

*continued on page 3*

*"Burning words rise from a flaming heart."  
Hz. Inayat Khan*

# Schedule of Events:

## January - June 2008



This winter and spring we continue our ongoing programs of Thursday night classes, Dances/Zikrs of Universal Peace and Universal Kirtan. As always, there can be some changes in the schedule from time to time, which we will give you e-mail notification about if you are on the "Caravan Update" e-list.

**\*\*\*Please keep a copy of the calendar handy for your reference.** If you don't get our e-mail updates yet and would like to, please notify us at peterchloe@shaw.ca. If you are ever unsure of a location or time, don't hesitate to call us 604-874-5323 or 604-877-0022. All of our events are open to all, with the exception of the "Mureeds' mini-retreat" mornings which are for Sufi Order initiates only. If you are interested in finding out more about initiation in the Sufi Order International, please speak with Amir.

Amir's Thursday evening series ("The Soul's Journey") continues, this winter and spring beginning to focus more on the death of the body and afterlife. Zainab has entitled her series "The Purpose of Life", drawing from Hazrat Inayat Khan's teachings on the unique purpose of each of our souls and the paths we take to arrive at our purpose. Subhan continues his monthly class series on "Awakening".

Our Thursday classes are always free of charge. We appreciate any donations, which help us sustain our local work and that of the Sufi Order International. A small admission is charged for The Dances of Universal Peace and Universal Kirtan evenings, as these events are used to raise money for Seva and The Chi-Ki Children's Foundation, two charities which our centre supports.

### Our Programs

**Thursday Evening Gatherings:** the teachings of Hazrat Inayat Khan and others illuminate spiritual practices of meditation, music, prayer, and spiritual psychology. Amir, Zainab & Subhan will give classes on the themes described

above. Thursday evenings are always at Amir & Chloë's (see Locations).

**Chishti-Inayati Zikr:** the practice of 'Remembrance' through sound, music, poetry & prayer from our tradition. Also at Amir & Chloë's.

**Universal Kirtan:** Evenings of beautiful music, chants and songs of ecstasy, devotion, and peace from the world's many traditions. Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup>, almost always the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday (\*\*note exception in April, when it is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday), January to June.

**Dances and Zikr of Universal Peace:** Dances and music invoking the universal spiritual ideals found in all religions and paths. This winter, Amir will alternate traditional Dances of Universal Peace evenings with "Zikr Dances"...by popular demand! Quaker Hall — 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month, January to May.

**All events start at 8:00 pm except where noted. Please try to be on time. All events are at Amir & Chloë's, unless otherwise indicated:**

### January

- 03 – Chishti-Inayati Zikr
- 05 – Universal Kirtan
- 10 – \*\*\*Universal Worship Memorial Service
- 17 – Awakening
- 18 – Dances/Zikr of Universal Peace (Quaker Hall)
- 24 – The Soul's Journey
- 31 – The Soul's Journey

### February

- 02 – Universal Kirtan (Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup>)
- 05 – \*\*\*Urs of Hazrat Inayat Khan, special event
- 07 – Awakening
- 14 – The Purpose of Life
- 15 – Dances/Zikr of Universal Peace (Quaker Hall)
- 21 – The Soul's Journey
- 23 – Mureed's Mini-Retreat (9–11:30)
- 28 – The Purpose of Life

### March

- 01 – Universal Kirtan (Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup>)
- 06 – The Soul's Journey
- 13 – Chisti-Inayati Zikr
- 20 – The Purpose of Life
- 21 – Dances/Zikr of Universal Peace (Quaker Hall)
- 27 – Awakening

### April

- 03 – The Purpose of Life
- 10 – Chisti-Inayati Zikr
- 12 – Universal Kirtan (Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup>)
- 17 – Awakening
- 18 – Dances/Zikr of Universal Peace (Quaker Hall)
- 24 – The Soul's Journey

### May

- 01 – The Purpose of Life
- 03 – Universal Kirtan (Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup>)
- 08 – Chisti-Inayati Zikr (Amir & Chloë)
- 15 – Awakening
- 16 – Dances/Zikr of Universal Peace (Quaker Hall)
- (\*\*\*last dance of the season)
- 22 – The Soul's Journey
- 29 – The Purpose of Life

### June

- 05 – The Soul's Journey
- 07 – Universal Kirtan (Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup>)
- 12 – The Soul's Journey
- 19 – Awakening
- 26 – The Purpose of Life
- 28 – Mureed's Mini-Retreat (9–11:30)

**July & August: Summer Break**

### Locations

**Amir & Chloë: 4464 James Street (2 blocks west of Main St. between 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>) 604-874-5323**

**Quaker Hall: 1090 West 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue (just west of Oak St.)**

**Yoga on 7<sup>th</sup> (Universal Kirtan): 156 East 7<sup>th</sup> (just west of Main Street), entrance on the side.**



## Caravan of the Message

The Caravan of the Message is a centre of the Sufi Order International ([www.sufiorder.org](http://www.sufiorder.org)). For information about our activities contact:

Amir O'Loughlin at 604-874-5323, email: [peterchloe@shaw.ca](mailto:peterchloe@shaw.ca), or Zainab Paula Ford at 604-877-0022, email: [paula@seva.ca](mailto:paula@seva.ca), or visit our website: [www.sufiordervancouver.org](http://www.sufiordervancouver.org)

The Caravan of the Message Sufi Centre would like to thank the following people for their time, talent and efforts in creating this newsletter:

*Editor:* Amir O'Loughlin  
*Design & Layout:* Safi Pijanka  
*Contributors:* Amir O'Loughlin, Chloë O'Loughlin, Mara Baudais, Catherine Crystal Southwood, Harreson Sito.

Please keep us updated with your current e-mail address. We are now publishing the Newsletter solely in electronic form, with apologies to those who don't have computers. We will print a limited number and have them available at some of our events.

Contributions (either content for our Newsletter or financial contributions) to the Caravan of the Message Sufi Centre are greatly appreciated! You can send cheques or relevant articles/poems/photos to:

Caravan of the Message  
4464 James Street  
Vancouver BC  
V5V 3J1



### Translating Poetry from page 1

and archetype, art does not reduce the experience of Reality but rather *opens* it up to be experienced even more fully and multidimensionally than the concrete unsymbolized moment itself.

The dreams that each of us generate while we sleep is a kind of effortless 'art' in this sense. While some dreams are perhaps fairly superficial translations of experiences we've had in our waking lives, there are others which bring that fourth dimension of understanding to three-dimensional form which the artist seeks to convey through symbolic art:

*A dream may be symbolical, and this is the most interesting type of dream. The greater the person, the subtler the symbolism of his dream will be. When someone is gross the symbolism will be gross. The more evolved the person is, the more fine, artistic, and subtle the dream will be. For instance, for a poet there will be poetic symbols; and the dream of a musician will have musical symbols; in the dream of the artist there will be symbols of art.*  
(Hazrat Inayat Khan)

The artist is perhaps always teetering on a thin fence rail — to one side she or he may drop into the muck of reductionist representation which, though striving to bring beauty through creation, only brings a flattening of reality and a cloak of limitation. But on the other side, she or he may land in that world of limitless consciousness which conveys not only one real original thing but a *super-reality* through enlightened use of symbol and archetype. In this place, the poet can use the word 'love' (Persian: *eshgh*) and the reader experiences every level of love in that one moment of the poem, the physical, the emotional, the spiritual, the transcendent.

*A poet was once reading a very deep poem, a symbolical poem, written by a friend of his. And when he saw his friend he said, 'What a wonderful poem! I was so impressed by its symbology. Will you explain to me what you meant by this line?' And the poet looked at him and said, 'Really, I cannot tell myself what it means.'*

*When a poet writes mystical poetry, and he himself is unconscious of his mysticism, then his mind must be a machine. Indeed, an obsessed poet can do this; but then it is some other poet who composes and he is only the pen. The poet writes what his soul dictates, and he writes according to the evolution of his soul.*  
(Hazrat Inayat Khan)

## Culture cannot be translated, yet it must . . .

Culture is comprised of an infinite list of components, of variables to be understood and respected when 'tasting' from one of its myriad parts. This means the consideration of layers of cultural attributes found in language, music, race, tribal and ethnic variables, food, economies, gender relationships, myths, and both oral and written histories. Ultimately, we reach the razor's edge of a paradox: *Culture cannot be translated, yet it must...*



Dreams.

Culture *cannot* be translated, at least not accurately, because there is no immersion long or deep enough to imbue one's consciousness to the fullness matching those native to the culture. The nuances are too many and too subtle to be absorbed at will. On the other hand, culture *must* be translated, because we now live in a global village and the wished-for achievement of world peace and harmony will be realized only with deeper understanding of how the 'other' thinks, feels, worships, and loves.

*continued on page 5*

*"Beauty is the object which every soul pursues."  
Hz. Inayat Khan*

# Poetry

by Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan

*Editor's note: The following excerpt from the Sufi Message volumes of Hazrat Inayat Khan is taken from a series of talks called "Art, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" (Sufi Message, Volume 10).*

**T**he poet was born first and poetry came afterwards; poetry was born in the spirit of the poet. It is said in the East that as one can already see in the cradle what features the child will have later, so one can recognize a poet before he learns to speak. And poetry came before language, for it is the poetic spirit in man that made language. Thus, the poet is not the son of language, but its father; instead of only taking words, he makes them. If it had not been for the poet, the language of all races would only have been shouting and howling. In all the different aspects of life, we can recognize the signs of inspiration most fully in the poet; and there is no doubt great truth in the saying that the poet is a prophet, though it would be still better to say that the prophet is a poet.

Poetry is the best art there is, for besides everything else it is also drawing or painting with words. The mission of poetry is the same as the mission of the other forms of art. Poetry is a living picture, a picture that says more than a painting on canvas; and its mission is to inspire. Poetry comes to a poet through the suffering caused by disappointment; but any pain or suffering is a preparation. Just as in order to be able to play on a violin, the violin must first be tuned, so the heart must be tuned in order to express wisdom. The heart is tuned by suffering, and when the heart has suffered enough pain, then poetry comes. The natural birth of poetry takes place on the day when the doors of the heart are opened. Poetry comes from the heart quality; it is an expression of the love nature.

There is an example in the Sanskrit language of what has been said above, that poetry comes before learning. In Sanskrit many everyday words rhyme. Mother and father rhyme: *matr* and *patr*. Also brother and friend rhyme: *bitra* and *mitra*. And if one goes through the *Kosha*, which is the Sanskrit dictionary,

one will find that all the words which are related to one another in some way rhyme. This shows that for the ancient people, poetry was the everyday language. In other words, their everyday language was poetry.

There is a Sanskrit saying which is perhaps an exaggeration, but it is significant: that a man without any interest in music and poetry is like an animal without a tail. If we wish to compare music with poetry, we can only say that poetry is the surface, and music is the depth, of one and the same thing. As with mind and

heart — the surface is the mind and the depth is the heart — so it is with poetry and music. The ancient poets were not only poets, but also singers. They composed poetry and they sang, and the perfection of the soul could be seen in these two faculties: the faculty of poetry, and at the same time its expression in the form of music. Those who separate music from poetry are the same as those who separate religion from

life; they are interested in separating everything.

There are superstitions that when a certain bird makes a sound it is a warning of coming death; this superstition exists in many different countries. It means that the sound this bird makes creates a destructive rhythm, and whenever that sound is heard it causes a destructive vibration. It is the same with poetry; the arrangement of words, syllables, and letters all have an effect. When the wind blows from the North, the South, the East, or the West; when it blows straight, slanting, zigzag, upward, or downward; it can cause different conditions in the atmosphere. It may bring the germs of a plague, it may culminate in a storm, it may create heat or cold, it may change the season, or it may cause destruction, good health, cheerfulness, or depression among people. And when by his breath, which can be likened to the wind that blows in the world, the voice of



Pir O'Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan.

*"The wise say in one word what the foolish cannot explain in a thousand words."*

*Hz. Inayat Khan*

a singer pronounces a certain letter, then that breath has to take a certain direction. Either it goes upward or downward, to the right or to the left, straight or zigzag; and in accordance with this direction, it has an influence upon a man's life.

One might think that if breath has such an influence on man's life, it is only for himself, whereas the influence of the wind is for the whole country, perhaps for the whole world; but man is more powerful than the world, though he may not realize it. The ancient people used to say that one man can save the world and the thought of one man can cause a ship to sink. If one wicked thought can cause a ship to sink, what a great power man has! The reason is that the wind is not so directly connected with the divine spirit as is the breath of man, and therefore man's breath is more powerful than the wind. Modern psychology supports the idea that the meaning of every word acts upon our life and has an influence on the lives of other people. Poetry can thus be considered to be a psychological creation, something with psychological power, either for good or for ill.

What was most remarkable about the poets of the Sanskrit age was that all their lives they practiced diction, the right pronunciation of every syllable and sound. Everything had to be in rhythm; in addition, it had to be of the right tone and it had to set up the right vibrations. And the most learned men, not only among poets but among doctors and others, spent half an hour or longer every day in practicing and pronouncing different syllables and words, so that they could speak with greater fluency. Just as a singer today practices pronouncing every word clearly, so did the poets of that time, because they believed in the influence of sound – how it is produced, and what effect it has.

The *Vedas*, which are supposed to have come from the divine source, are all in verse, as are the *Puranas* and other sacred scriptures of ancient times. This shows that when the divine mind wished to express itself, it did not do so crudely; it always expressed itself in a fully poetic, rhythmic, and lyrical form. So often we meet people who proudly and boldly say, 'I speak the truth. I do not care whether anybody likes it or not. I have the courage to tell the truth no matter if it

hurts or kills.' But they do not know what truth means; they do not know that truth comes in the form of poetry, of music, of delicacy and fineness.

After the Sanskrit age came the Prakrit age. Poetry became more human, and not as philosophical and scientific as in the Sanskrit age. At this time, the poet began to conceive in his mind different pictures of human nature and character; this was called *Rasa Shastra*, the science of human nature. In writing lyrics, they distinguished between three aspects of love, and they classified the female and male natures in four different aspects.

It has always been the poet's natural inclination to set the feminine aspect of life and of nature on a high pedestal. It is this that inspires the poet to give a beautiful form to all that he creates. Thus, poets of great repute in all ages have always been attracted by the moon. They have not written so many lyrics about the sun, as they had more appreciation for the feminine aspect of creation. For the same reason, the crescent was the sign of the Prophet; for if a prophet were not responsive to God as the crescent moon is to the sun, illumination would not come to him. It is through his response to the voice of God that a prophet receives or conceives in his spirit the message that he then gives to humanity.

Kings at all times have been very much interested in knowledge and learning. Their association with poets softened their character, and balanced their warlike tendencies, their roughness and crudeness. The poets helped the kings to look at life in a different way. It was the poetic inspiration of the emperor Shah Jahan that built the Taj Mahal. If it had not been for poetry, he would not have become such a great lover.

The one who reads poetry, the one who enjoys poetry, and the one who writes poetry must know that it is something which does not belong to this earth. Rather, it belongs to heaven. In whatever forms one shows one's appreciation and love for poetry, one really shows one's appreciation and love for the spirit of beauty.



### **Translating Poetry from page 3**

As well, culture *must* be translated because the knowledge of God is hidden in the heart of humanity's collective parts. By bringing one culture's wisdom to another via translation, we can gain a more complete *gnosis*. While it can be said that this process is like removing jewels from their settings, sometimes the settings (such as sexism or racial prejudice) blur rather than enhance the jewels of wisdom. These are times that there is more gained than lost by the deconstruction a translator commits when freeing core wisdom from certain cultural references, which if unedited make that very wisdom indigestible to the newcomer. Conversely, there are times when such editing merely achieves little more than an act of disrespect to the culture of the original. Knowing and judging the line between these two outcomes is an often subtle and precarious task for the translator.

Two spheres that scholars are especially involved with in the transformation from one language to another are poetry and scripture. Both areas have historically demanded not only translation in language but translation in time, i.e. updating language and sometimes reinterpreting meaning (for either good or bad) into that which is harmonious with the present time.

This extends to intra-language translation, as in the work of the many translators who strive to refresh the English language of times past with the current English vernacular. An example of this that is close to home for those of us in the Sufi Order International is the sometimes controversial modifications that many of us make when quoting or reading aloud the words of Hazrat Inayat Khan, a man of his time (early 20th century), utilized a somewhat Victorian and patriarchal English. When I read his works aloud, I do my best to make gender-neutral references to God, as well as the spiritual seeker — a language and cultural translation. Here, as everywhere with translation, one walks gingerly on thin ice in an effort to make the master's message palatable to the ear of today's listeners without in any way compromising it.

I recall a moment in the midst of a retreat with Pir Vilayat Khan when he

*“Insight into life is the real religion, which alone can help us to understand life.”*

*Hz. Inayat Khan*

### Translating Poetry from page 5

consulted with all those present, in the atmosphere of meditation, on adapting the parts of the prayers of Hazrat Inayat Khan to the modern gender equivalent idiom. The conversation was held with the conscious awareness of his father's admonition to not change his words. Nonetheless, Pir Vilayat's inspiration followed the prerogative that for every rule there is an exception, and that absolutes can become calcifying dogma. The prayers of our Order were thus altered to reflect the feminist principles to which Hazrat Inayat Khan himself subscribed and taught.

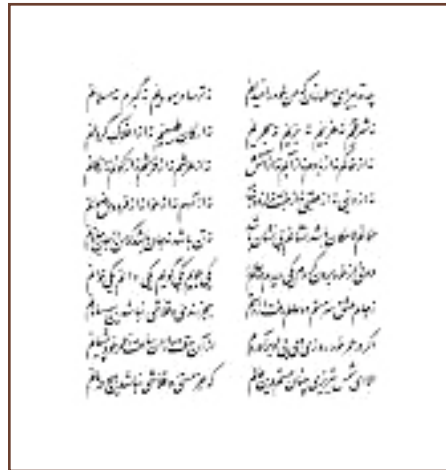
To further examine the questions and challenges of translation in as both a cultural and literary challenge in poetry, I would like to share my personal reflections and then present as an example a small excerpt from Rumi's.

### My Journeys Through Bookland . . .

Born in Canada as a Christian, English-speaking male, I have found myself wandering on roads far from home. These travels were mostly inconceivable and impossible for my ancestors, for unlike them I live in a time of air travel, of global media, of 'world music', of mass multi-directional immigration, etc. My first travels were in the imagination of a child, pouring through my grandparents' many-volume set of *Journeys Through Bookland* — fairy tales, adventure stories, nursery poems, mythical images from the corners of the globe. Cross-cultural journeys have blessed my whole life, and enabled me to experience and present, in my small way as a teacher and musician, the melding of East and West as they flow through my personality and soul.

One of the most exciting journeys I've been on in recent years is that of the poetry of the Persian mystics, such as Rumi, Hafez and Sa'adi. The deeper one travels into this world of mystical poetry, the more one concerns oneself with the issue of translation, because it is natural to want to get close to 'the real thing.' At this point in my exploration of Persian poetry, it is not enough to just be given the spirit of a poet through inexact and excessively liberal English interpretation,

nor is it enough to be given a literal, bookish rendition. Rather, I have become fairly demanding of the translator, enjoying only those translations which fulfill three essential criteria: 1) that they respect the beauty and meaning of the poem's original incarnation, the poetry's 'letter and spirit', 2) that they convey something of the music and personality of the poet's use of language, and 3) that they be good English language poetry...



Rumi Script

This is asking a great deal, especially when one is contriving versions of poetry from a language which is so structurally different than English, as Farsi (Persian) is, both in terms of sentence structure and poetic style. But translators of the saints of poetry such as Rumi and Hafez should at the very least sign on to the principle that poems held sacred by Persians oblige one to treat each word, each line, with the greatest of respect. Farsi-speaking readers are often horrified to read their beloved *Molavi* (Rumi) in translations which mostly lose the meaning of the original, or worse, substitute the translator's own wishful thinking about what Rumi 'should' have said (which is often the case with Barks' settings). Hafez, a poet whose volumes are cherished in almost every Persian household and which are used I-Ching-like for divination, has especially been distorted and disrespected by feeble and frankly dishonest 'translations'. The best-selling English versions of 'Hafez' currently are by the poet Daniel Ladinsky, which in this writer's opinion are more like whimsical creations with the name "Hafez" attached to them, not deserving to be

called translations or even mistranslations of the great Hafez. If Shakespeare, for example, were to be treated in the same way ("To be or not to be" could find itself being translated to "Should I live or should I just kill myself"), the literate Anglophone would be rightfully outraged.

### I want a heart that is torn open with longing . . .

In honour of 'The Year of Rumi', let us consider two couplets from the opening poem of his *Masnavi*, the renowned "Song of the Reed". Amongst the examples of translations found below, the reader will note a continuum between strict literal adherence and its antipodal relative, mystical interpretation.

The original classic Persian (or *Farsi* as it is more commonly known), transliterated into English, is:

*Seeneh khaham, sharhé sharhé az feragh*  
*Taw begooyàm, shar-hé dàrdé Eshteeagh*

*Har kassi koo douhrmawnd az asleh-khish*  
*Bahz jooyàd, rooz-é-gawreh Vaslé khish*

One can see in this tiny excerpt from the *Masnavi*, a four-volume masterpiece, the poetic devices which Rumi maintains through its more than 50,000 lines: metre or rhythm (specifically, the apocopated six-fold running metre consisting of two eleven-syllable half-lines), both internal and end-rhymes, and untranslatable word-play (the example here being the sound "*sharhé*" which, depending on emphasis and nuance of pronunciation means either "torn" or "explanation").

For the very studious amongst you, you can examine some fifteen settings of the "Song of the Reed" at <http://www.dar-al-masnavi.org/reedsong.html>. I have chosen some from that list as well as from other sources to compare and contrast.

Let us begin with the translation of R.A. Nicholson (1926), a scholarly though clearly dated version upon which

*"Beauty is the life of the artist, the theme of the poet, the soul of the musician."*  
*H.z. Inayat Khan*

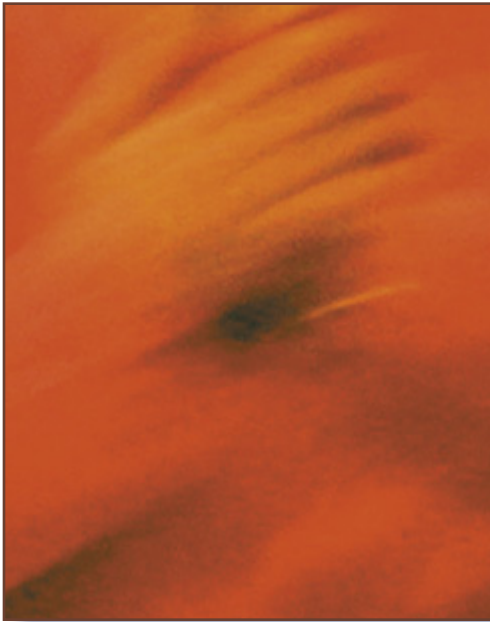


Photo by Chloë O'Loughlin.

many twice- and thrice- (and more-) removed 'translators' base their own English versions. This might have been the version that Robert Bly handed to Coleman Barks many years ago and supposedly said: "Someone needs to breathe new life into these"...

*I want a bosom torn by severance,  
that I may unfold (to such a one) the  
pain of love-desire.*

*Every one who is left far from his  
source  
wishes back the time when he was  
united with it.*

Compare this rendition with several of its newer cousins.

Kabir Helminski gives us a fairly literal free verse interpretation, which lands much closer to the Persian than Nicholson's:

*I want a heart that is torn open with  
longing  
So that I might share the pain of this  
love.  
Whoever has been parted from his  
source  
Longs to return to that state of union.*

Alan Williams, currently a favourite of mine, also has great reverence for the exact text of Rumi's original poetry.

His *Masnavi* translation, while in free verse, utilizes rhythm in a way very akin to the Persian:

*I need the breast that's torn to shreds  
by parting  
To give expression to the pain of  
heartache.  
Whoever finds himself left far from  
home  
Looks forward to the day of his  
reunion.*

Coleman Barks, the famous creator of some of the most liberal and some might say 'remote' renditions of Rumi, presents these lines like this:

*Anyone apart from someone he loves  
understands what I say.  
Anyone pulled from a source  
Longs to go back.*

Bulent Rauf, supposedly working from Nicholson but clearly projecting his own wishfulness on the text and losing altogether its meaning:

*The secret of my song, though near,  
None can see, none can hear.  
Oh, for a friend to know the sign  
And mingle all his soul with mine.*

Franklin D. Lewis, a very respected biographer of Rumi, is perhaps not as gifted a translator as he is a scholar, as can be seen in his somewhat befuddled version:

*I like to keep my breast carved with  
loss  
to convey the pain of longing —  
Once severed from the root  
thirst for union with the source endures*


Jawid Mojaddedi, like myself, treasures the rhyme form of Rumi's *Masnavi*. However his attempt to translate the entire *Masnavi* into English rhyme and metre proves in my opinion to be an excessively ambitious act of poetic daring-do, and his settings ultimately sound like they're from the pen of a very fatigued translator who is overly bound by his commitment to the rhyme — at the expense of textual accuracy and poetic beauty:

*A breast which separation's split in two  
Is what I seek, to share this pain with  
you  
When kept from their true origin, all  
yearn  
For union on the day they can return*

Finally, I offer my own rhyming gender-neutral translation of these couplets, direct from the Farsi (Persian language) with the assistance of Mahroo:

*May my heart with longing tear;  
Then the tale of Love I'll share...*

*Those who have been parted from the  
state of Union  
Long for the returning day of the soul's  
reunion...*

**Shahabuddin Less** is a senior teacher in the Sufi Order International who will be giving a four-day seminar in Seattle March 27–30. Shahabuddin's approach to the spiritual path is a beautiful balance of inner work, humour, engagement in social activism (he is very involved in interspiritual work in the Middle East) and health. Details about his seminar will be available soon. Contact Amir at 604–874–5323 or Paula at 604–877–0022.

*"The beauty which modesty covers, art gently uncovers."  
Hz. Inayat Khan*



## *Treading Water (for Mum)*

By Chloe O'Loughlin

My mother is on the bus.  
I am singing.  
It is a soft song  
accompanied by a feather beating.

She is going to the Lying-in Hospital  
for Women,  
my mother, on the bus.  
I am treading water  
waiting for her to meet me.

Then I am soaring fast  
through a shimmer —  
golden sunlight pouring  
through stained-glass windows.  
I am light. I am Nur.

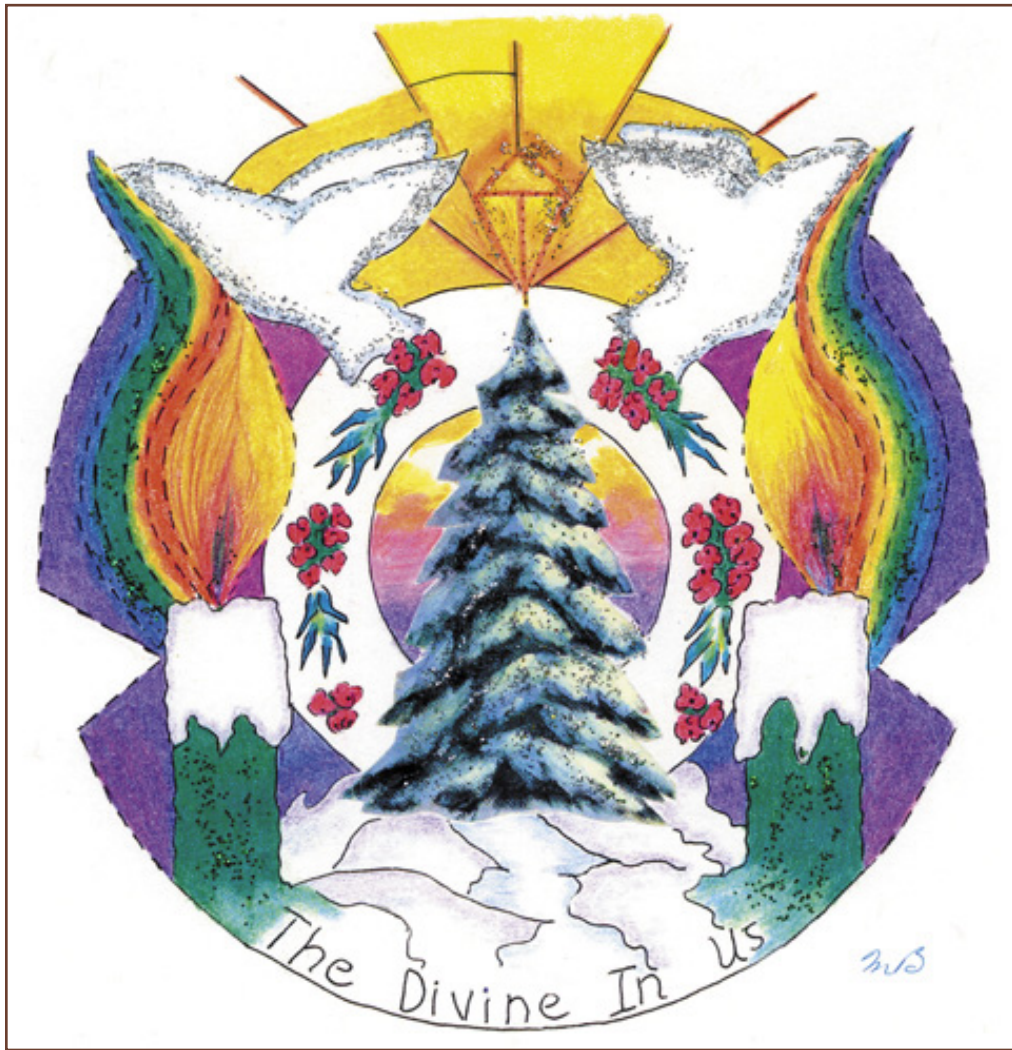
Music and words are ringing  
softness, gentleness, sanctuary

Then a soft breath blows  
me through a luminous gauze  
on my way to my mother,  
shimmering, radiant,  
cooing.

**Doris Clapham 1927-2007**

Photo by Amir O'Loughlin.

*"All beauty is veiled by nature, and the greater the beauty the more it is covered."  
Hz. Inayat Khan*



## The Divine In Us

By Mara Baudais

*Sacred Mandala Art based on an intense personal experience.*

*The universal shape of the mandala (the circle) to create order and clarity out of chaos and confusion. The mandala expresses wholeness.*



Raqib — turning. Photo by Harreson Sito.

## Turning and Turning and Turning

By Catherine Crystal Southwood

turning and turning and turning  
I see everywhere  
EXQUISITE PERFECTION  
pouring from everything



Raqib — respect. Photo by Harreson Sito.

*“A dancing soul shows its graceful movements in all its activities.”  
Hz. Inayat Khan*