

# Pilgrimage

## PILGRIMAGE

### I

When my feet tire of this world's ways,  
When the lights grow dim, when dust gathers  
In the air and the dance draws to a close,  
I hear the ancient calling in my soul  
And the beckoning of unknown horizons.

When the rose of morning hangs her head in shame,  
When her petals lie strewn in the dust  
And strange perfumes wash in on the gathering waves of night,  
I lay aside this gay dress, this gaudy attire  
And prepare my oblations to the unknown God.

And distant bells are tinkling in the gloom.  
Dear God, who now remembers the way to your door?  
Look: single tracks in the sand, away to a dim horizon;  
They go, and do not return.

When the darkness is complete, killing even  
The heart's faithful glow; when the voices and laughter  
And singing die into the desert howl  
And my own emptiness lies naked before me,  
I hear the voice of my soul  
And the ancient summons to pilgrimage.

II

And so we went out, with  
The waning of Summer and the first fruits.  
We were young: what had we to fear?  
(The way to God is paved with brick and mortar —  
Crushed bones of the lover watered with his tears.)  
The road was wide, and numbers our refuge,  
Our Beloved a smile of indulgence for the course  
We had already chosen while calling it his,  
A banner to which we flocked, a companion  
Of the bright days and the light of our songs:  
"Fearless Pilgrim, Friend of the roads,  
Answer to prayers and Bearer of loads."

We sang to a Beloved Whom we knew not, but was  
The accumulated sum of our many lights and loves  
To which we still paid obeisance; knew not, but fashioned  
After our own heart's desire, painted  
With the colors of melody, wrought  
And exacted to the measurements of our need.  
(While across the wide plains ranges the Lion,  
Ravager of cities, ruins and blood his food.)  
We sang to a Beloved Who was the Ocean of a tear,  
Whose overflow was the wine of our singing and our devotion.  
Drunken, we did not know  
Of the rose's thorn, that mountain passes  
And valleys of fire divided us from our love's consummation.  
(And dust, with winds howling down the narrow canyons.)  
And so — the naked days of wandering, homelessness,  
Nor flag nor friend, nor water hole,  
Nor the clear fountain of the heart: desert days;  
And the oblations, our own blood. And the pitiless Sun  
The God of our questing. Death in life: our heart  
Made desert, while the desert made green with our tears.

Death in Life; and pain our only joy. Who could know  
That the arrow of flame was His love-caress,  
That the brass-kettle sky was His Rain of Grace?

### III

Long are the days of wandering.  
Harsh winds across the empty places,  
Shifting sands cover the ancient ways.  
And swiftly the gathered treasures and empires  
Which one has envisioned crumble to dust or fade  
Into the darkness of dream or a haze of sunlight.  
Passing, passing is this world; but Thy Face remains.

Once I set out to win to my Beloved's door.  
In the early hours, when the first red fingers  
Of dawn steal across the sky's star-strewn treasury  
While dew-drops glitter in the grass like precious stones,  
The way seemed easy, and full of promise.  
But the north winds cold across the plains,  
While the summers are dry and rainless;  
And a far-wandering traveler has no resting place.  
And soon my lights began to fail me: and the years passed;  
And I was old, and weary. Once I sought  
To breathe again the freshness of the high places,  
To spring the water of life from the stone  
Of my own heart. But all my strivings  
Wrung but the two tears of pain and unfulfillment,  
While my eyes stung from the sweat of weeping.  
And the red fire of the westering sun set off in silhouette  
The crags and craters of my own lovelessness, while  
From the east a starless, dry dark night coming on.

And to bring roses from the desert? To draw  
Rain from a lead sky? For this,  
No work is sufficient: for it is by Grace.  
One needs Him; — not only as God,  
For God as God is too abstract, too formless  
For those lost in form's clutch and limitation.  
One needs a Friend, a Dear One, One  
Whom you can love more than your own soul

And for Whom the journey is done; One  
Whose smile is an Ocean of sweetness,  
Whose forehead is the wide sky of aspirations  
And whose seeing eyes are arrows into the heart.  
One needs Love and Grace

in the form of the Beloved One: Meher Baba.

But the winds are cruel in the cold midnight  
While the stony path is steep and unrelenting.  
Guard well the cherished whispers of the soul,  
Remember well the moonlit paths of Grace  
And the rose petal of the Beloved's smile,  
For this world cares not for love nor beauty  
Nor gentleness; its pounding waves  
Will drown the spirit and dash the soul  
On stone cliffs, its violent currents  
Will carry you far from the Beloved of your desire.  
Only in His Love  
Is there comfort; for His friendship  
Is truer than the loves of men.

Silent, tender have been the nights of separation;  
And now I wait for but one more boon, the fair dawn  
Of His coming, and the child of light stirring in my soul,  
When the heart will swim in sweetness,  
And the eye dissolve in tears before Love's Face  
Like in the storm's eye a Sun newly risen;  
When even the memory of tears will be lost,  
lost forever.

Long are the days of wandering,  
And red the tears of love.  
Passing, passing is this world, like clouds  
Before the white moon of Thy Face.  
But a single arrow, Beloved, or your eye  
To dispel this darkness in my soul . . .

While high above  
And motionless in their course, the ancient stars  
Silently shine the way Home.



#### IV

And so I am arrived, after a million years out-faring  
And the dust of countless lives, at Your Feet.  
There all roads and horizons converge; there all men  
Must wait — wait the turnings of the wheel and the endless night  
Of calling; wait the furnaces of tears, and breath  
Of sighs, and longing: Wait til the moment of Your Pleasure  
and the descent of Your Grace.

O Most Beloved! Precious One.

What roads have I traveled, not knowing you are everywhere?  
What desert treks, what fires, what deep descents — it  
Was my own heart's desolation I journeyed;  
What visions, what dreams, what winged flights —  
While you, Baba, Friend as well as Lord, and Goal  
Of my journeying, beside me every step of the way.  
And now, what have I to offer, all being your own?  
Nothing but the flower's morning smile of opening, or  
The drop's self-abandonment to the sea.

The earth in its waiting dreams of the seed, while  
The silence cries for a new day.  
My heart longs for your feet's touch, for the gentle kiss  
Of your eyes; for I know  
That you are the only hope for me,  
My Baba; and while the wide world and angels  
Sing hymns to the coming Glory, I  
Will wait silently for your entering in my soul  
With the gathered harvest of love and flowers, to pour  
At your white feet: that glorious Day  
When in your love my heart will be made shining.

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