PROLOGUE

When the world-illuming sun rushed
upon Night like a brigand,
My weeping bedewed the face of the rose.
My tears washed away sleep from the eye of the narcissus,
My passion wakened the grass and made it grow.
The Gardener taught me to sing with power,
He sowed a verse and reaped a sword.
In the soil he planted only the seed of my tears
And wove my lament with the garden, as warp and woof.
SECRETS OF THE SELF

'Tho' I am but a mote, the radiant sun
is mine:

Within my bosom are a hundred dawns.
My dust is brighter than Jamshíd's cup,\(^1\)
It knows things that are yet unborn in
the world.
My thought hunted down and slung
from the saddle a deer
That has not yet leaped forth from the
covert of non-existence.
Fair is my garden ere yet the leaves
are green:
Full-blown roses are hidden in the skirt
of my garment.
I struck dumb the musicians where
they were gathered together,
I smote the heartstrings of all that
heard me,
Because the lute of my genius hath a
rare melody:

Even to comrades my song is strange.

\(^1\) Jamshíd, one of the mythical Persian kings, is said
to have possessed a marvellous cup in which the whole
world was displayed to him.
I am born in the world as a new sun,
I have not learned the ways and fashions of the sky:
Not yet have the stars fled before my splendour,
Not yet is my quicksilver astir;
Untouched is the sea by my dancing rays,
Untouched are the mountains by my crimson hue.
The eye of existence is not familiar with me;
I rise trembling, afraid to show myself.
From the East my dawn arrived and routed Night,
A fresh dew settled on the rose of the world.
I am waiting for the votaries that rise at dawn:
Oh, happy they who shall worship my fire!
I have no need of the ear of To-day,
I am the voice of the poet of To-morrow.
4 SECRET OF THE SELF

My own age does not understand my deep meanings,
My Joseph is not for this market,
I despair of my old companions,
My Sinai burns for sake of the Moses who is coming.
Their sea is silent, like dew,
But my dew is storm-ridden, like the ocean.
My song is of another world than theirs:
This bell calls other travellers to take the road.
How many a poet after his death opened our eyes when his own were closed,
And journeyed forth again from nothingness
When roses blossomed o’er the earth of his grave!
Albeit caravans have passed through this desert,
They passed, as a camel steps, with little sound.
But I am a lover: loud crying is my faith:
The clamour of Judgement Day is one of my minions.
My song exceeds the range of the chord,
Yet I do not fear that my lute will break.
'Twere better for the waterdrop not to know my torrent,
Whose fury should rather madden the sea.
No river will contain my Omán:¹
My flood requires whole seas to hold it.
Unless the bud expand into a bed of roses,
It is unworthy of my spring-cloud's bounty.
Lightnings slumber within my soul,
I sweep over mountain and plain.
Wrestle with my sea, if thou art a plain;

¹ The Sea of Omán is a name given by the Arabs to the Persian Gulf.
6 SECRETS OF THE SELF

Receive my lightning, if thou art a Sinai.
The Fountain of Life hath been given me to drink,
I have been made an adept of the mystery of Life.
The speck of dust was vitalised by my burning song:
It unfolded wings and became a firefly.
No one hath told the secret which I will tell
Or threaded a pearl of thought like mine.
Come, if thou would'st know the secret of everlasting life!
Come, if thou would'st win both earth and heaven!
The old Guru of the Sky taught me this lore,
I cannot hide it from my comrades.

O Saki! arise and pour wine into the cup,
Clear the vexation of Time from my heart!
The sparkling liquor that flows from Zemzem—\(^1\)
Were it a beggar, a king would pay homage to it.
It makes thought more sober and wise,
It makes the keen eye keener,
It gives to a straw the weight of a mountain,
And to foxes the strength of lions.
It causes dust to soar to the Pleiades
And a drop of water swell to the breadth of the sea.
It turns silence into the din of Judgement Day,
It makes the foot of the partridge red with blood of the hawk.
Arise and pour pure wine into my cup,
Pour moonbeams into the dark night of my thought,

\(^1\) The holy well at Mecca.
8 SECRETS OF THE SELF

That I may lead home the wanderer
And imbue the idle looker-on with restless impatience;
And advance hotly on a new quest
And become known as the champion of a new spirit;
And be to people of insight as the pupil to the eye,
And sink into the ear of the world, like a voice;
And exalt the worth of Poesy
And sprinkle the dry herbs with my tears.

Inspired by the genius of the Master of Rúm,¹
I rehearse the sealed book of secret lore.
His soul is the source of the flames,
I am but as the spark that gleams for a moment.

¹ Jalálu’ddín Rúmí, the greatest mystical poet of Persia (A.D. 1207–1273). Most of his life was passed at Iconium in Galatia, for which reason he is generally known as “Rúmí,” i.e. “the Anatolian.”
SECRETS OF THE SELF

His burning candle consumed me, the moth;
His wine overwhelmed my goblet.  
The Master of Rúm transmuted my earth to gold
And clothed my barren dust with beauty.
The grain of sand set forth from the desert,
That it might win the radiance of the sun.
I am a wave and I will come to rest in his sea,
That I may make the glistening pearl mine own.
I who am drunken with the wine of his song
Will draw life from the breath of his words.

"Twas night: my heart would fain lament,
The silence was filled with my cries to God.
10 SECRETS OF THE SELF

I was complaining of the sorrows of the world
And bewailing the emptiness of my cup.
At last mine eye could endure no more,
Broken with fatigue it went to sleep.
There appeared the Master, formed in
the mould of Truth,
Who wrote the Koran of Persia.¹
He said, “O frenzied lover,
Take a draught of love’s pure wine.
Strike the chords of thine heart and
rouse a tumultuous strain,
Dash thine head against the cupping-
glass and thine eye against the
lancet!
Make thy laughter the source of a
hundred sighs,
Make the hearts of men bleed with thy
tears!
How long wilt thou be silent, like a bud?
Sell thy fragrance cheap, like the rose!

¹ This refers to the famous *Masnavi* of Jalālu’ddīn Rūmī.
SECRETS OF THE SELF

Tongue-tied, thou art in pain: Cast thyself upon the fire, like rue! Like the bell, break silence at last, and from every limb Utter forth a lamentation! Thou art fire: fill the world with thy glow! Make others burn with thy burning! Proclaim the secrets of the old wine-seller; Be thou a surge of wine, and the crystal cup thy robe! Shatter the mirror of fear, Break the bottles in the bazaar! Like the reed-flute, bring a message from the reeds; Give to Majnúñ a message from Lailá! Create a new style for thy song, Enrich the feast with thy piercing strains!

1 Rue-seed, which is burned for the purpose of fumigation, crackles in the fire.
2 "Wine" signifies the mysteries of divine love.
3 Majnúñ is the Orlando Furioso of Arabia.
12 SECRETS OF THE SELF

Up, and re-inspire every living soul!
Say ‘Arise!’ and by that word quicken the living!
Up, and set thy feet on another path;
Put aside the passionate melancholy of old!
Become familiar with the delight of singing;
O bell of the caravan, awake!”

At these words my bosom was enkindled
And swelled with emotion like the flute;
I rose like music from the string
To prepare a Paradise for the ear.
I unveiled the mystery of the Self
And disclosed its wondrous secret.

My being was as an unfinished statue,
Uncomely, worthless, good for nothing.
Love chiselled me: I became a man
And gained knowledge of the nature of the universe.
I have seen the movement of the
sinews of the sky,
And the blood coursing in the veins of
the moon.
Many a night I wept for Man’s sake
That I might tear the veil from Life’s
mysteries,
And extract the secret of Life’s con-
stitution
From the laboratory of phenomena.
I who give beauty to this night, like
the moon,
Am as dust in devotion to the pure
Faith (Islam)—
A Faith renowned in hill and dale,
Which kindles in men’s hearts a flame
of undying song:
It sowed an atom and reaped a sun,
It harvested a hundred poets like Rúmí
and Attár.
I am a sigh: I will mount to the
heavens;
I am a breath, yet am I sprung of fire.
Driven onward by high thoughts, my pen
Cast abroad the secret of this veil,
That the drop may become co-equal
with the sea
And the grain of sand grow into a
Sahara.
Poetising is not the aim of this masnaví,
Beauty-worshipping and love-making
is not its aim.
I am of India: Persian is not my native
tongue;
I am like the crescent moon: my cup
is not full.
Do not seek from me charm of style
in exposition,
Do not seek from me Khánsár and
Isfahan.¹
Although the language of Hind is
sweet as sugar,
Yet sweeter is the fashion of Persian
speech.

¹ Khánsár, which lies about a hundred miles northwest of Isfahan, was the birth-place of several Persian poets.
My mind was enchanted by its loveliness,
My pen became as a twig of the Burning
Bush.
Because of the loftiness of my thoughts,
Persian alone is suitable to them.
O Reader, do not find fault with the
wine-cup,
But consider attentively the taste of
the wine.