



## MAJNUN GOES TO LAYLI'S HOME AND SINGS THERE

One evening – when the twilight air was soft  
As silken clothes, the haloed moon aloft  
Was like a shining earring, and stars shone  
Like drops of mercury beside the sun  
That set in crimson fire – Majnun, whose heart  
Like mercury would spill and split apart,  
With his few friends set out impatiently,  
Reciting prayers and singing poetry,  
To where his love lived; since his heart was lost,  
Like one who's drunk, he did not count the cost.  
Where Layli sat within her tent that day  
The flap was tied back in the Arab way,  
She saw him and looked lovingly and long,  
He saw her and began his loving song.  
Layli a cradled star half hid from sight,  
Majnun her chamberlain on watch at night –  
Layli removed the scarf that held her hair,  
Majnun began the song of his despair;  
In Layli's heart a harp played plangently,  
In Majnun's head a lute twanged desperately.  
Layli the dawn's light when the dark's diminished,  
Majnun a candle self-consumed and finished;

Layli a garden in a fruitful land,  
Majnun the scar of self-reproach's brand;  
Layli the full moon with her radiant light,  
Majnun a reed before her, weak and slight;  
Layli a rosebush, bright and beautiful,  
Majnun a suppliant, bowed and pitiful.  
Layli I'd say was like a fairy-child,  
Majnun I tell you was a fire run wild;  
Layli a field that was still freshly growing,  
Majnun a field when autumn's winds are blowing;  
Layli who with the dawn was glad to rise,  
Majnun a lamp whose flame at sunrise dies;  
Layli whose teasing curls fell like a wave,  
Majnun whose earring marked him as a slave;<sup>18</sup>  
Layli who drank her draught of wine at dawn,  
Majnun who sang sad songs, whose clothes were torn.  
Layli sewed silk within, Majnun burned rue<sup>19</sup>  
Against the harm the evil eye might do;  
Layli was like a rose, while Majnun's eyes  
Shed rosewater, the tears a rose supplies;  
Layli let down and spread her lovely hair,  
Majnun wept pearls in his abject despair;  
Layli drank musky wine; wine's musky scent  
Rendered Majnun both tipsy and content;  
Her fragrance charmed him, she was gratified  
He'd searched for her and hurried to her side.  
Afraid they'd be found out, of meeting's dangers,  
They kept apart and acted like two strangers –  
Their only messengers were covert glances;  
They acted prudently, and took no chances,  
Pretending that the bridge across the river  
Dividing them was broken now forever.