

قوالی

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Libretto

Translations of five poems sung by the Sabri Brothers on their "Qawwali Music from Pakistan" tour of the United States March 1 - April 5, 1975, under the auspices of The Performing Arts Program of the Asia Society.

1. QAUL AND TARANA by Amir Khusro
2. SAR-E-LAMAKAN by Sheikh Saadi and Amber Shah Warsi
3. TERI SOORAT by Motrib Haggani
4. TAJDAR-E-HARAM by Hakim Habib Madani
5. MERA KOI NAHI by Masroor Anwer

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QAUL AND TARANA

Ali' is the master of my master, master of all.
From where does this surge of feeling come?
My body is like the rabab, my heart like the tambourine,
Rhythms throb in my veins,
Every hair on my body sings a note,
And that music is your name.

Ta na na na, ta na na na, rey²
Ta na na na ta na na rey,
Ta na dhim ta na dhim ta na them
Them them, ta na na na na na na na na,
Thhe they lana thitey theay lana,
Ta dha na dhrey, ta na na dhrey, ta na na na dhrey,
Ta na na dhrey, ta na na na dhim,
Hey tey lana, hey tey lana, dhig, dhig, dhig,
Ta na na na
Dhig, dhig, dhig, ta na na dhig dhig ta na na na na na na
Nittarey, titharhey, tirik coo coo, coog,
Thuy thuy thatey dha ghirunk, dhum kut tauk,
Thathey thakran tha,
Ta na na dhrey, ta na na dhrey, ta na na dhrey,
Ta na na tinathem ya li ya li
Ya ley, yila laley, yila laley, yila laley, rey,
Ali, my master, master of all.
Ta na na na rey, ta na na na rey
Ta na thim, ta na thim, ta na thim, thim, thim
Ta na na na na na na na

Ali, the master of all
Ali, the master of all
Ali, the master of all.

Oh Ali, lift up the veil from your brilliant face
So it may illuminate the world,
You are a mystery, by God,
Even to the eye that sees the inner truth,
Ali, you are my master, and I am your slave,
Ali, my master, Ali, the master of all.

“All power is subject to my will,
Yet I am subject to the will of Ali.
My devotion is my sword,
And I am the sword of Ali.
The sky is in my hands,
And I am in the hands of Ali.
The earth is under my feet,
And I am under the feet of Ali.
Ali is my leader,
I am the slave of Ali.
A thousand lives Giramī³ would give up in the name of Ali,”
Ali, my master, Ali, master of all.

The one whom the prophet called *his own flesh*
Is his true heir.
The one born in Kaaba⁴ and who died in the sacred mosque
Is truly the keeper of the House of God.

SAR-E-LAMAKAN (The Ascent)

You, the last of all prophets,
The object of our adoration.
In all that we can see around us,
Your being is evident.
We gain insight into the truth through you,
You are the secret of the existence of the world.

It was a beautiful night
In a peaceful world of gentleness and love.
This state of bliss inspired Allah to call his beloved to Him.
Thus at the invitation from the Omnipresence
The prophet started on his ascent to the Highest.
The beauty of the prophet was such that even
Allah could not bear the separation.

And Muhammad ascended to the heavens.
Unequaled in his devotion and virtue,
This prophet of wondrous beauty,
The guiding star, the eternal light, the brilliant sun,
The radiant moon,
Truly is Muhammad.
Who else can reach such heights!

Leader of the Caravan of Islam,
Bringer of peace and blessings to this world,
Last of all messengers, and the leader of all prophets.

Paradise is your abode.
Your face more brilliant than the sun,
Your hair like the darkness of the night,
Your body like the light of the world,
Your person, the pride of mankind,
Reflection of the glory of God.
Who else can reach such heights!

As he rose on Barak, the heavenly steed,
The winds swept below his feet
Transcending all, the earth and the sky.
His tresses blew about him,
And the world was filled with fragrance.
The birds sang, and the buds burst open in joy, exclaiming:
"Who else can reach such heights!"

Moses stood on one side,
And Jesus, the son of Mary, on the other.
Gabriel stood at the back, and they all asked:
"Who else can reach such heights!"

Listen, oh people, to the tale of this holy event,
Hear how this whole world was bathed in light!
When the Lord wished to see Muhammad,
He told Gabriel to go
And invite his beloved prophet to visit Him.
So Gabriel took the heavenly steed
And hastened as the Lord had commanded,
Telling everyone on the way
To prepare for the auspicious occasion.
And all those present joined in saying:
"Who else can reach such heights!"

He is the most precious of God's creations,
This friend of God's, this prophet mine,
A reflection of the Light Divine,
The illumination of the universe.
Without him there would have been no sky,
No moon, no star, no dawn, no night,
No universe at all.
He is the light,
The culminant of all virtues.
Without him there would be no awareness
Of the creator or the created,
There would be no reaffirmation of the greatness of God,
There would be no world, no kings, no guardians of the world,
No clouds, no rain, no waves or water in the river,
No Adam or Eve, no Jesus, no Moses, no Scriptures, no Koran.
Without Muhammad nothing would have existed,
He who is the source of light for
The sun and the moon and the stars in the sky,
The secret of the land and the seas, the gardens full of leaves,
The color of the flowers,
And the songs of the birds.
He who brought light to this world that was dark,
He who distinguished the name of Islam,
He who gave us the moon and the stars
Which illuminate the universe.
The light that flashed on Mt. Sinai
Was in fact his light,
He who rescued Kaaba from the idols,
And made the idolators repent.

Where else would Hasan and Husain⁵ have achieved grace?
If Ali had not been born,
The trials and tribulations of mankind
Would have been without solution.
If God had not created Muhammad,
There would have been no creation.
He gave us all knowledge,
His beauty is the perfect light,
It is through him we have all won God's mercy.
He is the true meaning of the Koran,
He is inimitable perfection,
He knows and reveals the truth,
He is the sublime reflection of the Eternal Being.
The Lord himself has said: "Peace upon him and his kin."

The religion of Ambar Warsi⁶ is the love of Muhammad,
And all his thoughts and words have only one theme:
Peace be on him and his kin.
I cannot describe his perfection,
For he is perfection itself.
How can I add to his beauty,
When that beauty is the source of all enlightenment.
In virtue he is the ultimate virtue.
My heart and soul can only send peace upon him and his kin.

TERI SOORAT (Your Face)

I gave you my heart,
For such is the extent of my trust.
I gave you my life,
For such is the extent of my love.
Even in death,
My eyes remained open,
For such is the extent of my hope.

If your face⁷ is always
Before my eyes,
And I am tormented by your love,
What am I to do?
Would somebody tell me,
When I am constantly reminded of you,
What am I to do?

I wander around the world
With your portrait,
Your face resembles no other.
My own face does not resemble any other,
Because I am part of your image.
Teri Soorat, Teri Soorat.

Like Shams-e-Tabriz⁸ I am intoxicated with your love.
I am aware of nothing else.
I wish to immerse myself in you to such an extent,
That anyone looking at me would actually see you.
Teri Soorat, Teri Soorat.

If your face is always before my eyes,
And I am tormented by your love,
What am I to do?

I kissed the ashes of what was my house,⁷
And consoled my heart with the thought
That I can build a home,
But if someone hurls a bolt of lightning,
What am I to do?

I was intoxicated like Shams-e-Tabriz,
But still remained faithful to you, the mysterious one.
If I am beheaded and you are blamed for my death,
What am I to do?

There is a difference between beauty and love,
But I adore both.
If God is displeased,
I can prostrate myself, and ask forgiveness.
But when my beloved turns away,
What am I to do?

I do not have to touch a cup of wine,⁷
Nor go to a tavern,⁷ like those of no capacity.
I do not drink,
But if your eyes intoxicate me,
What am I to do?

I have prayed at all the holy places
That I may find my beloved.⁷
I have done my duty,
But if God does not will it so,
What am I to do?

If this torture is to continue,
I would be happy for you to take away my life.
Death has been avoiding me,
If you also avoid me,
What am I to do?

TADJAR-E-HARAM
(King Of Kaaba)

Oh, Breeze,
Please take the story of this speck of dust
To the sun up above,
Kiss the floor when you enter the divine presence,
And convey my greetings.

Oh, writer of destiny,
Let not my ship go down,
Write for me if you wish,
But do include a visit to Medina in my future.
Oh King of Kaaba,
Have mercy, so the life of the poor
May also turn for the better.
Please look at me,
You from the tribe of Quraish, Hashim and Muttaib,⁹
Oh King of Kaaba, have mercy!

Oh prophet, look at our misery.
We lower our eyes in shame for our sins,
There is no one lower than me amongst your followers.
I beg for your compassion,
You who are the blessing of the world,
Oh King of Kaaba, have mercy!

Oh King of Arabia,
How do I tell you that without you
I cannot sleep at night,
That I have lost all consciousness of my surroundings.⁷
Please look at me sometimes,
And listen to what I have to say.
Oh King of Kaaba, have mercy!

Oh Breeze,
Tell the Lord
That a certain slave asks for
Just one glance,
One glance alone,
Oh beneficent, oh merciful, mercy for us!

For the helpless, the wretched,
You are the only hope, the only support.
I am guilty and sinful, and I ask forgiveness,
You who are the forgiver, the helper, the protector,
My intercessor on the Day of Judgment.
Oh fragrance of heaven, pure breath of the morn,
You, who are the healer, the comforter,
And friend of the sick and the sad.

Oh you, the bearer of happy tidings,
I beseech you in the name of this flower,
Like wind, bear me unto his presence
And convey my greetings
To the attentive ear of the blessed Prophet.
Oh King of Kaaba, a glance of mercy!
Oh King of Kaaba, a glance of mercy from you
Will bring happiness to our poor lives.

You are the friend of the poor and helpless.
What would the world say
If we went empty-handed from your door?
No one listens to us,
There is only you,
And if we do not have your blessing,
We will die at your door with your name on our lips.

Come on friends, let us go to Medina,¹⁰
Where, through the grace of Hasnain,¹¹
All the days of distress and misery end.
Let us go to Medina, let us go to Medina.
It is the last month of the year,
And lovers of the prophet have already reached Jedda,
The lucky ones who were invited are already there.
After a year of thirst and waiting
They have arrived with prayers on their lips.

There are strange illuminations in the air of Medina
There is the object of all our desire
And love in Medina.
There are neither the sorrows of life
Nor the fear of death in Medina.
We shall all offer the prayers of love in Medina.

Do not wander without aim, without direction.
Take the path to Medina.
It leads directly to the path of Allah.
The divine light shines in Medina,
And the object of all our admiration,
Muhammad is in Medina.

Where can I find peace? How will my nights pass?
My beloved has enchanted me, I have lost my heart
Medina is where he lives.
My beloved has enchanted me, he has made me lose my heart.
Where can I find peace? How will my nights pass?
My heart is in you, Medina.

When I decided to go to Medina,
I joined a caravan.
Later, with my feet bleeding and tired,
I sat down by the wayside,
And the leader of the caravan told me:
"You have seen the shrines of Ghaus, and Khwaja,
And the Pir of Kalyar,¹²
But unless you have seen Medina, you have seen nothing,
On to Medina."

Come on my drinking companions,⁷
Let us go to Medina,
And drink from the hands of the dispenser
Of the sacred fount of paradise.
Remember, with one glance from him,
All our cups will be filled.

Oh my master, there are difficulties and
Dangers in our lives.
There are storms and lightning,
And if you do not take care of us,
Where will we go?
Nobody goes empty-handed from your door,
Your bounty knows no limits.
Please, cast a glance of mercy upon me,
Lest all the leaves in my book of life
Be scattered by the winds.

MERA KOI NAHI
(I Have No One Except You)

Whatever you have to ask,
Ask it at the door of the prophet,
Who is the beloved of God,
And the king of all prophets.
You have been lost in darkness until now,
If you want light, let the light of God guide you.

I have no one except you,
I come to you as a beggar.
I have no one except you.

Grant your mercy to us sinners,
Help us who are helpless.
I come to you as a beggar.

If I could but reach your blessed shrine,
It would be a great blessing,
For one without joy like me.
If only I could hope for your mercy,
I would find courage to face this life.
I come to you as a beggar.

True, I have been a sinner all my life,
And I forgot you, merciful being,
But sinner or not, I am fortunate to be your follower,
You, favorite prophet of God.
Without your help I could not exist.
I come to you as a beggar.
I come to you as a beggar.

I have no friend, no companion,
Oh Messenger of God,
I have only your name on my lips.
Oh Prophet of God, have mercy on my misery.
Oh Prophet of God,
I am helpless and poor.
Oh Prophet of God, have mercy on my misery.
Let me at least in my imagination
Visit your shrine.
I come to you as a beggar.
I come to you as a beggar.

Those who have Muhammad's name on their lips
Should have no fear of the fires of hell.
No problem is without a solution,
When one utters the name of the prophet.

The guide of mankind on earth,
The beloved of the Divine Being,
He is glorious in both worlds,
The prophet of God, peace be upon him.
I have been searching for peace of mind,
And yearning to visit your abode.
You are the Kaaba, the object of our adoration.
The love of God is the only purpose of the earth and the skies.
You are the one to direct me to the ways of God.
I have been searching for you so long,
My feet have become blistered.
I cannot describe fully what you are,
Oh Prophet of God,
The perfection of all that is beautiful!
Truly the shadow of God.

Your face like the moon,
Your tresses like the night,
Your face, your brow, your chin like the Word of God.
There is no God except Allah.
May the peace of Allah be upon him.
May the peace of Allah be upon him.
May the peace of Allah be upon him.

FOOTNOTES

¹Ali is the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. He was the third elected caliph after the prophet's death. While Muhammad is regarded as the Messenger of God, Ali is regarded as the Friend of God: where friendship suggests a nearness to God, a mystical communion. It is that mystical tie that accounts for the frequent mention of Ali's name in the songs of the Sufi mystics.

²Mnemonic musical symbols (rhythmic memory aids).

³A Persian mystical poet.

⁴The Kaaba in the city of Mecca is the sacred center of the Muslim world. It is toward the Kaaba that Muslims face in prayer; it is to the Kaaba they go in pilgrimage. Ali was born there.

⁵Hasan and Husain are the sons of Ali and Fatima, daughter of the Prophet.

⁶The writer of this poem.

⁷The use of terms such as "the Beloved," suggesting the transposition of the vocabulary of earthly love to convey the power and transcendence of divine love, is quite common in Sufism (Islamic mysticism), and is not without its parallels in Christian mysticism and Hindu Vaishnavism. (The chorus of Bach's Cantata No. 140, "wachet auf," sings: "Awake! . . . the Bridegroom comes . . . Make yourselves ready for the wedding.") The "face" and the "tresses" signify the spiritual qualities of the master. "Wine" means the knowledge and love of God. The "tavern" refers to the spiritual master, for his heart is said to be the depository of the love of God. The "cup of wine" is a declaration of faith. When "wine" intoxicates the Sufi, it diverts his mind from all earthly passions, giving him pure spiritual delight. Building a "house" signifies the pursuit of material well-being.

⁸Shams-e-Tabriz, a mystic poet, was put to death for his unorthodox views.

⁹Tribal and ancestral lineage of the Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁰Medina is one of the holy cities besides Mecca where the Prophet Muhammad spent many years. He is buried there. A visit to Medina is part of the annual pilgrimage of the Muslims.

¹¹Hasan and Husain together are referred to as Hasnain.

¹²Shrines of well-known Sufi saints.

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