



**Nizami  
Ganjavi**

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# Nizami Ganjavi



The ideals which Nizami set forth 8 centuries ago remain desirable today. Presently mankind is fighting for domination of the features which Nizami Ganjavi wished in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to observe in human beings and society.

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**THIS YEAR AZERBAIJAN AND THE NATIVE CITY OF  
THE GREAT POET NIZAMI GANJAVI (1141-1209),  
CELEBRATE HIS 870<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

On Saturday, September 30, 1139, a landmark event in world history took place when one of the most destructive earthquakes ever seen turned the earth inside out. Middle Age historians stressed the unprecedentedness of the quake, which struck in Ganja, a city in Azerbaijan. The earthquake entirely ravaged the city. At the same time, it gave birth to a miracle of nature in the lake of Goygol ("blue lake" in Azerbaijani). The earthquake claimed the lives of dozens of thousands of human beings. And yet, during that 1141 calamity, seemingly compensating for those losses, nature bestowed upon Azerbaijan and the world an extraordinary descendant. The genius poet and philosopher later known as Nizami Ganjavi, whose works would profoundly impact the literary school through awaking the spirits and thoughts of mankind for centuries, was born. Nizami Ganjavi long ago became more than a descendant of Azerbaijan. His timeless verses rank among the most valuable wealth of mankind, while he himself reached the pantheon of history's most exalted descendants. While alive, Nizami Ganjavi was confident of the eternity of his works, writing the following:

*When asked a century later where is it?  
Each couplet would call out: «Here I am».*

Not one, but eight, centuries have elapsed since then, yet the vitality of Nizami reaches beyond the temporal borders of his clairvoyance, leading the way to eternity. A genius German poet emphasized the value of high modesty by pointing to seven great poets (Ferdowsi, Anvari, Nizami, Sadi, Rumi, Hafez, Jami) distinguished within Persian-language poetry: *"Even though the East has given the biggest advantage to only 7 of its poets, there are a lot of poets superior to me among the rest of the preferred ones"*.





*The Lake of Goygol. Ganja.*



Nizami's name was Ilyas. However, certain sources claim that his name was Ahmad (for example, the source entitled "Khulasat al-afkar" notes his name as Ahmad ibn Yusuf ibn Muayyad). Nizami is a nickname of the poet. His pseudonym was Nizam ad-din. In the medieval Moslem East there was a tradition of indicating kunya, the son's name, along with the names of famous persons. The kunya of Nizami is Mohammad. In his various hemistiches the poet speaks to his son Mohammad through admonishing him.

All sources indicate Ganja as Nizami's place of birth. Yet in some cases, referring to false information contained in the following couplet which a scribe included in a copy of "Iqbal-name", certain people claim that Nizami was born in Goum, a city in Iran:

*Though I remain undiscovered as a pearl in the sea of Ganja  
I come from the city of Goum.*

Nonetheless, the greatest Nizami critics, most notably the famous Russian orientalist Evgeny Bertels, acknowledge the falsehood of this couplet, averring that Nizami was born in Ganja and lived there all his life.

From his first poem to his last, Nizami repeatedly brings the name of Ganja to his hemistiches. And one of these couplets is an excellent riposte to those trying forcibly to extricate Nizami from Ganja and artificially connect him to other places. Seemingly responding to all these a few centuries in advance, he states his permanent belonging to Ganja:

*My secrets - my words coming from my spirit are made obvious  
Though he is taken to Boukhara, his origin from Ganja.*

Certain sources (for instance, Dowlatshah Samargandi, the 15<sup>th</sup> century) inform about Nizami's brother Givami Mutarrizi. The literary relics written by Givami Mutarrizi that we possess today attest to his high skills in the genre of qasida-masnavi, as well as his overall poetic talent and savy poetic technique. However, we lack definitive scientific evidence regarding the native brotherhood links between Mutarrizi and Nizami.

Meanwhile it is hardly accidental that we mentioned this contentious couplet relating to the place of birth of Nizami. Throughout history, along with those seeking to claim ownership of many Azerbaijani values and territories, there have also been people attempting to appropriate the genius descendants of Azerbaijan, and such attempts are happening to this day. During Nizami's era, two languages -

Arabic and Persian - dominated science and literature in the Near and Middle East. All scientific works were written in Arabic, while poets from a diverse range of nationalities in Central Asia, the Caucasus, Iran and India crafted their literary heritage in a single language - Persian. With clear command and knowledge of information in the most varied fields of science reflected in his works, Nizami demonstrates that he is a highly-educated person. His earliest known verses indicate his high poetical techniques. And this is evidence of Nizami's engagement in poetry not as an amateur but as a genuine professional, someone who perfectly mastered the theoretical basis of this art from the very beginning. The canons of that age necessiated, first of all, perfect command of Persian and Arabic in order to master such a wide range of universal knowledge. Nizami wrote his seminal works "Divan" and "Khamsa" in Persian. Referring to the observations of the prominent Iranian scholar Saeed Nafisi, in spite of his fluency in and perfection of Persian, Nizami does not belong to ethnic Persian like Ferdowsi. Nafisi admits that the aroma of Turkic language emanates from Nizami's verses. Moreover, in several instances, to specify the precise meaning of Persian words Nizami appeals directly to the explanatory glossaries of the Persian language:

*The catapults have two types with reference to the glossaries -  
One throws silk, other one throws the stone.*

Sources mention different dates for Nizami's death: 1180 (Dowlatshahi, Haji Khalifa, Hammer Purgshtal, F.Erdman), 1199, 1200 ("Atashkada", "Tarihe-Jahanara", G.Auzly), 1202-1203 (V.Baher, E.Brown, C.Ryeau) and so on. Nevertheless, a commonly accepted date is March 12, 1209 (in 1947 it was written on the stone over Nizami's grave as follows: 4 Ramazan 605 Hijri).

Due to his being not only a poet but also a formidable scholar standing one degree higher than other scholars of his period, Nizami was deemed a "physician" - owner of wisdom. Even though the indicated period abounded with geniuses, only two others in addition to Nizami were honoured with this title: Ibn Sina and Omar Khayyam.

As was noted, in his poems Nizami passionately speaks of his son Mohammad, born in 1174. It is unknown who Mohammad's descendants were and whether he had grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Nonetheless, other descendants of Nizami - the fruits of his pen - have remain as crisp and alive as they were eight centuries ago. The profound power of the word is captured here. In the following couplet, Nizami admonishes his son Mohammad:

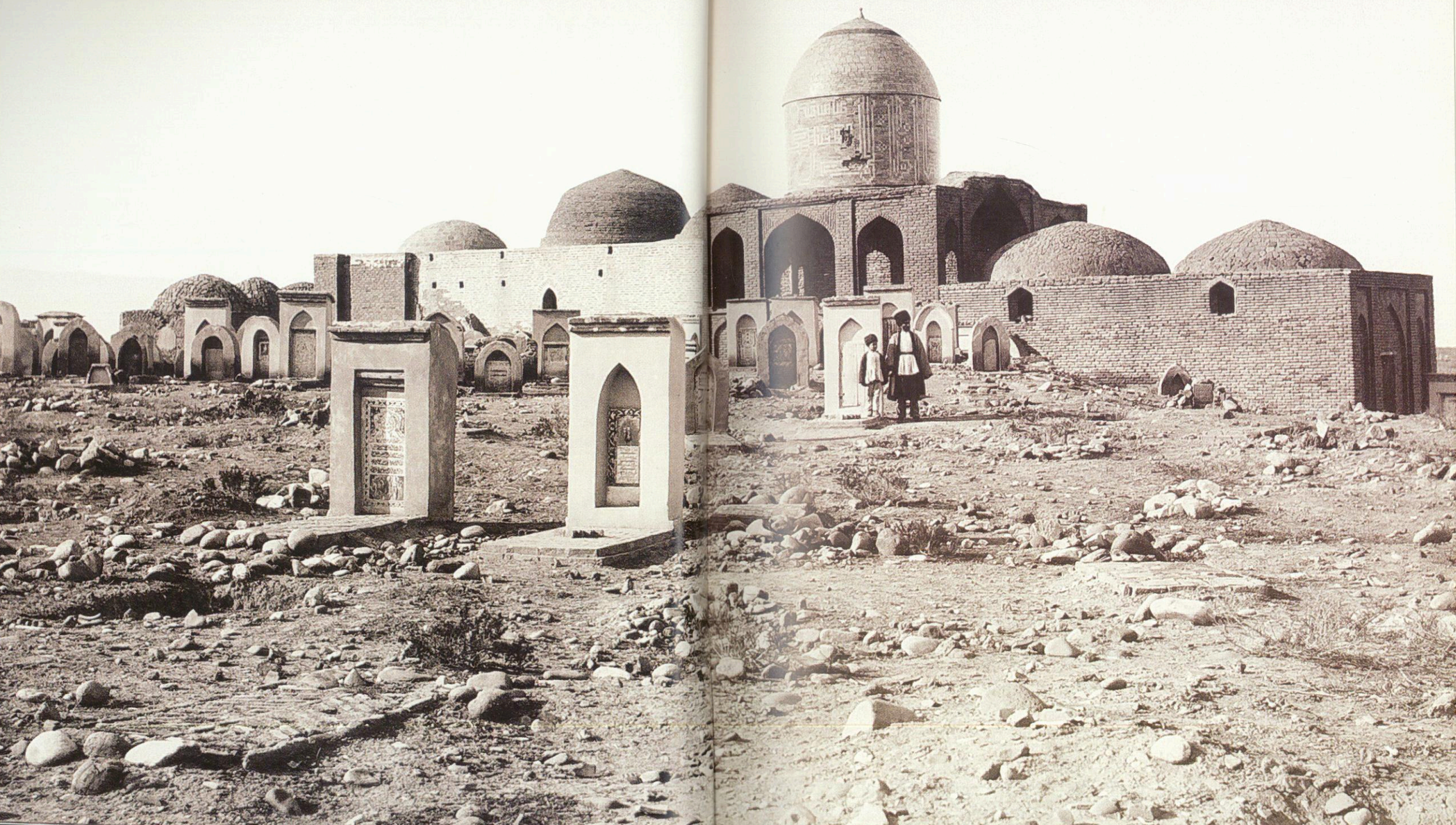


*View of the fortress. Ganja, 1900.*





*View of the Imamzada Mosque in Ganja. Early 19<sup>th</sup> century.*







*I notice in You the desire of being superior  
I observe in You the habits of poetry.  
Nevertheless, do not hold on the art or poetry  
As the nicest of it is the one lying most of all.  
Do not seek for fame in this art (poetry)  
As this art comes to the end with Nizami.  
Though the verse is higher for its position  
You had better be engaged in definite useful science.*

Certainly, the wise Nizami was well aware that the beginning of verse did not relate to him and it would not end with him either. So why did he deter his son with obvious poetry signs from this way? As a consummate professional, he wished to see his son as a poet of at least Nizami's caliber. Meanwhile, he probably realized that being Nizami is a miracle which would not fall to the lot of everybody. Therefore, he exhorted his son, who would not be a stronger poet than he, to take up a clearly required area of science.

As Nizami proposed the related formula:

*Good pack-saddle making  
Is better than bad hatting.*

Nizami was made Nizami as such by his "*Khamsa*", composed of 5 masnavis - poems which enshrined him in literature. "*The Treasury of Mysteries*" ("*Makhzan ul-Asrar*") written in 1178, "*Khosrow and Shirin*" written 1180, "*Leyli and Majnun*" dedicated to a love story and completed in 1192, "*Seven Beauties*" ("*Haft paykar*") written in 1197 and "*Iskandernama*" consisting of two parts - "*Iqbal-name*" and "*Sharaf-name*", completed in 1202. In fact Nizami combined these five works under a single title. Had Nizami lived longer he probably would have written several more poems, upping his body of work to 7, 8 or 9 poems. Nevertheless, his lifespan coincided with the time required to craft these five works, and the theorists who noticed the organic linkage of these five works, as well as the wholeness of the conception (which started in "*Treasure of Mysteries*") in "*Iskandernama*", initially combined these five works under the title "Panj ganj" - "*Five treasures*". Subsequently, these two words were replaced by the more compact Arabic word "*Khamsa*", meaning "*quintet*". Shortly thereafter, in the 13th century, the initial chain of responses to these five poems were born. In India, Amir Khosrow laid the foundation for the Nizami school by creating the first quintet in response to Nizami's poems. That is to say, through creating the response "*Khamsa*", Amir Khosrow also defined the



*Khamsa of Nizami. "The Treasury of Mysteries". Tabriz. 1539-1543.  
(London, British Library, Or. 2265)  
The competition of sages.*



formula of responding to Nizami: plot, characters and basic principles should be preserved; the responder should manifest his skills in mode of expression, artistic style and word polishing. Even though the doors of all palaces were open to Nizami during his lifetime, he remained outside the palaces. He preferred his calm and free life to everything. Nonetheless, his own door was open to everyone, and he invited everyone to step inside and benefit. As a matter of fact, the invitation Nizami made 8 centuries ago is in effect nowadays as well, the benefits of opening the door available to all:

*Do not shut my door to anybody,  
As it is not good behaviour to shut the door to someone.  
As the word named us "ocean",  
Our door should be open like the ocean.  
Enable the seekers to come,  
And see the door of the King of poets.*

Though time destroys even the most magnificent royal palaces, the word "palace" for Nizami gets more fresh, shining and attractive instead of atrophying, defying the logic of time as it increases its age. Probably, the initial reason for this is encapsulated in Nizami's verse created in the name of humanity and respect and love for mankind.

*The person hewing the human sculpture from stone  
Can but only wonder at human beings!*

He says these words as if to himself. As Nizami constantly marvelled at human beings and worshiped mankind's defining traits, he could have hewed eternal human sculptures from the word.

*If you are human then mix up with the people,  
As the human suits the human, the human fits the human.*

This idea-principle of humanism makes up the nucleus of Nizami's literary work. Nizami sets forth this supreme idea from his first verse up to his last one, and from his first poem to his final one. Regarding readability, Nizami is one of the most complicated authors of the Medieval period. It hardly stands to reason that Nizami's language is difficult to understand. Despite the fact that Nizami crafted his literary heritage eight centuries ago, his language is little different

from contemporary Persian, except for a number of archaic words. Comprehending Nizami is complicated by his intricate work on each hemistich and couplet, as well as his propensity for expressing multiple meanings of words in each hemistich and couplet, imbuing each line with several layers of meaning. Therefore, one cannot simply skim through Nizami. Each hemistich and couplet, as well as every word and phrase in each line, must be read repeatedly, in order to discover new semantic layers and comprehend the general sense of the fragment in line with the discovered meanings.

Nizami's poems embody an encyclopaedia of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. "*Khamsa*" can be perceived as one of the most reliable sources for acquiring knowledge on the mode of thinking, social and political atmosphere, architecture, art and economic life of that period. As Nizami was better informed than everybody else about the profound heritage he bestowed upon future readers, he stressed that these works must not be read purely for fun:

*I said that and went away leaving the narration,  
This narration can not be read somehow.*

Even the most preeminent Nizami critics have failed to discover all the semantic layers of the poet's hemistiches, something they openly confess. There are infinite semantic hues to Nizami's words, and, were an exhaustive annotation required, it would inevitably be an entire *khamsa* for each *masnavi* of "*Khamsa*". So Nizami is absolutely right in saying:

*The interpretation of the word is broader than the word itself.*

The unprecedented ability of expressing the word with magisterial power is not only something which makes Nizami a world-class poet. It is just one of the terms which ensure the genius of Nizami. Nizami was a broadly read person. He had not limited himself with solely Turkic, Arabic and Persian sources. As he noted he was aware of diverse Christian and Jewish sources. Knowing several languages enabled him directly to read those books. Meanwhile, it is possible that Nizami was familiar with sources in many other languages through third persons. Such universal scope of knowledge and a broad scale of information enabled him to create a literary world which covered the entire cultural world of that period from the point of view of the geography of meaning as well.

Nizami was born in Ganja, a renaissance city, and he was among those who founded and immortalized the Oriental Renaissance through his personality and





Khamsa of Nizami. "Seven Beauties". Shiraz. 1491.  
(Moscow, SMOA, f 155)  
Bahram Gur hunting the lion.



works. Nizami was a genius who projected his humanism beyond national borders, as clearly evidenced by his choice of main characters of his masnavis. His hero can be Persian, Arabian and Greek. The aim of Nizami is not captured by the nationality of the hero or character. The purpose is to find the supreme literary solution of the idea. However, neither the choice of main characters nor the representation of dozens of nationalities throughout his poems is unintended. Nizami does so intentionally. Thus he once more demonstrates that he writes about and for human beings, and that the readers of his works should be not one nation but many nations. And consequently it happened exactly that way. Nizami is one of the most widely-translated classics in the world. What's more, ever newer languages will join the ranks of these languages. Through his works Nizami not only founded a literary pattern to be repeated over centuries, but also the pattern for building ideas, nations, morality and states.

The ideals which Nizami propagated eight centuries ago remain desirable to-day. Humanity is presently fighting for domination of the features Nizami wished to see in human beings and society. The city Nizami depicts in his final poem - in "Iqbal-name" part of "Iskandername" actually was the society he dreamt of and wished to see implemented. Along with other world genius who served a kind of global school, Nizami has a clear stake in the overall progress attained by mankind from Nizami's time until now.

In this city all are equal, while respecting human rights is a bedrock societal norm. Money has already been abolished. There are no police either, rendered obsolete by the absence of legal violations in this conscientious and disciplined society.

*We are the peaceful persons with faith  
We do not make little steps around the truth.  
We do not have unfair dealing  
We have nothing but right deeds.*

*We offer our hand to those needing help  
We tolerate with patience when get in misfortune.  
In our case the wealth of someone is not more than the other one,  
The property is divided equally between us.*

*We find each other to be equal,  
We do not rejoice when someone else meets with sorrow.  
We do not fear the thieves,  
We have neither supervisor nor guard in the city.*





*We do not use keys and locks in our houses,  
There is no guard for our cattle.  
We do not count our gold and silver,  
As nobody needs them.*

*We do not eat as much as ox and donkey,  
However we do not refuse the boons we like.  
None of us die when young,  
Only the aged people who have lived long bid life farewell.*

We have not yet attained Nizami's desired world or the above-mentioned days. Nevertheless, humanity has always longed for such happy life, both eight centuries ago and millenia goneby. Therefore, there is today, and will remain tomorrow, the need for the light of Nizami's word and candle. Each compatriot of Nizami - each Azerbaijani - is in need of this light. Each compatriot of Nizami - each resident of earth and each citizen of the world - is in need of this light. Nizami Ganjavi, a person embodying the wishes of everyone, belongs to all. He is eternal because he belongs to everyone. Nizami will always be one step ahead of us, navigating towards a serene future.

Today, many locations and monuments have been named and dedicated to the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi - in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku; in his hometown of Ganja; and all over the world, in major cities such as Moscow, St Petersburg, Derbent, Cheboksary, Beijing, Acapulco, Kishinev, Luxembourg and Rome. Institutions, streets, squares and metro stations have all been named in his honour.

In 2012, his country, Azerbaijan, and his native city of Ganja celebrate the 870-year anniversary of this genius, great poet and philosopher of the world.



*Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Ganja.  
Sculptor: Fuad Abdurrahmanov. 1946.*



*The Tomb of Nizami Ganjavi, built in the 1980-1990s, Ganja.*





*Metal statue commemorating epic poems of Nizami Ganjavi. Ganja.*







*Nizami Ganjavi Museum in Ganja, 2013. Architect: Jamaladdin Gadyrov.*





*The building of the Azerbaijan State Literature Museum named after Nizami Ganjavi (previously housing the Metropol hotel). Redesigned by M.Usseynov and S. Dadashov in 1940. Carpet ornaments used for the ceramic decorations of the loggia by Latif Kerimov.*





*Azerbaijan State Literature Museum named after Nizami Ganjavi, 1940.*



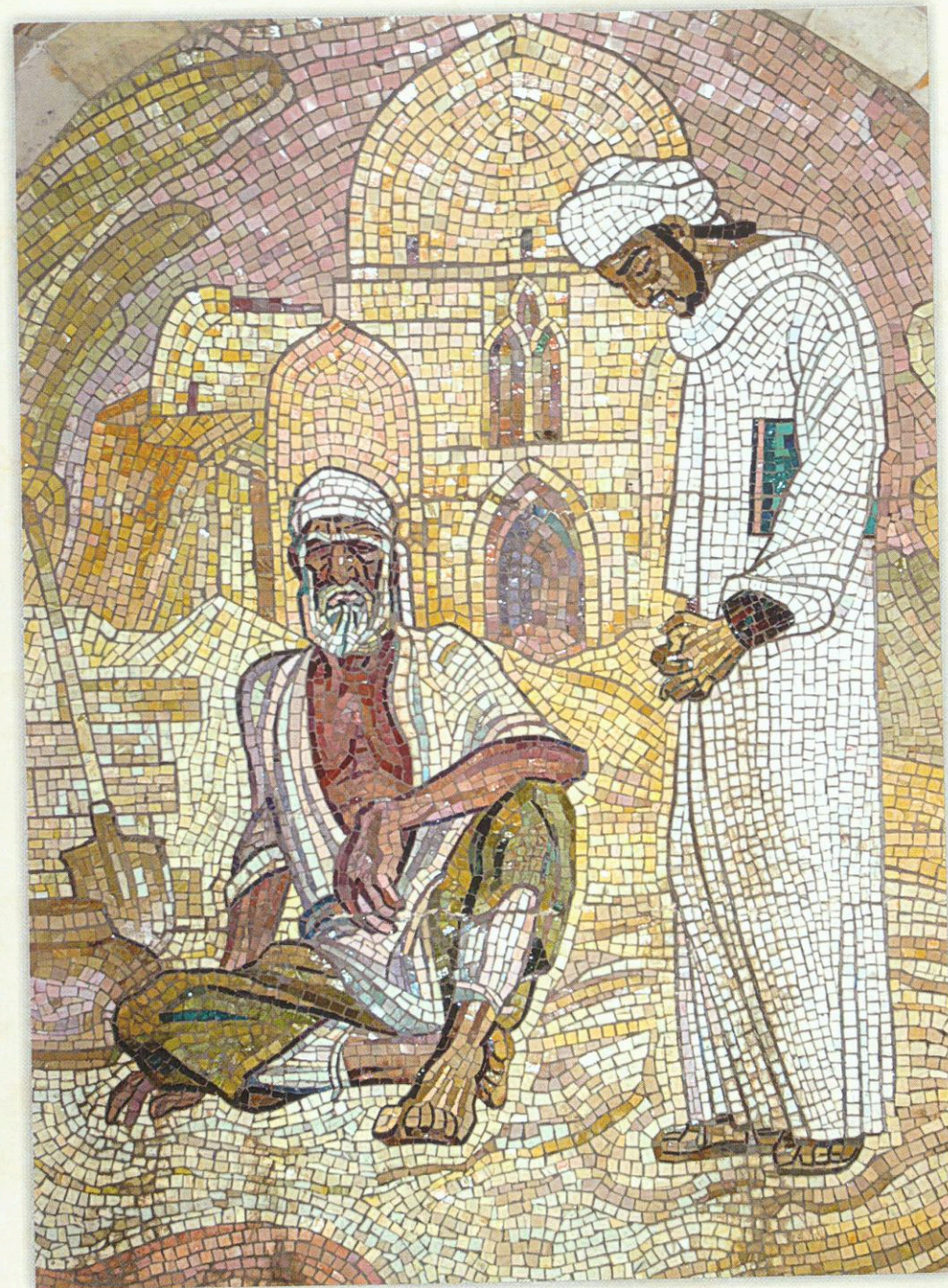


*Statue of Bahram Gur, a legendary hero from Nizami Ganjavi's poem "Seven Beauties" in Baku.  
Sculptors: G.Sujaddinov, A.Mustafayev. 1950.*





Monument to Nizami Ganjavi, an outstanding Azerbaijani poet and thinker in Baku.  
Sculptor: F. Abdurrahmanov; design by M.Usseyinov and S.Dadashov. 1949.



Nizami Ganjavi Metro Station in Baku, 1976.  
Illustration to Nizami Ganjavi's poem "The Treasury of Mysteries".





Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Moscow, Russian Federation. 1991.



Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Cheboksary, Russian Federation.





Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Kishinev, Moldavia. 2005.  
Sculptor: Akif Asgarov.



Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Saint-Peterburg, Russian Federation. 2002.  
Sculptor: Gorush Babayev.





Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Rome, Italy. 2012.  
Sculptors: Salkhab Mammadov, Ali Ibadullayev.

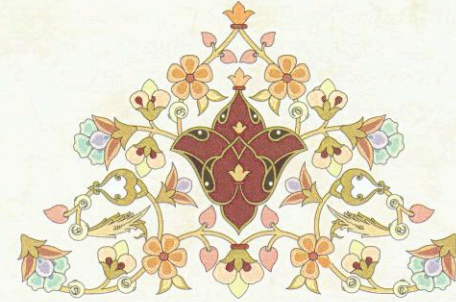


Monument to Nizami Ganjavi in Beijing, China. 2012.  
Sculptor: Yuan Xikun.

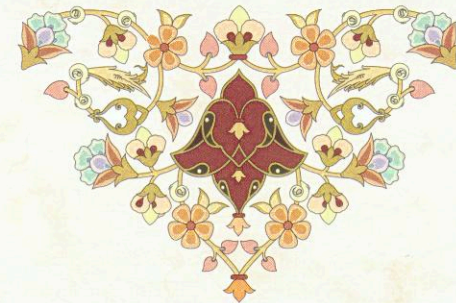




Miniature "Shah receiving Nizami Ganjavi". 1570.  
(Baku, Azerbaijan National History Museum)



## FRAGMENTS OF NIZAMI GANJAVI'S POETRY





## THE TREASURY OF MYSTERIES

## The Story of Sultan Sanjar and the Old Woman

A poor old woman, harassed and in pain  
 Came to Sanjar the Sultan to complain:  
 She said: "You have no justice, you offend,  
 Your club-law and your cruelty have no end.  
 Your drunken steward came to me, the lout,  
 Kicked, knocked me down, till he was tired out.  
 He seized me by the hair - an innocent old crone,  
 And dragged me, heeding neither cry nor moan.  
 A crowd flocked round, he swore at me, the brute,  
 Abused, reviled me, hard blows following suit.  
 He yelled: "You hunch-backed hag, you'd better tell  
 Who killed a man quite near to where you dwell?  
 He searched my house in hope of finding there  
 The murderer... O master, is that fair?  
 The reason was the steward's drunken state,  
 But why to torture me? O what a fate!  
 If subjects of the king ransack his land,  
 Can an old woman answer for the band?  
 The steward wished his false rights to assert -  
 Are not your justice and my honor hurt?  
 The blood flowed thickly from my wounded breast,  
 I have no strength to bear this cruel test.  
 O mighty Shah! I writhe with dreadful pain,  
 To God you'll answer should my cries be vain.  
 You have no mercy; you're unjust, unfair,  
 Your club-law is a torture, hard to bear.  
 A shah should grant his people bounty, grace,  
 Whilst you defile your honor with disgrace.  
 To rob poor orphans - that's no valiant deed,  
 I see the sequel to your acts, indeed!  
 Don't rob old crones that hunger they should bear,  
 And be restrained, at least, by their grey hair!  
 You are no shah - knave, and nothing more,  
 You cause great sorrows on our homes to pour.  
 If you but strove with love your land to bless,



*Khamsa of Nizami. "The Treasury of Mysteries". Tabriz. 1539-1543.*

*(London, British Library, Or. 2265)*

*Sultan Sanjar and the old woman.*

*Artist: Sultan Muhammad*



Your subjects would rejoice of your caress.  
 They would respect and honor you, no end,  
 And would consider you their greatest friend.  
 Your criminal acts created chaos here,  
 What valorous deed was yours, of conscience clear?  
 This state used to be famous for its might,  
 Its kings were praised for being just and right.  
 Now homes and hearths are ruined here by you,  
 The empty barns present a desolate view.  
 Recall the dreadful death you caused around,  
 Your turn will come! Yet you'll be safe and sound  
 If justice you adopt as guiding star;  
 Today is yours more than tomorrow, Shah!  
 Be kind and just to crones, infirm and old,  
 Attend to them; their words are more than gold.  
 Refrain from ruining homes of innocent folk,  
 They may take vengeance with a fatal stroke.  
 From your vile bow-strings swarms of arrows sped,  
 But starving men may rise and strike you dead!  
 This bear in mind: you are the key to peace,  
 Is mankind born disaster to increase?  
 You were made king to keep your folk from harm,  
 To treat their wounds with vivifying balm.  
 To what your subjects say, o Shah, give ear,  
 To what their hearts demand, give heed sincere.  
 No heed to words!... Though taking Khorassan -  
 Your loss was great, when everything was done."

Of shame today remains not even a token,  
 Loyalty's done away with, vows are broken,  
 Justice and conscience to the winds we fling,  
 They've fled, found refuge under Phoenix wing!

O Muse, your poet's words now stop their flood:  
 For Nizami has steeped his soul in blood!...

## KHOSROV AND SHIRIN

## The Contest between Khosrov and Farhad

Khosrov asked once: "Where do you come from, say?"  
 Farhad replied: "From regions far away."  
 Khosrov: "In what crafts does your land excel?"  
 Farhad: "We purchase grief and souls we sell."  
 Khosrov: "By selling souls what do you gain?"  
 Farhad: "Our bards this custom don't disdain."  
 Khosrov: "Your soul from love is well nigh fleeing?"  
 Farhad: "My soul? I love with all my being."  
 Khosrov: "Shirin's affection do you prize?"  
 Farhad: "O yes, I prove it with my sighs!"  
 Khosrov: "Is she the moon that shines at night?"  
 Farhad: "Though drowsy, still I see her light."  
 Khosrov: "When will your heart forget her glow?"  
 Farhad: "When I am buried, lying low."  
 Khosrov: "When she appears, you trembling, sigh?"  
 Farhad: "To please her in the dust I'd lie."  
 Khosrov: "But if she wounds you in the eye?"  
 Farhad: "I'll give both eyes without a cry!"  
 Khosrov: "If someone offers her his heart?"  
 Farhad: "My sword of still will do its part!"  
 Khosrov: "She never will become your own!"  
 Farhad: "A glimpse of her is joy enough alone!"  
 Khosrov: "If all your chattels she demands?"  
 Farhad: "I'll give her all, as she commands."  
 Khosrov: "But if she orders - go away!"  
 Farhad: "My head then at her feet I'll lay!"  
 Khosrov: "Forget this friendship, do you hear?"  
 Farhad: "Can friendship be destroyed by fear?"  
 Khosrov: "Be calm, it is a day-dream, see?"  
 Farhad: "Nay, calmness was not made for me!"  
 Khosrov: "Give up your love, and bear your lot."  
 Farhad: "For me life without love is nought."  
 Khosrov: "With patience men condole for sure."  
 Farhad: "Some men endure, I can't endure."  
 Khosrov: "By what great sorrow are you torn?"





*Khamsa of Nizami. "Khosrow and Shirin". Bukhara. 1648.  
(Moscow, SPL, NPV, 66)  
Farhad in front of Khosrow.*

Farhad: "Our parting makes me weep and mourn."  
 Khosrov: "Would you desire to have a wife?"  
 Farhad: "Alone I can no more bear life."  
 Khosrov: "Give up Shirin, you must obey!"  
 Farhad: "Shirin is mine, that's my last say!"  
 Khosrov: "Her name to mention do not dare!"  
 Farhad: "You see and hear Farhad's despair!"  
 Khosrov: "And if I come to love Shirin?"  
 Farhad: "The world will burn to ashes clean!"

Khosrov could give Farhad no fair reply.  
 And thought it best to stop with him to vie.  
 Confused, the Shah had surely to admit  
 No having ever met such ready wit!  
 The Shah proposed of gold a heavy sum,  
 To this proposal proud Farhad was dumb!  
 The Shah's sharp spoken word was firm and sound,  
 Instead of gold he tried a stony mound:  
 "Upon our roads stands a mountain tall,  
 With pain men cross this giant stony wall.  
 Your work will be to dig through stone and lay  
 For people's easement a convenient way.  
 No man can undertake this work; they say  
 That you alone can do it, so I pray.  
 In honor of Shirin you do the work,  
 My promise to reward you I'll not shirk.  
 Fulfill my cherished wish, and ease my load -  
 Through these great mountains dig a well-paved road.  
 You will be worthy of my gratitude,  
 I'll grant you all that vainly you pursued.  
 You will be housed with honor at my place,  
 You'll be promoted owing to my grace."  
 Farhad stretched iron muscles: "I obey,  
 The obstacles I'll duly clear away,  
 But if in this great labor I succeed,  
 There's one condition, that the Shah must heed:  
 Tomorrow, if you wish, I can begin,  
 But on condition - you give up Shirin!"



The Shah, enraged with what Farhad had said,  
 Was just preparing to chop off his head -  
 Then thought: "Khosrov is not on terms with fear,  
 Farhad will hew not earth but stone rock sheer,  
 If it were earth to dig and cart away -  
 Then that alone would take him many a day."  
 So: "I agree," said Shah Khosrov with heat,  
 "To compromise it is meanness and deceit.  
 Well, start to work and show your perfect skill -  
 And we will watch you boldly dig and drill!"  
 Farhad provoked by this insulting speech -  
 "Just Shah," said he, "how this high mount to reach?"  
 He showed the mountain looming far away,  
 That mountain's name is Bisutun\* today.  
 The mountain was of mighty granite stone,  
 To be utmost hardness it was known.  
 He hoped the promise of the Shah held good,  
 And toward the mountain ran as whirlwinds would.  
 He left the palace, flying like the wind  
 Toward Bisutun, and never looked behind.  
 He reached the mountain, without cry or moan,  
 And with his pick began to break the stone.  
 So, bit by bit, he hewed some figures fine,  
 Most beautiful, of wonderful design:  
 He made the sculptured figure of Shirin -  
 As with a sculptor's chisel, firm and keen.  
 Then with the pick's sharp point he drew alone  
 Khosrow, Shabdiz, upon the mountain stone.  
 Before these busts you see the sculpturing man  
 Who died, according to villain's plan:  
 Khosrov betrayed his vow, his word he broke,  
 Sent to Farhad a hag who dealt the fatal stroke.

\**Bisutun* - legendary mountain on which Farhad carved the image of his beloved Shirin.

## ISKANDERNAME

**Fragments from the arrival of Iskander in Barda  
 and his Encounter with the Queen Nushaba**

Oh, wine-bearer, bring me a cup of your exquisite wine,  
 It is for the thirsty spring giving water divine.  
 I feel all aflame and my thirst rouses terrible pain,  
 O brings me some wine; let me drink till no remnants remain.  
 Barda!.. what a beautiful country! A wonderful sight:  
 In spring and in winter the flowers are fragrant and bright,  
 In summer the tulips and poppies with scarlet tints glow,  
 In winter the breezes of spring-tide caressingly blow.  
 The verdant and soft rustling forests are numerous here,  
 Surrounded by springs that are welling, melodious and clear.  
 The fields are adorned with thick willows off emerald green,  
 The gardens resplendent - a fairy-land never yet seen.  
 The pheasants have built for their brood in each cypress a nest,  
 The ptarmigans coo, and the partridges sing there with zest.  
 A flower-beds slumber in silence, perfuming the air;  
 The lands of this country are free from all worry and care.  
 The sweet smelling greens in all seasons here sprout and abound,  
 Here flourishing nature is bountiful all the year round.  
 The birds to this country flock always to nest and to feed,  
 Here all, even pigeon milk, is to be found, if you need.  
 The soil of this country is verily nothing but gold -  
 As if the saf-flowers were blooming, so fair to behold.  
 Wherever you pass through the verdant and prosperous places  
 You witness the ease of existence and bright happy faces.  
 A garden as lovely as this one is not to be found,  
 Nor also a land likes Barda, where these riches abound.  
 An eminent narrator tells us a wonderful lay,  
 A lay that in eloquent wording survives to this day:  
 The fair Nushaba reigned here - queen of this land superfine,  
 A patron of feats rich in delicate sweetmeats and wine.  
 This female jeyran would have none of the masculine race,  
 And rivaled the gorgeous pheasant in beauty and grace.



An eloquent talker, unyielding, and wise and sincere,  
 In figure of a goddess, with temper of kindness and cheer.  
 A bevy of comely young maidens surrounded the Queen,  
 They stood in a round and created a picturesque scene  
 Besides them, the Queen had trick-riders and many a knight,  
 Great numbers of warriors presented a marvelous sight.  
 Although they were men in attendance, the prop of her reign,  
 Yet none of them ever set foot in her private domain.  
 The kingdom was governed by women with masterly skill,  
 To men she would never in person give word of her will.  
 The women were able and clever in action and plan,  
 And managed affairs by themselves with the help of no man.  
 Men housed in the outskirts, ne'er settled to live near their Queen,  
 And chose for their homesteads vast meadows, delightfully green.  
 In fear of her wrath none would venture to enter the town,  
 They loved Nushaba for they knew of her wondrous renown.  
 Whenever she ordered to corves the men would forsake  
 Their homesteads to labor, all ready to die for her sake.  
 When King Iskander with his legions appeared in the land,  
 The tents of her war camps were countless, her army well manned.  
 He saw here a country of luxury, joyful and free,  
 The crops were amazing, the rivers a wonder to see.  
 He questioned the people: "Whose country of beauty is this?  
 And who is the sovereign who reigns in this country of bliss?"  
 They answered: "These riches, these confines you hardly can span,  
 Belong to a woman, in courage exceeding a man,  
 A beautiful woman, in fearlessness resting secure,  
 Surpassing in beauty the pearls of the sea, and as pure.  
 No person can equal this woman in wisdom and might,  
 The support of her subjects in times of disaster and blight.  
 Arrayed in the masculine armor, her foes she defied,  
 She comes of the House of the brave Keyani, that's her pride!  
 She wears no Caucasian hat, but the crown of a queen,  
 A chieftain is she, though her soldiers she's never once seen.  
 Her numerous slaves are undaunted, the best of their race -  
 But none of these soldiers caught ever a glimpse of her face.  
 The Queen is surrounded by women, full-bosomed and fair,  
 With them she is apt to take counsel where men have no share."



*Khamsa of Nizami. For Yagub-bey Aq-Qoyunlu. "Iskandernama". Shiraz. 1543.  
 (Moscow, IOS, D-212)  
 Iskander before Nushabe.*



The Shah Iskander was surprised and well pleased with the story,  
 And wished to set eyes on this woman of beauty and glory.  
 He witnessed the wonders around him that made him aware  
 That this was a country unique, of prosperity rare.  
 The King Iskander thought it pleasant to stop here and rest,  
 They stayed and made merry - the sovereign himself and the rest.  
 The Queen was informed that an alien army was here,  
 That King Iskander had come down as a friend to her sphere.

The soul of the Padishah burst into bloom with desire  
 To meet this wise woman, to study her country entire,  
 To learn from the Queen of her secrets that made her great land  
 Yield fruits of the choicest, her forests and pastures expand,  
 And what were the bounds of this kingdom so vast to the view,  
 And whether the stories of all that he learned here were true.  
 They bought Shabdiz, golden-shoed and the best of his breed,  
 'Twas morning. The Sun of the Universe mounted his steed,  
 And all was prepared in advance for his trip to the Queen,  
 He went as an envoy the news he so longed for to glean.  
 As soon as the fane came to view with its walls tall and wide -  
 He stopped and dismounted to rest from his tedious ride.  
 The palace with towering arches appeared to his eye  
 So tall and so mighty, they seemed to be kissing the sky.  
 The maids of the Queen saw the envoy sent here by the Shah,  
 And ran to inform of this startling event Nushaba:  
 "The camp of the eminent Shah has emitted a ray -  
 He honors our country by sending his envoy today!  
 He comes to your Majesty, worthy and handsome and wise,  
 With news of his King that would make him sublime to your eyes.  
 Himself oh! So clever, polite and exceedingly fine,  
 He looks like a lamp that was lit by our Maker Divine!"  
 The Queen gave the order to clear and to deck her main domain,  
 To clean and to straighten the roadways that led to her fane.  
 Her ladies in waiting put on their most gorgeous array,  
 The palace was smothered with flowers, voluptuous and gay.  
 The maidens of honor wore jewels, had musk-scented curls,  
 Their gowns were of silk decorated with diamonds and pearls.  
 The Queen, like a pheasant tripped lightly, with infinite grace,

And wondrously bright, as a lamp, was here pure, smiling face.  
 She mounted the throne and sat down, like a goddess arrayed,  
 And held a fine orange, tradition most strictly obeyed.  
 She ordered her servants, as custom demands, to invite  
 The envoy of note to present himself now to her sight.  
 Her faithful attendants were ready the Queen to obey,  
 They hastened her will to envoy at once to convey.  
 The "envoy" walked fearlessly in, without any constraint,  
 He mounted the throne - this brave lion, devoid of all taint.  
 Contrary to custom he kept on his belt and his sword,  
 And made no low bows as an envoy, this eminent lord.  
 He noticed the wisdom and grandeur, and fathomed their price,  
 A picturesque palace, built really to daze and entice!  
 He noted the stir and the bustle, the court maidens' grace,  
 The perfume of amber and musk, the content on each face.  
 The glittering jewels that decked them so dazzlingly bright,  
 Reminded the Shah of the Stars on a dark moonless night.  
 The brilliant reflection of jewels on maiden and dame  
 Seemed likely to crown Iskander with a halo of flame!  
 It seems that the ocean itself, and each diamond mine  
 Had sent their best valuables here in her palace to shine.  
 The envoy's unseemly behavior had outraged the Queen,  
 Who became very angry at what she had seen.  
 She thought: "He knows nothing of what our customs exact,  
 No notion has he how an envoy's expected to act!  
 This poor ignoramus should duly be kept in his place,  
 His negligent manner toward us is perfect disgrace!"  
 But, watching attentively, suddenly doubt stirred her mind,  
 She probed him like gold to find out what was hidden behind.  
 She looked at him, guessed that himself Iskander Shah was there,  
 Made place for the King on her throne, glad her honors to share.  
 She guessed Iskander had behaved so by way of a joke,  
 And, wishing his presence beside her, Her Majesty spoke:

"Be welcome, a chieftain, be welcome, o great Iskander!  
 how quaint, you yourself are your envoy, come here from afar.  
 My sensitive heart has divined it. I see it this way:  
 Your royal demeanor and manners a sovereign betray.





*Khamasa of Nizami. "Iskandernama". Shiraz. 1491.*

*(SPL, NPV 83)*

*Iskander and the seven sages.*

No envoy is you, but a king, am I right, I demand?

No envoy is you but a sovereign to rule and command!

Your proper informant - your sword is the enemy's fear -

Unsheathe it before me; no other would dare, that is clear!

But if in my presence you draw it - your rights you exceed,

It means violating the bounds of convention, indeed.

Your sword will not help you; speak not of its valorous might,

Find other excuses to make yourself fine in my sight.

You come as a guest, but my nets draw around you secure,

Just think of it, think and reflect - you are not yet mature.

My luck brought you here, to my throne to my land rich and gay,

Long live this fair Luck that smiles down on my people today!"

Her words were sincere, and here beat with joy in her breast,

Her throne, decorated with crystals, she left for her guest.

"My throne is your own, famous Shah, on this throne take your seat.

No place for two rulers to sit thus enthroned, 'tis not meet!

From chess you must know that two kings with each other contest,

Their conflict is painful, of wit and endurance a test."

The beautiful Ruler stepped down from her sumptuous throne,

And honored the Shah with the offer to make it his own.

Like somebody's bride, on a plain golden chair she sat down,

And said: "I am surely your slaving on whom you may frown!"

The heart of giant was thrilled by the speech he had heard,

He flushed and he paled, was excited by gesture and word:

He thought: "The sly queen, though a woman, has thought out her plan.

She seems to be able, and brilliantly wise, like a man!"

He mused, and reproached himself now for the fault he had made

Of putting himself in the power of this royal maid.

If ever a knight made attacks on her land - 'twas in vain -

The dragon would capture him duly, and that was quite plain.

If ever a singer sang songs no composer had made,

The gay kamancha would make fun of his voice thus displayed.

So plunged in a reverie grievous, deploring his fate,

He scolded his nature, his conduct, his error so great.

Deep grief overwhelmed him; with patience this grief would he meet,

He bowed the proud head held so high and acknowledged defeat.



The Queen gave the word to her maidens to honor the guest  
 By gracefully decking the tables with all that was best.  
 The feast should be worthy in food and in wine of the King,  
 Most savory dishes the maidens were ordered to bring.  
 Her servants obeyed her, their bustling about never ceased,  
 They ran to and fro, and prepared a most wonderful feast.  
 They brought in great dishes of mutton and lamb meat of choice,  
 The bread was in loaves, newly baked, for the heart to rejoice.  
 The tables were laid near the palace and reached to the gate,  
 The dishes were flavored with saffron and ambergris.  
 The pies, richly covered with sesame, buttered and sweet,  
 And everything seemed as most fine and delectable meat.  
 And bullocks, well roasted, and all kinds of delicate fish,  
 A bull with the sphere on his horns, lying low on the dish,  
 And lambs settled gracefully, seeming so glad, beyond words,  
 As if they grew wings in their strange exultation, like birds.  
 And jams most delicious and syrups with lemon, made sweet,  
 The almonds, pistachios, nuts were a pleasure to eat.  
 Some food smelt of ambergris; the taste of such savory wealth  
 Could help a poor sickening man to recover his health!  
 And almond halva in great blocks; so much food all around,  
 That vessels enough to contain it could hardly be found!  
 The sherbet was flavored with rose water, fragrantly fine,  
 You took just one sip and it tasted of ambergris, like the best wine.  
 Besides this the Queen placed in front of her throne, made of gold,  
 A panel, exceedingly polished and rich to behold.  
 Four cups were displayed on the panel before Iskander:  
 One cup held red rubies, the second gold ore, bat on bar,  
 The third cup held pearls, in the fourth glittered sapphires rare,  
 Thus showing her riches, she honored her guest with her care.  
 As soon as the people were brought to a sociable mood,  
 And mouths were preparing to swallow the excellent food,  
 The Queen murmured thus: "Oh, I beg you, most eminent Lord -  
 Partake of the viands that are spread on this welcoming board!"  
 He answered: "O beautiful woman, I blush at your word:  
 For all that you told me just now is so very absurd:  
 Here, lying before me, are stones of a value most rare,  
 But can you digest them? Why offer uneatable fare?!"

And man with a mind, can he eat of the stones here displayed?  
 His stomach will never accept them, if ever well paid!  
 But treat me to food that would flatter the stomach at once,  
 To victuals that, temptingly, offer the hand to advance."  
 The Queen was amused, and she laughingly said to the Shah:  
 "If valuable stones cannot nourish a being so far,  
 Then jewels are useless, and really of very small need,  
 But why all the efforts to own them, with fever and greed?  
 If really these glittering jewels as food cannot serve -  
 Then man, due to them, cannot rise in the world with much verve.  
 I duly acknowledge the fact that a stone is no food -  
 But why do we labor to get it? This must be tabooed!  
 We clear away stones from the road, a good pass to afford,  
 Then why all the stones that are precious so well do we hoard?  
 We try to collect them; we dig with avidity great,  
 But eat them we cannot, they lie in a quite useless state.  
 If you, mighty Shah, have no love for a rich precious stone -  
 Reduce what you have, and thereby you will safeguard your throne."  
 The words of this woman so lovely impressed him with force,  
 The athlete agreed with her wise explanation, of course.  
 He said: "Oh, Khanum, your true words contradiction defy,  
 With words of your judgment no masculine judgment can vie.  
 Your lips spoke the truth about jewels, for each precious stone  
 For lost health and happiness, surely can never atone.  
 Be praised, lovely Queen, for your wisdom and cleverness rare,  
 Thus showing the way I must go to the honest and fair.  
 O clear-sighted maiden, your words have sown wonderful seed:  
 No coinage of gold shall I have, no advice shall I heed,  
 The gold I shall throw on the ground for it comes from earth,  
 Where mines are its cradle, the primary place for its birth."  
 Her ruby-red lips smiled in hearing the Ruler applaud,  
 They seemed to illuminate nature, approving the lord.  
 She ordered her maidens to serve him with exquisite meats,  
 And treat Iskander to the relish of delicate sweets,  
 She tasted each dish with a tender, benevolent smile,  
 Her guest was amazed at her grace as he watched her the while.  
 The Shah was uneasy at this unexpected strange turn,  
 When dinner was over, he rose to depart, with concern.



## GHAZAL

O radiant-face beloved, whose cherished bride will you be?  
Whose dignity will you raise, whose honor and pride will you be?

You are shaded this eve by the awning your master has spread,  
Whose queen with your odorous tresses and grace will you be?

You are sweeter than honey; no sherbet is sweeter than you,  
Whose rill his course with love's wavelets to trace, will you be?

In the darkness of night you're lamp with bright light,  
God guard you from evil eye.  
Breath of life - o whose love to caress and embrace will you be?

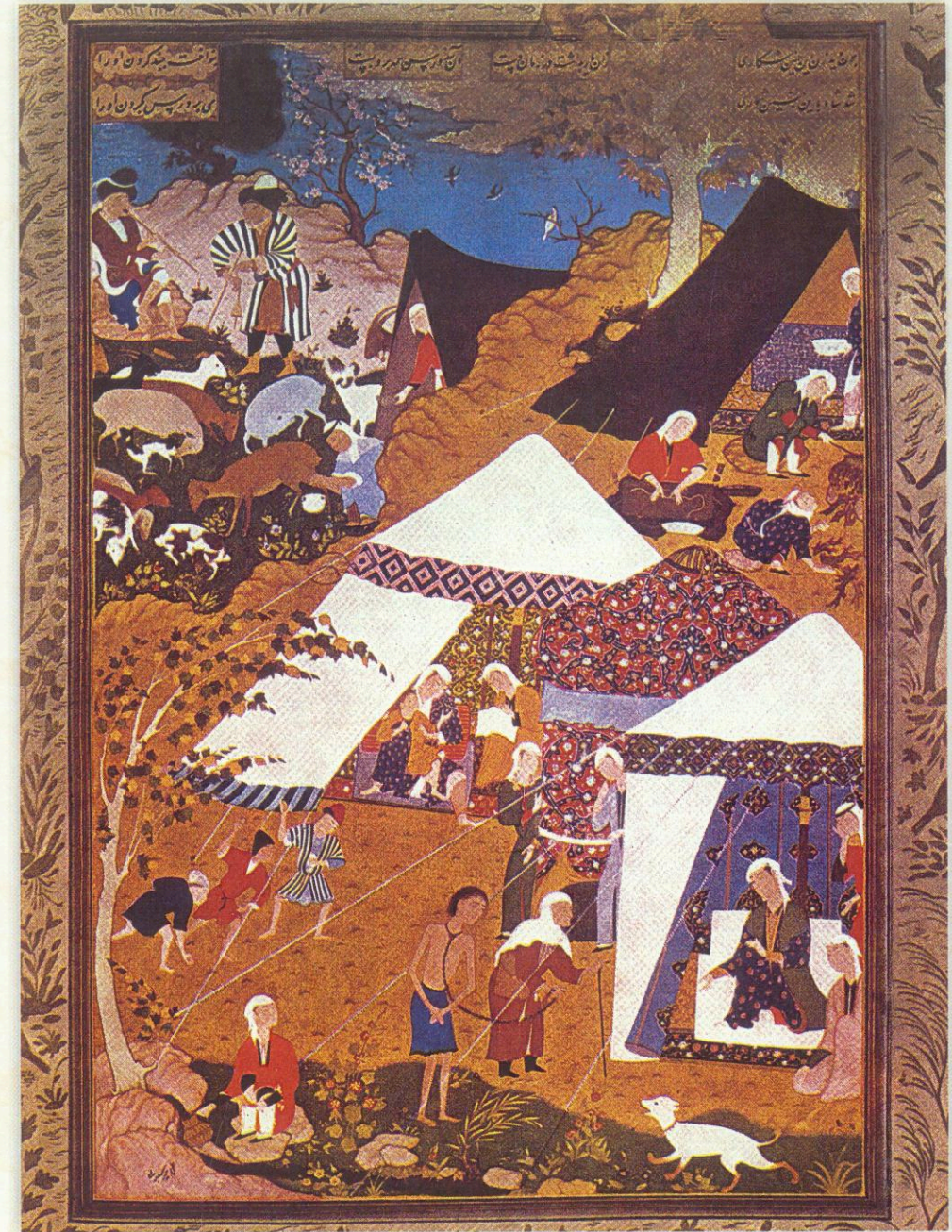
You are gone, how can poor Nizami live alone with his grief?  
He is down now, whose healer his pain to appease will you be?

## GUIT'A

Near the garden, too shy to go in, I was burnt by a flower,  
How I trembled... She laughed with her laughter of resonant power,

And the emerald garden, it echoed the sweet rolling laughter,  
She, smiling, exceeded in beauty the flowery bower.

In the morning, at dawn, fleecy cloudlets shed tears on the garden,  
And the jasmine laughed, and the violets smiled, revived by the shower.



*Khamsa of Nizami. "Leyli and Majnun". Tabriz. 1539-1543.*

*(London, British Library, Or. 2265)*

*Majnun brought to Leyli's tent.*

*Artist: Mir Seyid Ali*



## GASSIDA

It is who am peer of all knowledge, my renown of perfection is great,  
My genius is vast as the heavens, for I dominate earth, time and fate.

My breath fills the earth; it resembles the resonant chimes of a bell,  
My pen is a banner of glory called to conquer the earth and create.

And my proud, lofty brow has attained in its power Keigubad's regal crown,  
Nay, compared to this height and this grandeur his palace is of far lesser weight.

In the sky rose my wonderful sun to shine for the whole universe,  
While my body can breathe and give life, its power will never abate.

In the world of the bards has my name reached immortal and glorious fame,  
And my genius is here, of this palace, where the Shahs reign - the master innate.

Magnanimous and large is my heart - a vast storehouse of nobleness pure,  
It is sealed with the seal of deep truth, and the truth therein lying is great.

If this pride overwhelmed, the works of Zabur I peruse,  
His tongue for the reading of thoughts I wish to cut out, for sheer hate.

Generosity often breeds pity, gentle words are bred daily by me,  
My gift shows freshness and beauty, sweet youth seems forever its mate.

My ghazals reach the ear of the people in a wave of harmonious sounds,  
My ghazals are the color of poppies and, like wine, lull the heart-beats to sleep.

All that moves in the far starry heavens, all is put into motion by me,

And in the Fortune's gold cup I'm the water, while the sky is the scoop of the deep.  
I'll not strike tambourines to no purpose; with drums comes a wedding for sure;

When my word sounds, music is worthless, and all instruments silence keep.  
If my writings have flaws in their wording, they are still of an exquisite style;

If my syrup has dregs - still with pleasure, for its taste, you will drink of it deep.  
My new style has begun a fresh epoch, and now naught of old values remains,

If a new word is coined it is useless, for compared to my word - it is cheap.  
With my writings of beauty mysterious, I have conquered the heart of the world,

And from all this success and this glory - admiration and love do I reap.  
When I write, my great writings are such, that ibni-Mugla covets my pen,

Where my word is of clearness astounding, there his poise Ibni-Khani can't keep.  
When my lips part to utter wise sayings, then all people in gladness exult,

And the buds of the flowers open, by my spring from their winter sleep freed.  
If my word is not heard in its glory, and no gladness or joy light the scene,

Then no bard will you witness whose singing to the advent of springtide would lead.  
I have cause to be proud of my writings, of the beauty sublime of my pen,

And you notice the exquisite wording, when my wonderful verses you read.

I am mother-of-pearl, I am virtuous, I am clearer than crystal-clear gems,  
But am troubled that, causeless, some harm me, and deprive me of things that I need.

When my breath comes out freely and deeply, it resembles a light-floating mist,  
And it warms me and makes my fine verses string like pearls on a thread, bed by bead.

I am truly the star that is shining, making nough of my enemies fierce,  
It is greater than art and the Muses, and makes poets and thinkers recede.

Nizami's style resembles a charger with a bridle - a light leather strap,  
And my grief is a hard, heavy stirrup, but how perfectly gallops my steed!





**NIZAMI GANJAVI**

This book includes miniatures created by  
Azerbaijani and other Oriental painters.

Introductory article by: **Rafael Huseynov**  
Professor, Doctor of Philology

Portrait of Nizami Ganjavi by: **Elmira Shakhtakhtinskaya**  
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**Nizami  
Ganjavi**



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