

Nizami Ganjevi (1141-1209)

BIOGRAPHY

The great Azerbaijanian poet and thinker Nizami Ganjevi (real name Ilyas son of Yousif) is one of the geniuses of the past, whose creative activity forms a distinctive and original stage in the history of the development of world culture. The most brilliant poet of the romantic epic that Azerbaijan gave to the world – Nizami became the symbol of Azerbaijanian poetry, his poems were not surpassed by anyone and have preserved freshness and vigor throughout the centuries.

Very little is known about his life. It is known that he was born in 1141 in Ganje and spent all his life in this city. Only once about 1185-1187 did he leave it, and then not by his own accord but because the King of Azerbaijan Qizil-Arslan-shah was passing by and expressly requested a meeting. However, as we see from his poems, Nizami was a well-educated, versatile man well acquainted with ancient Greek, Arabian and Persian literature. And that's not surprising, since the X-XII cc. are called in historiography the "Golden Age" in the history of Azerbaijan. At that time Ganje, where poet lived, was one of the biggest cultural centers of Azerbaijan where trade routes from north to south, from east to west intercrossed.

Nizami wrote in Persian, since it was the basic literary language in the medieval Islamic Orient, with Arabic being the language of religion and science. Persian was also the official state language of the XII c. Azerbaijan Seljuk and Atabek feudal palaces. An authoritative expert on classical Persian-Tajik poetry and an outstanding orientalist Y.E. Bertels clearly shows that "the absence of national self-consciousness" prevented the Seljuk rulers from the progress of their native tongue*.

The epical works of Nizami consist of five separate poems that have been assembled by later generations into a collection called Khamsa (Five Poems or Quintuple). The Khamsa poems are "The Treasure-house of Mysteries", "Khosrov and Shirin", "Leyli and Mejnun", "Seven Beauties" and "Iskandarnama" (The Book of the Alexander the Great), which consists of two parts, "Sharfanama" and "Igbalnama".

It is doubtless that Nizami had a complete collection of lyrics – a divan consisting of ghazals, qassidas, rubaiyats, and others, probably, as much as 20.000 distiches, but practically, the whole of it has been lost, of only about 2.000 distiches preserved.

Virtue was one of the main factors characterizing Nizami. Humanism is the meaning and content of his poetry. Man and his destiny are the central themes in his creative activity. Nizami's lyrical poems are, in fact, permeated with passionate emotion, many of which are dedicated to his beloved wife Afaq (Afaq - Snow-White in Azeri-Turkish).

Nizami had an uncommonly large number of imitators in Azerbaijan, Iran, Turkey, Central Asia, and even India. Three centuries later the great poet Fuzuli inspired by Nizami's "Leyli and Mejnun" wrote his own masterpiece "Leyli and Mejnun" poem, this time in Azeri-Turkish. Tremendous admiration of Nizami is also reflected in the medieval Azerbaijanian and Middle Eastern miniature arts, where the themes are for the greater part taken from Nizami's Khamsa.

[*Bertels, Velikiy azerbaydzhanskiy poet Nizami (Great Azerbaijanian poet Nizami). Baku 1940 p. 36]

POETRY

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The Contest Between Khosrau and Farhad (excerpt from the poem Farhad and Shirin)

Khosrau asked once: "Where do you come from, say?"

Farhad replied: "From regions far away."

Khosrau: "In what crafts does your land excel?"

Farhad: "We purchase grief and souls we sell."

Khosrau: "By selling soul what do you gain?"

Farhad: "Our bards this custom don't disdain."

Khosrau: "Your soul from love is well high fleeing?"

Farhad: "My soul? I love with all my being."

Khosrau: "Shirin's affection do you prize?"

Farhad: "O yes, I prove it with my sighs!"

Khosrau: "Is she the moon that shines at night?"

Farhad: "Though drowsy, still I see her light."

Khosrau: "When will your heart forget her glow?"

Farhad: "When I am buried, lying low."

Khosrau: "When she appears, you trembling, sigh?"

Farhad: "To please her in the dust I'd lie."

Khosrau: "But if she wounds you in the eye?"

Farhad: "I'll give both eyes without a cry!"

Khosrau: "If someone offers her his heart?"

Farhad: "My sword of steel will do its part!"

Khosrau: "She never will become your own!"

Farhad: "A glimpse of her is a joy enough alone!"

Khosrau: "If all your chattels she demands?"

Farhad: "I'll give her all, as she commands."

Khosrau: "But if she orders - go away!"

Farhad: "My head then at her feet I'll lay!"

Khosrau: "Forget this friendship, do you hear?"

Farhad: "Can friendship be destroyed by fear?"

Khosrau: "Be calm, it is a day-dream, see?"

Farhad: "Nay, calmness not made for me!"

Khosrau: "Give up your love, and bear your lot."

Farhad: "For me love without love is nought."

Khosrau: "With patience men condole for sure."
Farhad: "Some men endure, I don't endure."
Khosrau: "By what great sorrow are you torn?"
Farhad: "Our parting makes me weep and mourn."
Khosrau: "Would you desire to have a wife?"
Farhad: "Alone I can no more bear life."
Khosrau: "Give up Shirin, you must obey!"
Farhad: "Shirin is mine, that's my last say!"
Khosrau: "Her name to mention do not dare!"
Farhad: "You see and hear Farhad's despair!"
Khosrau: "And if I come to love Shirin?"
Farhad: "The world will burn to ashes clean!"

Khosrau could give Farhad no fair reply,
And thought: it's best to stop with him to vie.
Confused, the Shah had surely to admit
Not 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 was firm and sound,
Instead of gold he tried a stony mound:
"Upon our roadway 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 honour of Shirin you do the work,
My promise to reward you I'll not shirk."
Fulfil 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 everything that vainly you pursued.
You will be housed with honour at my place,
You will be promoted owing to my grace."
Farhad stretched iron muscles: "I obey,
The obstacles I'll duly clear away,
But if in this great labour I succeed,
There's one condition that the Shah must heed:
Tomorrow, if you wish, I can begin,
But on condition - you'll give up Shirin!"
The Shah enraged with what Farhad had said,
Was just preparing to chop off his head -
Then thought: "Khosrau 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 Khosrau with heat,
"To compromise it is meanness and deceit.
Well, start to work and show your 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 of 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 a wind
Toward Bisutun, and never looked behind.
He reached the mountain, without cry and moan,
And with his pick began to break the stone.
So, bit by bit, he hewed some figures fine,
Most beautiful, or 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
Khosrau, Shabdiz, upon the mountain stone.
Before these busts you see the sculpturing man
Who died, according to a villain's plan:
Khosrau betrayed his vow, his word he broke,
Sent to Farhad a hag, who dealt the fatal stroke.

Ghazal

O radiant-faced beloved, whose cherished bride will you be?
Whose dignity will you praise, whose honour 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 wave lets to trace, will you be?

In the darkness of night you're a lamp with bright light, God guard you
from evil eye,
Breath of life - o whose love 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?

The Story of Sultan Sanjar and the old Woman (from the poem Treasure-house of Mysteries)

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 has 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 honour 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 honour 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 - a knave, and nothing more,
You cause great sorrows on our homes to pour.
If you but strove with love your land to bless,
Your subjects would rejoice of your caress.
They would respect and honour you, no end,
And would consider you're 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 deaths 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 need for 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 flood:
For Nizami has steeped his soul in blood!...

Fragments from "The Arrival of Iskander (Alexander the Great) in Bardaa and His Encounter with the Queen Nushabaa" (from the poem ISKANDER-NAMEH)

Oh, wine-bearer, bring me a cup of your exquisite wine,
It is for the thirsty a spring giving water divine.
I feel all aflame and my thirst rouses terrible pain,
O bring me some wine, let me drink till no remnant remain.

Bardaa!...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 carelessly 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 of emerald green,
The gardens resplendent - 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.
And 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 like Bardaa, where these riches abound.

An eminent narrator tells us a wonderful lay,
A lay that in eloquent wording survives to this day:

The fair Nushabaa reigned here - queen of this land superfine,
A patron of feasts rich in delicate sweetmeats and wine.
This female jeyran would have none of the masculine race,
And rivalled the gorgeous pheasant in beauty and grace.
An eloquent talker, unyielding, and wise and sincere,
In figure 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 marvellous 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 Nushabaa for they knew of her wondrous renown.
Whenever she ordered to corvee the men would forsake
Their homesteads to labour, all ready to die for her sake.
When King Iskander with his legions appeared in the land,
The tents of her warcamps 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 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 in the masculine armour, 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."

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 brought Shabdizaa, 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 Nushabaa:
"The camp of the eminent Shah has emitted a ray -
He honours 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 hit by our Maker Divine!"
The Queen gave the order to clear and to deck her domain,
To clean and 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 honour 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 her 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 servants, as custom demands, to invite
The envoy of note to present himself to her sight.
Her faithful attendants were ready the Queen to obey,
They hastened her will to the envoy at once 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 behaviour 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 hidden behind.
She looked at him, guessed that himself Iskander Shah was there,
Made place for the King on her throne, glad her honours to share.
She guessed Iskander had behaved so by way of 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 demeanour and manners a sovereign betray.
No envoy are you, but a king, am I right, I demand?
No envoy are 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 it 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 and rich and gay,
Long live this fair Luck that smiles down on my people today!"

Her words were sincere, and her heart beat with joy in her breast,
Her throne, decorated with crystal, she left for the guest.
"My throne is your own, famous Shah, on this throne take your seat,
No place for two rulers to sit thus enthroned, 'this 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 honoured 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 slaveling on whom you may frown!"
The heart of the 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 his 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 kamanchah [\[1\]](#) 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 honour 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 savoury 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 lambmeat 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 flavoured 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 gravefully, 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 savoury wealth
Could help a poor sickening man to recover his health!
And almond halvah in great blocks; so much food all around,
That vessels enough to contain it could hardly be found!
The sherbet was flavoured with rose water, flagrantly 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, bar on bar,
The third cup held pearls, in the fourth glittered sapphires rare,
Thus showing her riches, she honoured her guest with her care.
As soon as the people were brought to a sociable mood,
And mouths were planning 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 even 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 labour 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 judgement no masculine judgement 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 be 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 the earth,

Where mines are its cradle, the primary place of 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 his unexpected strange turn,
When dinner was over, he rose to depart, with concern.
But when he was leaving the Queen made him vow not to hurt
Her subjects, her land, and no rights in her realm to assert.
Then Shah Iskander duly published a royal decree,
And left the great Queen and her country well governed and free.
And when Iskander left the city the Queen breathed relief,
From God she expected great help and from fortune but grief.
To guard from the wrath of the Shah her dear country she played,
And thanked her Creator for saving her land from the raid.
And when the dark night overpowered the sun and the day,
She kindled a lamp while the candle extinguished its ray,
And high in the heavenly sphere with coming of night
The stars lit in legions their galaxies, twinkling and bright.

[1] kamanchah - Azeri folk music instrument

Gassida

It is I 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, with 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 colour 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 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 Ibn-i-Mugla [1] covets my
pen,
Where my word is of clearness astounding, there his poise Ibn-i-Khani [1]
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,
The 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 I am troubled that, causeless, some harm me, and deprive me of things 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, bead by bead.

I am truly a star that is shining, making nought 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!