

April 18, 2013

## Persian Language and Literature

### Timeline of Persian History

Sometime between 17th and 10th century BCE Birth of Zoroaster

559-330 BCE Achaemenian Dynasty Cyrus the Great, Darius and Xerxes Earliest Old Persian Inscriptions

332 BCE Alexander the Great Crossed Hellespont Destroys Persepolis

312 BCE 44 BCE Seleucid Dynasty (founded by Alexander's generals)

163 BCE 224 CE Parthian Dynasty

208 CE 637 CE Sassanian Dynasty Middle Persian (Few Extant examples)

651 CE Beginning of Arab (and Islamic) domination

750 CE Abbasid Dynasty defeats Umayyad; moves capital to Baghdad Translation Movement

994 CE 1030 Ghaznavid Dynasty (Turkic speaking) **Persian culture flourishes**

**Ferdowsi (b. 935) writes Shahnameh (Book of Kings); created modern Persian**  
**985 CE 1010 (New Persian or Classical Persian)**

1045 1092 Seljuq Dynasty (and vizier Nizam al-Mulk (1020-1092) Era of Omar Khayyam

Genghis Khan's Mongol Army captures Khorassan 1221

Timurid Dynasty 1405 1517

Safavid Dynasty 1502 1737

## Gathas of Zarathustra

Ideal are the thoughts, ideal the words, ideal  
the deeds of the Righteous Zarathushtra.

Let the ever-living promulgators present the  
Gathas. Homage to the righteous Gathas

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Both wholeness and immortality lead to Your  
splendor. The sovereignty of good mind and  
serenity with righteousness promote steadfast  
strength and courage. These, Wise One,  
constitute our strength against antagonists.

### Hakim Sanai *Walled Garden of Truth*

And if, my friend, you ask me the way  
I'll tell you plainly, it is this:  
to turn your face towards the world of life,  
and turn your back on rank and reputation;  
and, spurning outward prosperity, to bend  
your back double in his service;  
to part company with those who deal in words,  
and take your place in the presence of the  
worldless.

The way is not far  
from you to a friend: you yourself are that way:  
so set out along it.

### Hafiz

It's sunrise, wineboy. Pour my drink straightway  
For the turning of the sphere brooks no delay.

Ere our fleeting world has wasted away  
completely Get me completely wasted with  
Rosé!

From the east of the winebowl rose the wine's  
red sun. Want pleasure? Tell sleep to get out of  
your face today.

Fill the chalice of my skull with age-sweet  
ferment, The day the Firmament's wheel makes  
jugs of my clay,

I'm no man for sufiistry, cant or hermetic  
babble. If the wine is crystal-clear, then have  
your say.

Hafiz! The worship of liquid spirits is proper. Get  
up, then, and vow to make it a proper day.

### Omar Khayyam

As the rising Venus and moon in the skies  
appear

To the goodness of quality wine, nothing  
comes near

I am amazed at the vendors of a liquid so dear  
Where they'll buy a better thing, is not clear.

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,  
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,  
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd As,  
buried once, Men want dug up again.

در صومعه و مدرسه و دیر و کنشت  
ترسنده دوزخ اند و جویای بهشت  
آن کس که از اسرار خدا با خبر است  
زین تخم در اندون دل هیچ نکشت

*Those whom we meet in churches, divinity colleges or temples  
Desire heaven and fear hell;  
But he who has read the secrets of the Divine,  
Does not give a moment's thought to such matters.*

--The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

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**Last lecture May 16<sup>th</sup> Arabic**