



# The Lightning Should Have Fallen on Ghalib: Selected Poems of Ghalib

*Ghalib, Robert Bly, Sunil Dutta*

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Ghalib is an astonishing poet from India, perhaps the most important poet since Kabir. In *The Lightning Should Have Fallen on Ghalib: Selected Poems of Ghalib*, poet Robert Bly and Urdu scholar Sunil Dutta collaborate to bring the delicacy and intensity of Ghalib's poetry to readers of English. This collection of thirty ghazals by Ghalib also serves as an introduction to the ghazal, the elegant and amazing poetic form revered for centuries in the Muslim world.

Ghalib was unorthodox in many ways: he was a Muslim, but he drank and was fond of gambling. He had a difficult life, full of rejections and excesses; much of his life was spent in Delhi during the British conquest of India. Ghalib's poems often mingle humor and anguish. In "The Clay Cup," he says:

*I know that Heaven doesn't exist, but the idea  
Is one of Ghalib's favorite fantasies.*

His form and detail are exquisite. Many emotions flood into one poem--he complains, he pokes fun at intellectuals, he grieves over desires--and it is up to the reader to find the thread that holds the couplets together. Ghalib ends "The Road with Thorns" with a charming boast:

*The lightning that fell on Moses should have  
fallen on Ghalib.  
You know we always adjust the amount of the wine  
to the quality of the drinker*

His work lies in the tradition of Hafiz and Rumi; and yet he manages to join that fervor with a contemporary style. More than one hundred years after Ghalib's death, his ghazals remain indisputably modern, intense, and as fresh as ever.

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