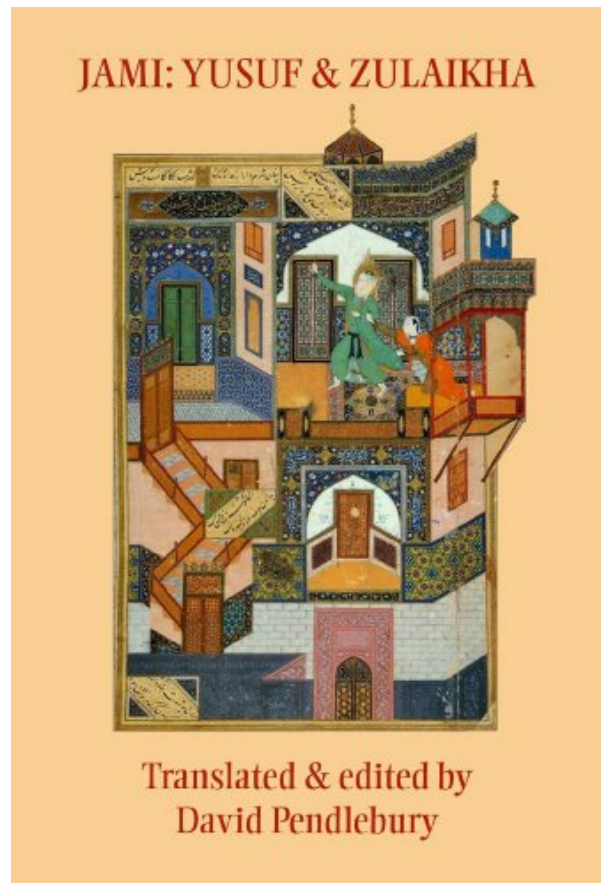


# YUSUF AND ZULAIKHA BY JAMI



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# JAMI: YUSUF & ZULAIKHA



Translated & edited by  
David Pendlebury

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### Language Notes

Text: English, Persian (translation)

### From the Publisher

Written by the great Sufi poet in 1483 A.D., this masterpiece explores the intimate and many-leveled relationship between love and beauty and portrays erotic and divine love, not as irreconcilably opposite to each other, but as an allegorical continuum.

Judaic, Christian and Islamic versions exist--derived perhaps from an ancient Egyptian source--but none could replace Jami's rendering. David Pendlebury's prose translation reaches for the kernel, not merely the husk, of this allegory. But while it does so, there is also humor, excitement, romance and an abundance of insight into human behavior.

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Described in the Qur'an (which gives a more detailed account than is found in Genesis) as 'the most beautiful of stories', the romance of Yusuf and Zulaikha is a theme to which eastern poets have constantly returned. Undoubtedly in Jami's deeply moving, thought-provoking and highly entertaining version it finds its finest expression. Jami explores the intimate and many levelled relationship between love and beauty and portrays erotic and divine love, not as an implacable dichotomy, but as an allegorical continuum. This entirely new prose translation combines a faithful reflection of the spirit of the original with the compulsive readability of a novel.

The present digital edition is based, with some minor amendments, on the 1980 Octagon Press edition.

My sincere thanks go to Idries Shah – specifically for introducing me to Jami's epic love-story – and in general for shedding so much light on Sufi thinking, both in its traditional and its current manifestations. If this new translation comes nearer than its western predecessors to rendering some of the kernel as opposed to the mere husk of the original, then the credit belongs to the clarifying and revitalising influence of Shah's works.

A taster from Jami's prologue:

“For this is a theme which has yet to be brought to completion: apart from its title nothing remains of this tale. In this tavern, where so many a sweet tale is sung, I cannot hear so much as an echo of this melody. My fellows have drunk their fill and gone, leaving nothing behind but their empty jars; I see no ripe one at this feast of the raw, who holds a cup of this wine in his hand. They have left us neither jug, nor cup, nor cupbearer: nothing but sorrow now remains.

But take heart, Jami: have done with diffidence! Whether it be lees or clearest wine, bring forth your drink!”

About the Author

Hakim Nuruddin Jami(1414-92 CE) lived most of his life in Herat and studied in close association with the Sufi Master Saaduddin Kashgari and (more remotely) Khwaja Ahrar, the supreme leader of the Naqshbandi Order. He was the author of about fifty works, including a collection of seven epic poems entitled *haft awrang* (Seven Thrones), of which Yusuf and Zulaikha is but one. (He wrote this masterpiece in his seventieth year, in 1483 – one year before Sandro Botticelli produced his *Birth of Venus*.) Jami also wrote *nafahat al-'uns* (breaths of the breeze of friendship), a lengthy compendium of biographies of the Sufi Masters, and the *beharistan* (Abode of Spring), a collection of verse and teaching stories in the manner of Saadi's *gulistan*. More details about this excellent man, whose manifest genius repelled some, but whose boundless compassion and humility captivated many, many more, are to be found in the Afterword of the present book.

Translator David Pendlebury has combined careers in language teaching, both in the UK and overseas with a lifelong interest in the ideas expressed so powerfully in Central Asia and the Middle East through the medium of poetry.

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7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Pleasing translation of a Sufi classic love story

By A Customer

Pendlebury has taken a classical Persian poem and turned it into a highly readable novel. The poem is based on a story from Islamic folklore, which is itself based on the chapter about Joseph in the Quran. It takes off from the part of the story where the master's wife tries to seduce Joseph and tells "the story behind the story." Zulaikha is the name Islamic folklore gives to the master's wife (known as Potiphar's wife in the Bible). This Sufi classic humanizes her and makes us more sympathetic to her desire. I have used this book semester after semester in my courses on the literature of the Middle East. My students mostly find it delightful, after they get used to the way the Persian poet revels in piling metaphor upon metaphor, hyperbole upon hyperbole. I tell them not to expect realism; we are in the realm of the mythical here, where every maiden is a "moon-faced beauty" and every pair of pursed lips is "tight as a rosebud."

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Excellent

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One of the best explorations into the mysteries of the divine. A truly excellent read, let down only in one place where the translator was obviously limited by the english language. A heart moving story for all generations.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Indelible Classic of Esoteric Spiritual Allegory

By Romulus Johnson

The translation betrays the era in which it was produced. However this is mostly an impediment to a modern reader's demands of a style, not a barrier to the meaning or understanding of this important classic. In the spiritual literature of Love, Jami is a master of the stature equal to the more popularly known Rumi. Like Attar, Jami renders a gnostic reality in allegory that yields sublime insight for the attuned reader. This is accessible through the medium of this present translation.

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