

# القصيدة المنفرجة

المنسوبة إلى حجة الإسلام أبي حامد الغزالي قدس سره

Attributed to Imām Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

Translated by Yusuf Chaudhary<sup>1</sup>

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم، والحمد لله رب العالمين

والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد النور الذاتي والسر الساري في سائر الأسماء والصفات، اللهم صل صلاة كاملة وسلم  
سلاما تاما على نبي نخل به العقد، وتتفرج به الكرب، وتقضى به الحوائج، وتنال به الرغائب وحسن الخواتيم، ويستسقى  
الغمام بوجهه الكريم وعلى آله وصحبه

*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds. Blessings and peace be upon our master Muhammad, the Essential Light and the Secret flowing through the Names and Attributes. O Allah, send Your perfect blessings and complete peace upon a Prophet through whom knots are untied, difficulties are relieved, needs are fulfilled, desires and good ends are attained, and rain clouds seek their supply from his noble countenance, and [send peace and blessings] upon his family and companions.*

The *Qaṣīdah al-Munfarijah* (Poem of Relief) is a prayer-poem written and recited in order to relieve distresses and difficulties through supplication to Allah. It is a 55-line *jīmīyya* (ending in the letter *jīm*) poem attributed to the celebrated Muslim scholar Imam Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). The poem shares the same name as the famous *Qaṣīdah al-Munfarijah* of the Andalusian scholar Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Tawzārī, known as Ibn al-Naḥwī (d. 1119), whose *Munfarijah* is still popularly recited today. In the Islamic tradition, as with books of hadith, spirituality (*taṣawwuf*), and stories of saints, and other poems such as the *Qaṣīdah al-Burdah*, both *Munfarijah* poems are believed to be tried and tested forms of supplication through which Allah brings about relief in times of distress and tribulation. While there is a need for the modern Muslim, cut off due to the colonial trauma from much of his or her heritage, to revive this practice, in the pre-modern world these readings were an important part of Muslim public life, and the rich intellectual and spiritual tradition of Islam was manifest in everyday life.

Today, unlike the *Munfarijah* of Ibn al-Naḥwī, this *Munfarijah* attributed to al-Ghazālī is significantly less popular. While it can still be found recited in some gatherings of *dhikr* around the world and is included in some prayer collections and anthologies of spiritual poetry, it is unfortunately not as well-known, and the authenticity of its attribution to Imam al-Ghazālī is doubtful.<sup>2</sup> Whatever the truth of the attribution, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the poem became popular in Damascene and Hejazi intellectual circles, and

<sup>1</sup> In producing this translation, special thanks go to my friend James (Ya'qūb) Wrathall, who kindly reviewed it and offered alternative renderings of some words and lines.

<sup>2</sup> Due to its popularity as the *Munfarijah* of al-Ghazālī, I have chosen to retain its attribution to him here. I intend to discuss the problematic of its attribution to al-Ghazālī in a separate article in the future, *in shā' Allāh*.

major scholars such as Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī (d. 1162/1749) and Ismā‘īl al-‘Ajlūnī (d. 1162/1749) produced commentaries on it, bearing witness to its efficacy.<sup>3</sup>

It is with this in mind that I present the following translation of this *Munfarījah* poem. For the Muslim living in the world today and throughout much of the twentieth century, wherever one looks, crises unfold before our very eyes – whether they be political, environment, economic, social, or intellectual. As I write, occupation forces continue their genocidal campaign in Gaza, murdering countless Palestinian men, women, and children. The Uyghur genocide and the tyrannical Syrian regime’s oppression of the Syrian people continue, and anti-Muslim sentiment rises in Europe and America. We watch helplessly as most avenues for immediate support are barred by actors who have no interest in truth, justice, or peace. The one avenue that will always remain, however, is that of Divine Assistance through penitent prayer – “Call upon Me, and I shall answer you” [Sūrah Ghāfir 40:60].

*“Who will redress the humiliation of a people after they were honourable,  
A people whose condition injustice and tyranny have changed?”*

*For the likes of this the heart melts from sorrow,  
If there is any Islam or belief in that heart!”*

The *Munfarījah* poem is ultimately an expression of our poverty and humility before Allah. When we come with broken hearts before Allah, we find Him with us. When we present our poverty and neediness before Allah, we hope that He accepts our prayers, grants relief, and lifts the oppression and tribulation that afflict the members of our body, our *ummah*: “Allah gave you victory at Badr, when you were a humble force.” [Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān 3:123]. In the words of Ibn ‘Atā’ Allāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709/1310):

*“Become realised in your attributes and He will strengthen you with His. Realise your humility  
and He will strengthen you with His pride. Realise your incapability and He will strengthen  
you with His ability. Realise your weakness and He will strengthen you with His power.”*

This translation is a gift for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Palestine and around the world, that Allah grants them His support. I hope the reader finds in the words of this poem acceptance of their prayers and that Allah grants relief to the Muslim community. If there are any mistakes in the Arabic text or the translation, they are entirely my own and I welcome any corrections. May Allah support Muslims’ resistance against tyranny and oppression wherever it may be found.

By one most in need of the mercy of his Lord,  
Yusuf Chaudhary

Friday, 17 Jumādā I 1445 AH / 1 December 2023 CE

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<sup>3</sup> Of the four commentaries on the poem known to exist, only three survive. They are:

1. *al-Badr al-mutalālī sharḥ munfarījāt al-ghazālī*, by Aḥmad Ibn Yāsīn. Completed in 1149/1736, copied from the author’s copy in 1164/1751.
2. *Iqtiḥām lujjāt al-la’ālī fī al-kalām ‘alā munfarījāt al-ḥujjāt al-ghazālī*, by Muṣṭafā b. Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bakrī (d. 1162/1749). Completed in 1168/1755.
3. *al-Anwār al-mubtabījah ‘alā al-manẓūmat al-munfarījah*, by Muḥammad b. ‘Isā Ibn Kinān al-Dimashqī (d. 1153/1740). Completed in 1131/1719.

I am currently in the process of editing the commentaries of Aḥmad Ibn Yāsīn and Muṣṭafā al-Bakrī, with the intention to publish them, *in shā’ Allāh*.

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الشَّدَّةُ أَوْدَتْ بِالْمُهَجِ يَا رَبِّ فَعَجِّلْ بِالْفَرَجِ

Hardship weighs heavily upon our hearts,  
O Lord, hasten our relief!

وَالْأَنْفُسُ أَضْحَتْ فِي حَرَجٍ وَبِيَدِكَ تَفْرِيجُ الْحَرَجِ

Our souls have become straitened,  
But by Your Power is distress dispelled.

هَاجَتْ لِدَعَاكَ خَوَاطِرُنَا وَالْوَيْلُ لَهَا إِنْ لَمْ تَهْجِ

Our minds clamour to beseech You,  
Woe betide them if they did not stir!

يَا مَنْ عَوَّدَتْ اللَّطْفَ أَعِدْ عَادَاتِكَ بِاللُّطْفِ الْبَهْجِ

O One who conveys countless blessings,  
Grant us evermore Your joyous blessings!

وَاعْلِقْ ذَا الضِّيقِ وَشِدَّتَهُ وَافْتَحْ مَا سُدَّ مِنَ الْفُرْجِ

Close off from us constraint and its cruel severity,  
And open wide the way to relief once shut!

عُجْنَا لِحَنَابِكَ نَقْصِدُهُ وَالْأَنْفُسُ فِي أَوْجِ الْوَهْجِ

We turn to seek Your Divine Presence,  
While our souls languish in the flaming depths.

وَالِي أَفْضَالِكَ يَا أَمَلِي يَا ضَيْعَتَنَا إِنْ لَمْ نَعُجْ

O my Hope, we seek Your favours,  
What a loss if we did not turn to it!

أَوْ لِلْمُضْطَّرِّ سِوَاكَ نَجِجْ

مَنْ لِلْمَلْهُوفِ سِوَاكَ يُغِثْ

Who may succour the grief-stricken but You?  
Or save the destitute, who but You?

عَنْ بَابِكَ حَتَّى لَمْ نَلِجْ

وَإِسَاءَتُنَا أَنْ تَقْطَعَنَا

Our ill deeds alone would sever us,  
From Your door, denying us entrance.

أَبَحْتَ لَهُ مَا مِنْكَ رَجِي

فَلَكُمْ عَاصٍ أَخْطَا وَرَجَاكَ

Yet, how many sinners have erred, then besought You,  
And You granted all they hoped from You.

قَدْ ضَاقَ الْحُبْلُ عَلَى الْوَدَجِ

يَا سَيِّدَنَا يَا خَالِقَنَا

Our Master, Our Creator,  
The rope around our necks has constricted.

مَا بَيْنَ مُكَيَّرِيٍّ وَشَجِي

وَعِبَادُكَ أَضْحَوْا فِي أَلَمٍ

And Your servants are in pain,  
Among us are the afflicted and aggrieved.

وَالْأَعْيُنُ غَارَتْ فِي لُجَجِ

وَالْأَحْشَاءُ صَارَتْ فِي حُرْقِ

Our innards sear in the blaze of tribulation,  
And our eyes are plunged in calamity's deeps.

غَاصَتْ فِي الْمَوْجِ مَعَ الْمُهْجِ

فَالْأَعْيُنُ غَارَتْ فِي لُجَجِ

Our eyes drown in calamity's chasm,  
Submerged in its maelstrom, along with our souls.

يَا أَرْزَمَةً عَلَّكَ تَنْفَرِجِ

وَالْأَرْزَمَةُ زَادَتْ شِدَّتْهَا

The crisis has sharpened in its severity,  
O crisis, might you soon be alleviated.

وَلِسَانٍ بِالشَّكْوَى لَهْجِ

جِئْنَاكَ بِقَلْبٍ مُنْكَسِرِ

We have come to You, O Lord, broken-hearted,  
Our tongues wetted with plaintive pleas.

لَكِنْ بِرَجَائِكَ مُمْتَزِجٌ

وَبِخَوْفِ الزَّلَّةِ فِي وَجَلٍ

In fear of fault, we cower and tremble,  
But our fear is mixed with our hope in You.

بِنَشْرِ الرَّحْمَةِ وَالْأَرْجِ

فَكَمْ اسْتَشْفَى مَزْكَومُ الذَّنْبِ

How many sickened by sin have found health,  
Through the sweet, perfumed breeze of Your Mercy

فِيهِ الْأَحْوَالُ مِنَ الْمَرْجِ

وَبِعَيْنِكَ مَا نَلْقَاهُ وَمَا

Aware You are of the trials we encounter,  
And the discord and disorder which befall us.

قُلْتَ ادْعُونِي فَلَنْبَتِهَجٍ

وَالْفَضْلُ أَعْمٌ وَلَكِنْ قَدْ

While Your Bounty is more encompassing,  
Still, You have said, "Beseech Me," so let us rejoice!

رَبِّ الْأَرْبَابِ وَكُلِّ نَجٍ

فِي كُلِّ نَبِيٍّ نَسَأَلُ يَا

Through every prophet we ask You,  
Lord of lords, and through every intimate invoker.

وَبِمَا قَدْ أَوْضَحَ مِنْ نَهَجٍ

وَبِفَضْلِ الذِّكْرِ وَحِكْمَتِهِ

Through the virtue of remembrance and its wisdom,  
And by the paths it has made clear.

وَضِيَاءِ النُّورِ الْمُنْبَلِجِ

وَبِسِرِّ الْأَحْرَفِ إِذْ وَرَدَتْ

Through the secret of the letters as transmitted,  
And by the shining light of dawn.

وَبِمَا فِي وَاحٍ مَعَ زَهَجٍ

وَبِسِرِّ أَوْدَعٍ فِي بَطْدٍ

Through the secret placed in *B-T-D*,  
And what lies within *W-Ā-H* and *Z-H-J*.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> A reference to *awfāq al-Ghazālī* or *muthallathāt al-Ghazālī*, a *waqf* (pl. *awfāq*) [magic square], with an arrangement of numbers or letters in a square grid, usually the Divine Names alphanumerically encoded in the letters of square which is then believed to have certain powers (*kbawāṣṣ*). Al-Ghazālī alludes to these particular letters in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl*, whence they became popularly ascribed to him, arguing that if the philosophers of early Islam affirm the powers of these squares, then they should also admit the spiritual efficacy of numbers in acts of worship (e.g., invocations prescribed in a certain amount, numbers of bowings and prostrations in prayers, etc.). I hope to discuss the concept of

وَبِسْرِ الْبَاءِ وَنُقْطَتِهَا      مِنْ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ لِذِي النَّهْجِ

Through the secret of the *bā'* and its point,  
In the saying *Bismillāh* by the one of the path.

وَبِقَافِ الْقَهْرِ وَقُوَّتِهَا      وَبِقَهْرِ الْقَاهِرِ لِلْمُهْجِ

And through the *qāf* and *qabr* and its strength,  
And the power of The Subjugator of souls.

وَبِبَرْدِ الْمَا وَإِسَاغَتِهِ      وَعُمُومِ النَّفْعِ مَعَ التَّلْجِ

Through the coolness of water as its swallowing,  
And the universal benefit of it and cold ice.

وَبِحَرِّ النَّارِ وَحِدَّتِهَا      وَبِسْرِ الْحُرْقَةِ وَالتَّضْجِ

Through the heat of fire and its rage,  
And the secret of its burning and roasting.

وَبِمَا طَعَّمْتَ مِنَ التَّطْعِيمِ      وَمَا ضَرَجْتَ مِنَ الضَّرَجِ

Through what You have fed us of nourishing food,  
And Your embellishing of the variety of creation.

يَا قَاهِرَ يَا ذَا الشَّدَّةِ يَا      ذَا الْبَطْشِ أَغِثْ يَا ذَا الْحُجْجِ

O Subjugator, O Possessor of Might,  
O Possessor of Power, aid us, O Possessor of Clear Proofs.

يَا رَبِّ ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا      وَمُصِيبَتَنَا مِنْ حَيْثُ نَجِي

My Lord, we have surely wronged ourselves,  
While our afflictions are only from where we came ourselves.

يَا رَبِّ خُلِقْنَا مِنْ عَجَلٍ      فَلِهَذَا نَدْعُوا بِاللُّجْجِ

My Lord, we were created hasty,  
For that reason, we call out persistently.

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*awfāq* and the question of their permissibility in the Islamic tradition in further detail in the commentaries I am editing, *in shā' Allāh*. For a historical overview in the early Islamic tradition, see Bink Hallum, 'New Light on Early Arabic Awfāq Literature', in *Islamicate Occult Sciences in Theory and Practice*, ed. Liana Saif et al. (Brill, 2021).

يَا رَبِّ وَلَيْسَ لَنَا جَلْدٌ  
أَنْى وَالْقَلْبُ عَلَى وَهَجٍ

My Lord, we can endure no more,  
How could we, as our hearts are ablaze?

يَا رَبِّ عَبِيدُكَ قَدْ وَفَدُوا  
يَدْعُوكَ بِقَلْبٍ مُنْزَعِجٍ

My Lord, Your slaves have come forth in droves,  
Calling out with one heart, beset by torment.

يَا رَبِّ ضِعَافٌ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ  
أَحَدٌ يَرْجُوهُ لِذِي الْهَرَجِ

My Lord, weak and lowly servants have no one  
To hope from during this turmoil.

يَا رَبِّ فَصَاحُ الْأَلْسِنِ قَدْ  
أَضْحَوْا فِي الشَّدَّةِ كَالْهَمَجِ

My Lord, the eloquent among us have  
Dwindled as flies in this severe privation.

السَّابِقُ مِنَّا صَارَ إِذَا  
يَعْدُوا يَسْبِقُهُ ذُو الْعَرَجِ

The foremost among us, were they to leave all ill,  
Would be outstripped even by one stumbling with a limp.

وَالْحِكْمَةُ رَبِّي بِالْغَةِ  
جَلَّتْ عَن حَيْفٍ أَوْ عَوَجِ

Your wisdom, my Lord, is tremendous,  
Majestic, free from harm or distortion.

وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكَ تُدَبِّرُهُ  
فَأَغْنِنَا بِاللُّطْفِ الْبَهْجِ

All matters return to You, who manages them.  
So help us, with Your delightful grace.

وَادْرُجْ فِي الْعَفْوِ إِسَاءَتَنَا  
وَالْحَيْبَةَ إِنْ لَمْ تَنْدَرْجْ

Envelop our misdeeds in Your forgiveness,  
What a loss for us, if they were not shrouded!

يَا نَفْسُ وَمَا لَكَ مِنْ فَرَجٍ  
إِلَّا مَوْلَاكَ لَهُ فَعُجِي

O Soul, there is no relief for you,  
Except through Your Lord, so straighten up!

وَبِهِ فَلْذِي وَبِهِ فَعُذِي      وَلِبَابِ مَكَارِمِهِ فَلُدْجِي

In Him seek shelter and in Him take refuge,  
And enter through the door of His generosity!

كَيْ تَنْصَلِحِي كَيْ تَنْشَرِحِي      كَيْ تَنْبَسِطِي كَيْ تَبْتَهِّجِي

So be you made right and be you made happy,  
So be you at ease, so may you rejoice.

وَيَطِيبُ مَقَامِكِ مَعَ نَفْرِي      أَضْحُوا فِي الْحِنْدِيسِ كَالسُّرْجِ

And your station be beautified among a people,  
Who passed the dark night as bright beacons.

وَقُوا لِلَّهِ بِمَا عَاهَدُوا      مِنْ بَيْعِ الْأَنْفُسِ وَالْمَهْجِ

Those loyal to Allah in what they swore,  
In selling [to Him] their souls and themselves.

وَهُمُ الْهَادِي وَصَحَابَتِهِ      ذُو الرُّتْبَةِ وَالْعَطْرِ الْأَرْجِ

They are The Guide and his companions,  
Those of lofty ranks and fragrant, perfumed souls.

قَوْمٌ سَكَنُوا الْجَرَعَاءَ وَهُمْ      شَرَفُ الْجَرَعَاءِ وَمُنْعَرِجِ

A people who residing in the desert lands,  
The nobility of the desert and those lands they uplifted.

جَاؤُوا لِلْكَوْنِ وَظَلَمَتْهُ      عَمَّتْ وَظَلَامُ الشُّرِكِ دَجِي

They came to this world while its darkness spread wide,  
When the darkness of polytheism shrouded all in gloom.

مَا زَالَ النَّصْرُ يَحْفُهُمْ      وَالظُّلْمَةُ تُمَحِّي بِالْبَلَجِ

Success did not ever cease to surround them,  
And the darkness obliterated through the dazzling dawn.

حَتَّى نَصَرُوا الْإِسْلَامَ وَعَادَ      الدِّينُ عَزِيزًا فِي بَهْجِ

Such that they gave victory to Islam,  
And the religion returned mighty and resplendent.



مَرَّ الْأَيَّامَ مَعَ الْحَجَجِ

فَعَلَيْهِمْ صَلَّى الرَّبُّ عَلَيَّ

So may the Lord send blessings upon them,  
With the passing of days and years.

وَكَذَا الْفَارُوقِ وَكُلِّ نَجِي

وَعَلَى الصِّدِّيقِ خَلِيفَتِهِ

And upon the truth-affirming one, his successor,  
Likewise, the distinguisher, and every intimate invoker.

رِوْفِي فَرَقَى أَعْلَى الدَّرَجِ

وَعَلَى عُثْمَانَ شَهِيدِ الدَّاءِ

And upon 'Uthmān, the martyr of the house,  
One faithful, and so raised to the loftiest of stations.

كَذَا الْأَزْوَاجِ وَكُلِّ شَجِي

وَأَبِي الْحَسَنِ مَعَ الْأَوْلَادِ

And upon the father of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, and the other children,  
Together with the wives and all brave ones.

وَسَارَ السَّارِي فِي الدَّلَجِ

مَا مَالَ الْمَالَ وَحَالَ الْحَالِ

And as long as wealth changes hands and affairs transform,  
And night-traveller sets out at nightfall.

**In some versions of the poem, the following lines are added to the end:**

عَجَّلْ بِالنَّصْرِ وَبِالْفَرَجِ

يَا رَبِّ بِهِمْ وَبِالْهِمِّ

My Lord, through them and their families,  
Hasten victory and relief!

وَلَهُ رَقٌّ أَعْلَى الدَّرَجِ

وَاعْفِرْ يَا رَبِّ لِنَاظِمِهَا

And forgive, O my Lord, the composer of this ode,  
And raise him to the highest stations.

لَأَكُونَ غَدًا فِي الْحَشْرِ نَجِ

وَاخْتِمُ عَمَلِي بِخَوَاتِمِهَا

Allow my deeds to end with the best seals,  
So that tomorrow in the Resurrection I may be saved.

الشِّدَّةُ أُوْدَتْ بِالمُهْجِ

وَإِذَا بِكَ ضَاقَ الأَمْرُ فَقُلْ

And when matters become difficult for you, then say:  
Hardship weighs heavily upon our hearts,

يَا رَبِّ فَعَجِّلْ بِالفَرَجِ

O Lord, hasten our relief!