**Al-Mutanabbi**

Abu at-Tayyib Ahmad bin Al-Husayn al-Mutanabbi al-Kindi (Arabic: أبو الطيب أحمد بن الحسين المتنبّي الكندي‎, translit. Abū ṭ-Ṭayyib ʾAḥmad bin al-Ḥusayn al-Muṫanabbī al-Kindī) (915 – 23 September 965 CE) was an Arab poet. He is considered as one of the greatest poets in the Arabic language and is the most prominent and most influential poet in the Arab world and much of his work has been translated into over 20 languages worldwide. Much of his poetry revolves around praising the kings he visited during his lifetime. Some consider[who?] his 326 poems to be a great representation of his life story. He started writing poetry when he was nine years old. He is well known for his sharp intelligence and wittiness. Al-Mutanabbi had a great pride in himself through his poetry. Among the topics he discussed were courage, the philosophy of life, and the description of battles. Many of his poems were and still are widely spread in today's Arab world and are considered to be proverbial.

His great talent brought him very close to many leaders of his time. He praised those leaders and kings in return for money and gifts. His powerful and honest[citation needed] poetic style earned him great popularity in his time.

**Childhood and Youth**

Al-Mutanabbi was born in the Iraqi city of Kufah, 915. Al-Mutanabbi was the son of a water carrier who claimed noble and ancient Yemenite descent from the Kindah tribe. Owing to his poetic talent, and claiming predecession of prophet Saleh, al-Mutanabbi received an education in Damascus, Syria. When Shi'ite Qarmatians sacked Kufah in 924, he joined them and lived among the Bedouin, learning their doctrines and dialect. Claiming to be a Nabi (Arabic: نَـبِي‎, Prophet) — hence the name Al-Mutanabbi ("The Would-be Prophet") — he led a Qarmatian revolt in Syria in 932. After its suppression and two years of imprisonment, he recanted in 935 and became a wandering poet. It is during this period that he began to write his first known poems. Al-Mutanabbi had great political ambitions to be a Wali. To fulfill his ambitions he joined the courts of Sayf al-Dawla and Abu al-Misk Kafur but his ambitions failed.

Al-Mutanabbi lived at the time when the Abbasid Caliphate started coming apart, many of the states in the Islamic world became politically and militarily independent from the weak Abbasid Caliphate. Chief among those states was the Emirate of Aleppo.

He began to write panegyrics in the tradition established by the poets Abu Tammam and al-Buhturi. In 948 he attached himself to Sayf al-Dawla, the Hamdanid poet-prince of northern Syria. Al-Mutanabbi joined the court of Sayf al-Dawla in 948. Sayf al-Dawla was greatly concerned with fighting the Byzantine Empire in Asia minor where Al-Mutanabbi fought alongside him. During his nine years stay at Sayf al-Dawla's court, Al-Mutanabbi versified his greatest and most famous poems, he wrote in praise of his patron panegyrics that rank as masterpieces of Arabic poetry. During his stay in Aleppo, great rivalry occurred between Al-Mutanabbi and many scholars and poets in Sayf al-Dawla's court, one of those poets was Abu Firas al-Hamdani, Sayf al-Dawla's cousin. In addition, Al-Mutanabbi lost Sayf al-Dawla's favor because of his political ambition to be Wāli. The latter part of this period was clouded with intrigues and jealousies that culminated in al-Mutanabbi's leaving of Syria for Egypt, then ruled in name by the Ikhshidids.

**Al-Mutanabbi in Egypt**

Al-Mutanabbi joined the court of Abu al-Misk Kafur after parting ways with Saif al Dawla, but Kafur dismissed Al-Mutanabbi's intentions claiming them to be a threat to his position. Al-Mutanabbi realized that his hopes of becoming a statesman were not going to be materialized and he left Egypt in c. 960. After he left, he heavily criticized Abu al-Misk Kafur with satirical odes.

**Poetry and famous sayings**

Mutanabbi's egomaniacal nature seems to have got him in trouble several times and might be why he was killed. This can be seen in his poetry, which is often conceited:

In a famous poem he speaks to the power of identity and the freedom that comes with knowing oneself.

و أسمعت كلماتي من به صمم أنا الذي نظر الأعمى إلى أدبي

والسيف والرمح والقرطاس والقلم الخيل والليل والبيداء تعرفني

ʾAnā l-ladhī naẓara l-ʾaʿmā ʾilā ʾadab-ī Wa-ʾasmaʿat kalimāt-ī man bi-hī ṣamamu

Al-ḫaylu wa-l-laylu wa-l-baydāʾu taʿrifu-nī Wa-s-saifu wa-r-rumḥu wa-l-qirṭāsu wa-l-qalamu.

I am the one whose literature can be seen (even) by the blind And whose words are heard (even) by the deaf.

The steed, the night and the desert all know me As do the sword, the spear, the paper and the pen.

Much of the sense of the first line is lost in translation, as in Arabic it begins with "I" and ends with "my".

"If you see the lion's canines, do not ever think that the lion smiles."

Death

Al-Mutanabbi was killed because one of his poems contained a great insult to a man called "Ḍabbah al-Asadī" (Arabic: ضبّة الأسدي‎).[citation needed] Dabbah, along with his uncle Fāṫik al-Asadī (Arabic: فاتك الأسدي‎), managed to intercept al-Mutanabbi, his son Muḥassad (Arabic: محسّد‎), and his servant near Baghdad. Ibn Rachik reported that when al-Mutanabbi wished to flee, his servant awkwardly reminded him of his bold verses. For this reason, al-Mutanabbi resolved to live up to them, fought, and died along with his companions in 965.[citation needed

**Legacy**

Mutanabbi Street in Baghdad is named after him.