

LI BAI *



**Li Bai (also known as Li Po, 701–762) is one of the most eminent poets of the Tang Dynasty and a central figure in the classical Chinese literary canon. Revered as the “Immortal Poet”, Li Bai symbolizes spiritual freedom, harmony with nature, and intuitive wisdom within Chinese culture. Distancing himself from Confucian orthodoxy, he drew heavily on Daoist philosophy; his poetry is infused with recurring motifs of the moon, mountains, wine, travel, and solitude, through which he constructs a boundless, transcendental poetic universe. By reshaping the traditional “lüshi” and “yuefu” forms, Li Bai loosened rigid formal constraints in favor of lyrical spontaneity and emotional intensity. This stylistic transformation had a lasting impact on the language, imagery, and aesthetic orientation of Chinese poetry in the centuries that followed, establishing him as both an artistic and spiritual model for later poets. Li Bai’s influence extends far beyond China. Through the translations and adaptations of figures such as Ezra Pound, Judith Gautier, and Arthur Waley, his work entered modern world literature and introduced Eastern lyrical sensibility into Western poetic discourse. In Turkey, poets including İlhan Berk and Cemal Süreya have acknowledged his imaginative freedom and cosmic vision. Li Bai’s poems remain among the most memorized and widely translated in the world.*

The Hard Road**

Pure wine costs, for the golden cup, ten thousand coppers a flagon,

And a jade plate of dainty food calls for a million coins.

I fling aside my food-sticks and cup, I cannot eat nor drink...

I pull out my dagger, I peer four ways in vain.

I would cross the Yellow River, but ice chokes the ferry;

I would climb the Taihang Mountains, but the sky is blind with snow....

I would sit and poise a fishing-pole, lazy by a brook –

But I suddenly dream of riding a boat, sailing for the sun....

Journeying is hard,

Journeying is hard.

There are many turnings –

Which am I to follow?....

I will mount a long wind some day and break the heavy waves

And set my cloudy sail straight and bridge the deep, deep sea.

