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The Institute of Philosophy

The *Ishraqi* Philosophy
of Jalal al-Din Rumi

by

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Contents

Contents	iii
A Few Opening Words	v
Acknowledgements	xi
Author's Biography	xiii
Maulana Rumi's Life	1
Rumi and the World	16
Rumi and Philosophy	25
Iranian Roots of <i>Ishraqi</i> Philosophy	27
Revival of Ancient Iranian Thought	28
<i>Ishraqi</i> Philosophy in Rumi's Verses	34
Concluding Remarks	42
A Few Closing Words	45
Bibliography	47

A Few Opening Words...

From Dr. Ali Musavi Garmarudi

Since the early days of my acquaintance with some of the works of Dr. Iraj Bashiri, I have always been impressed by the depth and expanse of his research in various fields. He is a source of information for the history of the vast area of Iran and Central Asia, as well as for the culture and literatures of the region. In addition, he is well versed in the intellectual aspects of Islam and *irfan*.

In the present study, Dr. Bashiri deals with the "*Ishraqi* legacy of Maulana." Following the main lines of Shaykhi *Ishraq* Suhrawardi's philosophy, he discusses Maulana's views and thoughts in five areas and on five topics. These are: the life of Maulana, the sources of Maulana's inspiration, the subject of *sama'* and its relation to *Maulaviyyeh*, Maulana's influence in the world, and Maulana's understanding of the *Ishraqi* philosophy of Suhrawardi.

Let us begin with a description of the five parts of his writing: Part one is about Maulana's life from childhood to the death of his father, Baha' al-Din Walad, as well as about taking control of the affairs of his father's *murids* and the supervision of

the Order. In this section, there is also a discussion of Maulana's visit to Farid al-Din 'Attar, the selfless supervision and guidance of Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq and Shams of Tabriz, as well as Maulana's travels in search of knowledge.

Part two deals with the sources of Maulana's inspiration. These sources, on the one hand, include the *Holy Qur'an*, the Islamic *Shari'a*, the *ahadith*, and the words and deeds of religious leaders and, on the other hand, *Ishraqi* philosophy, the thoughts of ancient Greeks and Persians, and the teachings of Najm al-Din Kubra. In this section, there is an in-depth study of the ethics of the perfect man from the point of view of Maulana followed by thoughts and deeds of Maulana himself as a highly respected individual with global recognition.

Part three deals with the diffusion of Maulana's thought and the appearance of music and dance (*sama'*) in the *Maulaviyyeh* Order. In this part, the Dervishes' manner of dance, the symbolic significance of the movements of the participants, and the type of verses chosen for the occasion are examined.

Part four is about the ever-increasing fame of Maulana at a global level. In this part, studies undertaken in various countries of the world, specifically in Turkey, Iran, France, Germany, England, and Italy are discussed and the history of Maulana studies is examined. This part also includes a section about the encounter of Americans with the thought and poetry of Maulana and their attempt at rewriting the translations of the *ghazals* of Shams on the basis of their meaning. This part is of special interest to us Iranians who do not have access to the primary sources on the subject. In this regard, the present study is entirely innovative, especially when we consider that Dr. Bashiri has nearly half a century of instruction at the University of Minnesota and chairmanship of that University's Middle East Studies Department to his credit. Needless to say he is cognizant of the primary sources on this subject.

But, as Dr. Bashiri aptly notes, whatever the general public or intellectuals write in American society about Maulana must be scrutinized by Iranian intellectuals. Of course, the first step in

that direction is access to American thought on the subject. The present study provides that priceless access.

The last part of the study includes an explanation of *Ishraqi* philosophy from the point of view of its founder Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi. In this regard, the author casts a look first at ancient Iranian thought and the value of the *farr* in the cosmic dimensions of light in ancient Iranian thought. Then, he investigates the relationship between Iranian thought and *Ishraqi* philosophy. In the process, he shows how the Iranians, after the expulsion of philosophy by al-Ghazzali and Ibn Taimiyyah from among the Islamic sciences, replaced *Masha'i* philosophy with a combined Perso-Islamic philosophy, and how Najm al-Din Kubra has harmonized that philosophy with the thoughts of the mystics of his time. At the end, two of Maulana's poems, "I died as a mineral" and "Listen to the reed flute" are analyzed and evaluated in the context of *Ishraqi* philosophy.

This study, in addition to providing a forum in which to discuss the life and works of Jalal al-Din Rumi and the impact of *Ishraqi* philosophy on the makeup of the two above-mentioned poems, emphasizes the education that Maulana received at the hand of his father Baha' Walad and his mystic mentors Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq and Shams of Tabriz. It also shows that each of these scholars personally contributed immensely to Maulana's erudition and worldview and that Maulana studied love, patience, and humility at their threshold.

In the section on philosophy, the emphasis is on the influence of ancient Iranian thought on Islamic philosophy, in general, and on *Ishraqi* philosophy in particular. In this regard, the works of al-Farabi and al-Suhrawardi are scrutinized. Maulana's knowledge about *Ishraqi* philosophy is based on the studies of Najm al-Din Kubra on the subject of light and Ala' al-Din Simnani's reshaping of that philosophy in terms of colors, each one of which signifies a stage on the Path. The methodology used consists of a basic structure on which semantic matrices are imposed. The artistic beauty of the poetry is the result of a dialog that obtains between the basic structure

and the semantic matrices within the text. Maulana's incredible mastery of the Persian language enables him to convey, with the least number of words and images, the most profound philosophical thoughts possible. A brief summary of the basics concludes the study.

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the English text and Dr. Ali Musavi Garmarudi edited the Persian text and wrote the foreword. The typesetting of the Persian text was done at Mitra Publishers in Tehran under the supervision of Mr. Rahravan Wahdat. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of the above, and many others, for their contributions, and remain the sole person responsible for any shortcomings.

Iraj Bashiri
Dushanbe
March 9, 2008

Iraj Bashiri's Biography

Dr. Iraj Bashiri, Professor of History at the University of Minnesota, USA, was born on July 31, 1940 (9 Amordad, 1319; 25 Jamadi al-Sani, 1359 AH), in the city of Behbahan, Iran. He completed his early education in the towns of Damaneh and Daran in the Fereydan region and his high school in Isfahan and Shiraz. He graduated in 1961 with a diploma in mathematics from the Hadj Qavam High School in Shiraz. While in high school, Bashiri showed a distinct talent for the English language. In 1959, he emerged from the national competitions held at Ramsar as Iran's top student in English.

Between 1960 and 1963, Bashiri studied English Language and Literature at Pahlavi University (present-day Shiraz University), and in 1963, graduated at the top of his class. While studying at Pahlavi, he also worked as a regional reporter for the *Kayhan Daily* in the Fars province and taught English at the British Council in Shiraz and English literature at Pahlavi University.

In 1964, Bashiri left Iran to study English Literature in England, and in 1966, he traveled to the United States to continue his education. In 1968, he received his M.A. degree in General Linguistics from the University of Michigan and, in 1972, his Ph.D. in Iranian Linguistics from the same University. Bashiri's dissertation is based on Ibn Sina's concept of Existence

i

(*budan*). He shows that the Persian verb *budan* (to be) has its own syntax. This syntax in the context of the concept of "becoming" (*shodan*) expresses transition, and in the context of "doing" (*kardan*) expresses action.

In the United States, too, in addition to studying linguistics, Bashiri taught Persian at the University of Michigan and trained Peace Corps volunteers in Vermont, New York, and New Jersey. In 1972, he was employed as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Iranian and Turkish Languages and Literatures at the University of Minnesota. During his early years at Minnesota, he used the theoretical framework that he had developed in his dissertation as the base for writing *Persian for Beginners*. This book, which has been revised four times, is available in both English and Russian languages. Bashiri was promoted to Associate Professor in 1977 and to Professor in 1996.

Professor Bashiri's courses at Minnesota include Iranian history (from ancient to modern times), Persian Literature (poetry and prose), and Iranian Languages and Linguistics. He also has developed and taught courses on the history of the peoples of Central Asia and Afghanistan. In 1980, he was recognized as one of the College of Liberal Arts' Distinguished Teachers.

Dr. Bashiri's areas of research are extensive. Below three areas of his expertise are briefly reviewed: Hedayat's *Blind Owl*, Firdowsi's *Shahname*, and the Sufic *ghazals* (sonnets) of Hafiz. He spent the first 15 years of his career working on a better understanding of Iran of the 1920's and 1930's and, in that context, the works of Sadeq Hedayat, especially his masterpiece, *The Blind Owl*. First, he translated Hedayat's short stories into English and eventually undertook the translation and analysis of *The Blind Owl*. A structuralist, Bashiri's views of Hedayat are thought provoking. By relating *The Blind Owl* to its two Indian sources, i.e., *The Buddha Karita* and *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, he hypothesizes that Hedayat might have skillfully used the life of the Buddha and his quest for freedom as a subtext in the novella.

In order to understand Bashiri's study of the structure of the novella, it is helpful if the reader is familiar with *The Blind Owl* and with the contents and import of Hedayat's Indian sources. It also needs to be borne in mind that structural analysis merely describes how the work has been crafted. The work's artistic, socio-political, and literary values must be assessed separately. With that said, in the Tibetan materials, after the individual dies, his soul must recognize the Clear Light. In order to see the Clear Light, he must see through the attractive façade that Desire (read *maya*) projects to distract him. If he ignores the attractive images and concentrates on the Clear light, he will achieve freedom from the Wheel (*nirvana*). Otherwise he will be reborn. That is the principle. The process is somewhat more involved.

The attractive image that distracts the individual is a reflection of his own past deeds. He sees his own soul standing before the Lord of Death, offering him a handful of black pebbles. Seeing this sign of attraction to earthly desires, the Lord of Death laughs out loud. Frightened, the individual falls into a swoon. The soul of the individual, too, fails to cross the River of Forgetfulness and falls into the river. From there, the river carries the soul to the Place of the Wombs where it is reborn.

Translated into *The Blind Owl*, this is how the subtext of the novella takes shape. The narrator fails to bring down the wine flask because he is attracted to a scene in which his ethereal double offers a stem of black lilies to an Odds-and-Ends Man. The Odds-and-Ends Man laughs a hideous laughter causing the narrator to fall into a swoon. The narrator's double falls in the Suren River and is taken to Shahab Abdul Azim where the narrator is reborn. Put differently, in the novella, the individual is the narrator, the Clear Light is the wine flask, the double is the ethereal being or the soul of the narrator, the black pebbles are the black lilies, the Lord of Death is the Odds-and-Ends Man, the River of Forgetfulness is the Suren River, and the Place of the Wombs is Shahab Abdul Azim.

During his second life, the narrator forces himself to recognize desire so that it cannot destine him to yet another

v

birth. To achieve his goal, he studies the manner and customs of all those around him including his wife, his nanny, the odds-and-ends man, the butcher, and the people of the city of Ray at large. He pays special attention to their relationship with his wife whom he calls the "Whore." At the end, it dawns upon him that he must avoid, nay, destroy his wife, which he does. Bashiri provides details about the various aspects of his analysis, but those details are outside the purview of a short biography.

Bashiri's research on Firdowsi is centered on Firdowsi's use of the concept of the *farr*. He distinguishes the *farr* as the fulcrum of government among the Iranian peoples. In mythical times, he says, the *farr* distinguished the house of Tur from the House of Iraj. In historical times, it has sustained Iranian identity and bestowed continuity and longevity to the land and people of Iran. The results of this research appear in *Firdowsi's Shahname: A Thousand Years After* published by the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan.

Dr. Bashiri has also contributed to our better understanding of the Sufic *ghazals* of Hafiz. He rejects the theory that the couplets in Hafiz's sonnets are haphazardly put together as one would put pearls on a string to make a necklace. He shows that each *ghazal* has a vigorous structure and is built around a defined theme; the themes are mostly, although not exclusively, centered on life in the *khaneqah* (cloister). He gives the relationship between the *morshid* (master) and the *morid* (disciple), in *gufta burun shudi ba tamashai mahi now*, wherein the *morshid* reproaches the *morid* for abandoning the path for greener fields, as an example. He further states that the Sufic sonnets have been composed to meet the needs of a particular group and that understanding the structure of the Sufic *ghazal* might shed light on our analysis of the structure of the English sonnet.

Several years before the fall of the Soviet Union, Dr. Bashiri expanded his research and teaching to cover the history and culture of Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, before the collapse of the USSR, and, thereafter, he made several trips to the republics

and, at times, remained there for a period in order to view life in the republics first hand. From among the republics he concentrated on the issues connected with Tajik ethnicity and the reaction of Muslim Tajiks to Sovietization and atheism. He has written extensively on the history and culture of the Tajiks. From among his contributions, mention can be made of his study of the life and works of Saddridin Aini. In 1996, the State University of Tajikistan in the name of Lenin awarded Professor Bashiri an honorary doctorate in history and culture and in 1997, the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan bestowed upon him the title of International Academician. Indeed, Hujjat al-Islam Akbar Rafsanjani and Dr. Iraj Bashiri are the only Iranians to have received the honor. He also has contributed to a better understanding, in the West, of the works of the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov.

While teaching at the University of Minnesota, Bashiri also taught and carried out research at other universities including the University of Michigan, the University of Texas at Austin, the State University of Kyrgyzstan, and the Academy of Sciences of Kazakhstan.

Finally, while carrying out research and teaching, Prof. Bashiri has also been involved in the administration of his home University. Between 1975 and 1979, he was the head of the Middle East Studies Department and later the South Asian Studies Department at the University of Minnesota. Several times between 1987 and 2005, he was the Chair of, first, the Russian and East European Studies Department, and later the Slavic and Central Asian Languages and Literatures Program. He also has been active in College committees, especially in relation to curricula. In 2005, he was both the Head of the College of Liberal Arts Assembly and the Head of the Executive Council of the College. Between 2005 and 2007, he served as the Interim Director of the Institute of Linguistics, English as a Second Language and Slavic Languages and Literatures. Currently on sabbatical, he is a lead researcher at the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan working on the philosophy of the 16th century theologian Mullah Sadra Shiraz



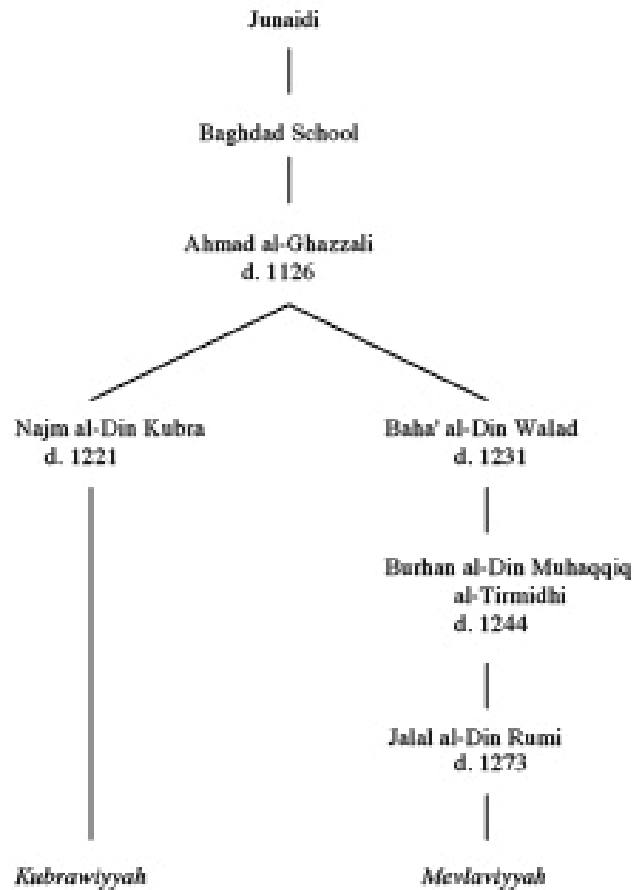
Maulana Rumi's Life

Generally referred to as Rumi,¹ but known to Iranians as Mawlavi or Maulana (our master), and to the Turks as Mevlavi, Maulana Jalal al-Din Muhammad of Balkh (henceforth Rumi) was born into a scholarly family of Balkh, in present-day Afghanistan, on September 30, 1207. He grew up in Balkh under the tutelage of his father Baha' al-Din Walad (hence Baha' Walad), and the care of his *atabak* (guardian) Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq of Tirmidh, a disciple of Baha' Walad.

At the time, Balkh was one of the major centers of mysticism and Baha' al-Din Walad was one of Balkh's leading theologians and mystics. His parents were related to the court of the Khwarazmshah, on the one hand, and to the first of the Rashidun Caliphs, Abu Bakr, on the other hand. Additionally, he was a student of Najm al-Din Kubra.

In 1212 or 1213, living in Balkh became increasingly difficult for Baha' Walad; therefore, he decided to leave Balkh for the western lands of Islam. The decision disrupted Jalal al-Din Muhammad's life in Balkh.

¹ Rum is the Persian word for Byzantium. Rumi means from Anatolia, present-day Turkey.



Genesis of the development of *Kubrawiyyah*
and *Mevlaviyyah* Sufi Orders

Several reasons are given for this move. One is that Baha' Walad was a supporter of the teachings of al-Junaid through

Ahmad al-Ghazzali, Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali's brother. This attribution connected Baha' Walad with the views of Najm al-Din Kubra, his teacher, who was well known in the Sufi circles of Transoxiana. Imam Fakhr al-Razi, a friend of Khwarazmshah, opposed both Kubra and Walad. He warned the Sultan of the imminent danger to his rule from the religious throngs controlled by Kubra and Walad.² A less likely reason is that Baha' Walad was aware of Genghis Khan's invasion of China and was convinced that the Mongol invasion of Khwarazm was imminent. He, therefore, decided to move his family out of harm's way. Another reason could be that since Najm al-Din Kubra was established in Transoxiana, Baha' Walad thought that he should create his own order somewhere in the western lands of the Caliphate.

In any event, on his way to Baghdad, Baha' Walad visited Nishapur. There, allegedly, he met Farid al-Din 'Attar, renowned at the time as a major follower of the *Kubrawiyyah* Order. 'Attar liked Baha' Walad's six-year-old son, Jalal al-Din Muhammad, and assured the father of his son's becoming a true inspiration for the devout.³ It is reported that 'Attar gave the child a copy of his *Asrar Nama* or *Book of Mysteries*. Rumi's contemporaries report that Rumi treasured 'Attar's book and, alongside his father's *al-Ma'arif*, kept it very close to himself.⁴

From Nishapur, Baha' Walad traveled to Baghdad. There he was invited by Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi to stay a while at his *khaniqah*, but he did not accept. Instead, he stayed at the *Mustansariah* School.⁵ After Baghdad, he visited Mecca, Medina, and Damascus, all the time looking for a town in which he could settle in a *madrasah* and teach his disciples who had accompanied him. None of these places satisfied Baha' Walad's requirements for a new home. Neither did his colleagues in those towns look forward to competing with him. A highly

² Zarrinkub, p. 279.

³ Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 451.

⁴ See Safa, vol. 2, 1988, p. 861 and 221.

⁵ See Safa, vol. 2, 1988, p. 249.

respected theologian and mystic, Baha' Walad attracted sizeable crowds to his lectures. His visits, therefore, were worrisome for the religious leaders of those towns. From Damascus, he moved to Aleppo and, then, to Malatya where he stayed for four years before he moved to Laranda (present-day Karaman), south east of Konya (Quniyyah), in present-day Turkey. He lived in Laranda for seven years.

At Laranda, Jalal al-Din Muhammad married Gawhar Khatun of Samarqand who, in 1226, gave birth to a son, the future Sultan Walad. The family also lost two of its members, Baha' Walad's wife and Jalal al-Din Muhammad's older brother, 'Ala al-Din Muhammad. As for Baha' Walad, in 1228, invited by the Seljuq ruler 'Ala al-Din Kayqubad, he moved to Konya, the then capital of the Seljuqs of Rum, leaving Jalal al-Din Muhammad's family in Laranda. In Konya, Baha' Walad lived in a *madrasah* until 1230 when he died.

It is ironic that Baha' Walad found his ideal place to settle, raise a family, and organize his Sufi order almost at the end of his search and, indeed, life. As the capital of the Seljuq Turks, thirteenth-century Konya was on the way to prosperity. A center of commerce and culture, it attracted scientists, artists, poets, and architects from all over the Islamic world. In contrast, Transoxiana was passing through one of its most unhappy times. When it eventually happened in 1220-27, the Mongol invasion impacted the lives of everyone there, especially the learned men of the realm. Both Farid al-Din 'Attar and Najm al-Din Kubra were put to death by the Mongols, while Muslih al-Din Sa'di was dislocated from his homeland of Fars. During his youth and middle age, Sa'di roamed in the devastated Mongol territories, seeking a reason for the Mongol scourge and the calamity that had befallen mankind.⁶ He did not settle down to document his thoughts until he was quite advanced in age. Similarly, the family of Saif al-Din Mahmud, the father of Amir Khusrau Dihlavi, was forced to move from Kish (present-day Qarshi in Uzbekistan) to Delhi to stay out of harm's way.

⁶ Cf., Rypka, pp. 248-253.

As mentioned, Baha' Walad was a student of Najm al-Din Kubra. He not only educated his son, Jalal al-Din Muhammad, in the *Kubrawiyyah* Order, but that he also acquainted Jalal al-Din with other *Kubrawi* Sufis, especially with his own disciple, Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq. Indeed, after his father, we must count Burhan al-Din as the other individual with great influence on the development of Jalal-al-Din Rumi's Sufi thought.⁷ This is not to diminish the role of Shams of Tabriz who entered Maulana's life towards the end, but who impacted Maulana's worldview the most. We will talk about those who impacted Maulana's life in some detail further below.

At the time of the death of his father, when he was 23 years old, Rumi's Sufi thought and his interest in mysticism had not developed enough to qualify him to occupy his father's exalted position. Therefore, he busied himself with giving sermons, issuing *fatwas*, and teaching at the *madrasah*. His Sufi training at the time was the responsibility of Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq who had recently arrived from Balkh for the purpose and who had taken over Baha' Walad's position. Muhaqqiq persuaded Jalal al-Din Muhammad to embark on a quest and to immerse himself in the type of studies, experiences, and teachings that had distinguished his father. To prepare him for the task, Burhan al-Din persuaded Jalal al-Din Muhammad to travel to Aleppo and Damascus and meet with other Sufi mystics. He instructed the young Rumi to give free reign to his experiences and thoughts.

During his travels, in Aleppo, young Rumi met with several major Sufi figures among them Kamal al-Din ibn al-'Adim and Muhiy al-Din ibn al-'Arabi. Then, after undergoing a rigorous program of meditation supervised by Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq, he assumed his father's mantle as the leader of the Sufis of Konya.⁸

As can be seen, Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq played a major role during this phase of Rumi's life. He stepped into the

⁷ Guzel, vol. 2, p. 635.

⁸ Cf., Rypka, p. 90.

position of the *Shaykh* after Baha' al-Din Walad's death, allowing Rumi to experience the world, and stood down when he felt Rumi was ready to shoulder the responsibility. According to Jami, Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq served as Maulana's mentor and guide for nine years.⁹

It should be mentioned that Jalal al-Din's thought is somewhat different from his father's thought. The difference lies in the milieus in which the two grew up and reached maturity. Baha' Walad lived in Transoxiana at a time when 'Ash'ari *kalam* was in contention with *Ishraqi* thought. It was also a time of uncertainty under the Khwarazmshah, when the fabric of Shafi'ite Sunni rule of the Seljuqs was being torn asunder and communities with long Islamic traditional bonds were being dispersed.

Rumi's milieu was 13th century turbulent Anatolia to which immigrants from all over, especially from what is present-day Central Asia (Khwarazm, Transoxiana, and Khurasan), as well as from Iran and Iraq were taking refuge from the Mongol onslaught. Among those who resided in Konya at the time, mention can be made of Sadr al-Din Qunavi, Fakhr al-Din Iraqi, and Najm al-Din Dayeh.¹⁰ These immigrants, like Rumi's father and his associates, had brought their own philosophical and theological ideas with them. Rumi's father, for instance, had brought his vision of the teachings of Ahmad al-Ghazali and Najm al-Din Kubra, while the immigrants from Iraq, like the Sufi Shihab al-Din Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 1234),¹¹ had brought an ethicist order that emphasized piety and asceticism. To put it differently, in Rumi's Anatolia, there was a coming together of communities and a lot of give and take was taking place among diverse groups. Rumi, for instance, supported work ethics, generosity, and justice. He especially supported *futuwwa* (chivalry), a major Islamic virtue to which he became

⁹ Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 453.

¹⁰ Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 452.

¹¹ Not to be confused with the *Ishraqi* (illuminationist) philosopher Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, who was executed in 1191.

dedicated.¹² In the same vein, Al-Suhrawardi revived the *futuwwa* organization in both its theoretical and practical senses to aid the caliph to propagate Sunni Islam. Rumi took advantage of the *futuwwa* vehicle and used it for his own purposes, i.e., for the propagation of a new order resulting from a synthesis of eastern (*Kubrawiyyah*) and western (*Suhrawardiyyah*) orders. This new order came to be known as the *Mevlavi* Order.¹³ We will have more to say about the organization of the order later.

The sources of inspiration for Jalal al-Din Rumi are diverse. On the one hand there are the *Qur'an*, and the Prophet as the Perfect Man, on the other hand, there are the less perfect human beings who supervised his formal education and Sufi learning. Among these latter, perhaps the most influential was his father while he lived. In fact, his father's notes, *Ma'arifi Baha' Walad*, can be traced in almost all the compositions of Maulana. As we have seen, his father's disciple, Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq, was also a major source of inspiration, especially after the death of his father. In fact, Muhaqqiq came to Konya after the death of Baha' Walad to meet with Rumi and his disciples in special sessions. In these sessions, he insisted that Rumi should read his father's notes over and over and use the wisdom contained in them in his instructions. Burhan al-Din died in 1240 in Qaisariyyah. His memory is kept alive in the many mentions of his name in Maulana's *Fih ma Fihi*. A third source of inspiration was Shams of Tabriz who, as mentioned, entered late in Maulana's life (1244). Unlike Muhaqqiq, Shams advocated independence from his father's legacy¹⁴ and indifference to worldly matters.

It is reported that when the forty-year old Maulana met the sixty-year old Sufi known as Shams of Tabriz, he was astounded. To Maulana, Shams of Tabriz appeared as the visage of the Almighty. Unable to answer Shams's questions, Maulana fell unconscious, and, thereafter, remained under the spell of

¹² Osemi, vol. 8, p. 449.

¹³ Cf., Guzel, vol. 2, pp. 633-637.

¹⁴ Zarrinkub, pp. 272-75.

Shams. For instance, before meeting Shams, Maulana had devoted his whole energy to the education of his disciples at the *madrasah*. After meeting Shams, he abandoned teaching altogether and spent his time in *khilvat* (seclusion) with Shams. Maulana's lack of attention infuriated his disciples, who, unable to change the attitude of their teacher, made life in Konya very difficult for Shams.

Without informing Maulana about his future residence, Shams left Konya. For fifteen months Maulana sought Shams's whereabouts without any luck. Finally, he received information that Shams was living in Damascus. He sent Sultan Walad to persuade Shams to return to Konya. When Shams returned, for some time, all was well between him and Maulana's disciples. They even arranged a marriage for him with the daughter of one of Maulana's relatives. But the reunion of Maulana and Shams did not last long. Again, a lack of attention to his teaching and Maulana's total absorption in *sama'* (music) and *raqs* (dance) infuriated the disciples. Shams left Maulana for the last time (1247) and, according to certain accounts, was murdered soon after at the hand of Maulana's students. Rumi's own son, 'Ala' al-Din, is reported to have been among the miscreants.¹⁵ As for Maulana, he waited for seven years for his soul mate to return. He even made two trips to Damascus to look for him. All in vain. Tired, he returned from Syria a totally changed individual. He no longer taught his regular courses or delivered any sermons. Instead, he spent his time at the *khaniqah* guiding disciples and pilgrims.¹⁶

After the departure of Shams, Rumi transferred his affection to Salah al-Din Faridun Qunavi, also known as "Zarkub" (goldsmith). A student and disciple of Muhaqqiq, Zarkub was naïve; he was, it is reported, the butt of jokes among his own disciples. What did Maulana see in him? After the death of the goldsmith (1258), for the last time, Rumi transferred his affection to Husam al-Din Chelebi who died in 1284. It was for

¹⁵ Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 455.

¹⁶ Safa, 3/1, p. 455.

Husam al-Din that Rumi composed what has come to be known as the Bible of Sufism, *Mathnavi-i Ma'navi* (The *Mathnavi* Devoted to the Intrinsic Meaning of all Things). The remainder of Rumi's life was devoted to the composition of the *Mathnavi* in which effort he was helped by Husam al-Din.

The themes, images, stories, and concept introduced and developed in the works of Rumi are too numerous to deal with in this study. In what follows, therefore, a few concepts and themes will be analyzed as samples representing the rest. These include Rumi's view of the perfect man, fate, poverty, and wisdom, among others. The concept of the perfect man is very close to Rumi's heart. Before Rumi, Ibn Maskawaih, Ibn 'Arabi, and Jilani, and after Rumi, in more recent times, Muhammad Iqbal have discussed this concept to some degree. Rumi, however, is the thinker who has analyzed the concept in terms of both material and spiritual dimensions. The material dimension of the impact of the perfect man on individuals and society places the perfect man at the apex from where he can command the world as we see and experience it. The spiritual dimension enables the perfect man to internalize the world, on the one hand, and to be internalized by it, on the other hand. Such a unique person, Rumi believes, can lead mankind on the path to righteousness.

Maulana's perfect man is an accomplished self in whom thought and action, as well as instinct and intelligence are united.¹⁷ Such a person retains his individuality even in relation to the godhead. He is not prone to the loss of self. This might seem like a contradiction to the general view of *fana'* (annihilation) as a result of which the lover is totally annihilated in the Beloved but, in reality, there is no contradiction. In its annihilation in the perfect soul, it is not the individual's individuality that is affected, but the individual's identity. It is, after all, man's individuality that gives him freedom and,

¹⁷ For a discussion of the perfect man, his relation to Shams of Tabriz and the sun, see Morewedge, 1975, pp, 200-04.

eventually, eternal life.¹⁸ Put differently, against the sun, the candle does not turn into naught. Rather, it remains a candle and produces light albeit within its own limited sphere and ability.

Maulana's views are at odds with the general Sufic view that advocates that one should abandon the world and put all his trust in Providence. In fact, Maulana tries very hard to instill in his followers a strict work ethic. The comfort of the individual and the family, he says, is tied to the individual's adoption of a profession.¹⁹ Even children, he says, can contribute to the labor force. They can be equipped with small drums that they can beat to keep the swarms of birds away from the farms.²⁰

One of the major issues during the formative days of Islam was the role of poverty in the life of the Muslim faithful. Are wealth and piety mutually exclusive? Rumi looks at the life of the Prophet Muhammad as an example and provides examples from the lives of the Rashidun caliphs, like Abu Bakr. In all those cases he makes a distinction between the individual who is facing a lack of worldly possessions because of circumstances, and an individual who deliberately avoids amassing worldly possessions. Put differently, the mendicant is poor because he does not have access to wealth while a poor by choice, like Abu Bakr, is poor because he chooses to live within what his labor pays. The mendicant, if his means allow, has the potential of becoming powerful, arrogant, and oppressive. The individual who chooses poverty is already powerful. He uses his power to educate the world and to gradually bring the mendicant, both when he is wanting and when he has become powerful, into the path on which he himself traverses. It is in learning, teaching, and guidance that the perfect man finds his wealth and makes his contribution to society.

Rumi is also at odds with the mainstream Sufis with regard to the role of reason in the progression of man towards unity with God. In general, it is believed that before annihilation,

¹⁸ Cf., Qaiser, 2006, p. 142.

¹⁹ Ravandi, vol. 1, p. 379.

²⁰ Ravandi, vol. 1, p. 263.

reason leaves the *salik*. Rumi believes that intelligence and love are part and parcel of the makeup of the perfect man. Indeed, it is the combined effect of love and reason that enables an ordinary man to reach the status of a perfect man. Is it not love that comforts the individual against the ravages of death, and is it not intelligence that finds an individual's way to love? With bodily death so imminent for everyone, should not the perfect man distinguish his immortality by exercising control over reason that leads his way to love? Then again, what is the source of the true knowledge of the perfect man? Rumi found his answer in Shams of Tabriz, a fellow twenty years his senior, who grabbed Maulana's books and threw them into the pond. In response to Maulana's protest he said true knowledge comes from the heart, not from books. Within you, he said to Maulana, there is an immense reservoir of knowledge waiting to be unleashed. Allow that knowledge to surface untrammelled.

Similarly, Rumi uses imagery as a mainstay of his works, both prose and poetry. A most prolific writer, comparable to Sana'i and 'Attar, Rumi wrote 3,200 odes in over 34,600 couplets, using imagery alluding to Allah and His reflection in all things. The most frequently encountered images in Rumi's works are those of water, animals, and the sun. The Almighty, the Holy Book, the Prophet, the *ahadith*, and the poets who had preceded him are all held very high in his poetry, as are ancient philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Rumi's writing style in the *Mathnawi* is very much like 'Attar's style in *Asrar Nama* with the difference that, unlike 'Attar, Rumi frequently interjects his own thoughts into the content of the poem.²¹ His major achievements, the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi* and the *Mathnawi* attest to his encyclopedic knowledge of the world. He categorizes people by the nature, temperament, knowledge, and region, distinguishes birds and animals by type, and foods by name. His knowledge of mythology, religious annals, and folklore is vast.

²¹ Zarrinkub, p. 262.

Rumi's *Mathnawi* testifies to the expanse of his phenomenal awareness of the world and the extent of his knowledge about the past and the present, and most importantly, to his dexterity at telling stories.²² While scrutinizing ethical, religious, and spiritual issues, and while explaining *Qur'anic* verses and *ahadith*, Rumi also delves into the delicate theme of love and explains its relation to rituals (*Shari'a*), on the one hand, and to the exalted state of the perfect man, on the other hand. He documents his assertions with *Qur'anic* references, and with references to the assertions of the *Shaykhs* before him, and with logic, common sense, and experience.²³ His *Mathnawi*, redolent with information about the past history of Iran, Islam, Anatolia, and Central Asia, also includes valuable information about the trends of Rumi's time and his perspective on them. For instance, Rumi regards men superior to women in foresight but not in intelligence where men have had to use other means, such



as brute force, to stay ahead of the game.²⁴ He is also very critical of deceitful and equivocal preachers, especially those who use heaven and hell as means of intimidating simple people.²⁵

Rumi lived a relatively full life. He died on December 17, 1273. He left instructions that Shaykh Sadr al-Din Qunavi should perform the prayer for him. Rumi was buried in Konya beside his father. Many frequent his mausoleum. It should be added that due to his long stay in Konya, he is often referred to

²² For Maulana's vast knowledge of Islamic narratives and Persian literary and popular tales, see Yousofi, 1975, pp. 225ff.

²³ Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 461.

²⁴ Ravandi, vol. 1, p. 692.

²⁵ Ravandi, vol. 1, p. 453; see also Yousofi, 1975, p. 293.

as the Mawla of Rum. As for Rumi himself, he always regarded Khurasan as his home. Then again, philosophically speaking, place of birth—Egypt, Damascus, or India—was immaterial to Rumi.

Rumi's funeral procession was attended by Muslims, Jews, and Christians, as well as by people of diverse ethnic backgrounds and nationalities. Is this not testimony to the appeal that his great humanity and spirit of tolerance had created?²⁶ According to both Sultan Walad and Aflaki, Rumi's wake lasted for forty days.²⁷ Again, following Maulana's instructions, after his death, Husam al-Din Chelebi succeeded him. Eventually Sultan Walad, Maulana's son, succeeded Chelebi and institutionalized the Order in the family.²⁸

Some sixteen years after Maulana's death, Sultan Walad wrote the most reliable biography of Rumi. This was a major contribution, not only because it was written very close to the time of Maulana's death, but also because someone very close to him, actually someone who could describe aspects of his life and thought with a special understanding, wrote it. Another biography, ordered by Maulana's grandson, took about forty-three years to complete. Written eighty-two years after the death of Maulana by Shams al-Din Ahmad Aflaki, it is a much less reliable source, redolent with superstition and flattery. Over the centuries, unfortunately, it is the information in this volume that has been repeated by later biographers rather than the facts in Sultan Walad's. If there is a positive side to Aflaki's work, it is in the fact that he examines the lives of Baha' Walad and those close to his circle as well.²⁹

The 13th century Sufi order known as the *Mevlaviyyah* (popularly referred to as the Whirling Dervishes) has its roots in the era immediately following Maulana's death.³⁰ At that time,

²⁶ Cf., Rypka, p. 240; Osemi, vol. 8, p. 449.

²⁷ Safa, vol. 3/1, pp. 458-59.

²⁸ Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 460.

²⁹ Zarrinkub, p. 275

³⁰ *Soviet Tajik Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, p. 84.

his disciples built a tomb and monastery complex in which they could gather and keep his memory and teachings alive. The performance of the *sama'* brought audiences to the place and the complex gradually assumed the shape of a regular meeting place for Maulana enthusiasts. Maulana's son, Sultan Walad, who served as the *Shaykh* of the order from 1285 until his death in 1312 took on the responsibility of propagating the Order.³¹ Sultan Walad's son, Ulu Arif Chelebi (d. 1320) is credited with introducing the liturgy, ritual, special garments, and the overall structure of the increasingly growing order.³²

The main audio-visual feature of the order is a passionate recital of music (*sama'*) and the performance of a dance (*raqs*). The music, religious in content, conveys love through playing musical instruments (*saz*), including *ney* (flute) and *daf* (drum). The dance consists of a series of choreographed gyrations that imitate the rotation of the heavenly spheres. The performance is orderly and serene. Each dancer wears a seamless felt crown, symbolic of a tombstone,³³ and a black robe, symbolic of the grave. At the beginning of the dance, all the dancers, in black garments, appear on the stage and stand in a line. When the *Shaykh* assumes his position, they all discard the black robes in anticipation of the dance. The dancer, who is at the head of the line, moves slowly in the direction of the *Shaykh* and kisses the hand of the *Shaykh*. The *Shaykh* in return kisses the *sikkah* (costume) of the dancer. The dancer then, with folded arms, moves onto the center of the stage and begins gyrating. The other dancers gradually join him. The garment in which the dance is performed is white and has a floating skirt.

The gestures and movements of the dancers symbolize the particular relationship that the dancers create between the Beloved and the world. For instance, when gyrating, the disciple's open right palm is raised to the heavens while his open

³¹ Guzel, vol. 2, p. 675.

³² Guzel, vol. 2, p. 639.

³³ Ordinarily, a turban is placed on top of the crown. Usually, this turban is absent when they dance.

left palm is turned downward. The raised hand symbolizes receiving blessings from Heaven, the down-turned palm symbolizes transmission of the blessings onto the earth.

Similarly, the gyrations, combined with music, indicate the flight of the soul of the dancer to the Beloved. It is reported that as they dance, the dervishes feel that they gradually elevate themselves above the floor of the stage and that the distance between them and God is diminished. This happens in several stages. During the initial rotations the dancers acquire a vision of the realms and bear witness to the unity of God. During the gyrations that follow, they accept the unity of God and make it a part of their philosophy of existence. This acceptance gradually elevates them to the presence of God, where the dance comes to a halt. At this point, the *Shaykh* takes his seat and the music signals the conclusion of the dance.

It is related in the *Tariq al-Haqyeq* that the *Mevlaviyyah* is spread widely throughout Anatolia, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and Iraq, and that in those places it is well known to one and all. Each disciple is required to attend to the business of the *khaniqah* for one thousand and one days. Deviation on any day would require the disciple to begin the process from the beginning. After the process is completed, the disciple undergoes a repentance ritual to cleanse his self. It is then that he will be ushered into the fold, robed in the traditional garb of the Mevlavis, and given a room (*hujrah*) in which to meditate and further perfect his self.³⁴

The order has two types of audiences. There is a serious audience that seeks a thorough understanding of the unity of existence (*wahdat al-wujud*) as it has been expressed by Ibn al-'Arabi and incorporated into Rumi's verses. This audience seeks the *tekkes* (dervishes lodge) with the most learned *murshids* and the best sources of information. The other is a popular audience interested in the spectacle of the dance and the soothing nature of the music. Put differently, there is an urban audience belonging to the higher levels of society and a rural audience

³⁴ Cf., Safa, vol. 3/1, p. 456.

that is satisfied with popular beliefs in the manner of the Bektashis. Increasingly, a third audience is being added. This audience consists of the foreign tourists who are attracted to Konya. They, too, divide along the same two lines outlined above.

The Mevlavi Order did very well during most of the era of the Ottomans. After 1825, the order lost its influence in high society and was eventually banned by Ata Turk in 1924.³⁵ In 1952, the government allowed *sama'* sessions to be held in Konya. This was followed by permission for radio broadcast of Rumi's religious verses. At the present, the music of the dervishes is retained by several Mevlavi lodges in various parts of Turkey.³⁶

Furthermore, 2007 is the 800th birth anniversary of Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi. The UNESCO General Conference in association with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan is presenting a special program of mystic Mevlavi music and dance (*Sama'*), along with lecturers and exhibitions, in a number of major cities in the United States and Europe.³⁷

Rumi and the World

Although Jalal al-Din Muhammad was born in Balkh and wrote his poetry in Persian, he lived in Anatolia (present-day Turkey, also referred to as Byzantium and Rum) and died there among his family and mostly Turkish disciples. The first works about his life and deeds were written in Turkey by his son, Sultan Walad, and Aflaki. After the *Mathnawi* was translated

³⁵ Guzel, vol. 5, p. 688.

³⁶ Guzel, 2002, vol. 4, p. 86.

³⁷ Hasnat Abdul Hye, see "Of Sema and Baul" in Bibliography.

into Turkish and *na'ats* (praises) in Turkish were added to recitals, some Turks came to the conclusion that Maulana had actually been a Turk. In the same way that Persians like Ibn Sina and al-Biruni had been forced by circumstances to write their works in Arabic, they said, Maulana had been forced by circumstances to write his poetry in Persian!³⁸

Among the Turks who have made lasting contributions to Rumi studies, mention can be made of Rosukhi Esmā'il Dede Anqaravi (d. 1631) and 'Abd al-Baqi Golpinarli (1900-1982). Although somewhat controversial, Anqaravi's seven-volume *Commentary* on the *Mathnawi* is the most comprehensive study of the master's verses in Turkish. Golpinarli's contributions are related to his translation of a major portion of the works of Rumi from Persian into Turkish. This included a translation from the *Mathnawi*, as well as lyrics from the *Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi*, Rumi's discourses, letters, and the *Majalis-i Sab'a* (Seven Sermons).

Rumi scholarship in Iran is extensive and beyond the scope of this essay. The reader is referred to the comprehensive work of Franklin D. Lewis for further details.³⁹ The most extensive study, however, was undertaken by Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar (1900-1970). An avid reader and Rumi enthusiast, he wrote his dissertation entitled, *Risalah dar Ahval wa Zendegii Maulana Jalal al-Din Muhammad* (Study of the Circumstances and Life of Maulana Jalal al-Din, on the subject. The 1954 revised edition of the 1936 dissertation continues to be useful to students interested in Rumi. Foruzanfar also took on the task of writing a *Sharh-i Mathnawi-i Sharif*, a comprehensive commentary on the *Mathnawi*, but could finish only three volumes before he died. Other contributors include Sadeq Gowharin (d. 1995), who provided a comprehensive dictionary

³⁸ This discussion, a part of a larger debate on the ethnic and national identity of some of the major figures of Medieval Islam, is outside the purview of this essay. For the Turkish claim, see Lewis, 2003, pp. 541-551.

³⁹ Lewis, 2003, pp. 554-560.

of Rumi terminology; 'Abdul Hussein Zarrinkub, who has provided an extensive commentary on the *Mathnawi*;⁴⁰ and Parviz Morewedge, whose essay on Rumi's philosophy and mystical poetry is of great interest.⁴¹

Not all Iranians adored Rumi. In fact, those who recognized Rumi's *Ash'arite* background and who deemed him to be anti-philosophy and anti-rational, regarded him as a dangerous element in society, detrimental to the psychological well-being of the youth of the country.⁴² Among this group Ahmad Kasravi (1890-1946) was the most vocal. A University of Tehran professor, Kasravi was forced to leave the university partially due to his staunch stance against medieval Persian poets, especially Sa'di, Hafiz, and Rumi. He considered Rumi to be a deluded individual prone to hallucination. If, according to the Sufis, whose creed Rumi follows, there is no good, no evil, and no salvation, asked Kasravi, why should we bother to educate the young or attempt to build societies, or harbor hope for the future?⁴³ Others also see a contradiction in Rumi's words and deeds. They point to Rumi's lifestyle that seems to be at odds with his teachings. He wore beautiful, expensive outfits, a magnificent headgear made from the finest fabrics, his ink set was inlaid with priceless pearls from Bahrain and with gold, and his pen was adorned with a peacock feather. Beautifully embroidered leather shoes completed his ensemble. Is this not at odds with the directives in *Misbah al-Hidayah* (The Guiding Light), where the circumstances of the life of a Sufi are outlined?⁴⁴ By the same token, one can argue that once the *salik* passes the arduous stations and states of the Path, he is free to choose any color or type of garment that is most fitting to his mood.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Lewis, 2003, p. 558.

⁴¹ Lewis, 2003, p. 560.

⁴² See Price, "Is Rumi what we think he is?" in the Bibliography.

⁴³ Jazayeri, 1973, p. 196.

⁴⁴ Cf. Huma'i, n.d., pp. 146-48.

⁴⁵ Huma'i, n. d., p. 152.

Rumi is first mentioned in French by Barthélémy d'Herbelot (1625-95), where, in his *Bibliothèque Orientale*, he discusses the life and works of Sa'di, Hafiz, Rudaki and other Persian poets and thinkers. His mention of Rumi, however, is noteworthy. Rather than as a mystic, d'Herbelot discusses Rumi as the master of the Mevlavi Dervishes. His emphasis, rather than on Rumi, is on the rituals of the order, music and dance.⁴⁶

The trend set by d'Herbelot became a tradition in France until the twentieth century. But that does not mean that the French did not study the other Oriental poets and thinkers in depth. In fact, some French scholars dedicated their entire study to Oriental themes. Louis Massignon, for instance, devoted most of his life to an appreciation of the life and times of Mansur al-Hallaj. In the case of Rumi, however, they allowed the spectacle to mask the message. For instance, Clément Huart (1854-1926), who translated the works of Aflaki, paid little attention to the works of Rumi.⁴⁷ Similarly, Henri Corbin studied the illuminationist Suhrawardi and the monist Ibn al-'Arabi, but paid only lip service to Rumi. No doubt, this trend would have continued if, in the 1970's, Eva de Vitray-Meyerovitch, a Rumi disciple, had not devoted her study to Rumi the mystic. Her translations and analyses of the philosophy of Rumi have made the French aware of the real force behind the music and the dance of the Whirling Dervishes of Konya.⁴⁸

The first mention of Rumi in English is by Sir William Jones (1746-94) who, in December 1791, in a lecture called "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus," recited his translation of the opening *bayt* of the *Mathnawi*.⁴⁹

Hear, how yon reed in sadly pleasing tales
Departed bliss and present woe bewails!

⁴⁶ Cf. Lewis, p. 528.

⁴⁷ Lewis, p. 542.

⁴⁸ Lewis, p. 545.

⁴⁹ Lewis, p. 565.

Although Jones's field of study was grammar, his contributions cannot be ignored. His *Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771) formed the linguistic base on which scholars like Edward Granville Browne (1862-1926) and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868-1945) drew to acquaint themselves with the works of the Persian masters. Without Jones's contribution, they would not have been able to delve into Mawlavi's works, especially into his *Mathnawi*.⁵⁰ Neither is what is being said an exaggeration. The contribution of Nicholson to an understanding of Jalal al-Din Rumi's world and thought is so great that even in Iran, for reference purposes, Rumi specialists use his edition of the *Mathnawi*. In fact, Nicholson and his student, Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969), prepared the ground for the two types of scholarship that dominated Rumi studies after they left the field. Nicholson inspires those Westerners who are interested in understanding the mystical dimensions of Islam; Arberry, on the other hand, provides translations on which a more popular understanding of Rumi can be based. A brief history of Rumi in English translation follows.

In 1887, E. H. Whinfield published the translation of an abridged version of the *Mathnavi*. This was followed by C. E. Wilson's translation of Book II of the *Mathnavi* in 1910. Finally, Nicholson published a complete version entitled, *The Mathnawi of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (1925-1940). The eight-volume translation set the scene for Rumi studies for the subsequent decades. Nicholson's efforts were followed by the 1949 translation of selections from the *Ruba'iyat of Rumi* by A. J. Arberry. In 1955, Nicholson published translations of some selections from both *Fihi ma Fihi* and the *Mathnawi*. The translations appeared in A. J. Arberry's *Selections*. Two years later, Nicholson's 1898 edition of *Diwani Shamsi Tabrizi* was reprinted. In 1956, using Nicholson's selections, Sir Colin Garbett contributed his own translation entitled, *Sun of Tabriz: A Lyrical Introduction to Higher Metaphysics*. In 1961, A. J. Arberry published

⁵⁰ Cf. Lewis, pp. 529-533.

Discourses of Rumi and in 1968 *Mystical Poems of Rumi*. In the 1960's, Arberry translated some of the tales for which Rumi is famous. They were *Tales from the Mathnawi* (1961) and *More Tales from the Mathnawi* (1963).⁵¹ As we shall see further below, these translations provided the base for a series of new transcreations by American poets dealing with Rumi. For instance, Coleman Barks and John Moyne reworded the translations of Arberry and Nicholson in the American vernacular in *The Essential Rumi* (1996), followed by *The Illuminated Rumi*, contributed by Coleman Barks and Michael Green (1997). We shall deal with the American treatment of Rumi's verses further below.

In Germany, the contributions of three scholars, among others, stand out. Hellmut Ritter (1892-1971) studied Rumi's life and works concentrating on the rituals of the Order, especially *sama'* about which he wrote two articles. Following in the footsteps of Ritter, Fritz Meier (1912-98) researched the family background of Rumi, especially Baha' Walad's views, and provided invaluable information about Rumi's theology. He based his understanding of Rumi on *Maqalat-i Shams*, a very informative source, especially in relation to Rumi's Sufic concepts. Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003) researched the primary sources of Rumi and published extensively on his Sufic thought. More than any other scholar, she has grounded the works of Rumi in the traditions of Indian Islam and in Sufism.⁵² She also has produced an extensive amount of literature in English on Rumi.

Rumi is not well known in Italy. In 1894, Italo Pizzi provided five passages and eleven poems from Rumi's works. This was followed in 1975 by the publication of the proceedings of a 1973 conference commemorating the 700th anniversary of Rumi's death held in Rome. In 1980, Alessandro Bausani (1921-88) published a volume that included fifty *ghazals* and twelve quatrains in Italian translation.

⁵¹ Windfuhr, 1973, p. 28.

⁵² Lewis, p. 539.

Europeans made contact with the Mevlevi dervishes as early as 1422 and became familiar with the poetry of Maulana and his philosophy. The accounts that the early travelers brought back, however, were distorted and culturally biased. Fortunately, later scholars discovered the true Rumi and justified the reasons for the Mevlevis being so proud of their master.⁵³ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82) who translated the German translations contributed by Hammer Purgstall and Herman Ethé (1844-1917) introduced Americans to Persian literature. As was the case in France, in America, too, Rumi was not the Persian poet most liked by the public. Shams al-Din Hafiz of Shiraz was. Actually, Rumi was not well known in the United States until the advent of the New Age in America. Then Rumi became increasingly popular. Today he is the most well-known and frequently-cited poet in the United States.

Unlike in Germany and Britain where scholars and religious institutions spearheaded Rumi's recognition, in the United States the general public took the lead. About this Lewis writes, "The influence of Rumi on modes of thinking in the West ... makes itself felt not so much in the churches and not so much in the academy or in quasi-scientific approaches to the mind, as in the popular movements and spiritual practices imported from points east and designated generally as New Age spirituality."⁵⁴

Perhaps one of the reasons for Rumi's attraction was the Americans' increasing interest in Eastern spiritualism in the 1960s and 1970s.⁵⁵ By 1976, this interest manifested itself in the youth movement which, being anti-materialist and anti-capitalist in nature, was acceptable of Sufi mentality. What vehicle would establish the new *Weltanschauung* better than Sufism, represented by Rumi as its poster boy? In other words, it was Sufism that was gaining ground in America and Rumi was riding on the crest of it.

⁵³ Cf., Lewis, pp. 499-500.

⁵⁴ Lewis, p. 513.

⁵⁵ Cf., Nasr, 1975, p. 182.

From this vantage point, we can see the emergence of two different attitudes towards Rumi and his teachings. One group insists on the promotion of the essential qualities of Sufism and the true philosophy of Rumi. The members of this group study Rumi's works in the context of the society and philosophy prevalent during the thirteenth century. The other group opts for the popular Rumi and, in the process, compromises the integrity of Rumi's teachings. And Sufism, as is its wont, accommodates both groups quite comfortably. Carl Ernst puts it best where, in his *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, he says that Sufism "has been followed by individuals of widely different temperaments and characters, and consequently exhibits a wide variety of approaches."⁵⁶

In 1973, the 700th anniversary of Rumi's death, one of America's major poets, Robert Duncan (1919-88) became familiar with the works of Rumi and, inspired by Rumi, in 1976, wrote "Circulations of the Song: After Jalal al-Din Rumi." Soon after that he included the poem in his public readings and, eventually, published it in his book, *Ground Work: Before the War*. According to West, Duncan's poem "demonstrates a remarkable familiarity with or intuition about the spirit, pacing, and style of Rumi's *ghazals*."⁵⁷ Duncan's recitations attracted the attention of two graduate students who wrote their dissertations on the subject. Ghulam Muhammad Fayez wrote on "Mystic Ideas and Images in Jalal al-Din Rumi and Walt Whitman" and Sabrina Caine wrote on "Eros and the Visionaries: A Depth Psychological Approach." The latter, following Duncan, dealt with the deep love that bonded Rumi to his soul mate Shams of Tabriz. The same Rumi-Shams encounter also inspired Daniel Liebert to write the first book in America on Rumi. Forty-five pages in length, the book is called *Rumi: Fragments and Ecstasies*.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ernst, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Lewis, pp. 584-85.

⁵⁸ Lewis, p. 858.

In 1984, David Martin translated Rumi from the Persian, disregarding the necklace theory that had governed the analyses, understanding, and translations of the Persian *ghazal*.⁵⁹ Consequently, he presented the poems of Rumi as unified wholes rather than as haphazardly juxtaposed couplets. His diction, however, remained the diction of those scholars who had translated Rumi in the 18th and 19th centuries.⁶⁰

Martin's treatment of the poems of Rumi affected the American poet Robert Ellwood Bly (1926-) in two ways. First it taught him that it was Rumi's ideas in his poems, i.e., the content, that had to be given precedence. Second that Rumi's ideas did not have to emerge through the structures and words of the Victorian translators who had introduced him to the West. Bly, therefore, drew Rumi into his own circle of translations and gave Rumi an American face. The process, which we shall call "transcreation," is quite simple. In the case of Rumi, you take a *ghazal* that is already translated by Arberry or Nicholson, assess its contents, and write a verse that conveys the meaning. Outwardly the new *ghazal* need not resemble Arberry's or Nicholson's original. If there is a resemblance, of course, so much the better. If there is not, nothing is lost. In the eyes of Bly, Arberry and Nicholson were means to make Rumi's ideas available. Thereafter, they are expendable. By the same token, we can assume that Bly, too, is a means to convey Arberry and Nicholson to the future generations. Where would this process leave Jalal al-Din Rumi?

The poet Coleman Bryan Barks (1937-) says that in 1976, Bly, with whom he had just become acquainted at a conference, handed him Rumi's poems and asked him to rewrite those poems as verses familiar to American ears. He did just that and, thereafter, too, he looked for literal translations of Rumi on which to base his renditions. According to Coleman, the more literal the translations, the better they are for his purpose. Often, John Abel Moyne (born Javad Mo'in) provides the literal

⁵⁹ See Bashiri, 1979.

⁶⁰ Lewis, pp. 585-87.

versions, at other times Arberry and Nicholson. The contributions of Barks include *The Essential Rumi* (1995), which pulls together some of his earlier selections, a coffee-table book of 128 pages called *The Illuminated Rumi* (1997), and *Rumi: Book of Love* (2005).

Transcreation of the type we are addressing here entered the translation of Persian works with the extremely successful transcreation of the *Quatrains* of Omar Khayyam by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-83). Those familiar with the Persian text of Khayyam's *Ruba'iyyat* and with Khayyam's philosophy would attest to the dexterity of Fitzgerald in recreating the world of the *Ruba'iyyat of Omar Khayyam* a-la-Fitzgerald rather than a-la-Khayyam. There is, however, a telling difference between the contributions of Fitzgerald and those by Bly and Barks. Fitzgerald knew the Persian language very well and, like Khayyam, was a philosopher. Additionally, he was well grounded in both the Western and Islamic cultures that contributed to the depth of the mystic dimension of the *Ruba'iyyat*. The transcreations of Bly and the others amplifying Rumi's *Oeuvre*--they lack these basic elements.

Although often helped by Moyne, the transcreations of Bly and Barks are based on the scholarly translations of nineteenth century authors like Nicholson and Arberry, the generation to which Edward Fitzgerald belonged. If we consider the fact that those great personalities of Iranian studies admitted that their translations did not fathom the depth of the poetry of Hafiz and Rumi, we will have a better grasp of the quality and the value of the Victorian English into American English transcreations of Bly and Barks. Why would then, major American poets like Bly and Barks, and a linguist like Moyne, undertake such transcreations? It all depends on the outcome that each transcreator aims for. Bly's version, in his own words, is based on guesses. He does not look for accuracy. An inaccurate translation, he believes, is better than no translation at all!

Finally, in Tajikistan, Academic A. Bahauddinov, as well as N. Odilov, Kh. Ziyaev, and M. Muhammadjonova have dealt with Rumi's philosophy. In particular, the two latter scholars

have authored books on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Rumi's birth. Kh. Ziyaev's publications include a good deal of information on the life and works of Rumi's father, Baha' Walad.

Rumi and Philosophy

When we think of Arthur Schopenhauer, we are reminded of volition (*erاده*) and about our own sense of connection to the ultimate reality. When we think about Friedrich Nietzsche, rather than an ultimate reality, we think about superman (*abar insan*), a distinctly different reality with its roots not in the heavens but among ourselves. Johann Gottlieb Fichte replaces God with an Absolute Mind, an existent (ego, *khud*) into which existence is projected, and Henri Bergson credits nature as the reality that renews itself at each turn.

Nazir Qaisar compares the thought of Muhammad Iqbal with the thoughts of the four philosophers mentioned above, as well as with the philosophies of Henry James and John McTaggart. They are the Western philosophers whom Iqbal is supposed to have emulated. After analyzing the thoughts of those philosophers and comparing them, almost strand-by-strand, with Iqbal's, he rejects the notion that Iqbal has followed those Western philosophers. He agrees that there is a resemblance, but states categorically that the resemblance is not substantial enough for those philosophers to be credited as the source of Iqbal's inspiration. According to Qaisar, Iqbal's thought takes source in the teachings of the *Qur'an*, the *ahadith* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, as well as in the legacy of Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi.⁶¹ To Qaisar's statement we can add that Iqbal, like Rumi, follows the tradition of the eastern encyclopedic scholar. Rather than connect the nodes within the

⁶¹ See Qaisar, pp. 96, 136-37, 238-40, 322-25, 351.

same topic such as volition, or will to power, or centrality of nature, he connects the nodes across topics. In this way, he allows lesser issues to find their solutions within the larger context. In the philosophy of Rumi, therefore, we find topics like volition, will to power, centrality of nature, and many others as contributing factors to an overall understanding of man and his role here below.

In what follows, we shall examine Rumi's thought in the context of its *Ishraqi* source and in relation to the worlds of Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi and Najm al-Din Kubra.⁶² Since an understanding of the world of Kubra necessitates an examination of the efforts of the founder of *Ishraqi* philosophy, and since *Ishraqi* philosophy draws on ancient Iranian thought, we shall start with the pre-Islamic roots of al-Suhrawardi's philosophy, i.e., the Ancient Persian idea of light and emanation.

Iranian Roots of Rumi's Philosophy

In Mazdian cosmology, the ancient Iranian concept of the *khwarnagh*, which in medieval times appears as *farr*, refers to the power of the sun deified. In present-day Farsi, the word *khawar* (east) refers to where the sun rises. A more important concept is the ancient Iranians' belief that the rays of the sun, accompanied by thought, serve as building blocks to form perfect cosmic societies. The closer the units of light (read "thought beings") were to the source, the stronger was their claim to purity, prowess, and leadership. Thus, the Persian form *farahmand* (a person endowed with *farr*) has different connotations, depending on where on the *farr* hierarchy an individual is located. In the ancient Iranian social structure, the

⁶² For a comprehensive study of Rumi's life, see Lewis, 2000.

most powerful individual is the one who is invested with the *farr* by a divine personage. The invisible status of the individual vis-à-vis the deified sun (*khwar*) manifests itself, at different levels, depending on the individual's thoughts, words, and deeds.⁶³

In ancient Iranian cosmology, a distinction is made between the celestial and terrestrial manifestations of the life force. Everything that emanates from the life force, itself known variously as the Void, Thought, or *Khwar*, moves downward along an ever-decreasing hierarchy of light and sagacity. In the celestial domain, *Ahura Mazda*, at the apex, is the source of thought, light, and life. He is assisted by six *Amesha Spentas* (holy immortals or demi-gods) who, in turn, are aided by a host of *Yazatas* (archangels). The *Yazatas* are assisted by an innumerable host of *Farahvashis* (angels). The deeds of these cosmic personages are illustrated in myth through a series of saint-heroes like Fereydun, Kayka'us, and Kaykhusrau. The terrestrial rungs of the hierarchy emanating from *khwar* materialize in real historical kings like Darius I the Great, Xerxes I, Ardashir, and Anushirvan. These monarchs model their actions on those of the saint-heroes who have preceded them. Under these rulers, the *farr* of the king of kings is supreme. Princes, satraps, nobles, farmers, and prisoners of war are placed hierarchically below the king of kings.⁶⁴

Revival of Ancient Iranian Thought

The philosopher who revived the ancient Iranian concept of *khwar* deified, and who developed the idea further by relating it to its ancient Egyptian and Persian roots is Shihab al-Din Yahya

⁶³ For a discussion of *farr*, see Bashiri 1994; see also Filippani-Ronconi, 1978.

⁶⁴ Bashiri, 2003, pp. 103-117.

al-Suhrawardi al-Maqtul.⁶⁵ He is the founder of *Ishraqi* philosophy that, after the condemnation of philosophy by Abu al-Hassan 'Ash'ari, Abu Bakr Baiqalani, Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, and Ibn Taimiyyah, became the dominant philosophy of its age.⁶⁶

Al-Suhrawardi was born in 1155 in the village of Suhraward in northwestern Iran. He was educated by Majd al-Din al-Jili in Maragha and by Zahir al-Din Qari'i in Isfahan. After completing his basic education, al-Suhrawardi traveled in Iran, Anatolia, and Syria and became familiar with Sufi elders. In Aleppo, he participated in religious debates that pitted his illuminationist philosophy against 'Ash'ari dogma. His frank assertions did not sit well with the 'Ash'arites who accused him of having claims to prophethood. Al-Suhrawardi was either starved to death or strangled at the behest of Salah al-Din Ayoubi in 1192 at the age of 37 or 38.⁶⁷ He is referred to as "*al-Maqtul*" (the slain) to distinguish him from the Sufi *Shaykh* of the same name who headed the *Suhrawardiyyah* Sufi Order.

In order to grasp the work of his predecessors, al-Suhrawardi studied the works of the peripatetic philosophers, especially the works of Ibn Sina, and documented his understanding of the knowledge of those sages in a trilogy: *Talvihat* (Intimations), *Muqovimat* (Oppositions), and *Mashari' wa Mutarihat* (Paths and Heavens).⁶⁸ His assessment of peripatetic philosophy convinced him that the path to Truth lies beyond discursive philosophy, and in the relatively uncharted realms of intuitive philosophy. He then wrote his fourth book, *Hikmat al-Ishraq* (Philosophy of Illumination) that, according to himself, was inspired to him in a dream by Aristotle.⁶⁹ Al-

⁶⁵ For the impact of Egypt on ancient Iran, see Bashiri, 2007.

⁶⁶ Hussein Kuhsari, 2004, p. 164.

⁶⁷ Corbin, 1995, p. 288.

⁶⁸ For the contributions of Ibn Sina and al-Farabi, see Fakhry 1983; see also Bashiri 2005.

⁶⁹ Corbin, 1995, p. 294.

Suhrawardi also wrote a number of essays (*risalah*) and stories with mystical dimensions.

Al-Suhrawardi bases his illuminationist theory on two main sources: a) Greek sources including Hermes Trismegistos, Asclepius, Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, the Neo-Platonians, the Egyptian Zu al-Nun, and Abu Sahl Tastari, and b) Iranian sources that also begin with Hermes Trismegistos but include the Royal Iranian *mu'bads*, as well as Kayumars, Fereydun, Kaykhusrau, Zoroaster, Abu Yazid Bastami, Mansur al-Hallaj, and Abu al-Hassan Kharraqani.⁷⁰ In essence, his philosophy retains not only the Neo-Platonic philosophy that had resulted from the synthesis of ancient Egyptian and Iranian emanation theories of light and al-Farabi's enhancement of those theories, but also the Aristotelian or *Masha'i* philosophy that views the world in terms of cause, effect, and categories.

Al-Suhrawardi uses Ibn Sina's peripatetic philosophy as a base for his own philosophy and crowns it with al-Farabi's emanationist philosophy. Then, within the new combined system, he makes the following changes. He replaces the discursive nature of Ibn Sina's arguments with his own intuitive interpretations. And he summarily replaces al-Farabi's concrete emanations—from Saturn to the Moon—with abstract emanations that take source in the *Nur al-Anwar* (Light of Lights). Most importantly, to these new dimensions, he adds a gradation mechanism whereby the beings closest to the Light of Lights cast the least amount of shadow and those at the greatest distance cast the most amount of shadow. Before entering a brief review of Rumi's world, let us summarize al-Suhrawardi's cosmos in relation to its Mazdian roots. This will help us understand the role that Light and Shadow play across the system, as well as the nature of the gradation involved. It will also prepare us to grasp the world of Najm al-din Kubra on whose thought Rumi drew.⁷¹

⁷⁰ See Kuhsari, 2004, p. 166.

⁷¹ For a visual representation of the Ishraqi emanation hierarchy, see further below

Al-Suhrawardi divides the world into two: celestial and terrestrial.⁷² He calls the chief deity, *Ahura Mazda*, the Light of Lights. In this way he revives the concept of the *Khwar* deified. Alongside the Light of Lights, he places Shadow that, due to the intensity of the Light of Lights, cannot show itself. We are aware of it only in a theoretical sense. Below the Light of Lights are the Demi-gods--*Artibihisht*, *Khwardad*, *Amurdad*, etc.--with their Iranian names retained intact. We know them as the *Amesha Spentas*. These Demi-gods and their concomitant Shadows form a rather high level of being that controls aspects of *Ahura Mazda's* creation. Al-Suhrawardi's lower lights recall the *Yazatas* of the ancient religion. Known as archangels, they, too, form a level that consists of infinite interactions among the lights and shadows of this level. Before the celestial emanations end, there is a level of angels that corresponds to the *Farahvashis* of the old system. They are the last of the celestial beings and the closest to human existence.

The terrestrial world, which lies below the *Farahvashis*, is the part of al-Suhrawardi's cosmos in which shadows gain power over lights. Human beings, more shadow than light in composition, are at the apex of this world. Their internal hierarchy, from king of kings to prisoner of war, was already discussed. Below them are the lesser beings including animals, followed in descending order by plants, and minerals. The world of the minerals is the world of absolute Shadow with light appearing only as a theoretical reality.

The system outlined above includes enough information to discuss the structure with which Rumi works, especially in his poem called *az jamadi murdam* (I died as a mineral), without getting involved in a full discussion of *Ishraqi* philosophy. One very important aspect, however, needs to be mentioned in order for us to fathom the depth and the quality of the separation expressed in Rumi's other poem that we intend to look at: *bishnau az ney* (listen to the reed flute). That aspect pertains to a vertical

⁷² Cf., Morewedge, 1975, p. 189, where the world is divided into the spiritual (*ruhani*) and the physical (*jismani*).

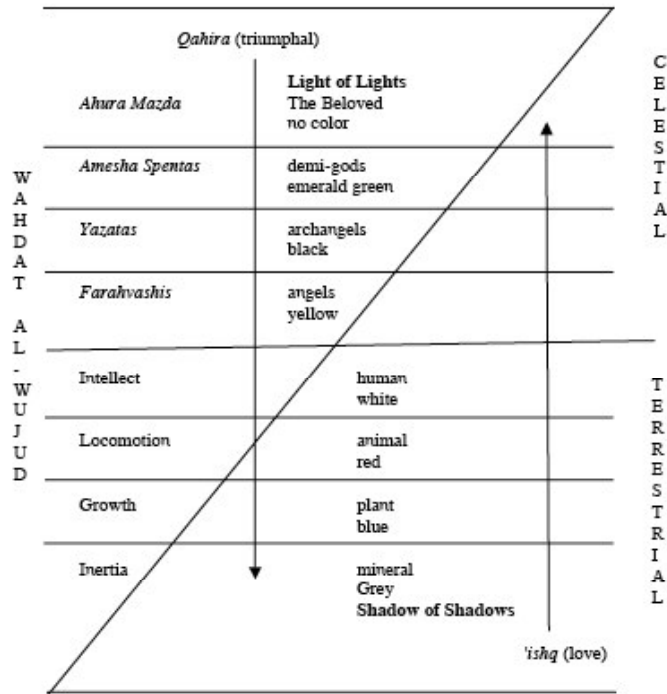
interaction that exists between the uppermost and the lowermost rungs of the emanation hierarchy. The Light of Lights stands in a *qahira* (triumphal) relation vis-à-vis the lights below it as they are increasingly obscured by shadow until they reach the Shadow of Shadows. Conversely, the Shadow of Shadows stands in an *'ishq* (love) relationship vis-à-vis the Light of Lights above, the object of its relentless quest.

In Sufi literature, the lover (*'ashiq*), who is on the lower rungs of the hierarchy, finds himself confronted with the immense power (*qahr*) of the Beloved. It is through weeping, imploring, and begging, that he endeavors to soften the *qahr* to bring about a degree of proximity to the Beloved and a modicum of solace for himself. Understanding the dynamics of this relationship, especially the distance that *qahr* creates and that love must bridge, is essential to an understanding of the relationship between man and his Creator.

The scholar who continued the efforts of al-Suhrawardi is Najm al-Din Kubra, the founder of the *Kubrawiyyah* Sufi Order. A follower of Ahmad al-Ghazzali, the brother of the famed Abu Hamid who died in 1111, Kubra was born in Khwarazm in 1146. He traveled to Nishapur, Hamadan, Isfahan, Mecca, and Alexandria gathering information on ancient creeds and cultures. Eventually, in 1184, he returned to Khwarazm and committed his thoughts to writing. When Genghis Khan invaded Khwarazm in 1220, he ordered Najm al-Din Kubra to appear before him. Kubra refused to leave his people, and because of his insubordination, Mongol officials executed him.

By combining the apparent properties of light and color with al-Suhrawardi's emanation theory, Najm al-Din Kubra played a pivotal role in the further development of *Ishraqi* philosophy that had been gaining ground since the fall of the Mu'tazilites. Kubra created a mystical system with which he could determine the stations and the states that the *'arif* (mystic) experienced as he made progress on the Path. Although not material in nature, the light-color hierarchy that related the mundane to the sublime served as a guide for the insignificant ray of light (the *salik*) that sought its source, the sun. 'Ala al-Din

Semnani, building on Kubra's system, posited seven colors, indicating the seven stations and states of the hierarchy that the Sufi traverses on the Path. From the lowest rank to the highest, the colors introduced by Semnani are: grey (any human being), blue, red, white, yellow, black, and emerald green (Muhammad). In each color, Semnani saw a different reflection of the prophet of Islam. Needless to say, all the changes take place beyond the realm of the senses, some beyond the realm of the intellect. The following chart summarizes our discussion thus far.



The *Ishraqi* Emanation hierarchy

Rumi picks up the emanation theory at a time when the theory is still being developed. In the 16th century Mir Damad of the School of Isfahan, and his student, Mullah Sadra of Shiraz, expand the capability of the emanation theory manifold. By replacing the concept of "light" with the concept of "existence," Mullah Sadra revolutionizes Islamic philosophy and provides answers to questions that had baffled both the *Masha'i* and the *Ishraqi* philosophers. The remainder of this paper is devoted to the impact of *Ishraqi* philosophy on Rumi's thought, and, consequently, on the import of his poetry.

***Ishraqi* Philosophy in Rumi's Verses**

In his poem *az jamadi murdam* (I died as a mineral), Rumi presupposes a knowledge of both the emanation theory and the existence of interaction between Light and Shadow and *qahr* and *'ishq* up and down the emanation hierarchy. In order to follow Maulana's train of thought, we must understand that he begins not at the zenith, but at the nadir of the hierarchy and moves upwards incrementally.⁷³ In other words, he presupposes that a bright beam of light, separated by *qahr* from the Light of Lights, has degenerated into a faint (read theoretically distinguishable) existence in the Shadow of Shadows. It is now using *'ishq* as a vehicle to make advances in the realm of *qahr* to retrieve its former status. The "I" in the first couplet, in other words, is not a human being in our sense of a human being, but what we know as *jamad* (lifeless, inert thing, existent) or the totality of the Shadow of Shadows.

Recall that at the level of the Light of Lights, shadow was a theoretical existent. By gaining what *we* consider life, it reached its apex (nadir in Sufic terms) where, at the end of the emanation hierarchy, it eclipsed light altogether. The death of the *jamad*, therefore, is the beginning of a new type of life (unknown to us) for the faint residual of light/life.⁷⁴ As the action moves upwards in the hierarchy, the amount of shadow decreases and the power of light increases. The increase, as a result of the many deaths of the Shadow, brings light back into the abode of the untrammelled

⁷³ There is a difference here with Plato's view according to which the terrestrial is a "poor" example of the celestial. In al-Suhrawardi's view, and later on in Mullah Sadra's view, the same being or reality undergoes change. Cf., Morewedge, 1975, p. 189; see also Bashiri 2006.

⁷⁴ Cf., Nasr, 1975, p. 179.

Light of Lights, the Ultimate. In a sense, therefore, the life and death that Rumi talks about are the exact opposite of what we recognize as life and death.

Thus far in our study of Rumi, we have looked at the underlying principles. Let us now apply those principles to *az jamadi murdam*. Here is A. J. Arberry's translation of the poem.⁷⁵ The numbers are added for ease in comparison with the Persian text following the translation.

1. I died as a mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
2. I died as animal and I was Man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
3. Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
With angels blest; but even from angelhood
4. I must pass on: *all except God doth perish*.
When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
5. Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence
Proclaims in organ tones, To Him we shall return.⁷⁶

1. *Az jamadi murdamu nami shudam*
Vaz nama murdam zi hayvan sar zadam

This opening *bayt* establishes the undeniable fact that, in essence, all things, human beings included, pass through the sieve of creation and that the progression of *jamad* must necessarily be upwards; there is no involvement of space and time as we know them, and there are no lower levels to which *jamad* can descend. Furthermore, the move upwards happens in a series of transformations that are triggered by a kind of death (*murdan*), the quality of which is also unknown to us. In fact, we learn that death is an ever-present reality and that life confronts death at every breath we take. Fortunately, the ongoing struggle

⁷⁵ Arberry, 1958, p. 241.

⁷⁶ Al-Qur'an: 2. 156.

affects the world and us tangentially. In fact, we remain practically unaware of death.

Furthermore, the *bayt* gives the impression that we are dealing with an individual human being's passage through the hierarchy. But in reality, we are looking at the smallest amount of light amid the Shadow of Shadows that seeks the largest amount of light. On the way to achieving its goal, it passes the human realm as well. *Jamadi* is the state of utter lifelessness. Life within the realm of *jamad* is not recognizable by human senses. Nevertheless, it is not the type of life that can be summarily dismissed.

The first perceivable life appears after the state of *jamadi* is overcome. That is when *jamad* becomes *nami* (that which grows). Usually the plant world is given as an example of the *nami* world; but, in reality, all that grows on top of the mountains and in the depths of the oceans share the *nami* status. The next stage in the chain is the *hayvan* level. This is usually recognized to be the animal world, but it, too, is a world unto itself. It is the world in which the static *nami* merges with locomotion to produce *hayvan* (animal). *Hayvan*, in other words, is a life force attached to *jamad* that is made *nami* and to which locomotion is added.

2. *Murdam az hayvani u adam shudam*
Pas chi tarsam, key zi murdan kam shudam

The culmination of the improvement on the insignificant being as it moves in the direction of the Light of Lights, in the terrestrial sphere, is the emergence of intellect (in human beings). From here on, *jamad* finds itself increasingly on the defensive; it has to fight its way, as it were, in an uncharted territory, the territory of Light. It is at this stage that intelligence kicks in and the inert being, now a human, initiates a dialogue within himself. The question of origins pains him and the recognition of the distance yet to be traversed alarms him. Pining for reunion he forges ahead.

The concept of a transition from the mundane world into the world of the gods has a long history beginning with the dual role of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs and the legendary Iranian saint-heroes, like Kaykhusrau. That discussion, however, is outside the purview of this paper. In medieval mystic terminology, this role is played by the members of the family of the Prophet. In Rumi's world, this role is played by Shams of Tabriz. Shams of Tabriz leads Rumi through the uncharted territory of the divine and into the presence of God.

- 3 *Hamlai digar bemiram az bashar*
Ta bar aram az mala'ik parru sar

Although intelligence is instrumental in pointing out origins and providing a foretaste for reunion, it is powerless in actually penetrating the levels of the angels, archangels, and the demi-gods. Here, according to al-Suhrawardi, there is need for intuition out of which a faith-key, a key of unreason, can be forged to gain entrance into the mansions of the celestial realm.

4. *Bari digar az malak parran shavam*
Anchi andar vahm nayad an shavam

The penultimate action of the life force that began in the *jamad* is a return to the world of no *jamad*. This is a world about which we know nothing (*andar vahm nayad*).

5. *Pas 'adam gardam 'adam chun arghanun*
*Guyadam ki anna alayha raji'un*⁷⁷

The final *bayt* summarizes the endeavor. The Light of Lights and the Shadow of Shadows are one and the same, the unity in diversity that we know as *wahdat al-wujud*.⁷⁸ Together they are called *'adam* (non-existence), a neutral continuum

⁷⁷ Qur'an, 2: 156.

⁷⁸ Morewedge, 1975, p. 204.

along which diverse attributes (*nami, hayvan, adam, malak*, etc.) contribute to the creation of temporary distinctions (cf., the creations of *maya*—desire—in Buddhism). In reality, however, there is only one process: becoming (*shudan*).

Hakim Sana'i expresses the same idea in a slightly different way. Could this poem of Sana'i have inspired Rumi? Sana'i says:

*Vaz daruni falak be char gohar
Hama dar bando khasmi yakdigar
Se mavalid az in chahar arkan
Chun nabato ma'adeno hayvan
Chun nabati ghazaye hayvan shod
Hayavan ham ghazai ensan shod
Nutqi insan cho shod ghazai falak
To be-d-in rui baz shod ba falak.*⁷⁹

From within the universe,
Four elements emerged.
Enmeshed in a perpetual conflict,
Three of the progeny interact:
Plants, minerals, and animals.
The plants sustain the animals,
While animals become food for man.
Man's eloquence feeds the angels,
Gaining him reentry into the universe.

* * *

Bishnau az ney (listen to the reed flute) is the second poem that we will deal with briefly. It is about separation and yearning for reunion. It spans the hierarchy between the Shadow of Shadows at the nadir, and the Light of Lights (the Almighty) at the zenith. Words like *juda'i, boridan, firaq, dur mandan az asl*, and other, more subtle, forms indicate the depth of the yearning of the soul for returning to its original home, the abode of the

⁷⁹ See Sana'i, *Hadiqat al-Haqiqah*, 1384.

Light of Lights. Here is a translation of the opening verses of the *Mathnawi* by A. J. Arberry.⁸⁰

Hear, how yon reed in sadly pleasing tales
Departed bliss and present woe bewails!
'With me, from native banks untimely torn,
Love-warbling youths and soft-ey'd virgins mourn,
O! let the heart, by fatal absence rent,
Feel what I sing, and bleed when I lament:
Who roams in exile from his parent bow'r,
Pants to return, and chides each ling'ring hour.
My notes, in circles of the grave and gay,
Have hail'd the rising, cheer'd the closing day:
Each in my fond affections claim'd a part,
But none discern'd the secret of my heart.
What though my strains and sorrows flow combin'd!
Yet ears are slow, and carnal eyes are blind.
Free through each mortal form the spirits roll,
But sight avails not. Can we see the soul?'

In this poem, using the analogy of the reed flute, Rumi teaches his disciples, and the community at large, about their salvation and whether the gap between man and the Beloved can be bridged. Rumi's audience is acquainted with the reed flute, its construction and function. They know how a reed stalk is severed from the reed bed and converted into a flute. Using this knowledge, then, Rumi explains the workings of the *khaniqah*, the stations and states that the *'arif* undertakes, as well as the relationship of those stages and states to the spiritual existence and the daily life of the *'arif*.

Originally, Rumi says, the reed flute was a plant that grew in the bend of a river or in the calm waters of a lake. In the reed bed life and death mingled mysteriously, so that as long as it stayed in the reed bed the reed would enjoy immortality. Similarly, all beings, from the *jamad* to the human and the angel

⁸⁰ Arberry, 1958, p. 223.

have their origins in the reed bed of the Light of Lights. The master reed flute maker has visited the reed bed, severed a stalk and taken it to his workshop, somewhere between the Light of Lights and the Shadow of Shadows.

Compare this with the ordeal of the *ney*. After it was severed from the reed bed, it remained in the flute maker's shop. In time, its green hue changed into a sallow color and its supple composition became hard and wooden. The master cut a piece from it, hollowed it thoroughly, and burned several holes into it. Once polished, the reed became a conduit that could convey the laments of the multitude to the Beloved. In other words, the *jamad* nature of the reed was transformed to create the love that soothes the *qahr* of the Almighty.⁸¹

The *murshid* in a *khaniqah*, Rumi says, has undergone an analogous ordeal to become a guide, the same ordeal that the reed flute underwent in order to create the music that rends the heart.⁸² The *murshid-to-be*, answering a call, severs his ties with family and society and, in search of his true origin, enters the *khaniqah*. In the *khaniqah*, like the reed that is hollowed, he learns selflessness by voluntarily abandoning all worldly things, including the desire for worldly things. He undergoes rigorous training that includes crossing arduous stations (*maqam*) and experiencing delightful states (*hal*) that no ordinary human being experiences. He even gives up reason. At the end, like the reed flute, he becomes polished—a conduit to guide the multitude on the path to Truth.

The source of *Nur al-Anwar* is God. Maulana has read in the *Qur'an* that *Allahu nur as-samawat wa al-arz*⁸³ (Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth). What prevent the individual from falling victim to *jumud* are *pindar-i nik* (good

⁸¹ For a comprehensive *bayt-by-bayt* discussion of this poem, see Anqaravi, 1970.

⁸² Here I agree with Morewedge that Maulana uses cluster symbols to convey comprehensive concepts and that in order to make sense of some of his poetry, we must apply the same technique, see Morewedge, 1975, p. 190.

⁸³ *Qur'an*: 24: 35.

thoughts), *guftar-i nik* (good words), and *kerdar-i nik* (good deeds). The roots of these virtues are embedded in the ancient heritage of the Iranians, from where they have entered *Ishraqi* philosophy.

What we accomplish as a result of our daily activities stems directly from our thought (*pendar*). That is why in Mazdaism human thought is recognized as the source of existence; words and activities are ancillary to thought. An analysis of Maulana's thought reveals that his *murshidi kamil* (perfect leader) also bases his worldview on thought.

Recall that Maulana relates the topic nodes to each other to answer difficult questions. The structure and the semantic contents of the two poems that we are examining illustrate this point. Why should there be a death from *jamadi*? Is it because *jamadi* is the state of utter ignorance and inertness? The person whose thought falls within the realm of *jamad* does not have any constructive powers. For him, something that had been significant centuries ago remains as significant today. Passage of time and human progress do not influence him or change his attitude. A society afflicted by *jamud* behaves in the same way. It is at the mercy of ignorance and stagnation. Maulana says only through death can we rid ourselves and our society of this type of stagnation.

Why should we turn our back on things that merely grow? Perhaps because there are individuals who, like plants, are satisfied with mere growth. Eating and sleeping summarize their existence. An individual or a society in the state of *nabat* can remain in that state ad infinitum. Islamic societies in recent times provide good examples of this. Since the 13th century when the study of philosophy and the sciences was forbidden, until today, what visible progress has been made?

Locomotion distinguishes the *hayvan* (animal) from the *nabat*. But the *hayvan* world, too, is deficient; it is not endowed with reason. To resolve their problems, animals resort to violence and killing. Human beings, too, for better or worse, have retained their share of brutal activity. During Maulana's

time, it was the Mongols. Today, it is 9/11, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Darfur.

Does death come as easily to us as it does to the *jamad* and the others in "I Died as a Mineral?" Of course not. At every level of the hierarchy, death is a desire and an end for the being that is separated from the Light of Lights. And the distance he is looking at is the distance between the flute and the reed bed. By breaking away from *jamad*, *nabat*, and *hayvan*, and with laments and supplication, as well as by cleansing the spirit from evil, Rumi says, there is a chance at clearing one level. He illustrates the difficulty of clearing each level in *bishnau az ney*.

In summary, for Maulana human *qua* human is one who has put the states of *jamadi*, *nabati*, and *hayvani* behind him and who has chosen love, religion, wisdom and knowledge as his guiding light. His knowledge that comes from within (*shuhudi*) is not affected by time. Without considering his own gain, he can direct the multitude out of mental rigidity, inactivity, and violence and onto the path of righteousness. By teaching oneness, equality, and justice, he introduces the Light of the Creator into the darkness in which the multitude dwells. His thought, like the thought of the *murshid* about whom we talked, is the essential fulcrum of his existence and freedom. In freedom and steadfastness, he rivals his Creator. When he makes a decision based on good thought, when he expresses that thought, and when he implements it, he is not afraid of anyone or anything, not even of death. He teaches the mysteries of love not because it is likely to gain him entrance to heaven, but because it elevates his thought closer to the Light of Lights. The spiritual power of his self confidence puts the world in his hands and places him at the center of the world.

Conclusion

This paper showed that the Ancient Iranian idea of light and emanation not only survived the Muslim invasion but that it reemerged during the apogee of Islamic civilization as *Ishraqi* philosophy. It also showed that the efforts of the founder of the *Ishraqi* philosophy, Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, were enhanced by Najm al-Din Kubra who incorporated *Ishraqi* philosophy in his *tariqa*. By analyzing two of Rumi's famous poems in light of *Ishraqi* thought, it was shown how the poet, a follower of Najm al-Din Kubra, incorporated *Ishraqi* thought in his verses to guide his audience down the path of mutual understanding and tolerance.

A Few Closing Words

About Professor Bashiri's Study of Maulana

Dr. Iraj Bashiri is a hardworking Iranian researcher who, for many years, has resided in the United States. He broaches difficult problems in Perso-Tajik literature, history, philosophy, and culture and provides solutions for them. Orientalists, especially Tajik scholars, are familiar with his contributions.

One of the important tasks that Iraj Bashiri undertakes is translation of the works of Tajik scholars into English. This has led to the acquaintance of many American and European scholars with the contributions of Tajik scholars. Translation, of course, is a time-consuming and tedious task. The fact that Bashiri undertakes this task, therefore, is indicative of his affection for the Tajik people and his loyalty to our shared Perso-Tajik legacy.

Professor Bashiri's contributions to a better understanding of the works of Kamal Khujandi, Firdowsi, Aryan civilization, and our ancient and Islamic heritage expand the domain of not only the English-speaking world and others, but also enhance the understanding of these scholars about their own contributions to Tajik culture.

The present work, one of Iraj Bashiri's latest contributions, is written in honor of the 800th anniversary of Maulana's birth. It includes a number of germane points, all of them testifying to

Bashiri's keen insight and his employment of sound methodologies in his research. Bashiri's comparison of Maulana's ideas with the ideas of the philosophers of the *Ishraqi* School is of particular scientific merit. He concludes that Suhrawardi and Najm al-Din Kubra developed their philosophy of light, or *ishraq*, out of the teachings of Zoroaster, and that Maulana has presented this same philosophy to us in a new garb. The reasons that the author presents in support of his ideas are strong. In some cases, however, it is possible to argue with him. With respect to light, for instance, perhaps one of the major sources of Maulana regarding the transformation of mineral into plants, plants into animals, animals into man and, ultimately, man into angels could be through the school of the Eastern peripatetic (*masha'i*) philosophers. In relation to this, mention can be made of the works of Khwajah Abdullah Ansari and Hakim Sana'i, especially the latter's *Siar al-'Ibad ila al-Ma'ad*. Needless to say, this proposition itself needs further investigation.

It is important to note that the respected scholar has been able to credibly present a germane idea and an important scientific discovery in a concise study. Doubtless, this study will direct scholars in the history of philosophy and literature, but more importantly those in *tasawwuf*, toward uncharted territory for further research. The study might also contribute to our resolution of enigmatic issues in the history of philosophy and *irfan* among our own people.

I wish continued success for Dr. Bashiri, honorary member of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, in his research and in strengthening the cultural bonds between our peoples.

Karomatullo Olimov,
Doctor of Philosophy,
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Director of the Institute of Philosophy
Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan

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The Song of the Reed

Written by
Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-
1273)

Translated by
Sir William Jones

Hear, how yon reed in sadly pleasing tales
Departed bliss and present woe bewails!
"With me, from native banks untimely torn,
Love-warbling youths and soft-ey'd virgins mourn,
O! let the heart, by fatal absence rent,
Feel what I sing, and bleed when I lament:
Who roams in exile from his parent bow'r,
Pants to return, and chides each ling'ring hour.
My notes, in circles of the grave and gay,
Have hail'd the rising, cheer'd the closing day:
Each in my fond affections claim'd a part,
But none discern'd the secret of my heart.
What though my strains and sorrows flow combin'd!
Yet ears are slow, and carnal eyes are blind.
Free through each mortal form the spirits roll,
But sight avails not. Can we see the soul?"
Such notes breath'd gently from yon vocal frame:
Breath'd said I? no; 'twas all enliv'ning flame.
'Tis love, that fills the reed with warmth divine;
'Tis love, that sparkles in the racy wine.
Me, plaintive wand'rer from my peerless maid,
The reed has fir'd, and all my soul betray'd.
He gives the bane, and he with balsam cures;
Afflicts, yet soothes; impassions, yet allures.
Delightful pangs his am'rous tales prolong;

And Laili's frantick lover lives in song.
Not he, who reasons best, this wisdom knows:
Ears only drink what rapt'rous tongues disclose.
Nor fruitless deem the reed's heart-piercing pain:
See sweetness dropping from the parted cane.
Alternate hope and fear my days divide:
I courted Grief, and Anguish was my bride.
Flow on, sad stream of life! I smile secure:
Thou livest! Thou, the purest of the pure!
Rise vig'rous youth! be free; be nobly bold:
Shall chains confine you, thou they blaze with gold?
Go; to your vase the gather'd main convey:
What were your secrets? The pittance of a day!
New plans for wealth your fancies would invent;
Yet shells, to nourish pearls, must lie content.
The man, whose robe love's purple arrows rend
Bids av'rice rest, and toils tumultuous end.
Hail, heav'nly love! true source of endless gains!
Thy balm restores me, and thy skill sustains.
Oh, more than Galen learn'd, than Plato wise!
My guide, my law, my joy supreme arise!
Love warms this frigid clay with mystik fire,
And dancing mountains leap with young desire.
Blest is the soul, that swims in seas of love,
And long the love sustain'd by food above.
With forms imperfectly can perfection dwell?
Here pause, my song; and thou, vain world, farewell.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

بشنو از نی چون حکایت میکند
 کز نیستان تا مرا ببریده اند
 سینه خواهم شرحه شرحه از فراق
 هر کسی کو دورماندا زاصل خویش
 من بهر جمعیتی نالان شدم
 هر کسی از ظن خود شد یار من
 سر من از ناله من دور نیست
 تن زجان و جان زتن مستور نیست
 آتشست این بانگ نای و نیست باد
 آتش عشقست کاندن نی فتاد
 نی حریف هر که از یاری برید
 همچو نی زهری و تریاکی که دید
 نی حدیث راه پر خون می کند
 محرم این هوش جز بیهوش نیست
 در غم ما روزها بیگانه شد
 روزها گر رفت گورو باک نیست
 هر که جز ماهی ز آبش سیر شد
 در نیابد حال پخته هیچ خام
 بنسد بگسل باش آزاد ای پسر
 گر بریزی بحر را در کوزه
 کوزه چشم حریصان پر نشد
 هر کرا جامه ز عشقی چاک شد
 شاد باش ای عشق خوش سودای ما
 ای دوی نخوت و ناهوس ما
 جسم خاک از عشق بر افلاک شد
 عشق جان طور آمد عاشقا
 بالب دمساز خود گر جفتمی
 هرک او از هم زبانی شد جدا
 چونک گل رفت و گلستان در گذشت
 جمله معشوقست و عاشق پرده
 چون نباشد عشق را پروای او
 من چگونه هوش دارم پیش و پس
 عشق خواهد کین سخن بیرون بود
 آینه ات دانی چرا غماز نیست
 بشنوید ای دوستان این داستان

از جداییها شکایت می کند
 از تقیرم مرد و زن نالیده اند
 تا بگویم شرح درد اشتیاق
 باز جوید روزگار وصل خویش
 جفت بد حالان و خوش حالان شدم
 از درون من نجست اسرار من
 لیک چشم و گوش را آن نور نیست
 لیک کس را دید جان دستور نیست
 هر که این آتش ندارد نیست باد
 جوشش عشقست کاندن می فتاد
 پردهاش پردهای ما درید
 همچو نی دمساز و مشتاقی که دید
 قصهای عشق مجنون می کند
 مرزبان رامشتری جز گوش نیست
 روزها با سوزها همراه شد
 تو بمان ای آنک چون تو پاک نیست
 هر که بی روزیست روزش دیر شد
 پس سخن کوتاه باید والسلام
 چند باشی بند سیم و بند زر
 چند گنجد قسمت یک روزه
 تا صدف قانع نشد پر در نشد
 او ز حرص و جمله عیبی پاک شد
 ای طبیب جمله علت های ما
 ای تو افلاطون و جالینوس ما
 کوه در رقص آمد و چالاک شد
 طور مست و خر موسی صاعقا
 همچو نی من گفتنیها گفتمی
 بی زبان شد گرچه دارد صد نوا
 نشنوی ز آن پس ز بلبل سر گذشت
 زنده معشوقست و عاشق مرده
 او چو مرغی ماند بی پروای او
 چون نباشد نور یارم پیش و پس
 آینه غماز نبود چون بود
 ز آنک زنگار از رخس ممناز نیست
 خود حقیقت نقد حال ماست آن



I Died as a Mineral

Written by
Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207-
 1273)

Translated by
A. J. Arberry

I died as a mineral and became a plant,
 I died as plant and rose to animal,
 I died as animal and I was Man.
 Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
 Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
 With angels blest; but even from angelhood
 I must pass on: all except God doth perish.
 When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
 I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
 Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence
 Proclaims in organ tones, 'To Him we shall return.'

از جمادی مردم و نامی شدم	از نما مردم بچیان سرزدم
مردم از حیوانی و آدم شدم	پس چه ترسم کی زمردن کم شدم
حمله دیگر بمیرم از بشر	تا برآرم از ملایک بال و پر
از ملک هم بایدم جستن ز نو	کل شیء هالک الا وجهه
بار دیگر از ملک پرآن شوم	آنچه اندر وهم ناید آن شوم
پس عدم گردم عدم چون ارغنون	گویدم انا الیه راجعون
آب کوزه چون در آب جو شود	محو گردد در وی و چون او شود