



Masnavi of Jalaluddin Rumi

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Thirteenth Century in which Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was born and lived (1207 - 73 AH) the Islamic world was in economic and political turmoil. Tartars that rose like a strong current of wind not only subjugated many an established sultanates but also destroyed centers of learning in Iran and Iraq, which were considered to be think-tank of Islamic world along with Syria and Egypt. Repeated changes of political power in new hands, some of whom indulged in the plunder of common people in order to collect resources to sustain their power and trust that came with it, were taking place. The elite who were hitherto living a luxurious life became pamper overnight being target of plunder. The Crisis Continued for Longer period than ever witnessed in the history. This caused a change in the people's perception of life. Having lost worldly comfort they were now trying to find solace in spiritual from active life. They were increasingly drawing towards Fakirs and their Khanqahs where they found peace and tranquility. Sheikh Najmuddin Kubra, Sheikh Shahabuddin Saharwardi, Sheikh Akbar, Ibn-e- Arabi, Khwaja Fariduddin Attar, Sadruddin Qunvi and many others were there in response to the demand from the frustrated people.

Maulana Rumi's father, Mohammed Burhanuddin Walad, who lived in Balkh, was a highly reputed man. For some reasons he had to leave his home-town and migrate. At that time Maulana Rumi was six years old. After moving around for some years and performing Haj he finally settled down at Qunia, where he died in 1231 AD. Maulana Rumi received education under the guidance of his father. After his death one of his father's followers, Syed Burhanuddin Mohaqiq took the responsibility of educating the Maulana. In his Practical life Maulana marched on the foot-steps of his father and resumed teaching and preaching through discourses. This continued till he happened to meet Shams Tibriz in 1244. This meeting had changed the life of



Maulana, who abandoned teaching and preaching and spent all his time in the company of Shams Tibriz discussing secrets of gnesis.

This was resented by Rumi's disciples and followers. But still Maulana continued to be in the company of Shams then Maulana's followers started harassing and even insulting him. Irked by such behaviour Shams left Qunia without informing Maulana about his act in 1246 AD. and according to some sources he was murdered in 1247 AD. The separation caused Maulana restlessness. However after some times he found some solace in the Company of Sheikh Salahuddin Zarkoob. After his death Hassmuddin took his place. He wrote the Masnavi at the instance of Hassmuddin.

The critical edition of the Masnavi was edited by Prof. Arnold Nicholson (1924-1940 AD) Ghazals and Rubais of Rumi were compiled and edited by Prof. Badiuzzaman Farozan Far in 1336-38 AH.

Maulana's misson was to propagat spiritual and ethical values. So he sung the song of analysis of soul; purification of thought and Love of God. These are the themes that are spread all over the Masnavi. Besides gnosticism he has also explained many problems of Shariah by allegorical stories and events. At this plan the Masnavi can be termed as an encyclopedia of Sharia and Tariqah (Dr. Sy. Naimuddin)¹. All the stages of issues like seeking God and Later spiritual integration with Him has been explained through these stories and events.

Khush-tar aan bashad ke sirr-e dilbaran

Gufta aayad dar hadis-e-digaran

What is the secret of beloved? Rumi thinks that the secret of beloved is hidden in one's soul. That is why he has emphasised in the Masnavi, Diwan and Fih-ma-Fih that the real human is not his body. Body is no more than a mere handful of dust. Under the body flows a strong current of soul. If our limited soul enjoins the Unlimited it will not stay in the body and will become immortal. And this can be possible by love alone. One can attain this immortality by first of purifying his heart from all pollutants and whole heartedly concentrating on his search of God. Rumi says, in this way, one can gain such knowledge which is out of the reach of mind. He says that in the path of gnosism worldly reason is as ineffective as a wooden foot in a body. Without giving any importance to reason one can march forward in his search



for God through the path of devotion and Love. And as Holy Quran says : “ and that to you Lord is the goal (Qur’an 50 : 42) And also for seekers He is nearer to you than your own vein.”

Many interpreters expound the Masnavi in terms of the pantheistic system associated with *Sheikh Mohiuddin Akbar Ibn-e Arabi*. Being convinced that the poem was deeply influenced from that quarter, they hold that it cannot be made intelligible without reference to those ideas. Such a mode of explanation is apt to mislead us. In a poem that consists of thousands of verses only at two or three passages some verses are there which given this impression. For example in **Daftar 1** there is a verse:

***Jumla ma’shooq ast wa a’shiq parda-i
Zinda ma’shooq ast was a’shiq murda-i (2)***

The idea that whole creation is beloved leads one to think of pantheistic doctrine (***Huma Oost***). But such verses are very few in comparison to that (***Huma az oost***). We must remember that Rumi is a poet and mystic, not a philosopher and logician. He has no system; he creates an aesthetic atmosphere which defies analysis (Nicholson).

Rumi was worried because people’s behaviour towards Shams Tibrizi was not good, they also envied Salahuddin Zarkoob (on the ground that he was an ordinary goldsmith and did not deserve the honour Rumi was bestowing on him) and finally they also envied Hassmuddin Chelebi. Rumi told people again and again that one’s status is decided by his knowledge and piety and not by his worldly riches. To emphasise his point he also praised Hassmuddin in the Masnavi, He held Tibrizi, Zarkoob and Hassmuddin as real worshipers of Unity. For Rumi Unity meant burning oneself to brighten his life like day-light.

***Chist tawhid-e Khuda aamokhtan
Khweshtan ra pesh-e wahid sokhtan
Gar hami khwahi ke befrozi choo roz
Hasti-e hamchoo shab-e khud ra besoz***



For Rumi one who completely devotes himself to the will of Allah, rises above the worldly sense of bad and good and he does not differentiate between sugar & poison.

Ta zaheer wa az shakar too naguzri

Az gul-e wahdat kuja boo-e bari

Rumi's Masnavi begins with the complaint of separation;

Bishunaw az nay choon shikayat mi kunad

Az judai ha hikayat mi kunad

Rumi does not hesitate even cursing those who do not burn themselves in the fire of love for God;

Har ke een aatish na darad nist baad

(Prof. Aatish)

Rumi had surpassed in love of God from the stage of "Pukhta Shudam" and reached the higher stage of "Sokhtam". As a result a sense of spiritual courage flows in his poem which is a distinct deviation from his predecessors, who showed a feeling of helplessness.

The Masnavi was hailed by not only the Rumi's disciples and later members of the great brotherhood of which he was the founder, but all Persian speaking Sufis as a unique revelation of truth long before Jami called it : "the Qur'an in Persian (***Hast Qur'an dar zaban-e Pahlawi***) and said of Jalaluddin himself : "though he is not a prophet, he has a book (***neest payghambar vali darad Kitab***). Sufis boast of many inspired books of this kind, but none has been so carefully studied and copiously expounded in all the principal languages of Islamic world. The oldest exegesis dates from the 15th Century, *Kamaluddin Husain Ibn Hasan at Khwarizmi al-kubravi*, a disciple of *Khawaja Abul Wafa* discussed and explained the Masnavi in two works which he entitled respectively *Kunzu-l Baqaiq fi Rumuzi-l Daqaiq* and *Jawahiru-l Asrar wa Zawahiru-l Anwar*; and his example was followed by a younger contemporary, *Nizamuddin Mahmood Ibnul Hasan al-Husain of Shiraz*. Though Iran led the way but first complete and systematic commentaries were produced in Turkey. For these we



are indebted to *Muslaehuddin Ibn Mustafa Sururi*, who died in 969 AH, and *Ismail Anqirawi* (1041 AH).

The Masnavi was, and still is, equally popular in India. Well known Sufi of the 16th Century Abdul Quddus Gangohi (1538 AD) quoted verses both from the Masnavi and the Diwan-e-Tibrizi in letters to his disciples and followers. During 17th and 18th Centuries The Masnavi was read with keen interest by almost all persian knowing households in the country as it was prescribed in the syllabus of madrasas; religious preachers also quoted verses from the Masnavi in thier discourses. *Miftahul Ma'anvi* by *Abdul Fatah* (1049 AH), dataful Masnavi by *Abdul Latif Abbasi* (1048 AH) and *Mukashifat-e Razvi* are the popular explanatory works of the 17th Century. Abbasi also compiled and edited an authentic Volume of the Masnavi, entitled *Nushkha-e Nasekha wa Masnaviyat-i Suqimah*, after deleting verses, from it, supposed to be inserted by others. During this period *Rasukhi Ismail Dadah Anqrawi* (1631 AD) expounded the Masnavi from the point of view of *Ibn Arabi*. Explanatory work by *Baharul Uloom's "Sharah-e Masnavi* (1877 AD) gained much popularity in India.

All these works form a part of an immense mass of exegetical materials which no modern commentator can afford to ignore, though a great deal of it yields no or bitter fruit. But in the beginning of the past century *Allama Shibli No'mani* in his "*Sawaneh Maulana Rum*", reviewed the Masnavi and *Diwan-e Shams* in such a way that it gave new meanings to the verses of the Masnavi, which hitherto remained hidden. He put forward such verses which exposed the courage and deep knowledge of *Rumi*, who wanted his followers to be active in life;

Zin ham-rhan-e sust unasir dilam girift

sher-e khuda wa Rustam-e dastanam aar zi-dast

Choo ghulam-e aaftabam ham az-aaftab goyam

Na Shabam no Shab parastam ke hadis-e khwab goyam

