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RUMI AS A TRUE LOVER OF GOD

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The "Mathnevi" of Rumi is throughout a love letter to God. In this remarkable work, Rumi narrates all the mystical states he experienced himself during his spiritual ascension. In his first eighteen verses (1) he points out these stages as follows:

- 1 — Need (searching for the daily bread for spiritual hunger).
- 2 — Choosing of path (materialistic i.e. poison; spiritual i.e. antidote).
- 3 — Desire and yearning (like fish and water).
- 4 — Unveiling of some states (i.e. tearing of veils).
- 5 — Love and devotion (like Majnun and his beloved Leyli).
- 6 — Observing God in every phenomenon (i.e. soul and body).
- 7 — Unification of purpose (reaching the Origin). (2)

In this paper we shall take the fifth stage i.e. his love and try to see how we experienced it. However, it is not easy to put Rumi's love in words as it is above the faculty of earthly languages as he says:

بکلمه گفتیم نغمه زاده بیان ورنه لهم افهام سوزدهم زبان

"I have narrated love in brief but not in details, for both my perception (3) and tongue would have burnt away."

(M. I, verse no. 1758) (4)

- (1) For further details see my article "On The First Eighteen Verses of Rumi's Masnevi", Islam and The Modern Age, Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, vol. XIV No. 4, November 1983, p. 286 - 298.
- (2) Similar Stages of Islamic Mysticism have been given by Mehdi Tevhidi, in his preface to "Nefahat'ül Üns, Molana Abdurrahman Jami, Kitab Ferushi-yi Mahmudi, Tehran p. 113 - 131.
- (3) Izbudak's translation gives "lips" instead of perception which is evidently wrong, see Veled Izbudak, Mesnevi, M. S. Basimevi, İstanbul 1966, vol. I, p. 140.
- (4) Mathnevi used here is R. R. Nicholson, Emir Kebir, Tehran Urdu Bilhsht 1350.

Generally speaking, his love has the following major characteristics :

- 1 — His love depends on sacrifice and patience, but not on personal expedience.
- 2 — Reason is helpless and weak in front of love's power.
- 3 — Love is eternal and infinite.
- 4 — Love is above belief or disbelief.
- 5 — The Beloved is passive while the lover (man) is active.
- 6 — There is no fear of time and death in true Divine Love.

1 — Rumi like all other sufies refused to live a rich life, although he was highly respected by the Selçukian Sultans. Today we see ruins of the Sultans' palaces and castles but we see no traces of Rumi's villa because his home was in the heart of people. He devoted his fame and and possession in the way of Love. He, therefore, suggests others to do so by lessening their sensual desires. At the beginning of his mathnevi he says :

بند کس با سه آزادی بر
چند باشی بند سیم و بند زر

"How long will you be the captive of gold and silver, so break your fetters and be free, my son."

(M. I, v. 19)

His love was not egoistic, but sacrificing like that of Majnun :

فی عذبت راه بر خود می کند
قهرهای عشق بجنونه می کند

"The reed talks about the bloody path and tell us the tales of Majnun's love."

(M. I, v. 13)

He continues :

عشق ناه بیانه غذای عاشق است
بند هستی نیست هر کوی صادق است

"A lover's food is the bread of love, not this (ordinary) bread, he who is a true lover is not a slave of existence."

(M. III, v. 3020)

To reach other stations that lead to God, one has to minimise one's needs and provide them for others. In this way we train our greedy selfness. He who claims to be the lover of God and fails to sacrifice his own will for the will of God, cannot be promoted to other stations. It is love by which we control our worldly desires and gain real knowledge (i.e. gnosis).

بک لحظه اگر نفس تو محکوم شود علم همه انبیاء معلوم شود
آن صورت غیب که جهان در لب اوست در آینه فهم تو مفهومی شود

"If you are able to control your selfness for a while, you can obtain the knowledge of all prophets and can begin to observe in your mirror of comprehension the face which the whole universe is looking for."

(Divan, p. 1390) (5)

The lover of God does not seek for the pleasure of this world. As he has lost the vicinity of his Beloved, he must mourn and wail like the reed. Rumi expresses such feelings in his following verses :

نالم ایرانا لها فوسه آیدسه از دو عالم ناله و غم بایدسه
چو ناله همی شب بی روز او بی وصال روی روز افروز او
عاشقم بر پنج فوسه و در فوسه بهر خوشنودی بشاه فرد فوسه

"I wail because wailings are pleasant to Him, He wants wailing and grief from the two worlds. Why shouldn't I cry like a night without its day, failing to see His face that illuminates a day. I love my grief and pains just to please my only King (God)."

(M. I, v. 1775, 1776, 1777)

Finally, when Rumi cannot reach his sublime Beloved he tries to sooth himself, patiently, with what he has in hand :

(5) Kulliyat-i Divan-i Shems Tebrizi, Ali Deshti and Feruzanfer, Chap Kha-ne-yi Sipeher, Tehran, Merdad Mah 1351.

بر یاد لب لعل نکیه می بوسم آنم جو بدست نیست ایله می بوسم
 رسم جو بر آسما توی نرسد بیارم سجده و زبیه می بوسم

"In the memory of Thy lips I kiss the red-diamond (of my ring),
 Since I cannot reach Your lips, I kiss this,
 As I have no access to Your sky (Your height),
 I prostrate down (6) and kiss the earth."

(Divan, p. 1419)

2 — Rumi's love knows no bounds of wisdom, because love cannot be encaged within the domain of logic. The human logic is nothing more than a tiny drop in the sea of Divine Mercy. Love and its charm is above conception. He says :

مهرم ایله کوسه جز بهوسه نیست مرزبان شتری جز کوسه نیست

"None other, but he who has lost his (worldly) senses can comprehend the feelings of love and it is the ear that receives what tongue utters."

(M. I, v. 14)

So to understand and appreciate Rumi's romantic verses one has to possess spiritual heart. Love can be explained only by language of love. As he says :

عقل در شرح عشق بیوفود در گل بخت عشق اصغر لوب اسرار خداست
 شرح عشق و عاشقی هم عشق گفت علت عشق ز علت های جداست

"The ailment of a lover is of a different kind, while love is the astrolabe (7) of mysteries of God. Reason is like an ass stuck in mud but it is only love that can comment on love and loverhood."

(M. I, 110, 115)

(6) It is a reference to the Islamic prayer, so called 'namaz'.

(7) Since astrolabe is used for finding out way by means of the stars and planets, so is love that helps discovering Divine Mysteries (see Abdulbaki Gölpınarlı, Mesnevi tercemesi ve şerhi, İnkılâp ve Aka, İstanbul 1981 p. 43).

لا ابالی عشق باشد فی فرد عقل آن جوید گز آن سودی برد

"It is love that is reckless but not intellect; reason looks for what is profitable (for ego)."

(M. VI, v. 1967)

Mental power is the slave of forms and colours. Anyone who is fond of colours and outer beauty may get stuck :

عشقهای که از بی رنگی بود عشق نبود عاقبت رنگی بود

"The love that depends on colours (and shapes) is not true love, it finally ends up in disgrace."

(M. I, v. 205)

آنچ معصوفت صورت نیست آنه خواه عشق ایبه جهان خواه آن جهان
 آنچ بر صورت تو عاشق گشته چون برون شد جهان چرا بس گشته
 صورتسه بر بهاست ایبه سیری ز بهیبت عاشقا واکه معشوق تو کیست

"The Beloved has no form, may it be the beloved of this world or of that. If you have fallen in love with a figure, then why do you leave it when it dies; the shape is there, so why have you ben fed up of it; O' lover so seek for the real Beloved."

(M. II, v. 701)

It is the reason that deceives a man and keeps the realities un-veiled, as Rumi says :

تاد آمد حکم و تقدیر آله عقل هارس غیره سرگشت و تباه

"When His decree and predestination arrives, the watching reason becomes giddy-headed and good for nothing."

(M. V, v. 2166)

Again, Rumi explains how an individual reason is weak and helpless as compared to the universal reason in the following lines :

کل عالم صورت عقل کل است گوشت بابای لهر آنک اهل قل است
 صلح کن با ایله پدر عافی بهل تا که فرسه زر نماید آب و گل
 من که صلحم را نما با ایله پدر ایله جهان چونه جنتم در نظر
 لهر ز ماه تو صورتی و تو جمال تا ز نو بدین فرو میرد مدول

"All the universe is the reflection of the universal reason, because it is the father of the believers of the word say (8); so make peace with this father so that you may see the clay and water (9) as a bed of gold. Since I have made peace with this father, all the world is like a paradise to me. At every moment, there appears a new form and a new beauty; and thus by watching each new vision my pains die away."

(M. IV, 3259, 3261, 3263, 3264)

It is the power of love that ends the spell of reason and one begins to observe realities beyond the outer forms:

گرز صورت بگذرید ای دوستان جنت و گلستان در گلستان

"If you, my friends, pass beyond forms, there is a paradise and rosegarden within rosegarden."

(M. III, v. 577)

Rumi advises us not to seek the apparent charm of objects, but to look for the Oneness of beauty:

نه دو باشد تا نوی صورت پرست بیسه او بیک کنت گرز صورت پرست

"So long as you are worshipper of forms, they look double; but when you free yourself from individuality you find them all one."

(M. I, v. 679)

(8) It is a reference to the Kuranic verses that begin with the word "kul" i.e. "say"

(9) "Clay and Water" means the human body.

در معانی تجزیه و افراد نیست
تا بسنی زیر او و عهدت هو کنج

در معانی قسمت و اعداد نیست
صورت بر کسه گدازده کن برنج

"In things spiritual there is neither division nor numbers,
In things spiritual there is neither partition nor individuality,
By means of grief, melt the obstinate forms,
Then you see the Unity that lies under it like treasure."

(M. I, v. 681, 683)

It was this talent of Rumi which enabled him to discover what lied behind the corporal frame of Shems-i Tebrizi, Selahaddin and Husameddin Chelebi.

3 — Divine Love is eternal and infinite. It is above any limits and ties, regarding this Rumi says :

عشق در یاریت قهر سه ناپدید
هفت در یاریه آه بجز است خرد

در ننگ عشق در گفتم و شنید
قطرهای بحر را نتواند شعرد

"Love cannot be explained and heard, it is like a sea without dept. As one cannot count drops of ocean, so seven seas are like a tiny sea in front of love."

(M. V, v. 2732-33)

and :

دو جهان یک دانه یسه نول عشق

لهزم جز عشقت شد ما کول عشق

"Love devours whatever there is; to the beak of love two worlds are like a single grain."

(M. V, v. 2726)

Love dominates over the lover and unites him to the Beloved in such a manner that no duality is left :

که برم از تو ز ساره تا قدم
در وجودم جز تو ای نهوسه کام نیست

گفتم سه در تو عهدانه فانی شدم
بر سه از هستی سه جز نام نیست

"He (the lover) replied I have lost myself in you in such a way that from top to toe I am filled with you. Of my existence there is only my name, but in my body there is nothing left except you for your wishes always come true."

(M. V, v. 2022, 2023)

After such unification lover gains immortality and immensity :

در دید عقل بس می کنم در دیده عشق بی مکانم

"I end up in the eyes of reason, for I am placeless in the eyes of love."

(Divan, p. 597)

It is the dynamic power of love that exalts a lover to the highest point where he achieves vicinity of God. Love took Muhammed to the spot during his ascension (mi'raj) and love's dynamism made Moses's mountain shake :

بهر خاک از عشق برافروختند کوه در رقص آمد و مهلاک شد

"The clayey body rose upto the skies due to love, the mountain came into action and began to dance."

(M. I, v. 27)

عشق بپوشد بحر را مانند دَبَك عشق بساید کوه را مانند بِك
عشق بتکافد فلک را صد تکاف عشق لرزاند زمین را ز لَدان

"Love boils the sea like a cauldron, love scumbles mountains and turns them into sand; Love brings about a hundred holes in the sky and makes the earth tremble without a reason."

(M. V, v. 2734, 2735)

4 — Love is so sublime that it may surpass belief or disbelief. Rumi has held his love above the religious conflicts and he says :

ز آنک عا شق در دم نقد است لا جرم از کفر و ایمان برتر است

“Since a lover is intoxicated with the present situation (of love) doubtlessly he is above faith and faithlessness.”

(M. IV, v. 3280)

This does not mean that Rumi left Islam aside (10). It is emphasis laid upon the greatness of Divine Love. Besides, love is the attribute of God and is, therefore, as sublime as God Himself. Rumi says :

توبه کرم و عشق همچون اژدها بوبه وصف خیل و آن وصف خدا

“Repentance is like a worm and love is like a dragon, repentance is the attribute of man, while love is the attribute of God.”

(M. VI, v. 970)

غیر هفتاد و دو ملت کیسه او تحت شاهانه تخته بندی بسج او

“Lover’s belief is other than that of the 72 nations, for him thrones of kings are like some tied up (ordinary) timbers.”

(M. III, v. 4721)

ملت عشق از کفر دینها جداست عا سقاہ را ملت و مذہب خداست

“The nation of love is separate from all the worlds, lovers have a different nation and religion.”

(M. II, v. 1770) (11)

5 — The Beloved is passive and concealed while a lover is restless in his search, as Rumi says :

بیل معشوقانہ نہانت و سیر بیل عاشق بار و صد طبل و نفیر

“The tendency of the beloved is hidden and veiled but he desires

(10) Afzal Iqbal’s statement that “Rumi knows no religion but religion of Love” (see “Life and Works of Rumi”, Pakistan 1977, p. 159) can be misleading because the gazels he used for supporting his point i.e. “I am neither Christian nor Jew, nor gahr nor muslim...” and “I have picked out the essence of the holy word... (p. 159)” are not found in the critical edition of Feruzanfer’s “Divan-e Shems”. Such poems need to be carefully used because a large number of these poems do not belong to Rumi.

(11) See also Annemarie Schimmel, The Triumphal Sun, Fine Books, London 1978 p. 336.

of lovers are accompanied with two hundred drums and trumpets (due to his mourning and complaints)."

(M. III, v. 4603)

جمله معشوقست و عاشق پرده زنده معشوقست و عاشق مرده
چو نه نباشد عشق را پروای او او چو مرغی مانند بی پروای او

"All is the Beloved and the lover is a (sheer) curtain, the Beloved is living and the lover is dead; when one is indifferent to love one is like a bird without wings, what a pity."

(M. I, v. 29-30)

This is why Rumi advises lovers to choose the love of the Immortal but not that of the dead. He continues :

عشق آنه رنده گزیده کو باقیست کز شراب جهان فزایت ساقیت
عشق آنه بگذریده که جمله انبیا یافتند از عشق او کار و کیا

"Choose the love of that Living One who is everlasting and renders you the wine that increases your life; choose the love of Him from Whom all the prophets got their power and glory."

(M. I, v. 219 - 220)

لهیج عاشق خود نباشد وصل جو که نه معشوقه بود جو یای او
جمله اجزای جهان زاده حکم پیسه جفت جفت و عاشقا جفت خو پیسه
لغت لهر جزوی ز عالم جفت خواه راست همچون گهر با و بر آن گاه

"No lover seeks union by himself unless the Beloved looks for him. All the particles (the atoms) of the world due to His ordainment are paired as mates (and they are all in love with each other) while lovers seek for their pairs, too. Every atom of the universe is in search of its mate like an amber and the blade of straw."

(M. III, 4393, 4401, 4402)

We can deduce from the above verses that everything in the universe is in action due to the attraction of love. Divine Love is the source of life and dynamism. The blow into Rumi's flute is not an ordinary air; it is the fire of love :

آتش ایبه بانگ فی و نیت باد هر که ایبه آتش ندارد نیت باد
آتش عشق که اندر فی افتاد جو شمع عشق کاندر می افتاد

"The voice of the reed is fire but not a simple blow and the one who has no such fire, should stop to exist (12); it is the fire of love that has fallen in the reed, it is the attraction of love that ferments wine."

(M. I, v. 9 - 10)

6 — In true love there is no room for fear of death, time and affliction. For Rumi, death is the door that opens to the chamber of the Beloved and soul is like a bird captive of the cage of body where it wails to get free in order to go to its eternal mother-land (the Garden of the Beloved).

عشق دیگران بگرد از حال بحال عشق من و عشق مرا نیست زوال

"Other's love passes from state to state, but my love and the Beloved have no decline."

(Divan, p. 1412)

باغ سبز عشق کوی منتهاست جز غم شادی در بوس میوه هاست
عاشقی ز سیه لهر دو حالت برتر است بی بهار و بی جزان سبز تر است

"In the eternal green garden of love there are other kinds of fruits besides happiness and grief; yet love is above all these conditions, because it is ever-green and fresh without spring and autumn."

(M. I, 1793 - 1794)

(12) "It should not be taken as an imprecation" (as said by Nicholson, Commentary, I, p. 10) but as an invocation for those who are deprived of Divine Love i.e. "May they lose themselves in God."

Love even cures one's diseases :

"Well done, o'love that brings nice profit, O' that is the doctor
of our all ailments."

(M. I, v. 23)

Person is matured by afflictions and worries then he welcomes
death without fear. Love helps him in breaking the prison of body.
His following verses about resurrection show us why he welcomed
death :

از جھاری مردم و نای شدم وز نما مردم بچوایه بر زدم
مردم از حیوانی و آدم شدم بس چه ترسم کی ز مردم کم شدم
جمله دیکر بدم از بشر تا بر آدم از حدیثک بر و سر

"I died as mineral and became plant; I died as plant and rose to
animal,

I died as animal and became a man; why should I fear, since I
never wasted away by dying; I make an attempt to die as a man,
so that I may begin to possess wings and head (like that of an
angel)."

(M. III, v. 3901)

جنازه ام هر بسنی مگو فراق فراق سرا وصال و ملاقات آه زمانه باشد
فرو شدن هر بیدیدی بر آمد بنگر غروب شمس و قرآن از یاب باشد
کدام رانه فرو رفت در سهد کز است چرا بدانه انسانت ایسه گمان باشد

"When you see my funeral, don't say "what a separation",
It is the time for me to visit and meet (my Beloved),
Since you have seen my descending, then do see my rising,
Why one should complain about the setting of the moon and sun,
Which seed that went under earth did not grow up again?
Then why should you doubt about the grain of a man (the
dead body)."

(Divan, p. 367)

مرگ اگر مرد است آید بترسده تا کنم خموسه در کنار سه تنگ تنگ
سه از او جانی برم بی رنگ و بو اوزمه دلفی ستاند رنگ رنگ

"If death is brave let it confront me, so that I may kill myself
little by little at its side,
I take its soul which is colourless and scentless,
While death takes colourful robes from me."

(Divan, p. 516)

For the Divine lovers time and space have no restrictions because they are only earthly conceptions. Rumi discloses this point in the following verses :

بیان ابروی ای عشق ایبه زمانه کرهت
که نیست لبی آن روی خواب از آه بازا

"Time is, O' my love, like a knot (wen) between your eye-brows;
therefore, it does not suit your beautiful face, please give it up."

(Divan, p. 132)

There is no concept of youth, old age or childhood in love. It is above such ties :

ما عاشق و بیدل و فقیریم
لهم کوردک ولهم جوانه و بیرییم

"We are lovers, desireless and poor, we are children, young and
old (at the same time)."

(Divan, p. 598)

To sum up, Rumi's love is above all feelings, forms and fears. It is as sublime as God himself. Man by sacrificing his wills for the will of God can gain a location closest to Him. Love is eternal and cannot be buried.

TANRI AŐIĐI OLARAK MEVLÂNÂ

Tasavvuf merhalelerini, Mevlânâ'nın bizzat yaşadığı ve müşahade ettiği bir gerçektir. Biz bu tebliğimizde onun kendi eserlerinde derleyerek 5. merhale sayılan "Aşk'ı" konu edineceğiz. Mevlânâ kendi eserlerinde İlahi aşkı nasıl görmüş ve nasıl dile getirmiş olduğunu İngilizce olarak anlatmaya çalışacağız.