

DARUL-IL-MASNAVI
OF THE MEVLEVI ORDER

"Rumi and Self-Discovery" in Islamica Magazine

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(translations and transiterations from Persian by Ibrahim Gamard)

In order to discover yourself, you have to submit to the Creator of yourself, my Lord and your Lord, the Lord of all the worlds, glorious and exalted is He! --beyond anything that we can conceive!

The Holy Qur'an tells us about how special the creation of humanity was: how God breathed into Adam (all mankind) of His spirit (15:29); how God taught Adam all the names, which even the angels did not know (2:31-32); how God drew out from the loins of Adam all the souls of future human beings and asked them, "Am I not your Lord?" And they replied, "Yes, of course! We testify!" (7:172)

However, since the fall of mankind, we have forgotten all this and we resist submitting our small wills to the Almighty Will of our Lord. And so He sent many prophets, known and unknown, to remind us that submission [islâm] to the One God leads to peace and safety [salâm]. It is the goal of sufism [taSawwuf] to return to this primordial homeland of harmonious surrender to our Lord--the only one worthy of worship and the only true Beloved of mankind, the Infinitely Loving One.

The model of submission to the Divine Will for the sufis is the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, who said, "My self [meaning, 'my ego' (nafs)] has become a muslim" [meaning one who has submitted to God Most High]. Even though he attained to lower and higher spiritual stations, he never stopped praying. His wife 'â'isha reported that she asked him why he kept going to do so many extra prayers, "standing through most of the night time hours until his feet became swollen, when he was the Prophet of God. He replied: "How can I not be grateful to my Lord!" And the Prophet (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him) has given us so many examples of inspired surrender to the Will of God in a wide variety of situations in the collections of sayings known as the Traditions [Ahâdîth].

In regard to self-discovery and Jalâluddîn Muhammad al-Rûmî, I looked up some of the terms Rumi uses for self-awareness in a Persian concordance of all the words in Rumi's "Mathnawî." He uses the term "khod-parast" (self-worshipper) three times to describe someone who is dominated by the base self, or ego [nafs]. He describes the nafs in this way: "The nafs is the root of all idols is the idol of your (base) self, because that (outward) idol is (only) a snake and this idol is a dragon. . . ." (l. 772). A related term is "khod-bînî," literally "self-seeing," which is an idiom in Persian, meaning self-conceited, proud, arrogant. This term occurs six times in this negative sense.

Rumi speaks about "khod-shenâsî" (self-knowing) in one instance in the Mathnawî, where he quotes the saying so often quoted by the sufis (that they have attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him): "He who knows himself knows his Lord" [man 'arafa nafsâ-hu fa-qad 'arafa rabba-hu].

However, contrary to what one might expect, Rumi doesn't interpret this in a mystical sense, as in his sublime passages about the "union" of the lover and the beloved; or in a way similar to mysticism in other religions (such as meaning, "He who truly knows himself, knows his Lord as his true Self"; or as meaning, "He who knows the light within his eye becomes the eye of God"). Instead, Rumi interprets this saying in a very religious and Islamic sense, as meaning that the human self is as nothing before the Divine Majesty of God.

He tells the story about Ayâz, the favorite slave of Mahmûd, the King of Ghazna. In the story, the King symbolizes God and Ayâz symbolizes the humble saint whose spiritual purity and compassionate wisdom are envied by those of lesser capacity. Ayâz's fellow servants (devsâhs, fadls), who were his destroyers, his locked him up, convinced that he had hoarded hidden treasure there. All they found was his original rustic shoes and sheepskin jacket, that he kept to remind himself of his humble origins as a shepherd before being raised to prominence by the King. (In earlier centuries, kings often elevated their favorite slaves to positions of great power and wealth.) The King said, "O Ayâz, pass judgment on the wrongdoers. . . . (your knowledge) is a bottomless ocean (derîâh) which I know alone; (your patient forbearance) is a mountain and a hundred mountains; it is not (human) forbearance." Ayâz replied, "I know that this is Your gift, since otherwise I am (nothing but) these poor shoes and sheepskin jacket."

Rumi then comments: "The Prophet explained this (by saying): 'Whoever has known himself, has known God.'" [bâ-hi-ân payghambar in-râ sharhî sâkhî] har ke khod be-shnâkht, yaddân-râ shenâkt"--Mathnawî V: 2114]. Rumi further comments further on the meaning of the story: "The (foul-smelling) semen (which conceived you) is your rustic shoes and your blood is the sheepskin jacket [this is a reference to the reference in the Qur'an to the humble origins of the human being in semen and blood (96:2)]: anything else, O sir, is His gift. He has given it for this sake: so that you may seek another [gift]. Don't say that there is nothing from Him besides (only) this amount." (V: 2115-16)

Rumi is saying that the servant of God knows that he is only a container for God's gifts, and not the possessor or source of those gifts. A commentary on this passage by the British Rumi scholar R. A. Nicholson quotes a 17th century Turkish Mevlevi commentator on the Mathnawî (named Anqaravî) as saying that Rumi interprets the saying, "He who knows himself knows his Lord," as meaning, "He who knows himself to be helpless and contemptible knows his Lord to be Mighty and Glorious."

Now this kind of religious terminology--of feeling helpless and lowly before God--brings up resistance for some people who are attracted to Westernized versions of sufism that view the Divine as an impersonal and essential Beingness within humans. Perhaps due to negative experiences with religion when young, such people are uncomfortable with viewing the Divine as personal and external, since this involves a personal relationship with God that includes issues such as sin, repentance, submission to a Higher Will, and salvation by Divine Mercy and Grace or punishment by Divine Justice.

An example of this is a friend who had been learning this kind of sufism for about a year, but felt disturbed by some traditional Islamic sufi teachings, such as the practice of repeating the Arabic prayer, "I seek the forgiveness of God!" [astaghfirullâh]. He had been physically abused during childhood and was taught that God's anger and punishment toward him would be terrible. He was somewhat comforted when I asserted that God's Justice is truly just, and that the Qur'an states that His recompense for a wrong deed is exactly equivalent to it and no more, but that His recompense for a virtuous deed is many-fold (6:160). But my friend still found it extremely difficult to trust God as a personal Being separate from him, and preferred the idea that he could meditate and experience a state of pure consciousness as an undifferentiated cosmic Light. I responded that, as a mystic, I believe that God is both within and nearer to us than our very selves, as well as a Divine Other to whom we must submit harmoniously; that since there is only One Being and One Will, "my identity" is not absolutely separate from the Divine Identity; that whatever happens in the world is not absolutely separate from "my will"; that since God is not absolutely separate from our most essential selves, God is worthy of our trust and love. My friend continued to struggle with this important question of trust.

In my own case, I was fortunate to be one of the first Americans to be trained in the "Whirling Prayer" of the Mevlevi dervish tradition, beginning in 1975 in Los Angeles. The next year, Shaykh al-Islamân Dede Efendi, the Mevlevi Shaykh of Konya, Turkey (where Jalâluddîn Rûmî is buried) came to America for the first time and lead us in the famous "Whirling Prayer Ceremony." The following year, in 1977, my wife and I traveled to Konya for two weeks, went daily to Rumi's tomb (a place filled with the "perfume" of God's Love), and visited Sulayman Dede Efendi in his home. Dede was a saintly and very pious Muslim, and his American disciples whom we met there were all converts to Islam. They very graciously invited us to stay among them in Konya, but I declined. I felt disappointed that Dede seemed primarily to want them to learn to become Muslims, go to mosques, and learn to read the Qur'an in Arabic. I wanted to learn about Rumi's most mystical teachings and practices instead, and I was not attracted to becoming a Muslim. At the time, I believed that sufism was a universal and esoteric form of mysticism that transcended Islam, which I looked down upon as merely an "exoteric shell." We travelled on to Iran, Afghanistan and India, and all the sufis I met were devout Muslims.

Some years later, however, my attitude toward Islam had changed completely. I became convinced that sufism was Islamic mysticism, that ninety-nine percent of all sufis who had ever lived were devout Muslims, and that if I wanted to go deeper on the path of the sufis (devsâhs, fadls), I needed to practice Islam, as had so many generations of dervishes in the past. I converted to Islam in 1984, joined an Islamic sufi order, and decided to stop going to non-Islamic sufi gatherings.

By then, I had been teaching myself Persian for several years in order to read Rumi in the original language. I was convinced that Rumi was the greatest religious mystic who ever lived, and one of the greatest Muslim saints. In 1985 I met Professor Ravan Farhadi, an Afghan scholar of classical Persian sufi texts, who suggested that we translate all of Rumi's quatrains [rubâ'iyyât]. This is now a large unpublished manuscript. I have been able to study almost every translation and version of Rumi's quatrains published in English and to make comparisons with the original Persian texts. I have also compared what was published in the early editions of Rumi's poetry, since I feel that I have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the popular translations and versions made of Rumi's poetry, as well as their anti-Islamic biases.

In conformity with the popular elements of non-Islamic sufism in the West, popular versions of Rumi's poetry have been created which avoid or minimize his religious teachings. Rumi has been wrongly portrayed in a way which is appealing to Americans: as a maverick, an individualist, unafraid to be a "free spirit," a wild mystic who is crazed with passion, an inspired poet who is spontaneous and sensual, and a universal mystic who ignores the Muslim authorities and their "uptight" religious laws.

The idea that Jalâluddîn Rumi cared little for religion has been strengthened by translations and versions of poems attributed to Rumi which were actually not composed by him and which express radical sufi ideas which are not characteristic of him. The following verses are not in the earliest manuscripts of his poetry and therefore are not from genuine poems of Rumi: "What is to be done, O Moslems? I for I do not recognise myself. I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem. I am not of the East, nor of the West, nor of the land, nor of the sea. . . ."

--translated from Persian by R. A. Nicholson ("Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabriz," 1998, p. 125)

"Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu, Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion or cultural system." --an interpretive version by Coleman Barks (who does not know Persian), based on Nicholson's translation above "If you desire your own divinity, come out of yourself" --a translation from Persian by Shahram Shiva ("Rending the Veil," 1995, p. 10)

"That one who has tasted the wine of union with the supreme soul./ In his faith, the Ka'ba and an idol temple are one." --a translation by Shahram Shiva ("Rending the Veil," 1995, p. 33; also trans. by Shahram Shiva with Jonathan Star, "Rumi: In the Arms of the Beloved," 1997, p. 177)

"The ones who reach the truth/ Become believers, but the people call them infidels."

--translated Shahram Shiva ("Rending the Veil," 1995, p. 107; also translated from Persian by John Moyne with Coleman Barks, "Unseen Rain," p. 44)

"This is me: Sometimes. . . a devoted Muslim, sometimes a Hebrew and a Christian./ For me to fit inside everyone's heart, I put on a new face every day." --translated by Shahram Shiva ("Rerubbing the Veil," 1995, p. 176; also trans. by John Moyne with Coleman Barks, "Unseen Rain," p. 83)

"We have caused much uproar./ We have picked the essence of the Koran/ throwing away the skin to the dogs" --translated by John Moyne, "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," 1998, p. 70.

"Come again, please, come again, whoever you are/ Religious, infidel, heretic or pagan" --translated from a Turkish translation by Nevit Ergin ("Crazy As We Are," 1992, p. 1; also rendered by Coleman Barks, "The Illuminated Rumi," p. 3) --this is from a quatrain found among the quatrains of Bâbâ Azzâluddîn Kâshânî (died 1274-- Rumi died 1273) and is related to a similar quatrain attributed to Abu Sa'îd ibn Abî'l-Khayr (died 1048).

Then there are poems attributed to Rumi that do occur in the earliest manuscripts of the quatrains, some of which I have found to be poems composed before his lifetime. Some lines which are uncharacteristic of Rumi are:

"I want to be free from good and bad"

--translated by Nevit Ergin ("Crazy As We Are, 1992, p. 18)

--this quatrain is found in the Divan of Farîduddîn 'Attâr, died 1221

Some anti-Islamic writers have even claimed or suggested that Rumi really wasn't a Muslim, because they falsely believed that the line, "I am not a Christian, a Jew, a Zoroastrian, or a Muslim" expressed Rumi's true attitude toward Islam. But as I said, this poem is not in the earliest manuscripts and so is not a genuine Rumi poem. Nicholson first published a translation of this line [na tarsâ na yahûd-am man na gabr-am na musulmân-am] in 1988, but he admitted that, "The original text does not occur in any of the editions or MSS. used by me" (p. 281).

In his book on Rumi, "The Way of Passion, Andrew Harvey went so far as to claim that "Mohammed wasn't a Muslim, Buddha wasn't a Buddhist, and Christ wasn't a Christian! So what's the point? Rumi was a Muslim? Religions are a cosmic disaster because immediately when the sacred fire is lit, somebody seems to it to illuminate some grim old sanctuary" (p. 151-52). Apparently ignorant of the universal Islamic belief that Muhammad was the final prophet, he declared, "Rumi is a prophet, talking to us with poetry to inspire our transformation" (p. 158). Harvey, like many Westerners, tries to elevate sufism (Islamic mysticism) as a universal religion of love, distinct from "orthodox Islam." For example, he mistranslates part of a Rumi quatrain as a rejection of Islamic religious laws in a way reminiscent of the Christian rejection of the laws of Judaism: "Tell the night 'Our day has no night; Our religion has no law but love'" (p. 47) [correct translation: "Repeat until night: 'Our days have no nights/ In the path of Love, and Love has no rules'"] (tâ shab mê-gô ke rûz-ê mâ-râ shab nêst/ dar maZhab-ê 'ishq-o 'ishq-râ maZhab nêst) Rumi's Quatrain No. 375)

In his book, "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition: Essays On the Mowlavi Order And Mysticism," John Moyne, who provided the literal translations for Coleman Barks' immensely popular versions of Rumi, stated that "Rumi was a devout Muslim" who "frequently expressed utmost reverence for the Prophet" and who "had memorized the Koran and frequently quoted it. . . ." (p. 25). And he also said, "It is generally understood that Sufism, tasawwuf, grew within the Islamic milieu, and the terms Islamic mysticism and mystics have often been used as synonyms of Sufism and Sufis" (p. 31). However, then Moyne then expressed agreement with earlier generations of Western orientalists by saying, "However, there are compelling arguments that the origins of the theosophy and doctrine of Sufism go back to the pre-Islamic era" (p. 31). He also referred to "the alien origins of Sufism" (p. 53).

In the last chapter of the book, Moyne constructed an imaginary debate between Rumi and a group of orthodox Islamic jurists. Moyne described it as "an imaginary account of what could have taken place in the encounter between our mystical poet and the members of a delegation who attempted to persuade the celebrated Sufi poet back to formal and ritual orthodoxy" (p. 59). He suggested misleadingly that this imaginary account is "reconstructed from the available texts." And with a false appearance of objectivity, he added: "This genre of writings integrates what can be extracted from actual writings of and about Rumi, and a historical novel. Often the free flow of fictions depicts more effectively the sentiments of such an encounter than the concatenation of a set of passages from limited documents." In Moyne's fantasy about Rumi (that may have expressed his own resentment toward the ayatollahs in Iran than anything having to do with Rumi) by saying that the most learned and capable among the "priests" (but there are no "priests" in Islam) were sent to go to Rumi and persuade him to come back to the fold. . . . to the norms of the Islamic law and tradition. It was in the pursuit of this mission that a delegation of the most learned and respected, but highly conservative, jurists arrived at the Monastery. . . . A prolonged debate and discussion ensued which lasted for several days. Here are some excerpts from the records of this debate: . . ." (pp. 61-62).

In Moyne's fantasy, Rumi says the following: "There are many ways to reach God, I have chosen dance and music as my path. . . . Dance. . . . leads to a frenzy that results in understanding humanity. In performing Sama, a man can reach a state of spiritual frenzy where he is under the control of a Divine power; he whirls and dances under the spell and control of mysterious angelic powers. . . . A mystic whirls around his own soul and the soul of his beloved. . . . Shams and I say that we must find God from among His creations. We must find the way to feel God and see Him within ourselves. At that stage we will be beyond all worldly and heavenly elements. All religions will merge and we will reach a height that is beyond human perception. . . ." Moyne then quotes the non-Rumi line, "I am not Christian nor Jew, I am neither Gabr nor Muslim." (pp. 63-65)

However, Rumi did not abandon Islam after becoming absorbed in ecstatic dance and music--as many Western and Westernized people would like to believe. There are many accounts in the Persian sources of his performing the five daily prayers with his disciples and attending the weekly Friday congregational prayer in the mosques in Konya. It has been recognized for centuries that much of Rumi's Persian poetry is an inspired translation of thousands of verses of the Qur'an as well as translations of many traditional sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

In an article written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr entitled "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," he states, "One of the greatest living authorities on Rûmî in Persia today, Hâdî Hâ'irî, has shown in an unpublished work that some 6,000 verses of the Diwân and the Mathnawî are practically direct translations of Qur'anic verses into Persian poetry." (From Cheikowski, editor, "The Scholar and the Saint," p. 183)

In an authentic quatrain composed by Jalaluddin Rumi, he tells us:

I am the servant of the Qur'an as long as I have life.
I am the dust on the path of Muhammad, the Chosen one.

If anyone quotes anything except this from my sayings,
I am quit of him and outraged by these words.

[man banda-yê qur'ân-am, agâr jân dâr-am
man khâk-ê rah-ê muHammad-e muktâr-am

gar naqî kon-âz jûz in, kas az gofâr-am
bêzâr-am az-ô, w-âz-in sokhan bêzâr-am]

--Rumi's Quatrain No. 1173, translated by Ibrahim Gamard and Ravan Farhadi (in "The Quâtrâins of Rumi," an unpublished manuscript)

Here, the Persian word "bêzâr" translated as "quit of" and "outraged" also means disgusted, fed-up, repelled, estranged. The meaning is that no one should interpret Rumi's speech and poetry as having meanings that do not conform to the revelation and practice of Islam.

After generations of biased books written by Western orientalists about sufism, during the last couple of decades, Western scholars of sufism are finally acknowledging that sufism is none other than Islamic mysticism; inspired by the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). For example, in a book titled "All the King's Falcons" by Professor John Renard, he wrote that Rumi's popularity in the West is mainly "as a mystic, a Sufi, and a source of spiritual inspiration," secondly as a great poet with a vast repository of imagery, and thirdly as a thinker influenced by Neoplatonic metaphysics. Renard asks what is missing from material available on Rumi's life and works. He answers:

"Although it may seem all too obvious to need saying, Rumi was a Muslim. Yet what one sometimes hears about his attitude to perhaps even went so far as to deny the importance of his own adherence to Islam. For reasons such as that, or perhaps because of the oddly persistent notion that Sufis have always drifted off toward the fringes of Islamic society, relatively little attention has been given to what one of the world's most prominent and popular Muslims thought and felt about Islam's most fundamental notions and principles." (John Renard, "All the King's Falcons: Rumi on Prophets and Revelation," 1994, p. xiv)

Renard's book gives examples of the treasures which Rumi excavated from the Qur'anic "mother lode." He writes, "From that mine he brings forth the rough gems of the tradition, cutting and polishing them as only he can, so that they reflect his own insight into, and interiorization of, the central themes of Islamic life. . . ritual prayer, jihad, pilgrimage, fasting, his understanding of the significance of revelation, and his interpretation of the crucial events of early Islamic history as enshrined in the life of Muhammad." (Renard, p. xiv)

I wasn't always religious. I started out as a pantheist, after having an experience of the transcendent Oneness of the universe when I was a young man: all was miraculously One, uniquely Many, and blissfully No-Thing-- all at the same time! Since all was One and nothing was separate, I could not see the use of prayer, since there was nothing separate from me to pray to. However, years later I became religious when I experienced that, in addition to transcendent Oneness, there is also the simultaneous reality of the Divine Other: the Lord of Majesty who governs the universe, who is also the Only Beloved who attracts true lovers nearer and nearer. After I became more religious, I found that I loved to pray longer. I found much solace in prostrating my head to the floor or ground, as if before the Throne of God's Majesty. I had the blessing of going on the Pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca and was able to prostrate my head at the base of the Ka'ba, in Mecca, which has been called "the Shadow of the Divine Throne" on earth"--a very profound a great blessing (thanks be to God!).

Prostrating one's head to the ground in humble submission to Almighty God is mentioned in many places in the Bible, but this form of worship has been abandoned by Jews and Christians, with rare exceptions. And the idea of prostrating tends to seem strangely "oriental" to Westerners and perhaps embarrassing. The Book of Chronicles (II, 7:1-3) says: "When Solomon had finished his prayer. . . the glory of Yahweh filled the Temple. The priests could not enter the house of Yahweh because the glory of Yahweh filled the house of Yahweh. All the sons of Israel. . . bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the earth; they worshiped and gave praise to Yahweh, for He is good, for His love is everlasting." That is pure Islam. And in a famous story about the Prophet Jesus, peace be upon him, the "Gospel of Matthew" [26:39] states that he "fell on his face in prayer saying, 'Father, if possible let this cup [of suffering] pass from me, but not as I will, but as You will.' That is the essence of Islam and the essence of sufism. This ancient form of prayer expressing surrender to the Almighty Will of the One God, as done by the prophets such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them all) was revived by the renewal of pure monotheism known as the Islamic revelation. And the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said that in the last days prior to the Day of Judgment, "a single prostration to God (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it" (Sahîh al-Bukhârî as narrated by Abu Hurayra). He also said (may the peace and blessings of God be upon him): "The nearest a servant comes to his Lord is when he is prostrating himself. So make supplication (in this state)" (Sahîh al-Muslim, as narrated by Abu Hurayra). A related sufi saying, which has also been attributed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) is: "Whoever humbles himself before God is elevated by Him" (man tawâZa 'il-lâhî ratâ'a-hu-- Tabaqat as-Sufiyyah, p. 76, as quoted in "Traditions of the Prophet," Volume 2, by Javad Nurkakhsh).

Related to this, we have an account about Rumi's absorption in prayer written by Rumi's disciple, Sepahsâllâr ["Zendegâna-yê Mawlânâ Jalâluddîn Mawlawî," pp. 41-42; also quoted in Schimmel's "The Triumphal Sun," pp. 357-58]. After quoting a saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), "There is no ritual prayer without presence of the heart" [lâ Salâtû illâ ba-HuZûn-i-ḥ-qalb], Sepahsâllâr relates (and I translate here from the Persian): "One time when he was residing in a college [madrasa] during the winter season, he prostrated upon the carpet during the first part of the night. So many tears flowed from his blessed eyes that his blessed beard and face became covered with ice because of the coldness of the air and became stuck to the surface of the floor. In the morning, (his) companions prepared warm water which they poured onto his blessed face so that the ice became completely melted." Sepahsâllâr then asks, "And who knows about the secrets of his inward prayer?" He then quotes from one of Rumi's quatrains [no. 81]: "There are a hundred kinds of prayer, bowing and prostration for the one whose prayer-niche

[miRâb] is the beauty of the beloved." [Sad gûna namâz-ast-o rukû'-ast-o sujûd/ ân-râ ke jamâl-ê dôst bâsh-ad miRâb]

There is a wonderful description of the Islamic prayers in Rumi's Mathnawî [Book Three, lines 1824-2305] in the story of the sufi saint named Daqqî, who "traveled on the earth like the moon upon the sky," and by whom "the souls of night-travellers became luminous." "He travelled during the day; at night he was (engaged) in the ritual prayer [namâz]. His eye (was always) open toward the King, (and) he was like the (King's) falcon." "In addition to such piety [taqwâ] and devotions [awrâd] and standing (at length) in prayer, he was always the seeker of the special elect ones of God. His main goal in travel was that he might contact one of the chosen servants of God (even) for a moment."

For years and months he went travelling "because of love for the Moon, unaware of the way, bewildered by God." He reached a certain shore and had a vision of seven candles, the flames of which reached up into the sky. The seven candles became one, then seven again, then became seven men, then seven trees, then one tree, then seven trees lined up as if for the Islamic ritual prayer, with one tree in front as if the prayer leader. The trees became seven men who understood Daqqî's thoughts, and who asked him to lead them in the ritual prayer. He spent an hour in that chosen company in contemplation, became separated from his night, and his spirit became freed from the bounds of Time. Rumi comments here that during the part of the ritual prayer in which the worshipper prays for salutations and benedictions upon the righteous [as-Sâlihîn], that praises of all the prophets is blended: "The praises become entirely mixed; the jugs (are) poured into one basin. Since He (who is) the object of praise is no more than One, from this viewpoint religions are but one religion." (z-ân-ke khwôd mamûd-iH joz yak besh nêst/ kâsh-hâ z-in-ke joz yak nêsh nêst-- line 2124) The poet, however, should not be taken out of context and interpreted to mean that Rumi was expressing approval for other religions or saying that religious differences don't matter. Rather, it expresses a sublime mystical awareness beyond the ordinary human mind in which all separateness has vanished.

Daqqî's went forward to lead the prayer. "When they proclaimed the greatness of God [takbîr-- Allâhu akbar], they pray out from the world, like sacrificed animals. . . (for) the meaning of proclaiming the greatness of God is, 'O God, we have become a sacrifice in Your Presence! At the moment of slaughtering, you say 'Allâhu akbar' (which you should also do) likewise in slaughtering the base self [nafs] which is worthy of being killed. . . . They had lined up in rows in the presence of God, as (during) the Resurrection, reckoning (their sins) and saying fervent devotional prayers [munâjât]. They were shedding tears, standing before God like one rising straight up on the Day of Resurrection." Each time the worshipper bows and prostrates, he is commanded to account for his deeds and for his gratitude to God.

However, Daqqî became distracted from pure absorption in the prayer before God and heard the cries of people on a ship in danger of sinking because of a whirlpool. He prayed to God to be merciful and to save the people from death, and because of the prayer they were saved. "God makes that (kind of) prayer, since he is annihilated [fanâ-st], that prayer and that answer are from God." The people on the ship were saved at the same moment the ritual prayer ended. But the seven exalted saints objected to the interceding prayer of Daqqî as interfering with the Supreme Free Will of God, and so they disappeared. [It is interesting to note here, that Rumi presents the most exalted sufi saints as continuing to do the ritual Islamic prayers and being extraordinarily submitting of the Will of God-- in a way which is similar to the mysterious Khidr, who was so obedient to God's Will that even Moses could not tolerate his mysterious actions.

Daqqî grieved over losing contact with those seven saints for years, shedding lifetimes of tears in longing for them. In a manner that would seem to express his own longing for his own missing teacher, Shams-i Tabrizî, Rumi ends the story by saying: "O Daqqî with eyes (shedding tears) like a stream! Don't cease hoping (and) seek them! Seek! For search is the pillar of good fortune for the heart. Every opening (of happiness) is from fixing (the goal) within the heart. (Detached) from preoccupation with the business of the world, keep saying with (all your) soul, 'Where? Where?' [kû, kû?] like the dove." "(For) God has tied asking in prayer [du'â] to (His saying in the Qur'ân, 40:62), 'I will answer.' The prayer of anyone whose heart is purified from ailments will go (directly) to the Lord of Glory!"

ay daqqîq bâ dô chashm-i hunchô jû
hîn ma-bor ômêd, ishân-râ be-jû

hîn be-jû ke rukn-ê dawlat jostan-ast
har gošhâd dar del andâr bastan-ast

az hamma kâr-ê jahân pardākhta

kû-wê kû mê-gû be-jâ il chûn fākhta

nêk be-n'gar andar-in ay mulHajtib

ke du'â-râ bast Haq dar istâjb

har-ke-râ del pâk shod âz i'tilâ ân du'â-ash mê-raw-ed tâ Zu 'H-jâlâl

--Rumi's Mathnawî, III:1924-2305