



The Reverberations of Divine Unity in the *Mathnawī* of Rūmī*

Mevlânâ'nın Mesnevî'sinde Tevhîdin Yansımaları

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Abstract

Maulânâ Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī (d. 1273), commonly known as Rūmī, is widely regarded as one of the foremost expositors of Sufi thought throughout Islamic history. One of the most central concepts that encapsulates the essence of Rūmī's message in his magnum opus *Mathnawī* is *tawhīd*, or Divine unity. In this article, I argue that for Rūmī, the realization of *tawhīd*—the oneness of God—is achieved through an experiential form of knowledge attained in the annihilation of the carnal self in God (*fanā*). I further maintain that this knowledge is not discursive or conceptual but rather a direct and realized understanding, accessible solely through the path of love and the guidance of a spiritual master. I will begin by demonstrating that the triad of the Truth (*haqīqah*), the spiritual path (*tarīqah*), and Divine law (*sharī'ah*) are intricately interconnected, each reflecting a distinct aspect of the unified reality of Divine oneness. This foundation paves the way for discussing a crucial prerequisite for understanding *tawhīd* in Rūmī's thought: purification. According to Rūmī, purification is an essential step in the path of wayfaring, enabling the self to break free from vices and worldly attachments, thus becoming a vessel for Divine Light. However, this purification process ultimately culminates in the annihilation of the self, as the carnal ego represents the greatest obstacle and the root of all attachments.

Following this point, I will explore the relationship between the declaration of *shahādah* (*lā ilāha illa 'llāh*) and the understanding of Divine unity, arguing that this knowledge transcends the discursive reasoning of theologians. I will then examine the outcome of this realization of unity, wherein all creation is perceived as

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a manifestation of the beautiful Divine Names and attributes. Finally, I will turn to the metaphysical principles underlying Rŭmĭ's vision of *tawhĭd*, offering a deeper insight into his understanding of Divine oneness.

Keywords: Maulānā Jalāl al-Dĭn Balkhĭ, *Mathnawĭ*, Divine Unity, *tawhĭd*, divine names

Özet

Batı'da daha ziyade "Rŭmĭ" nisbesiyle bilinen Mevlānā Celāleddin Belhĭ (ö. 1273), İslam tarihi boyunca tasavvuf düşüncesinin en önde gelen düşünürlerinden biri olarak kabul edilir. Mevlānā'nın büyük eseri *Mesnevĭ*'deki mesajının özünü oluşturan merkezi kavramlardan biri tevhit ya da ilāhî birliktir. Bu makalede, Rŭmĭ için tevhidin -Tanrı'nın birliğinin- gerçekleşmesinin, nefsin Tanrı'da ifnâ bulmasıyla (fenâ) elde edilen tecrübeye dayalı bir bilgi biçimiyle sağlandığını öne süreceğim. Ayrıca bu bilginin, dolaylı veya kavramasal değil, yalnızca mânevî bir mürşidin rehberliğinde aşk aracılığıyla erişilebilen doğrudan ve tahakkuka dayalı bir bilgi olduğunu savunacağım. Hakikat, mânevî yol (*tarikāt*) ve ilahi nizam (*şeriat*) üçlüsünün karmaşık bir şekilde birbirine bağlı olduğunu ve her birinin ilāhî birliğin hakikatının farklı bir yönünü yansıttığını göstererek başlayacağım. Bu temel bize, Rŭmĭ'nin düşüncesinde tevhidi anlamının önemli bir ön koşulunu tartışmanın yolunu açar: Tezkiye-i nefis. Rŭmĭ'ye göre tezkiye, nefsin kötü alışkanlıklardan ve dünyevi bağlardan kurtulmasını ve böylece ilāhî nŭr için bir kap haline gelmesini sağlayan, seyr u sŭlŭk yolunda önemli bir adımdır. Bununla birlikte, bu arınma süreci nihayetinde nefsin ifna olmasıyla sonuçlanır; çünkü nefis-i emmāre en büyük engeli ve tüm dünyevi bağların kökenini temsil eder. Bu noktadan sonra, şehâdet beyanı (*lā ilāhe illallāh*) ile tevhid anlayışı arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyecek ve bu bilginin kelâmcıların dolaylı akıl yürütmelerini aştığını savunacağım. Daha sonra, tüm yaratılışın ilāhî isim ve sıfatların bir tezahürü olarak algılandığı bu birlik idrakinin sonucunu inceleyeceğim. Son olarak, Rŭmĭ'nin tevhit tasavvurunun altında yatan metafizik ilkelere dönerek, onun ilāhî birlik anlayışına dair daha derin bir perspektif sunacağım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mevlānā Celāleddin-i Rŭmĭ, *Mesnevĭ*, ilāhî birlik, tevhĭd, ilāhî isimler

Our *Mathnawĭ* is the shop for Unity
anything you see except the One is an idol.
(*Math.*, VI, 1528)¹

Introduction

In the preface of the *Mathnawĭ*, Rŭmĭ introduces his work as "the root of the roots of the roots of Religion" alluding to the fact

1 *Math.*, VI: 1528.

If you are thirsting for the spiritual ocean
make a breach in the Island of Mathnawĭ.
Make such a great breach that at every moment
you will see the Mathnawĭ to be only Spiritual
(*Mathnawĭ*, VI: 67-68).

The Latin numeral indicates one of the six books of Rŭmĭ's *Mathnawĭ*, and the following number signifies the number of the verse in the specified book. The English translation of the verses is by R.E. Nicholson, in his *Mathnawĭ of Jalaluddin Rŭmĭ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

that it unveils the mysteries of attaining the Truth and certainty. Moreover, it said that the *Mathnawĭ* "is the greatest science of God, the clearest way of God, and the most manifest evidence of God."² According to Rŭmĭ, religion as such comprises three main and inviolable elements: *sharĭ'a* (Divine Law), *tarĭqa* (The Path) and *haqĭqa* (The Truth). *Sharĭ'a* is like a candle; unless one possesses a candle, one cannot proceed on the Path. Once one has embarked on the way, one's wayfaring is the Path and finally, when one has reached the destination, that is the Truth.³

In another simile which presumes the ancients' belief in the science of alchemy, this science itself is likened to the Law; the application

2 *Math.*, I: 3.

3 *Math.*, IV: 3.

of this science, namely, the act of rubbing the copper upon the philosophers' stone is the Path, and Truth is like the transmutation of the copper into gold. "Those who know alchemy rejoice in their knowledge of it saying "We know the theory of this science"; and those who practice it rejoice in their practice of it saying "We perform such works"; and those who have experienced the reality, rejoice in the reality saying, "We have become gold and are delivered from the theory and practice of alchemy: We are God's freedmen.⁴ *Each party is rejoicing in what they have.*"⁵

On another occasion, Rūmī compares the Law to the science of medicine and the Path to regulating one's diet in accordance with that science and taking the medications prescribed by the physician, and he compares the Truth to gaining everlasting health. So, the Law implies knowledge, the Path implies knowledge combined with action and the Truth implies reaching God and when a man dies, he is cut off from the Law and the Path and what remains is the Truth.⁶

Analyzing the above similes, one could perhaps say that until reaching the destination, the three aspects cannot be totally separated from each other. It is only a matter of emphasis in the sense that priority is much more given to one aspect rather than the others. They might be identified with what the Sufī masters designate as the three ways of action or fear (*makhāfa*), Love (*maḥabba*) and gnosis (*ma'rifa*).

Rūmī presents a view of *tawḥīd* in which one truly knows the meaning of Divine Unity only after undergoing spiritual training and self-cultivation which culminates in the state of the annihilation of the carnal ego in God (*fanā*). Rūmī refers to a verse in the Qur'ān according to which most of the believers do

4 *ibid.*

5 Q 23/53.

6 *ibid.*

not believe in God, but they associate other gods with Him.⁷ This means that there are two kinds of idol-worship, hidden (*khafīyy*) and manifest (*jaliyy*). The Prophet is reported to have said, *shirk (idol worship) is more hidden in my community than the creeping of a black ant in a tenebrous night on a massive rock.*

The Temptation of this World and of the Carnal Ego

In order to attain the station of the Divine Union the wayfarer (*sālik*) should undergo spiritual training. He should abandon the merely mundane aspects of the world and crave for the Hereafter. In order to purify his soul, he must abandon the passions of the carnal self. He should forsake the company of evil companions and opt for a spiritual retreat. He must abandon foolish talk in order to seek the Divine science. If he is to keep the spiritual vigilance (*bīdārī*),⁸ he should relinquish oversleep. In order to gain spiritual nourishment, he should abandon taking excessive food. Since spiritual wayfaring is encompassed by afflictions and tribulations which require the traveler's endurance and patience, he should abandon luxurious comforts. The spiritual traveler, moreover, is required to abandon blind imitation (*taqlīd*) if he is to gain knowledge through realization (*taḥqīq*). He should give up the habit of pride and boastfulness and adopt the practice of prayer and supplication. He should moreover incline toward anonymity rather than reputation and fame.

It is narrated that the Prophet said that this world is a prison for the believer and a paradise for the disbeliever.⁹ What do we mean

7 Q 12/106.

8 *Bīdārī* is a Persian equivalent of the Arabic *yaqzah*, meaning both wakefulness and spiritual vigilance.

9 *al-dunyā sijn al-mu'min wa jannat al-kāfir*. See, M.H. al-Ṭūsī, *al-'Amālī* (Beirut: Dār al-Thiḳāfah, 1414 AH lunar), 346.

when we say that it is a prison for the disbeliever? Or generally speaking what do we mean when we blame this world? It is to be blamed when it brings in its wake the forgetfulness of God. Every blessing of God can be used for good or evil purposes. Water, for example, beneath a ship in a vast ocean is a blessing because it carries the ship safely to the seashore. But when water pierces through the ship, it causes it to sink and brings a boat its perdition.

This world is a prison, and we are prisoners
dig a hole in the prison and let yourself out.
What is the world? It is to be forgetful of
God
it is not merchandise, silver, weighing
scales and women.
As regards the wealth that you spend for
religion
how good the righteous wealth is as the
Prophet said.
Water in the boat is the ruin of the boat
but water underneath the boat is a support.¹⁰

Purification of the Soul

The condition *sine qua non* of spiritual wayfaring to the Divine Threshold is the purification of the soul. In the Holy Qur'ān prophets are said to purify the soul of believers first and then to teach them the Scripture alongside the Divine Wisdom (Q 2/51, et al.) In the Surah al-Shams, salvation of the soul is premised solely on its purification (Q 91/1-11) which polishes the mirror of the soul and makes it possible to reflect and comprehend the Divine mysteries through knowledge by realization.

As in all sacred scriptures, Rūmī makes frequent use of parables which are the symbolic representation and expression of universal truths in concrete terms.¹¹ In a famous simile,

10 *Math.*, I: 982–985.

11 See G.R. Aavani, “Rūmī’s Use of Tales, Parables and Similes” in *Rūmī: a Philosophical Study* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 2016), 307-315.

Rūmī likens this world to a bathhouse which comprises a bathroom above and a bath-stove or a furnace below. The share of the pious from the bathhouse is cleanliness which is visible from their shining faces. The mundane and worldly people are like the stokers of the furnace who keep it always warm, and the sign of the stokers is visible from their impure complexions.

The lust of this world is like the bath-stove
by which the bath, piety, is resplendent.
The pious man’s portion from this stove is
purity
because he is in the hot-bath and in clean-
liness.
The Worldly superiors resemble those who
carry dung
for the bath-keeper’s fire-making.
God has implanted cupidity in them,
in order that the bath may be hot and
well-provided.
Abandon this stove and advance into the
hot-bath,
know that abandonment of the stove is
the very essence of the bath.
Anyone who is in the stove is as a servant
to him that is self-denying and on his
guard.
Whoever has entered the bath his sign
is visible upon his face.
The signs of the stokers are conspicuous
too
in their dress and in the smoke and dust.¹²

But more detrimental to the spiritual wayfarer is the love of the carnal ego. It is the worst enemy in the path of spiritual realization and a great barrier in the vision of Divine reality in this world. The Prophet is reported to have said, *Your worst enemy is your carnal soul within your two flanks.*¹³ The more lenient you are towards it, the stronger it becomes and the more rigorously it opposes the inspirations of

12 *Math.*, VI: 238–245.

13 *a’adā ‘aduwwika nafsuka allatī bayna janbayk.* M.‘I. Warrām, *Tanbīh al-khawāfir* (Qom: Maktabat al-Faqīh, n.d.), 59.

the heart and the mandates of the intellect. The idol of the carnal ego is the mother of all idols. The material idol is a snake, whereas the idol of the carnal self is a dragon. It is very easy to break an idol but to regard the carnal ego as easy to subdue is indeed folly. The Hell in the Qur'ān is depicted as having seven gates which are nothing but the vestibules of the carnal soul leading to eternal damnation.¹⁴

The entire Qur'ān is a description of the viciousness of the carnal souls.

look into the Holy Book, where is thine eye?¹⁵

Listen to this good counsel of the Prophet,
Your worst enemy is between your two sides.

Do not listen to the pompous talk of this enemy

she is like Satan, obstinately wrangling and quarrelling.

For the sake of this world and for contention,

she has made the everlasting torment easy to you.

Like magicians it makes a straw a mountain by artifice

again it weaves a mountain like a straw.

It makes ugly things beautiful by sleight of hand

and things beautiful ugly by false opinion

The work of magic is this that it breathes incantations

and at every breath transforms realities.

Such a magician is latent within you

and this concealed magic of temptation

is wrought by your carnal soul.¹⁶

Annihilation (*fanā'*)

There is a tradition from the Prophet who is reported to have said, *neither I, nor anybody else before me uttered a formula like lā ilāha*

14 Q 15/44.

15 *Math.*, VI: 4862.

16 *Math.*, III: 4066–4074.

*illā-'Llāh, that is there is no Divinity save Allah.*¹⁷ This terse formula delineates the very essence of *tawhīd* or the Divine Unity. It comprises both an affirmation and a negation, a negation of absolute reality from everything other than God, and its affirmation of the Absolute Being, namely God.

The above formula of *tawhīd* has other variants, seldom noticed by common believers but essential for a deeper understanding of it. Another version of the above formula is "*lā ilāha illā huwa*,"¹⁸ There is no Divinity but He," which means that the Ipseity (*huwīyyah*) of every being is due to the Absolute Ipseity of God. Still in another version of the formula we read "*lā ilāha illā anta*,"¹⁹ there is no Divinity but Thou," which signifies that had not God created the world there would be no "thou-ness". Therefore, God is the absolute "Thou" who is the creator of every "I" and "Thou".

But most important of all and specially emphasized by Rūmī is the formula "*lā ilāha illā anā*,"²⁰ there is no Divinity but I" which signifies that God the Almighty has the sole prerogative of being the Absolute "I" and that His absolute "I-ness" has manifested itself in everything. The latter version of *tawhīd* is much emphasized by Rūmī. True *tawhīd* can be realized if and only if one's phenomenal "I" is annihilated in the Absolute Divine "I". In this connection, Rūmī often refers to the story of Moses and Pharaoh in the Qur'ān. God spoke to Moses and encouraged by this interlocution with God, Moses addressing God said: "*My Lord show me that I might look upon Thee.*" God said: "*Thou shall not see me, but look upon the mountain, if it remains in its place then you will see me.*" When God

17 By which is meant only the formulation and not the Reality of *tawhīd*.

18 Q 20/8.

19 Q 21/87.

20 Q 20/14.

*manifested Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble to dust and Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered, he glorified God, turning to Him in repentance of what he had already said.*²¹

In the process of interlocution there was still the duality between “I” and “Thou” and since a physical vision of God was impossible, God manifested Himself to the mountain whereby the mountain crumbled to dust and Moses fell in a swoon, which is almost equivalent to what the Sufis call the state of annihilation (*fanāʾ*). The recovery of Moses from the swoon is tantamount to what Sufis term as *baqāʾ* (subsistence after annihilation). Pharaoh, instead, by denying the Divinity of the Absolute, appropriated to himself the title of Divinity by saying, *I am your Lord, most high* (Q 79/25). This means that by denying the Divinity of God, he falsely appropriated it to himself.²²

I am not of the same genus as the King of beings
but I have a light from Him in His self-manifestation.
Since my genus is not the genus of my King
my ego has been annihilated for the sake of His Ego.²³

Holding fast to the carnal soul is the cause of one’s perdition, but true *tawhīd* can be real-

21 Q 7/143.

22 According to Rūmī, every human being has a share of Moses and Pharaoh in him or herself. One should see to it which of the two preponderates in one’s being.

The mention of Moses has become an obstruction to you

for you think that these are stories which happened long ago.

The mention of Moses serves for a mask
but the light of Moses is thy actual concern, O good man!

Moses and Pharaoh are in thy being
thou must seek these two adversaries in thyself.
(*Math.*, III: 1251–1253)

23 *Math.*, II: 1170–1173.

ized through the works of devotion and not by mere discourse.

Egoism is the ladder of creatures
they must fall from the ladder in the end.
Unless thou hast died and become living through Him
thou art an enemy seeking partnership with Him.
When thou hast become living through Him, He alone remains
it is absolute unity, how is it partnership?
Seek the explanation of it in the mirror of devotional works
thou wilt not gain the understanding of it from speech and discourse.²⁴

Such knowledge can be gained through realization, unveiling and spiritual tasting. If it were attainable merely through academic learning, Fakhr Rāzī (d. 1210), the greatest scholar-theologian of his time would have obtained it.

Since it has been delivered from “I”, it has now become “I”
blessing on the “I” that is without affliction.
If the intellect could discern the true way in this question
Fakhr-i Rāzī would be an adept in religious mysteries.
Since he had no knowledge through Spiritual tasting
his intelligence and imagination increased his perplexity.
How should this “I” be revealed by ratiocination?
That “I” is revealed after passing away from self (*fanāʾ*)
These intellects in their quest of the Real “I”

24 *Math.*, IV: 2763–2768. According to Rūmī, in order to glorify God, one should be humble before the Divine Majesty. To attain to the station of unity the seeker should consume one’s self in the Divine Self. The murky carnal ego to become luminous it must burn up in the radiance of the Divine Sun. As long as we have staunchly clutched our hands on the dualism of “I” and “We”, we shall never attain to the station of unification. *Math.*, I: 3008–3012.

fall in the abyss of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and immanentism (*ittiḥād*).²⁵

In the following couplets Rūmī contrasts the ecstatic utterance of Ḥallāj (d. 922) (*anā-l-Ḥaqq*, “I am the Real”) with the claim of Pharaoh to be the supreme Lord. Ḥallāj, being God-intoxicated, uttered it, after having reached the state of annihilation, while Pharaoh’s utterance was a claim to Divinity accompanied by the negation of the Divinity of God.²⁶

25 *Math.*, V: 4142–4147. Here Rūmī wants to show the incapacity of reason alone to achieve the reality of *tawḥīd*, which is solely possible through the annihilation of the carnal ego and not merely by ratiocination. He also wants us to understand that in relying on ratiocination alone, there is the danger of falling into the abyss of incarnation (*ḥulūl*) or immanentism (*ittiḥād*) which are the identification of the Divinity either with a single person or with material entities.

26 There has been a prolonged and intense controversy over Ḥallāj’s ecstatic utterance “I am the Real” (*anā ’l-Ḥaqq*). According to Rūmī, Ḥallāj’s utterance should be distinguished from Pharaoh’s bold and misleading statement “I am your most supreme Lord” (79/24) because in the case of Ḥallāj, the utterance was due to the annihilation of his illusive self in the Divine Absolute Self, whereas Pharaoh claimed the Divinity for himself. According to the great Persian poet Ḥāfīz, Ḥallāj was crucified because he divulged Divine secrets that should be kept concealed. (Ghazal No. 136, Khānlarī edition.) According to Ibn ‘Arabī, ecstatic utterances, even if valid in their own right, being uttered in the state of Divine Intoxication (*sakr*) do not represent the highest stage of spiritual attainment. Divinity is the sole prerogative of God, and it does not behoove a servant of God to claim it (See Ibn ‘Arabī, *al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyah*, (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, nd.), chapter 195). Nonetheless Rūmī argues that to exist is to be something and to be something is to be determined. A perfect human being is not like an entity among other entities and as such is beyond any determination and hence is a perfect image of Divinity.

Since you have heard the description of the sea of non-existence

continually endeavor to stand upon this sea
Inasmuch as the foundation of the workshop
is that non-existence which is void and traceless and empty.

All master-craftsmen seek non-existence
and a place of breakage for exhibiting their skill.
Necessarily the Lord, the master of all masters
his workshop is non-existence and naught.

A Pharaoh said, “I am God” and was laid low,

a Mansur (Ḥallāj) said “I am God” and was saved.

The former “I” is followed by God’s curse, and the latter “I” by God’s Mercy, O loving man.

For that one (Pharaoh) was a black stone, this one a cornelian.

that one was an enemy to the Light, and this one passionately enamored of it.

This “I” was He (God) in the inmost consciousness

through oneness with the Light not through incarnation.²⁷

When a man’s “I” is negated from existence,

then what remains, consider well, O denier

If you have an eye open it and look
tell me after “not” what remains.²⁸

According to Rūmī, man is made in the image of God, that is, God has bestowed on him all His Names and Attributes. He has blown into him of His own Spirit. So, when the loving believer sincerely treads the Straight Path leading to God, his essence and attributes become Divine. When he is annihilated in God, in a state of intoxication he will utter like Ḥallāj “I am the Real.” When we eat lifeless bread, for example, it is transubstantiated into life. When a bundle of dark wood is turned into fire, it loses its darkness and is turned into light. The black iron when thrown into the furnace becomes fiery and red and totally loses its darkness. The Qur’ān talks about the “dyeing of God” and asks that “who is better than God in dyeing?” (Q 2/138) Now, dyeing involves plunging cloth in the dyeing vat.

Whenever this non-existence is greater, in that quarter
the more manifest is the work and workshop of God.
Since the highest stage is non-existence
the dervishes (Sufis) have outstripped all others.
(*Math.*, VI: 1466–1471)

27 *Math.*, V: 2035–2039.

28 *Math.*, VI, 2096–2097.

The baptism of Allah is the dyeing vat of Hū (the Absolute God)

therein all multi-colored things become of the one color.

When the mystic falls into the vat and you say to him “arise”

he says in rapture, I am the vat, do not blame me.

Saying “I am the vat” is saying “I am God” he has the color of fire, even though he is iron.

The color of iron is naughted in the color of fire,

it boasts of its fieriness, though keeping silence.

When it has become like gold in redness, then without tongue it boasts “I am the fire.”

Being glorified by the color and nature of the fire

it tells you “I am the fire, I am the fire”

I am the fire, if you have doubt and suspicion

make trial, put thy hand upon me

I am fire, if it seems dubious to you

lay your face upon my face for one moment.²⁹

Then Rūmī apologizes for the simile. One should not take it in a quite literal sense and then he advises himself to leave the sea of Divine Unity untouched and unprofaned by such comparison.

Do not set foot in the Sea, speak not of it on the shore of the Sea keep silence, biting your lips in amazement.³⁰

Appearance and Reality

According to the Qur’ān, God is both manifest (*al-zāhir*) and Hidden (*al-bāṭin*). Being manifest means that He has made His appearance in the world such that the world is nothing but the manifestation of Divine Names and

29 *Math.*, II: 1342–1352.

30 *Math.*, II: 1353.

Attributes. Now, this world appears to human beings as objects of the five senses, that is, as perceptible phenomena, and we take these sense phenomena to be not only real but as constituting absolute reality. In other words, if we trust our senses alone, we are deceived because we are suffering from the illusion that there is no reality save the perceptible phenomena. There are some phenomenologists who absolutely deny any reality beyond what is given to us in sense perception. There are still others who do not deny extra-phenomenal reality, but nonetheless to them the data of sense perception are more real, and that is why they use deduction to infer the existence of ultra-sensible realities.

God hath caused the non-existent to appear existent and magnificent

He hath caused the existent to appear in the form of non-existent.

He hath concealed the sea and made the foam visible

He hath concealed the Wind and displayed to thee the dust.

The dust is whirling in the air as a minaret how should the dust rise aloft, of itself.

Thou seest the dust on high, O infirm of sight

and not the wind except through knowledge by induction.

Thou seest the foam moving in every direction

without the Sea the foam hath no existence.

Thou seest the foam by sense perception, the sea by induction

thought is hidden, speech manifest.

We deemed negation to be affirmation

we had an eye that saw only the non-existent.

The eye that made its appearance in a state of slumber

how can it see aught but phantasy and non-existence.³¹

31 *Math.*, V: 1026–1033.

He who depends solely on the authority of his senses gets totally perplexed because he is refused and denied the vision of reality. He is overwhelmed by phantasy and illusion. Rūmī asks the question as to why God being generous and beneficent, caused the reality to be hidden from some and revealed to others? God is a master magician. He who is the Absolute Reality has made the phenomena appear as reality to those who have turned away from Him.

Wondering why He set up this non-existence in full view
and why He caused that Reality to be hidden from sight.
Praise to Thee O Master-weaver of magic who hast made
dregs to seem pure wine to them that turn away from the Truth.³²

The impermanent phenomena of the world of appearances are constantly changing, which the unenlightened minds take as the only reality. It is quite an illusion to take the phenomenal world to be the absolute and immutable reality.³³ For Rūmī, God alone is the Absolute reality and the world and everything in it is a theophany or a manifestation of the Divinity. The formula of *tawhīd* signifies that the reali-

32 *Math.*, V: 1035–1036. According to Rūmī those who deny the reality of *ātman*, necessarily deem the *māyā* to be the sole reality. In addition, he considers it to be an artifice of God “the Master-weaver of magic who has made everything other than the Real to appear as absolute reality to those who deny Him.”

33 The multifarious phenomena of the world are as the veils of the Reality concealed behind them. They are like the froth and foam which conceal the reality of the ocean. It is one of the paradoxes of the Divine theophany in the world that the Real manifests itself in the phenomena to become known and to be recognized, but the phenomena, instead, are like the veils which conceal the Real, who is only known by those who have either shattered the veils or having pierced the veils have been able to catch a glimpse of the Real. See, Qayṣarī, *al-Tawhīd wa'l-nubuwwah wa'l-walāyah*, edited by S.J. Āsh-tiyānī (Tehran: Iranian Institute of Philosophy, 1360 AH solar), 13.

ty of anything other than God is derived from the Divine reality.

Who are we, O Thou soul of our souls
that we should remain in being beside
Thee.
We and our existences are really non-existences
Thou art the Absolute Being which manifests the perishable phenomena.³⁴

In the next few lines which has drawn the attention of many saints and sages and on which many commentaries have been written, Maulānā depicts the world as a flute and God as the flute-maker and the flute-player. The music in us comes from Him. We are the harp and he is the harp-maker who strikes with the plectrum the notes of joy and lamentation; we are pieces of chess and our victory or defeat is from Him. We are the rushing lions of the banner in front of the wind of His glory. He has given to non-beings the delightfulness of being.

We are all lions, but lions on a banner
because of the wind They are rushing onward from moment to moment.
Their onward rush is visible and the wind unseen
may that which is unseen not fail from us.
Our wind and our being are of thy gift
our whole existence is from thy bringing us into being.
Thou didst show the delightfulness of Being unto non-being
after Thou hadst caused not-being to fall in love with Thee.
Take not away the delightfulness of Thy bounty
take not away the dessert and wine and wine-cup.
And if Thou take it away who is there to make inquiry?
how should the picture strive with the painter.
Do not look on us, do not fix Thy gaze upon us (in anger)

34 *Math.*, I: 601–602.

look on Thy own kindness and generosity.
We were not and there was no demand on
our part
Thy grace was hearkening to our unspo-
ken prayer.³⁵

In the state of annihilation, the wayfarer is
awakened by and enlightened through God,
an enlightenment which awakens one from
the spiritual slumber, a slumber which the
worldly people falsely call an enlightenment.

Whosoever is awake (to this material
world) is the more asleep
His wakefulness is worse than his sleep.
When our soul is not awake to God
wakefulness is like closing the gates of Di-
vine Grace.³⁶

The Simile of Color

Tawhīd literally means “Unification,” that
is taking plurality and multiplicity back to
their original unity. Unity and plurality are
correlative terms, meaning that one cannot
be found without the other. This relationship
between unity and multiplicity can be best
illustrated by the simile of light. Sunshine,
for instance, is colorless but when it passes
through glasses of different colors and hues,
it takes on the different colors of the multifar-
ious glasses through which it passes. When
the glasses are cast away, the original light
becomes resplendent.

The glasses of diverse hue
cause that Light to seem colored to us.
When the many-colored glasses are no more

35 *Math.*, I: 599–600.

36 *Math.*, I: 409–410. Enlightenment, that is awaken-
ing to the Real is of paramount importance in all
religions. In Hinduism the ultimate goal in life is
the attainment of *Moksha*, which is the final libera-
tion and release from all bonds such as *Karma* and
Samsara. In Buddhism it is equivalent to Bodhi,
which literally means “awakened”. “Without this
experience there would be no Buddhism.” (See the
articles “Moksha” and “Enlightenment” in *Ency-
clopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*, (Bos-
ton: Shambala Publications, 1994).)

then the colorless Light makes thee
amazed.

Make it thy habit to behold the Light with-
out the glass
so that when the glass is shattered there
may be no blindness.³⁷

There are many who see the coloured glass-
es but not the light. There is no doubt that
what Rūmī has in mind is the Divine Light,
which if taken away, everything reverts back
to the original state of non-being. Time and
again Rūmī reiterates that when the sun sets,
it becomes clear that the cause of daylight was
not the day but the luminous sun. Similarly,
God is the source of every excellence, and
perfections of the world are borrowed from
the Divine Perfections.

The beauty of everything beautiful, the beau-
ty of the beloved in the bosom or that of the
rose in the rose-garden fade away, which
means that their beauty was borrowed. They
put on a borrowed adornment and pretended
that these robes were their own property.

O God, I wonder what fault did that or-
chard commit
that these beautiful robes should be
stripped from it!
It paid regard to itself and self-regard is a
poison
beware, O thou who art put to trial.
The minion for love of whom the world
wept
the world now is repulsing him from itself:
what is his crime?

The crime is that he put on a borrowed
adornment
and pretended that these robes were his
own property.
We take them back in order that he may
know for sure
that the stack is Ours and the fair ones are
only gleaners.

That he may know that those robes were
a loan

37 *Math.*, V: 989–991.

it was a ray from the Sun of Being.
 All that beauty and power and virtue and
 knowledge
 have journeyed hither from the Sun of Ex-
 cellence.
 They, the light of that Sun, turn back again
 like the stars, from these bodily walls.
 When the sunbeam has gone home
 every wall is left dark and black.
 That which made thee amazed at the faces
 of the fair
 is the Light of the Sun reflected from the
 three-colored glass.³⁸

If the lamps are distinct yet their beams merge
 into one, this suggests that their illumination
 does not originate from separate sources—
 which often lead to diversity—but from the
 Infinite Light above, the primal source of all
 light below. Keeping our gaze fixed upon that
 absolute and infinite light will deliver us from
 dualism and idol-worship.

This earthenware lamp and this wick are
 different,
 but its light is not different: it is from Yon-
 der.
 If thou keep looking at the glass (lantern)
 thou wilt be lost.
 because from the glass arise plurality and
 dualism.
 But if thou keep thy gaze upon the Light
 thou wilt be delivered from dualism and
 the plurality of the finite body.
 From the point of view, O thou the kernel
 of existence
 there arises the difference between the be-
 liever, the Zoroastrian and the Jew.³⁹

38 *Math.*, V: 979–988.

39 *Math.*, III: 1255–1258:

If ten lamps are present in one place
 Each differs in form from another.
 But if you turn your face towards their light
 It is impossible, without any doubt to distinguish
 the light of each. (*Math.*, I: 678–679):
 In things spiritual there is no division and no num-
 bers
 In things spiritual there is no partition and no indi-
 viduals (*Math.*, I: 681):

The Duplicity of Vision

When we think about this world, we conceive
 it as being totally other than God. But this
 “otherness” in the strict sense is conducive to
 dualism. According to the Qur’ān, God is the
 First, the Last, the Manifest, and the Hidden.
 (Q 57/3) These four attributes of God reveal
 to us the secret of His Self-disclosure in the
 universe. Being the First means that He is
 the primordial principle of everything. He is
 the Last in that everything returns to Him.
 He is Manifest in that the world is His locus
 of self-disclosure; He is Hidden, that is His
 reality is concealed behind everything, an
 “indication that God is outwardly manifest
 and inwardly hidden”.⁴⁰

Now to separate the First from the Last and
 the Manifest from the Hidden is a symptom
 of the duplicity of vision.

This dualism is characteristic of the eye
 that sees double
 But the First is the Last and the Last is the
 First
 Hark! By what means is this made known
 to thee?
 By means of the Spiritual resurrection
 seek to experience that resurrection.⁴¹

“Spiritual resurrection” is a reference to the
 Prophetic Tradition, *Die before you die*, which
 in the Sufi tradition means mortifying the
 passions of the carnal soul in order to make
 the Spiritual vision of Divine realities pos-
 sible.⁴²

Do not say “two” do not know “two” and
 do not call “two”
 deem the slave to be effaced in his master.

40 See S. H. Nasr (editor-in-chief), *The Study Quran*,
 (New York: HarperOne Publishers, 2015), 1331.

41 *Math.*, VI: 819–820.

42 *Math.*, VI: 3837–3838.

The mystery of “die before death” in this
 that all the prizes come after dying, not before.
 Except dying no other skill
 avails with God, O artful schemer!

The Khwāja likewise is naughted and dead
and checkmated and buried in Khwājāh's
Creator.

When you regard this Khwāja as separate
from God

you lose both the text and the preface. (i.e.
the two aspects of the one reality)

Hark, let your inward eye and your heart
pass beyond the bodily clay

this is one *Qibla* (object of worship) do not
see two qiblas.⁴³

There are few people to whom one can con-
fide the secrets of the Divine Unity. One
must close one's mouth and be silent or else
one should speak in the language of the
double-seeing man or one should wield both
ways: to speak and to be silent; to be silent in
the presence of the people of falsehood and
deceit and patiently endure their presence
who might by the stone of their ignorance
break the jar. One should speak to them with
fair words and with divinely inspired reason.
Being patient with the unworthy purifies the
heart.

That unity is beyond description and con-
dition

nothing comes in the arena of speech but
duality.

Either like the double-seeing man drink in
this duality

or close your mouth and be very silent.

Or do both in turns, now silence, now
speech

with the uninitiated beat the drum like
him that sees double.

When you see a confidant declare the
mystery of the Spirit

if you see the rose sing loud like nightin-
gales.

But when you see a water-skin full of de-
ceit and falsehood

shut your lips and be like a dry-lipped jar.

For he is an enemy of water, in his pres-
ence do not move

43 *Math.*, VI: 3215–3218.

your lips, else the stone of his ignorance
breaks the jar.

Patience endure the punishments inflicted
by the ignorant man

give him fair words and dissemble with
the divinely-inspired reason.

Patience to the unworthy is a means of pu-
rifying the worthy

wherever a heart exists, patience purifies it.⁴⁴

The Path of Love

So far, we have had almost a theoretical dis-
cussion about the meaning of *tawhīd*. But the
question now is as to how this sublime stage
can be achieved not by conceptualization and
theoretical deduction but through Spiritual
realization. To this question Rūmī answers
categorically that the surest and the best way
to achieve the union is the Path of love. When
the fire of love blazes up, there remains no
duality between the lover and the beloved.
The lover's being gets consumed and there
remains only the beloved. If there is still the
duality between the lover and the beloved, it
is not lover, in the proper sense; it is only an
idle passion. Only through Divine love, can
the meaning of *tawhīd* be realized.⁴⁵

Love is that flame which when it blazes up
consumes everything else but the Beloved.

The lover drives home the sword of *not* (*la*)
in order to kill

all other than God: thereupon consider
what remains after *not*.

44 *Math.*, VI: 2034–2041.

On the Gnostic's lips is a lock while his heart is full
of mysteries

his lips are silent, but his heart is filled with melodi-
ous songs

Gnostics who have drunk from the cup of God

have known the mysteries and kept them hidden.

Whosoever has been taught the mysteries of the Di-
vine action

his lips are sealed and as it were stitched. (*Math.*, V:
2238–2240)

45 For a more detailed discussion about love in Rūmī,
see Gholamreza Aavani, *Rūmī: A Philosophical
Study*, 119–135.

There remains *except God (illa-Llāh)*, all the rest is gone
 Hail, O mighty Love, destroyer of polytheism!
 Verily, He is the First and the Last, do not regard polytheism
 as arising from aught except the eye that sees double.⁴⁶

In the Qur'ān we read, *He loves them, and they love Him* (Q 5/54). His love, being absolute and infinite, precedes our love which is only a pale reflection of it. Love is first and foremost an attribute of God. Man being created in the image of God has potentially all the Divine Attributes which can be assimilated only through Divine Love.

Love is an attribute of God, but fear is an attribute of the servant
 who is afflicted by lust and gluttony.
 Since you have read in the Qur'ān "*they love Him*"
 joined in a certain place with "*He love them.*"
 Know, then that love (*maḥabbah*) and excessive love (*ishq*) too
 is an attribute of God; fear is not an attribute of God, O honoured Sir!
 What relation exists between the attributes of God and those of a handful of earth
 what relation exists between the attributes of the temporally originated man and those of the Holy one.⁴⁷

God loves all those who love Him. God does not look upon our outward forms. He keeps in deep regard the heart of the servant who loves Him. So, we should not care whether we are beautiful or ugly, infirm or stout in stature. We should only look upon our noble aspiration. We should always keep searching for Him at all events. We should be like the dry-lipped thirsty ones who are seeking water. This unquenchable Spiritual thirst will

46 *Math.*, V: 586–591.

47 *Math.*, V: 2185–2188.

remove all the obstacles in our way to ultimate Union.

Do not regard thy ugly or beauteous form regard Love and the object of thy search.
 Do not regard the fact that thou art despicable or infirm
 look upon thy aspiration, O noble one.
 In whatsoever state thou be, keep searching
 O thou with dry lips, always be seeking water.
 For that dry lip of thine gives evidence that at last it will reach the Springhead.
 Dryness of lip is a message from the water that this agitation will certainly bring thee to the water.
 For this seeking is a blessed motion
 this search shall remove obstacles on the way to God.⁴⁸

The Role of the Spiritual Master

It is necessary for a spiritual wayfarer to choose, by Divine Grace, a spiritual master who guides him on the Way. To travel in this path without the Divine aid and spiritual direction of a master (*pīr*) is extremely dangerous even if one has travelled on the way many times. One should follow in the footsteps of the master lest Satan lying in ambush make the neophyte deviate from the way. He has already caused many wayfarers to go astray.

48 *Math.*, III: 1437–1442. According to Rūmī, Prophet Muhammad is the consummation of Divine Love. God, addressing him, said: *Were it not for you, I would not create the spheres (lāulāka lammā khalaqtu'l- aḥlāk).*

The pure love was united with Muhammad for love's sake God said to him "but for thee." Since he alone was the ultimate goal of love, therefore, God singled him out from the other prophets.

Saying, had it not been for pure love's sake how should I have bestowed an existence on the heavens

I have raised up the lofty celestial sphere that thou mayst apprehend the sublimity of love. (*Math.*, V: 2737–2740)

Choose a *pīr*, for without a *pīr* this journey
is exceeding full of woe and affright and
danger.

Without an escort you are bewildered on
a road

you have travelled many times before.

Do not, then, travel alone on a Way that
you have not seen at all

do not turn your head away from the
Guide.

The ghouls will entice you from the way
and cast you into destruction

there have been in this way many craftier
than you.

Hear from the Qur'ān the perdition of the
wayfarers

what the evil-souled Iblis did unto them.⁴⁹

When one has chosen a *pīr*, one must not
be faint-hearted like water and crumbly like
earth. If one is enraged by every blow, then
one is like he who wants to become a mirror
without being polished.

Go thou, take refuge in the shadow of the
sage

that thou mayst escape from the Enemy
that opposes in secret.

Of all the acts of devotion this is the best
for thee

thereby thou wilt gain precedence over ev-
ery outstripper.

When the *pīr* has accepted thee take heed,
surrender thyself

go like Moses under the authority of Kh-
izr.⁵⁰

How canst thou go without being coun-
selled by a wise shaykh (master)

since thou hast not a discerning heart.

Woe to the unfledged bird that

flies up to the zenith and falls into peril.

Intelligence is wings and feathers to a man
when he lacks intelligence, he must seek
the intelligence of a guide.

Either be victorious or in search of a victor

49 *Math.*, I: 2943–2949.

50 *Math.*, I: 2967–2969.

either have insight or be in search of one
endowed with insight.⁵¹

The Sufi's book is not composed of ink
and letters

it is naught but a heart white as snow.⁵²

Divine Names

The best way to know God and His image,
man, is through the Divine Names and
Attributes. The Qur'ān is unique among all
Scriptures, nay, among the world literature
in its unsurpassed allusions to the Divine
Names. *Unto God belong the Most Beautiful
Names, so call Him by them and leave those
who deviate with regards to His Names.*⁵³

Concerning Adam, the progenitor of human-
kind, it is said in the Qur'ān that *He taught
Adam the Names, all of them.* Considering
the fact that the all-inclusive Name, *Allah*,
comprises in itself all the Divine Names, this
verse signifies that Adam and his progeny are
the manifestations of the Supreme Name.⁵⁴

Innumerable books and treatises have been
compiled concerning the Divine Names, deal-
ing with the subject from Sufi, theological
and philosophical viewpoints. But it is one of
the great achievements of Rūmī, that without
being entangled in hairsplitting scholastic
casuistry, using the symbolic allegories and
similes sums up the whole doctrine in a few
lines.

In a beautiful simile, the Divine Names
are likened to the stars in the galaxy which
are reflected in the pure and limpid water
of the stream. The water in the stream has

51 *Math.*, VI: 4037–4076.

52 *Math.*, II: 159.

53 Q 7/180.

54 The story of Adam's creation as the vicegerent (*khalīfah*) of God on earth and the dialogue of angels with God about their own superiority to Adam and the instruction of all the Divine Names to Adam is beautifully recounted in *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2/31–35).

changed many times or is ever changing, but the reflection of the stars and the moon remains unaltered. Divine Names are like the ideal stars. Generations and generations have passed but these Ideas (Divine Attributes) are permanent and everlasting. One should not seek the foundation of these Names in the running water, rather one should raise one's head and behold them in the wide expanse of Heaven. These attributes are like ideal stars which are established in the Sphere of Divine Realities.

Know that the created world is like pure and limpid water
in which the attributes of the Almighty are shining.
Their knowledge and their justice and their clemency
are like a star of heaven reflected in running water.
Kings are the theatre for the manifestation of God's kingship
the learned are the mirror for God's Wisdom.
Generations have passed away and this is a new generation,
the moon is the same moon, the water is not the same water.
The justice is the same justice, and the learning is the same learning too,
but those generations and people have been supplanted by others.
The beautiful are the mirror of His Beauty
Love for them is a reflection of His being desired
This cheek and mole go back to the Source thereof.
How should a phantom continue in the water forever?⁵⁵

In the end Maulānā advises us not to be veiled and deceived by these phenomenal forms, rather we should lift our spiritual eyes and behold their reality in the Divine Realm. One

55 *Math.*, VI: 3172–3182.

should wake up from the dream of phenomenal forms and be fully awakened from the dizzy slumber of engagement with phenomenal appearances. One should rub one's eyes, which makes one aware that all phenomenal configurations are in reality nothing but He.

The whole sum of pictured forms is mere reflection in the water of the river
When you rub your eyes, you will see that all of them are in reality He.⁵⁶

Everything in the universe is a manifestation of the Divine reality and according to the Qur'ān is a "face" of God: *To God belong the East and the West; wheresoever you turn there is the face of God.*⁵⁷ Everything is a face of God in the sense that God has manifested Himself in that thing, by which He may be known. *All things will perish but His Face.*⁵⁸ Things due to their contingent nature are evanescent, but the Divine manifestation is permanent. *That which is with you comes to an end but that which is with God subsists.*⁵⁹

The peerless God hath made all the six directions
a theatre for the display of His signs for the enlightened
In order that whatever animal or plant they look upon
they may feed upon on the meadows of Divine Beauty
Hence, He said to the company of believers
Wheresoever you turn, there is His Face.
If in thirst they drink some water from a cup
They are beholding God within the water.⁶⁰

Surely contemplating the signs of God and beholding His resplendent appearance in

56 *Math.*, VI: 3183.

57 Q 2/115.

58 Q 28/88.

59 Q 19/96.

60 *Math.*, VI: 3640–3643.

everything as displaying His Most Beauteous Face is a sure sign of Divine Unification (*tawhīd*). To summarize one can say that spiritual journey for Rūmī lies in the human recognition that there is ultimately one reality, the Absolute Reality of God, to whom one should return through contemplating the reality of Divine Names and Attributes through deciphering the secrets of their manifestation in creation and through wayfaring and spiritual realization.

Man Made in the Image of God

In the Holy Bible we read: “Then God said: Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (N.T. 1:26.)” Now the question arises as to what the Bible signifies by this statement. What does God mean by “His image, after His likeness?” In my estimation, the best, most precise and rather more detailed account is to be found in the terse formula of the Qur’ān with regard to Adam. *And God taught Adam all His Names* (Q 2/31). Since the Holy Name *Allah*, according to the Qur’ān, comprises all the Divine Names (Q 17/110), it follows that humans are made in the image of God and after His likeness in this sense that they potentially encapsulate all the Divine Names and Attributes. So the emphasis of the Qur’ān as well as the Bible is to actualize them as much as possible by assimilating all the Divine Attributes inherent in us human beings. After such assimilation no doubt the light of true *tawhīd* will dawn upon and illuminate the depth of the self of the believers.

If you are born of Adam sit like him
And behold all his progeny in yourself.⁶¹

61 *Math.*, IV: 809.

The Primordial Covenant of *Tawhīd*

In the Surah al-A’rāf, there is a well-known verse about the Primordial Covenant of God contracted with human beings with regard to *tawhīd*: *And when thy Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny and made them bear witness concerning themselves, “Am I not your Lord?” They said, “Yea, we bear witness.”*⁶²

This verse emphasizes the fact that the fundamental relationship between God and all human beings is premised upon the simple and unmediated recognition of his Lordship before their creation. This verse is also connected with the Quranic notion of *fiṭrah*, or the primordial nature with which all human beings were endowed.⁶³ It is also connected with the *imago Dei* conception of man discussed above. In the above verse God addresses human beings “Am I not your Lord?” (*alastu bi-rabbikum?*) and by their responding “Yea” they bear witness to Divine Lordship.⁶⁴

In the *Mathnawī*, Rūmī refers to this pact as “*ahd-i alast*” (pre-eternal covenant). We have come to this court of justice of the Divine Decree in order to fulfil the covenant. We had already said “yea” to God’s question, *Am I not your Lord?* We are already on trials. Our words and deeds are the best evidence of that assent. Why are we silent in the court of the Judge? Have we not come here to bear witness?

How long, O witness! Wilt thou remain
under detention
In the court of the Judge, give thy testimony,
now...
Until thou give that testimony, O witness
How wilt thou escape from this court?...⁶⁵

62 Q 7/172.

63 Q 30/30.

64 See S.H. Nasr, *The Study Quran*, 466-468.

65 *Math.* V: 174-180.

Some Metaphysical Problems Concerning *Tawhīd*

1. God the Cause of All Causes

Philosophers consider God as the first cause and moreover believe in many secondary causes other than God. This, according to Maulānā, is a sort of polytheism. In addition, they deem the sensible causes to be proximate and using them as premises, argue for the existence of God as the remote cause. This is to be veiled by phenomena and to see everything topsy-turvy. One should not be veiled by the secondary causes. The formula of *tawhīd* demands us to uphold that there is no cause other than God. If, for example, an injury befalls us from a creature, it is in reality no more than an instrument for the Divine act. A true gnostic refers everything to God and not to the instrument. There is a well-known proverb to this effect: “The wall said to the nail: Why are you splitting me? The nail replied: Look at him who is hitting me.”⁶⁶

Rūmī cites Abū Yazīd Basṭāmī as a good example who said that during all his bygone years he had never spoken to any creature, nor had he heard any creature speak to him, but people fancied that he was speaking and listening to them because they did not see the Most Glorious Speaker and Listener behind the scene.

All prophets, according to Maulānā, have come to cut the cord of the secondary causes. The whole of the Qur’ān consists in cutting off the chain of secondary causes.⁶⁷

God says: “I am all-sufficing, I will give thee all good,
without a secondary cause, without the mediation of another’s aid.
I am all-sufficing, I will give thee satiety without bread,

66 *Math.*, V: 1680-1685.

67 *Math.*, III: 2517-2520.

I will give thee sovereignty without armies.

I will give thee narcissi and wild-roses without spring,

I will give thee instruction without a book and teacher.”⁶⁸

God is the Causer of all causes (*musab-bib-al-asbāb*), so, one should not be veiled by the causes from the vision of the Causer who is the absolute cause of everything.

These causes are veils on the eyes
for not every eye is worthy of His work...
Everything good or evil comes from the Causer
cause and means, O father, are naught.⁶⁹

2. God’s Essence and Attributes

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said: *Do not meditate upon God’s Essence but meditate upon His bounties.* According to Maulānā the intellect has no way to the Divine Essence, because it is in bondage to separation and union. What we humans think about the Essence, is in reality our speculation about the Essence and not the Essence itself. It is our false opinion, because on the way to God there are a hundred thousand veils.⁷⁰ This might remind us of the following utterance attributed to Imam Muḥammad Bāqir who is reported to have said: “Whatever distinctions you make (concerning the Divine Essence) by your fancies (reasons) in the most strict sense, it is a creation like you, forged by you and mirrors back to you.”

But according to Maulānā, human reason can have no access to the Divine Essence,

68 *Math.*, IV: 3517-3518.

69 *Math.*, V: 1551-1554. It might seem that Maulānā believes in absolute determinism and predestination. But this is far from being the case. Shams, his spiritual master is a staunch adherent of human free choice. Maulānā, too, offers many arguments to prove the reality of human free choice. See, Aavani, *Rūmī: a Philosophical Study*, 55, 301-305.

70 *Math.*, IV: 3700-3702.

but such an access is possible in the state of union when one transcends all relations and all signs. He who has lost the Essence is confined to the Attributes or to the actions or relations proceeding from the Attributes.

Inasmuch as those in the state of union
Are absorbed in the Essence, O Son!
How should they look upon the Attributes?
When your head is at the bottom of the
river,
How will your eye fall on the color of the
water?⁷¹

In that sublime presence that there is the light of God, there is no past, present or the future. Again, those men of God who have transcended the space and in whom is resplendent the light of God, have likewise transcended the three mentioned moments of time.⁷²

Proximity to God, moreover, is not spatial such as going up and down. It is to escape from the prison of mundane existence. Existence as such has nothing to do with “up” and “down”. There is no “up” and “down”, “soon” or “late”, “near” and “far” in the non-existence of the Divine Threshold.⁷³

3. The Manifestation of Divine Names in Opposites

In the worldviews expounded by the theory of Theophany, the Divine Attributes are said to be manifested in the world through opposites. This point is reiterated by Maulānā on different occasions. In the first book of *Mathnawī*, he emphasizes the fact that since God has no opposite, He is ever hidden, but the manifestation of the hidden Divine Names and Attributes is through the opposites.

We humans, too, know everything by their contraries such as light, which is known by its opposite, i.e. darkness.

71 *Math.*, II: 2811-2814.

72 *Math.*, III: 1151-1152.

73 *Math.*, III: 4514-4516.

The light of God hath no opposite in all
existence
That by means of that opposite it
Should be possible to make Him manifest.⁷⁴

In the Holy Qur’ān, we often see the Divine Names in opposites. For example, we read: *He is the First (al-awwal), the Last (al-ākhir), the Manifest (al-zāhir) and the Hidden (al-Batin)*. These four attributes best articulate the reality of *tawhīd*. In one sense we can say that they are opposites but, in another sense, they are correlative and complementary in that one cannot exist without the other. But at the same time, they are all processions or emanations of the one single and unique Divine Ipseity (*huwa*) which remains ever hidden from the world.

The Divine Attributes are as if the sub-categories of these four Divine Names. God for example is both the Abaser (*al-khāfiq*) and the Exalter (*al-rāfi‘*). Without these two attributes nothing can be accomplished. The lowliness of the earth and loftiness of heaven are clear instances of these two Names without which the revolution of the celestial bodies would be impossible. The loftiness and lowness of the earth are of another sort because one half of the year the earth is barren and the other half it is fresh and green.⁷⁵

Again, the sovereignty of God and His manifestation through the opposite Attributes is best exhibited in the course of human history which is no exception to this universal rule. In eternity it was the decree of God to reveal and manifest Himself. But since He has no opposite and nothing can be shown without a contrary, He created a vicegerent (*khalifah*) to function as the mirror of His sovereignty and endowed him with all His Names and Attributes. But at the same time, He set up against him a contrary of darkness.

74 *Math.*, I: 1131-1134.

75 *Math.*, VI: 1847-1853.

He made two banners: one white and the other black. The white one was Adam and the other Iblis (The Devil) and as a result there was combat and strife between these two opposite camps.

In the next generation there was the combat between Hābīl (Abel) and Qābīl (Cain). These two banners of justice and iniquity continued to be raised till the period of Nimrod who was staunch adversary of Abraham and as a consequence they waged war against each other. These two contrary parties carried on the struggle from generation to generation down to Pharaoh and Moses, who fought bitterly against each other. God made the water of the sea His arbiter to decide which party should prevail. This banner of struggle between the two parties was kept unfurled till the time of Muṣṭafā (Prophet Muḥammad) who contended with Abū Jahl, the commander of the army of ignorance and iniquity.⁷⁶ The same kind of antagonism existed between the former prophets and their respective tribes, as the one between Lot and his people or the prophet Hud and his tribe (‘Ād).⁷⁷

4. Everything is a Miracle of God

For the one who perceives everything with his or her spiritual eye, everything in existence is a true miracle of God. Take as an example the physical eye and ear. God has caused the light to flow from the fountain of the eye. This light has no source of supply in the fat of the eye or in the retina. But God has made them a veil for Himself when bringing light into existence. Again, the cavity of the ear by attracting the words into itself apprehends that which is spoken and distinguishes between what is true or false. As in the case of the eye, the bone and the ear only veils. “In the two worlds there is none except God.

76 *Math.*, VI: 2151-2163.

77 *ibid.*

He is the Hearer, He is the Speaker unveiled (to the Gnostics).”⁷⁸

In the second book of *Mathnawī*, he reiterates the same theme, adding thereto the miracle of the tongue from which flow the words of wisdom and that of understanding and reason in the midst of blood and intestines.

Save through Thy munificence it is impossible to convey
understanding and reason into the midst of
blood and entrails.

This flowing light proceeds from two
pieces of fat,
their waves of light reach up to the sky.
The piece of flesh which is the tongue
from it the flood of wisdom is flowing like
a stream.

Towards a cavity whereof the name is ears
up to the orchards of the soul, whereof the
fruit is intellections.

Its main course is the highway of the or-
chards of soul
the orchards and the gardens of the world
are its branches.

That, that is the source and fountainhead
of joy

quick, recite: *Gardens beneath which flow
the rivers.*⁷⁹

If we do not understand the miraculous nature of everything created by God, as expounded in Holy books, prophets like Moses have brought knowledge into stone and rod, that we might by analogy deem all other lifeless things to be like rod and stone.⁸⁰

5. All the Particles of the World are the Army of God

All the atoms of the earth and Heaven are God’s army. We can see it from what the wind did to the people of ‘Ād or what the water did at the Deluge. The vengeful sea by Divine

78 *Math.*, VI: 1019-1024.

79 Q 2/25.

80 *Math.*, IV: 2825-2826.

command dashed on Pharaoh. See what the swifts (*abābīl*) did to the elephants⁸¹ and how a gnat devoured the head of Nimrod. How David, using his sling hurled with his hand a stone which became six hundred pieces and shattered the army.⁸²

Air and earth, water and fire are all His slaves and obey him. With God they are alive, even if with us they seem to be dead.⁸³ To the vulgar all the particles of the world seem to be dead, but before God they are possessed of knowledge and are submissive to his commands.⁸⁴

6. One Should Seek Everything from God

A devout servant of God seeks Divine favors as much as possible at every instant. He is content with whatever God grants him; he seeks his sustenance from God alone and does not beg it from people of sundry ambitions. He desires wealth from Him and not from treasures and worldly possessions. He seeks aid from Him and not from paternal or maternal uncles whom one will lose in the end. In order to inherit the kingdom of the world one should call unto Him and leave all the rest.⁸⁵

Throughout the *Mathnawī*, Maulānā calls for God's assistance and supplicates Him to come to his succor.

Without the favors of God and God's elect ones
angel though he be, his page is black.
O God, O Thou whose bounty fulfils every need
it is not allowable to mention anyone beside Thee.

81 Q 105/3.

82 *Math.*, IV: 783-787.

83 *Math.*, I: 838.

84 *Math.*, VI: 860.

85 *Math.*, V: 1495-1499.

This amount of guidance Thou hast bestowed upon us until now
Thou hast covered up many a fault of ours.
Cause the drop of knowledge
Thou hast given us heretofore
to become united with Thy seas.
In my soul there is a drop of knowledge,
Deliver it from sensuality and from the body's clay,
before these winds sweep it away.⁸⁶

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's conception of *tawhīd* transcends mere theological discourse, presenting it instead as an experiential and transformative journey. For Rūmī, the realization of Divine unity is achieved through the annihilation of the carnal self (*fanā*) and the cultivation of an experiential knowledge that emerges through love and the guidance of a spiritual master. The interconnected triad of *ḥaqīqa*, *ṭarīqa*, and *sharī'a* underscores the multi-faceted nature of this journey, rooted in the purification of the self and culminating in a direct awareness of the oneness of God. Rūmī's emphasis on the *shahādah* (*lā ilāha illa 'Llāh*) as a transformative declaration further highlights the supra-discursive dimensions of this realization, where the self transcends conceptual reasoning to perceive creation as a manifestation of Divine Names and Attributes. Ultimately, Rūmī's metaphysical vision of *tawhīd* invites seekers to recognize the all-encompassing unity of existence, urging them to move beyond duality and embrace the reality of Divine oneness. Through this lens, Rūmī not only provides a profound exposition of Sufi thought, but also offers timeless insights into the transformative power of love and spiritual devotion.

86 *Math.*, I: 1879-1884.

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