

INFLUENCE OF RUMI'S THOUGHT ON THE RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND LITERARY LIFE OF THE TURKS OF TURKEY

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Two centuries before the arrival of Rumi's father to the capital of the Seljukian Empire of Anatolia, the dispersed Islamic states were not yet properly organized. -These were the Anatolian Seljuks who reorganized the smaller Islamic states under one flag. Oghuz Turks, the ancestors of Seljuks and Turcomans (Muslim Turks) had found Islam closer to their previous religion "Shamanism". For example, in Shamanism, as Jihad in Islam, fighting and dying for God was thought to be rewarded by a better life after death. Moreover, the Turks also believed in one God.¹ Dance in the company of music was considered to be the part of worshipping God. It is, probably, due to this reason that there remained a custom among the Seljuk Sultans who have the military drums played five times a day and only three times for the minor rulers.²

When Rumi's father was at Balkh, three great Turkish empires were fighting and challenging one another in the Central Asia. In the west were the Great Seljuks; in the middle were Khwarezmshahs and in the east were Ghaznavids. The Turko-Iranian elements got mixed up. Nevertheless, Turcomans kept some old pre-Islamic customs alive. Being free minded nomadic people, they obeyed their babas or atas and later they began to respect Mevlevi Chelebis or Dedes in the same way. "To them, Mevlevis were like old Ozans or Bakhshies"³ who gave them spiritual support along with music reminding them of their old religion.

¹ Prof. Dr. Osman Turan, *Selcuklular ve Islamiyet*, Nakislar Yayınevi, İstanbul 1980 p. 39

² Prof. Dr. Huseyin Yurdaydin, *İslam Tarihi Dersleri*, Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fak., Yayın. 182 p. 62

³ Prof. Dr. Fuad Koprulu, *Türk Edebiyatında İlk Mutusavvflar* Ankara 1976 p. 169

When Rumi came to Anatolia, he found two strong groups - Mu'tizile (the rationalist Muslims) and Jebriye (the fatalist Muslims), side by side. It is due to this reason that we find Rumi criticising the rationalists and the fatalists throughout the Masnavi. Rumi obtained support of the educated Turkish community as well as of royalties. They turned to be a productive piece of land ready to receive the mystic seeds of Islam that Rumi tried to sow in the light of the Koran. Study of pre-Islamic Turkish religious poetry shows that Turks had, always, their eyes in the sky and not on shapes or luxury of the earth. Rumi's teachings, too, invite us beyond the world of shapes and time. As he says:

گزر صورت بگذارید ای دوستان جنت و گلستان در گلستان

“If you, O my friends! Pass beyond forms, there is a paradise and rose-gardens within rose-gardens”

صورت سرکش گذران کن برنج تا ببینی زیر اد وحدت چون گنج

“By means of grief melt the obstinate forms, so that you may see the Unity that lies beneath it, like treasures”

(M I, 683)

This idea brought Rumi face to face with other two strong Muslim groups of Anatolia, a) The fanatic Muslim group, h) The Muslim Brother Group called Ahi.⁴ The fanatic group refused anything beyond the superficial meanings of the Koran and Hadis. They disapproved of music and the dervish dance, Sema and even poetry with Rumi and his followers practised. Referring to these people Rumi says:

آتش این بانگ نے نیست باد بر کہ این آتش ندارد نیست باد

⁴ From the Turkish word Aqi = generous or from Arabic Akhi = my brother Prof. Dr. Neshet Chaghatay, Ahilik Seljuk University Press, Konya p. 52

“The sound of reed-flute is fire and not a simple blow of wind and he who has no such fire should stop to exist”

(M I, 9)

In this group was also his friend Sheykh Sadrettin-i Konevi who loved Rumi but refused to join his group.

The Ahi establishment was based on the moral teachings called futuvvet business and art. It was introduced by the great economist Ahi Evren Sheykh Nasrettin Ebu'l Mahmud bin Ahmed al-Khoyi (1171 -1261)⁵ a distinguished disciple of Avha ud-Din-i Kermani (A.D. 1238). Ahi Evren's wife Fatma Baji (Fatma Sister) established a group for women, ⁶too. This group gave importance to the Turkish handicraft, business and art, while Rumi's group laid emphasis on the art of loving God.

“O son, break away all the ties and be free, for how long will you be captive of gold and silver?”

(M I, 19)

Rumi does not invite us to passiveness and poverty; he wants us to work for God and His beloved people. It is the intention that counts as Muhammad says, [“All deeds depend on intention”], and we should avoid greed and try to be happy with what God has given to us.

Why did the “Mevleviye” succeed in the teeth of opposition of other Sufi paths? Is a question that should be replied here briefly? Mevleviye was formalized by Rumi's son Sultan Veled and his grand son Ulu Arif Chelebi. Since teachings of Rumi based on the Koran and Hadis, the Turkish people welcomed the path whole heartedly. It spread all over the Ottoman Empire, leaving hardly any city or town out of its scope. The centers were called “Tekke” and the tomb of Rumi Dergah, and the sub-branches were named

⁵ Neshet, *ibid*, p. IV

⁶ Dr. Mikail Bayram, “Anadolu Bacileri, Belleten 180 Turk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara.

as -Zavi-ye. The central sheykh was called “Chelebi” who was supposed to represent Rumi and the followers were called “Mevlevi”, in general sense dervish Rumi would never have desired any such establishments, for he invites all mankind around the love of God without any show. But as the mevleviye grew, centers were required to render spiritual service under a system. From the royalties down to a simple soldier all trusted the sheykhs and their spiritual hands. In some cases, pomp and show went to its peak and the sheykhs lost their spiritual reverence.⁷

Here are some major points that covered the teachings of mevleviye which won the hearts of the Anatolian people:

- I- Respect and politeness Edah:⁸ First one should respect oneself (called by M. Iqbal as Khudi) and then the Creator and all his creatures. In order not to break anybody’s heart, we should have fine and modest manners:

بے ادب محروم شدا از لطف رب از خدا جوئیم تو فبیق ادب

“From God, we should seek for His grace, so that He may give us fine manners because ill-mannered is deprived of God’s mercy”

(M I, 79)

For this, one needs to soften his heart in the crucible of Divine Love.

- I- Zikr and prayers should be practiced repeatedly in order to lessen your lust desires:

بادِ َخشم و بادِ شہوت ، بادِ آز بُرد اُد را کہ نبود اهل نماز

⁷ Abdulbaki Golpinarli, Mevlana ‘clan Sonra Mevlilik -Inkilap, Istanbul, p. 260

⁸ The word adeb has no direct English equalent. Nicholson gives as “self-control” but it actually means respect + modesty + fine manners.

“The wind of anger, the wind of lust and the wind of greed will take over those who do not offer their prayers to God”

(M I, 3796)

- I- Sleep less, in order to serve God and His mankind. Speak less, in order to receive more messages from the Divine World, leaving your greedy partial intellect aside. Eat less to control your ego:

چون بحق بیدار نیورد جان ما بست بیداری در بندان ما

“When our soul is not awake to God, our wakefulness is like being in the prison:

(M I, 410)

ناں گِلست و گوشت، کم خورزاین تا نمائی بمچو گِل اندر زمیں

“Bread and meat are originally clay, eat little out of them, so that you may not stay under earth like clay”

(M I, 2872)

- I- Avoid the company of those who are not matured enough and have a negative character:

در نیا بد حال پخته بیچ خام پس سخن کو تاه باید والسلام

“Since an unmatured man is unable to perceive the state of a ripe man, it is better to cut a long story short and say him “farewell”

(M I, 18)

- I- In case you cannot control your ego and greedy self-hood, then go and find a perfect man or a lover of God to train you:

عقل تو ا همچون شتر بان، تُو شتر می کشاید، هر طرف در حکم مر
عقل عقلمند اولیا و عقلمند بر مشال اشتران تا انبها

“You are like a camel and your sensual intellect is like a camel-driver which drives you to every direction with bitter

words. The saints are intellect of intellects and up to the end they have control over others intellects like camel drivers.”

(M I, 2497-98)

I- Cry to God for His mercy and love:

نالَم اِيرا نا لها خوش آيدش او دو عالم ناله و غم با يدش

“I wail and lament because wailings are pleasant to Him. He wants wailing and grief from the two worlds”

(M. I, 1774)

The tears of repentance will wash the glasses of our windows that open to the eternal Light of God.

I- Try to be with God as much as possible:

گر با ہم ای چوبی منی ، یمه ای وری یمه ای چوں بامنی با یمه ای

If you are with everyone, without Me, you are with none, If you are with Me and with nobody, you are with everyone”

(M III, 1613)

Once you attain the vicinity of God, you can never remain passive and dull. Because the Koran says: کل یوم هوفی شان “Everyday God shines with a new splendor (invention)”

It was these teachings of Rumi that became deeply rooted in the hearts of the Anatolian people, who later established a large Ottoman empire based on brotherhood and tolerance. Ottoman Turks and many of their kings remained attached to the Mevlevikhanas, the sheykhs who gave spiritual energy to them.

In order to enliven the spirits of the Anatolian people, more than two hundred Turkish poets and several musicians took part in spreading the essence of the masnevi, directly or indirectly.

The first one is Rumi's contemporary, great Sufi poet Yunus Emre⁹ who feels proud to win his favour as he says:

Mevlana Hudavendgar bize nazr kilali,

Anun gorkli nazari gonlumuz aynasidir

(Eversince Mevlana, our master, has shown his favour to us,

His magnificent eyes have been the mirror of our heart).

Bir kez gonul yikdunisa bu kildugun namaz degil,

Yitmisiki millet dahi elin yuzin yumaz degil¹⁰

(In case you have broken someone's heart once, Your prayers are not true prayers, not even like the 72 nations are then your hands and face neat.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to throw light upon the Mevlevi Turkish poets, yet it will not be out of interest to give some poet's name and a brief introduction, chronologically along with, at least, one verse as an example:

I- Ashik Pasha (1272 -1333)

He belonged to a Turkish family of Khorasan that came to Qirshehir where the poet received his education.¹¹ He wrote a masnevi like that of Rumi's, called Gharib Nama (around 12,000 verses):¹²

Isbu mulk-i ask icun duzdi Calab,

Yir u gok olmakliga askdur sebab,

Yirde gokte zerre zerre ask kodi,

⁹ Dr. Erkan Turkmen, Turki Key Sab se Pehle Sofi Shair Yunus Emre Journal Khuda Bakhsh Library, Patna No. 46, p. 327-333

¹⁰ Yunus Emre, Risalat al-Nushiye Eskisehir Turizm, 1965 s. XIV and p. 176

¹¹ Nihat Sami, Turk Edebiyat Tarihi, MEB, Ankara p. 380

¹² Prof. Dr. Fuad Koprulu, ibid, p. 339 and Prof. Gibb, A History of Ottoman Poetry, London 1958, p. 176 Sq.

Anin icun doldi alem ask odi.

(God created this world for sake of love,

He made the earth and the sky for His Love,

He placed then, mote by mote, on earth His love,

That is why the whole world is filled with the fire

of Love.¹³

II- Divane Mehmed Chelebi:

A 16th century Mevlevi poet. He belongs to Sultan Veled's daughter's family. At his time Mevleviye had spread up to Egypt and Algeria.

Dedi bir dervise of bir padsah,

Nedurur hirka vu hem basta kulah?

Dedi dervis iy seh-i ali tebar

Hirka kabrimdir kulah seng-i mezar¹⁴

(A certain king asked a dervish,

Why do you wear a robe and a hat?

The dervish said O the noblest king,

My robe is my shroud and my hat the tomb-stone)

III- Nef'i (1575 -1635):

He was born at Hasan Qale, a little town in the neighborhood of Erzerum. He came to Istanbul and wrote qasidas for Sultan Ahmed and

¹³ Abdul Baki, *ibid*, p. 473

¹⁴ Mehmed Onder, *Mevlana Siir Antolojisi*, A Jansturk, p. 42

Sultan Murad IV. He was a great satirist. Following is a glimpse of his verses upon Rumi's Masnevi:

Masnevi amma ki her beyti cihan-i marifet,
Zerresiyle afiabinin beraber pertevi,
Alemi mana ki hursid-i cihan-ara gibi,
Devreder girmis sema'a anda ruh-i Mevlevi¹⁵
(Masnevi's each verse gives world-wide knowledge,
One little mote of it is like the whole light of the sun,
The world of its meaning is like the world-illuminating sun,
The soul of Rumi keeps on whirling in his Masnevi)

IV- Neshati (died in 1674)

He was sheykh of Edirne Mevlevkhana who takes place among the famous Ottoman poets. He is called Ustad-i Ustadan-i Rum "The master of masters of Anatolia in the tezkire of Esrar Dede:¹⁶

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Ask ehli odur ki bakmayip dunyaya,
Efzun ola sevk-i alem-i manaya,
Sevda-yi vatanla durmayip bir yerde,
Cun katre-i ebr, azm eyler deryaya.
(The true lover is he who without looking at this world
Has a greater desire for the other world,
He does not stay at a spot, though he loves his country,

¹⁵ Esrar Dede, Tezkire-i Shurayi Mevleviye, Suleyaniye Library No. 109 (Halet Ef.) Istanbul.

¹⁶ Mehmed Onder, *ibid*, p. 46

Like a rain drop he struggles in order to reach the Sea.)

V- Sheykh Ghalib (1757 - 1798)

He was born at Istanbul and is famous Ottoman poet. He was once a sheykh of Galata Mevlevikhana. Here are some lines that he wrote on Rumi:

Mazhar-i ask-i Huda Hazret-i Mevlana ‘dir,

Menba-yi sidk-u safa Hazret-i Mevlana ‘dir,

Seref-i zatiyla masuk-i gunah-i ervah,

Gevher-i bahr-i vefa Hazret-i Mevlana ‘dir,

Evlya sirrina mirasiyle maliktir ol,

Mazhar ul’ulema Hazret-i Mevlana ‘dir.¹⁷

(Greatly bestowed with divine Love is Mevlana,

The source of piety and righteousness is Mevlana,

with is honorable being, he a beloved of sinful

souls,

The pearl of the sea of loyalty is Mevlana,

By birth he knows the secrets known by prophets,

Beloved of all the learned men is respect worthy Mevlana

VI- Kececizade Izzet Molla (1758 - 1829)

He was born at Istanbul and died at Sivas. He was a good friend of Sultan Murad the II. His feelings for Rumi are as follows:

Gam basima dusumustur Ya Hazret-i Mevlana,

Gayret sana dusumustur Ya Hazret-i Mevlana,

¹⁷ Suleyman Nahifi, Bulak Press, Egypt 1268 H.

Olduk gunaha taib, cik bendelere sahip,
Zilletde Koma haib, Ya Hazret-i Mevlana,
Biz bendeleri yad et, Izzet kulunu sad-et,
Viraneyim abad et, Ya Hazret-i Mevlana.

(I have fallen in grief, O' honorable Mevlana,

It is up to you now to help, me, O' honorable Mevlana,

I am penitent for my sins, take care of your slave, Don't leave me
disappointed under any disgrace, O' honorable Mevlana,

Remember your slave and please your servant (Izzet),

Populate my deserted heart, O' honorable Mevlana.)

VII- Yahya Kemal Beyatli (1884 -1958):

One of the most famous Turkish poets of the latest era is Yahya Kemal.
He worked as a teacher, ambassador and as a governor of Grand Assembly.
He died in Istanbul.

Mesnevi sevkini eflaka cikarmis nayiz,

Hasr dek hem nefes-i Hazret-i Mevlana 'yiz

Seb-i lahutda manzum-i ecram gibi,

Lafz-i "Bisnev" le dogan debdebe-i manayiz

(We are the reed-flute (Ney) that has lifted the love of Masnevi, up to
the sky,

We are friend with honorable Rumi, until the last day,

Like the lined up stars of the Divinely nights,

We are awe of essence, born of the word heararken (Bishnav)

There are also some poets like Nahifi (1640 - 1739) who translated the Masnevi into Turkish in verse.¹⁸

It is noticeable that there is some linguistic influence of Masnevi on the Turkish of Turkey. The following proverbs will be enough to prove it:

- I- “Bicak kemige dayanmak” = “knife came to the bone” i.e.
“to come at the peak of patience or it cannot be endured any more”

کاردش تا استخوان ما رسید	باز ما را این نفس پلید
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- II- “Vakitsiz oten horozun basi kesilir” “A cock that crows untimely is slaughtered” said for a thing that is done before its proper time.

سر بریدن دا جیست اعلام را	لا جرم بر مرغ بی بنگام را
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- III- “Gonulden gonule yol vardır” - “(there is way from heart to heart “that is if you love someone he will love you, too.

از دل من تا دل تو روزن است	
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- IV- “Bir pire için yorgan yakmak” - “to burn a quilt for just a flea”
“to burn a new rug for a flea” = to spoil a precious thing for a valueless thing”.

Rumi’s influence on the Turkish poets of the eastern Europe is also great.¹⁹

In the year 1926 all the Mevlevi tekkes, along with many others were banned, but Rumi’s tomb remained open as museum. It is a °museum for those who love physical forms and dergah for those who love the spiritual

¹⁸ Iskender Sefikoglu, Mevlana in the Works of Turkish Poets

Living in Yugoslavia, I. International Magazine of Seljuk University, 1987 p. 258

¹⁹ Dr. Ahmed Alkan, Mevlevilik ve Mevlana Kulliyesinin

Konya Sehirscl Gelismeleri, I. International magazine of S.U. p. 208

existence of Rumi. However, it is interesting to know that the people of Konya began to settle around the dergah which was once out of the main city, with the hope of getting some morsels of spiritual food and. “lucky is the man who has a garden in Meram and a house in front of the shrine” became a proverb among them.²⁰ The old custom of visiting the tomb before setting out for the pilgrimage to Mecca is still in vogue. Today, more than 3000 people visit the place everyday and a few become perfect, as Mulla Jami said:

“This is the Kabbe of lovers and he who comes here as imperfect becomes perfect.”

In the end I will like to recite the verse of another Turkish poet Avni Bey²¹ who uttered the following lines for Rumi’s shrine:

Sahasinda rusena kendiller mi berk uran,

Ya nucum-i-asuman-i-alem-i-mana midir?

Ses cihetden ruz u seb kerrubiyen eyler tavaf,

Mescid-i-Aksa midir ya Kabe-i-ulya midir?

(Are there the candles shining at-his shrine?

Or they are the stars of the spiritual skies?

Day and night great angels visit the place from six sides,

Is it mesgid-i Aksa or the glorious Kabbe itself?)

²⁰ Prof. Dr. Mehmedcavusoglu, Yenisehirli Avni Bey, *ibid.*, p. 132