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jalaluddin
rumi
and
sufism

A Dervish's Logbook 

FOREWORD

The book you hold in your hand is a logbook, similar to the kind kept by sailors at sea, who after weighing anchor record the voyage of their ship. But this is “a dervish’s logbook,” in which we will be charting the course for the ship of humanity as it sets sail on a spiritual sea. As there are seven seas, there are seven stages of the soul.

A dervish is a person in the Sufi tradition who sets out on a metaphysical journey to reach a higher spiritual level. The maritime metaphor embodied in this book’s title is in fact rooted in the Sufi readings and teachings. A person who embarks on such a journey is traditionally addressed as “*salik*,” an Arabic word for wayfarer. The *salik* is a disciple, an initiate to a dervish - or Sufi - order. The spiritual journey they undertake is referred to as the *seyr-u suluk* “the wayfarers’ voyage.” This book charts that extraordinary journey towards God, the Beloved, towards Oneness with the Universe.

I hope to set out on this mystic journey with you to attain *yaqin*, or certainty. To reach a state of certainty means the field and perceive Him and His Oneness, to possess intimate knowledge of the Beloved.

We can say that we are boarding the Ark of Noah, but that the port from which we embark on this journey lies deep within us. This is a voyage undertaken within the heart and by the heart.

After all, the heart - the soul - is God’s house. It is the home in which His proof manifests itself. If God is reflected - humbly so - in the soul, that soul then becomes the Kaaba, the focal point of ritual worship.

A person who manifests the Creator’s light in his heart becomes a family within the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the People of the House. He becomes equipped with the tradition of the Prophet, and is dyed with the color of God.

This journey’s destination is the awareness and comprehension of God’s glorious manifestations. The breast of that fortunate servant

splits open, his heart expands, and he find courage. He draws a deep breath and reaches felicity. He is elated and satisfied.

The captain on this journey is the *murshid*, the mentor. He is a knowledgeable guide who has already sailed these routes. He provides the dervish with companionship and know-how. Without him, this journey would not be possible.

This book is a dialogue between the guide and the *murid*, the aspiring disciple. It is a simulation of the Sufi spiritual conversation known as *suhbat*, wherein the mentor imparts advise, inspiration and instruction on the disciple. The passages we will soon read explain how the murshid leads the disciple, step by step, towards the Beloved.

This book works through all the stages of the Sufi process, offering a full account of the dervish's "formation." Sufism provides an "education in love," the love of God, the Beloved! The objective of this education is to make the heart swell, in stages, with the spirit of the Prophet. In a word, we are concerned with the soul's "enlightenment."

This enlightenment is crucial because people who fail to reach their own spiritual capacity become unhappy and anxious.

They burden themselves as well as the community in which they live. It becomes a problem and escalates.

Twenty-first-century man is suffering, and without even knowing why. In this sense, Sufism is a salve, a remedy, a medicine for the heart, a prescription for the inner peace.

Sufi culture is a living tradition. Legends and shrines exist to shed light on our present and on our future. But that tradition, and the heirs to the tradition, have always carried on. Perhaps they are right here within our midst. Right here, of course, for those who can see. This book shows us how we can find and see them.

Sufism has attracted a lot of interest lately. And the interest is growing! Resources on the subject or widely available, yet the material and concepts are difficult to understand in all their complexity and nuance. Establishing an intellectual foundation on classic Sufi literature is an incredibly arduous endeavor.

This book attempts to explain to you and familiarize you with this highly elaborate world using terminology suited for a modern, twenty-first-century audience, while leaving its essence intact. You may have already noticed the use of Sufi jargon, with words like *murshid*, *salik* and *murid*. These terms come from Arabic. After all, Sufism is rooted in Islam, and the language of Islam is Arabic. Sufism is in fact the mystical, esoteric dimension of Islam. Naturally, this book, and Sufism in general, makes frequent references to the Qur'an and to the Prophet Muhammad, whom the dervish attempts to emulate in terms of the Prophet's spiritual life and his intimate relationship with God, the Beloved.

You should also know that in Sufism applying the theory is important. It could be said that one becomes versed in Sufism by reading and studying. But this does not make him a *Sufi*! A Sufi is someone who knows this path through experience, who sees with the *Ayn al-yaqin*, the Eye of Certainty. Sufism, in a figurative sense, exists not to be read, but to be "worn."

Speaking more literally, even this is not enough. In his *Rubaiyat*, Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi states, "You cannot become a Sufi merely by wearing the coarse robes of the ascetic. Nor will you become a murshid by only listening to the conversations of the masters. You must practice and experience first hand what you have learned. The Sufi's heart must be pure, his soul cleansed of evil, lust, and anger. A Sufi who holds a grudge? God forbid, can there be such a thing?"

This Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi, known in the West as Rumi and in the East as Mevlana, is counted among the greatest Sufi masters ever to walk this earth. His pupils founded the Mevlevi Sufi Order during the thirteenth century in Konya, Turkey. The Mevlevi derive many of their teachings from his magnum opus, the *Masnavi*, a six-volume work of poetry that includes parables, Qur'anic exegesis, and spiritual advice. This book you hold in your hands also makes extensive use of material from the *Masnavi* as we guide you on this journey.

Through the teachings of Rumi and other masters, *Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and Sufism: The Dervish's Logbook* takes you through the

dervish's various spiritual states and the transitions from one state to the next. In other words, it portrays Sufism as it is lived. God bestows on us these spiritual states, which are each known as a *hal*. We will take you step by step on your journey towards the Beloved.

In the Qur'an it says, "Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return."

But what happens in the time between? True friends of God have wondered, "Are we really separate from Him during our life when we are between these two points?"

We are not separate, of course. But an awareness - for whatever reason - envelops our ego. The dervish, you see, understands this; he is awake and fully conscience. He can discern *tahwid*, the Oneness of God. Sufism is essentially a journey from God (from the Day of Alast) and back again (to Eternity). The wayfarer experiences transformations along the way at seven different stations, each of which bears an attribute of God and is known as a *maqam*. The subject in question at every *maqam* is perfection - perfection of emotion, perception, and comprehension, of the mind and conscience. Sufism is the path to man's perfection and enlightenment. It leads a person down the path to be a true servant of God, and a people to a state worthy of the Prophet. This book strives to show you what you must do on this long and narrow path, but in a way that is easy to understand yet does not cheapen or debase the tradition.

Imperfections are the fault of the writer. Success is up to God. Happy reading! In the book it will seem like a murshid is speaking. But really what you are reading is your own book. Read what is in your heart, and read with your heart. Best of luck...

M.K.Ö - June 2017

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SALAAM!

“The announcer said, ‘Ever since your royal majesty planted in him the seed of love, he has had no other desire but for you.’”

They say all great works begin with the *Basmala*, the Arabic phrase, *Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim*: In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Indeed, nothing is possible without the beloved. And what secrets, what prophecy, what abundance are contained within this single phrase! One of the beauties of the Arabic language is the many hidden meanings it conceals within its alphabet and the words and poetry it forms. The *Basmala* is no exception.

The *Basmala* begins with the letter “*bā*,” equivalent to the letter “B” in sound and alphabetic order. Yet the *Basmala* should have begun with the letter “*alif*,” the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, for *alif* represents God’s oneness. However, that *alif* is hidden within *bā*’. Scholars assert that this “indicates that absolute oneness is concealed within multiplicity.” *Bā*’ then, according to this idea, consists of multiplicity. The transition from the greatness of *alif* to a state of humility is rendered as though *bā*’ is bowing down.

There is much to say about the *Basmala*’s divine calligraphy, but let’s cut to the chase and make one or two brief remarks about it in regards to *bā*’.

In the beginning when God asked, “Am I not your Lord?” The answer came back, “*Bala*,” yes. As you can guess, *bala* begins with *bā*’. Creation then begins at this exact moment. Sufism too takes that moment as its starting point.

“*Bā*” is written as a line with a dot underneath: the point of unity! Ali the Chosen, of whom Muhammad said, “I am the city of knowledge, Ali is the gate,” declared, “Knowledge is a point. The ignorant have reproduced it, but I *am* that point.”

Hopefully we have not already tired you out or confused you right off the bat. Our path ahead is long, and we have much to talk about. There is a time and place for everything. Let's just say another phrase that begins with B: "Be patient." Hang in there.

But first we must praise the Glory of God.

Glorification belongs only to God, and praising Him appropriately comes naturally once you thoroughly know His nature and attributes. The hadith state that God has a 99 attributes, known as the Beautiful Names of Allah. They appear in the Qur'an, the hadith and other sources. We will mention a few here as we give praise.

O God, You said, “I want to be known and to be loved,” and through your love You created Mankind and the world. This is expressed in the holy attribute of “*Al-Wadud*,” (The Loving). As “*Al-Muhymin*” (The Protector) You watch over and protect us. And through your manifestation of “*Ar-Rahman*” (The Exceedingly Compassionate), You grant us countless blessings, both physical and spiritual.

We know that as “*Al-Wali*” (The Protection Friend) You are our unique friend, our confidant, our “*Ar-Refiq al-'Ala*,” the highest of companions.

As “*Al-Hadi*” (The Guide) You show us the correct way, the straight path. We, as dervishes, wish to gain understanding and insight into this path.

In accordance with the Beautiful Name of “*Al-Fattah*” (The Opener), it is You who will grant us the possibilities to open our hearts, to reclaim our souls, and to be able to benefit from your beauty and benevolence.

O God! We are your helpless, insignificant, and humble servants – if of course you command us to accept our servitude. We cannot glorify you by describing you. We cannot praise you in a way worthy of your

glory. But, by making an effort to absolve You of everything, we are saying that we have infinite praise and thanks for you, O God.

May You grant peace be upon that prophet who is the messenger of both man and jinn, whom you call “My *Habib*” (my love), for whom you reserved the Praised Station in heaven, and whom you have named Ahmed there and Muhammad on earth. And may you grant peace upon His exalted family (*Ahl al-Bayt*), his companions, and our great forebears who have tread down this path and have passed through the gate to His companionship!

And we wish peace specifically upon the great Sufis of the Mevlevi order: Bahauddin Walad, Jalaluddin Rumi, the great Sahms Tabrizi, Husamuddin Chelebi, Sultan Walad, Syed Burhanuddin Mahaqqiq, Sheikh Saladin of Konya, Sheikh Karimuddin, Arif Chelebi, and to all the sheikhs, dervishes, caliphs and lovers.

By opening tis book, you have made it clear to us that you intend to set out on the Sufi path. Bravo. Wanting to embark on this journey, and taking the steps to do so, as you have done, is a commendable act.

You are already a kindred soul, a love-seeker. You have a place in our circle. You have joined our conversations. You know though, that we do not turn anyone away, nor do we make anyone stay. However, crossing that threshold and devoting yourself to the Sufi path is no small feat. Sufism is a tough (perhaps the toughest) occupation.

But you know, it is not required. There is no tenet in God’s Book that says everyone must become a “Sufi.” You may ask, “Aren’t those who become dervishes ‘chosen’? Why do they get accepted? Do they have something that I do not?” You may even search your heart for these answers.

At first glance, you may be right to ask these questions, but when you look at Sufism from its inner, hidden perspective you need not to worry. Sufism embodies a wisdom that is not readily apparent, as everything has both an inner (*batin*) and exterior (*zahir*) dimension.

The *batin* is the unseen purview of the heart, the concealed meaning that underlies an object or an action, whereas *zahir* refers to the physical and visible manifestation of that object or action. Simply put, an action is *zahir*, while the intent is *Batin*. You will come to understand this as you labor on the path, removing the patina from the mirror of your heart.

The Sufi path is a long, narrow road. Some will lose their footing, and some will not. But won't the guide see them slipping? Of course, but there is such a thing as turning a blind eye. Otherwise how else would the poor dervish move forward in his lessons?

At any rate, there are some that whirl and some that stumble. In sufism, at this beginning stage the dervish is a traveller, or wayfarer. The diversity of wayfarer is myriad: There is the traveller of the oath and the wayfarer in love. We have the shameless traveller, the incomplete traveller, the authentic traveller, the mad wayfarer, the vulgar wayfarer, the unripe wayfarer, the loyal wayfarer - I could go on, if you'd life.