

The Life and Works of Mawlānā Jalāl Al-Dīn Balkhī-Rūmī

By Ibrahim Gamard

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī b. Bahā' al-Dīn Walad b. Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad Khaṭībī was born on 6 Rabī' I 604/September 30, 1207 in or near the ancient city of Balkh in a region of Khorāsān (now in Afghanistan) and died on 5 Jumāda II 672/December 17, 1273 in Konya (now in Turkey). His birth name was the same as his father's: Muḥammad. From an early age, his father called him Jalāl al-Dīn ("The glory of the Religion"). He was also called by the Arabic title, Mawlānā ("our Master"), as was his father. In addition, his disciples called him by the Persian title, Khodāwandgar ("great Master"). He was known as Rūmī ("Roman") because he spent most of his life in the region known by Muslims as "Rūm," the Anatolian peninsula most of which had been conquered by the Saljūq Turks after centuries of rule by the Eastern (Byzantine) Roman Empire.

Mawlānā has long been viewed as one of the greatest Persian poets and has been called "surely the greatest mystical poet in the history of mankind" (Arberry, 1949, p. xix). He is the author of the following poetic works: *Dīvān-é Kabīr* ("Great Collected Poetic Works") or *Dīvān-é Shams-é Tabrīzī* (which contains, in the earliest manuscripts, more than 3,000 *ghazaliyāt* or lyric poems, 40 *tarjī'āt* or stanzaic poems, and over 1800 *rubā'īyāt* or quatrains) and *Mathnawī-yé Ma'nawī* ("Couplets of Deep Spiritual Meaning"), considered his greatest work that was composed in his later years, which contains over 25,000 authentic verses). Over the centuries, many verses and poems, as well as "improvements" within verses, have been added to the manuscript tradition; and more inauthentic verses and poems are claimed as belonging to Mawlānā in contemporary books and articles. His prose works, believed to have been compiled after his death, are *Fīhi Mā Fīhi* ("Whatever Is In It, Is In It," also known as the "Discourses of Rumi"), *Majālis-é Sab'a* ("Seven Sessions," also known as the "Sermons"), and *Maktūbāt* ("Letters").

The basic story of Mawlānā's life is well known: how he emigrated from Balkh with his family just prior to its destruction by the Mongol army of Genghis Khan, travelled from place to place (including Mecca) with his family before living in several towns in Anatolia (in present day Turkey) and moving finally to Konya (the ancient city of Iconium), succeeded his father who was a renowned religious scholar, met the wandering dervish Shams al-Dīn of Tabrīz who had a transforming impact on his life, became troubled by the jealousy of his followers that led to the first disappearance of Shams, sent his oldest son (Sulṭān Walad) to bring Shams back from Damascus, became completely distraught when Shams disappeared permanently, then became more profoundly creative than ever before as a mystical poet, and was succeeded (following the death of his chief disciple, Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī) by Sulṭān Walad, who was the first to organize the tradition of the Mawlawī (Mevlevi) Sufis—later known in the West as the "Whirling Dervishes."

Here, certain aspects of his life have been selected for emphasis, some of which challenge assumptions and claims that occur frequently in many of the books and articles about Mawlānā.

According to Sepahsālār, who wrote that he was Mawlānā's direct disciple, Mawlānā's birth was in the year 1207 C.E. (p. 22). And Aflākī also accepted this year in his hagiography (p. 73), written at the request of Mawlānā's grandson (between 1318-1353) and mentioned the full date as September 30, 1207 (6 Rabī' al-Awwal 604 A.H.). However, some Mawlānā scholars have thought there was evidence of an earlier birth year, but this view has not been accepted by most scholars (Lewis, pp. 317-20).

There is evidence, based on his father's journal, *Ma'ārif*, that Mawlānā was born in Wakhsh (now in Tākijistān), about 240 kilometers northeast of Balkh in the valley of the Wakhsh River (which flows into the Āmū Daryā, or Oxus River), where his father lived and worked as a jurist and preacher between 1204 and 1210 (Bausani, 1965, p. 393; Meier; Schimmel, p. 11; Lewis, pp. 47-49). The town of Wakhsh was culturally a part of the city of Balkh. In the year 1212, Mawlānā's father moved with his family to Samarqand (now in Uzbekistān). He presumably returned to Balkh at some point, since he and his family emigrated from there to Anatolia about 1216 or 1217. Since there is reason to believe that Mawlānā lived in Balkh for some period of time, this gives justification to view him as from Balkh, a "Balkhī."

Mawlānā's father, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad, may have been born and raised in Balkh. However, there is no supporting evidence that he was a well-known religious scholar in Balkh (Lewis, pp. 46-47, 54-55); rather, a miracle story developed that was based on a dream that he recorded in his journal, that the Prophet Muḥammad declared him to be the "Sultan of Religious Scholars." Presumably, he lived in Balkh for periods of time as a preacher, scholar, and spiritual teacher. He may therefore also be viewed as a "Balkhī," a man from Balkh. Books about Mawlānā commonly say little about his father except to describe him as a Muslim scholar and judge. However, Bahā' al-Dīn was an unusual mystic, whose focus was not on discourse but on direct experience of the Presence of God through prayer, dreams, visions, and intimations. There is evidence that Mawlānā's own mystical teachings were strongly influenced by his studies of his father's journal of mystical experiences and insights (Lewis, pp. 82-86, p. 107).

A number of stories about Mawlānā's life were added or altered in order to fit hagiographical needs. For example, claims were made that he was a descendant of Abu Bakr (the first successor of the Prophet Muḥammad) and that his grandmother was a royal princess (the daughter of the Khwārazmshāh, the King of Khorāsān or eastern Persia). These assertions have been refuted by scholars (Forūzānfār, 1988, p. 8; Lewis, p. 91).

The legend that Mawlānā's grandmother was a princess has been used to support a claim made by some Turkish scholars that Mawlānā was Turkish and that his native language was

Turkish (based on an assumption that the ruling family in that part of Central Asia was a Turkish dynasty). A related claim is that Mawlānā later learned an “Anatolian Persian dialect” (Önder, pp. 198-99). These claims are contradicted by the fact that there are no more than two dozen verses containing Turkish words out of all the thousands of verses composed by Mawlānā in his *Dīwān* (Lewis, pp. 548-49) and very few words in his *Mathnawī*. In addition, the poetic works of his son (Sulṭān Walad) and his grandson (Ūlū ʿĀrif Chalabī) are entirely in Persian, except for a small number of poems in Turkish.

A claim (made in the 15th century) that Mawlānā met the great Sufi poet ʿAṭṭār as a child enables him to be viewed as “blessed” with a similar poetic gift (Lewis, pp. 64-65). The assertion (also made in the 15th century) that Mawlānā’s father was a disciple of the famous Sufi master Najm al-Dīn Kubrā can be considered legendary, since it remains unsubstantiated (Lewis, pp. 30-33, 92).

Many books and articles about Mawlānā’s life depict him as a conventional religious intellectual, an Islamic scholar and judge (as his father tends to be described), who suddenly was transformed into a mystic after meeting Shams-é Tabrīzī. While there is no doubt that his experiences with Shams-é Tabrīzī were greatly transformative, Mawlānā had previously undergone nine years of Sufi training under his father’s leading disciple and successor, Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn Muḥaqqiq al-Tirmidhī, known as the “Knower of Secrets” (Sirr-Dān). Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn arrived in Konya in 1232, a year after Mawlānā’s father died.

During part of these years of Sufi discipleship, the Sayyid directed Mawlānā to go to Syria and master the traditional Islamic domains of knowledge. He first went to Aleppo, where he studied at the Madrasa-yé Halāwiyya (a college of the Ḥanafī school of Sunnī Islamic law) and where he associated with some disciples of his father. After completing his studies, he returned to Anatolia and the Sayyid directed him to do several forty-day spiritual retreats. The Sayyid was said to be so impressed by Mawlānā’s spiritual state, after completing these retreats, that he declared him to be without equal in the world in the major branches of knowledge as well as of hidden spiritual secrets (Aflākī, pp. 83-84). In the year 1241, Mawlānā received word that Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn had died and went to visit his teacher’s tomb (in Qaysariya). Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn was a mature mystic who loved to quote from the Sufi poetry of Sanā’ī.

Mawlānā was married all his life from about the age of eighteen, and he was very devoted to his two wives. His first marriage was to Gawhar (“Pearl”), whom he had known since childhood. She was the daughter of one of his father’s disciples (Sharaf al-Dīn Lālā of Samarqand), who had accompanied the family during their migrations. The marriage took place in the town of Lāranda (present day Karaman), which was not far from Konya. It was there, during period of seven years, that Mawlānā’s sons, Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad Walad (known as Sulṭān Walad) and ʿAlā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad were born; it was also where his mother, his wife’s mother, and his brother ʿAlā’ al-Dīn died. The family then moved to

Konya in 1228. His wife died there at a young age, and later on he married a widow (who had a son), Kerrā of Konya, with whom he had a third son, Muẓaffar al-Dīn Amīr °Ālim, and a daughter, Malika.

Mawlānā's second Sufi master, Shams-é Tabrīzī, arrived in Konya on November 29, 1244 (Aflākī, p. 84). Aflākī called him "Mawlānā Shamsu 'l-Ḥaqq wa 'l-Dīn Muḥammad, ibn °Alī, ibn Malakdād al-Tabrīzī" (p. 614). According to early Mawlawī (Mevlevi) tradition, the spiritual tradition of Mawlānā's successors, he was said to be 60 years of age (Forūzānfar, p. 50). Later on, Shams asked to marry a young woman raised in Mawlānā's household named Kīmīyā, and after they married they lived in Mawlānā's household (Sepahsālār, p. 133).

Although Shams-é Tabrīzī has been described for more than a century as an illiterate wandering dervish [qalandar] who was charismatic and had antinomian or heretical tendencies, we now have much more information about him in the English language (thanks to scholars such as Franklin Lewis and William Chittick) that was previously available only in Persian (Muwaḥḥid, 1990 and 1998). We now know, based on the notes of his discourses (*Maqālāt-é Shams-é Tabrīzī*) that were recorded by his disciples (one of whom was Mawlānā's son, Sulṭān Walad), that he had a solid Islamic education in the Arabic language and that he was a Sunnī Muslim who followed the Shāfi'ī school of Islamic law (*Maqālāt*, pp. 182-83). He must have memorized the *Qur'ān*, since he taught young boys its memorization (Chittick, p. xvi).

Shams al-Dīn placed much importance on "following" [mutāba'at], meaning following the Sunnah or the example of the behavior that was modeled by the Prophet Muḥammad. Shams was critical toward a number of well-known Sufi masters (contemporary and past ones) because they did not follow the example of the Prophet sufficiently, and some apparently felt they were so spiritually advanced that they had little need for it (Lewis, p. 150, 156-58).

Based on this understanding, the initial meeting between Shams and Mawlānā can be seen in a new light: Shams was searching for one of the great hidden saints of God, and one of the proofs of such a person would be a humble veneration and love of the Prophet Muḥammad, combined with a strong commitment to following the Prophet's pious way of life. This would be in contrast to other Sufis who made claims of receiving extraordinary spiritual favors from God but who had a lack of commitment to following the Prophet's example.

In Aflākī's hagiography there are two versions of the famous meeting. The first account is generally preferred by popularizing Western authors because it fits their view that Mawlānā had been a mere Muslim scholar and theologian until he met Shams, who introduced him to radical mystical teachings.

According to the first version (pp. 84-87), Shams challenged Mawlānā with quotes from the Prophet Muḥammad and the (ninth century C.E.) Sufi, Bāyazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (also spelled Abū Yazīd):

“Say who was greater: Ḥāzrat-é Muḥammad the Prophet or Bāyazīd?” He answered, “No, no! Muḥammad Muṣṭafā, the leader and chief of all the prophets and saints! And greatness belongs to him!” Shams then said, “Then what does it mean that Ḥāzrat-é Muṣṭafā said (to God), ‘Glory be to You! We have not known You as You deserve to be known’ and Bāyazīd said, ‘Glory be to me! How great is my state! And I am the King of kings!’”

Mawlānā is then depicted as falling from his mule from awe of that reply, shouting, fainting, and sleeping for an hour. After returning to his senses, he is described as taking Shams by foot to his (religious) college, into a small cell in which no one was given passage until forty days were completed, or three months according to others.

Aflākī’s second version (pp. 619-20) portrays Mawlānā as a faithful Muslim who revered the Prophet Muḥammad more than anyone, and Shams-é Tabrīzī is depicted as the one who fainted after hearing Mawlānā’s reply:

For Abū Yazīd, (his) thirst became pacified by a gulp (of water), he spoke from (feeling) satiated, and the jug of his comprehension was filled by that amount. And that light was (suited to) the measure of the window of his house. But for Ḥāzrat-é Muṣṭafā—(may the) peace (of God) be upon him, there was tremendous thirst, (there was) thirst after thirst.... Necessarily, he spoke about thirstiness and every day he became increased in his supplications for (greater) nearness (to God). And (so) of these two assertions, the assertion of Muṣṭafā is greater. Because (Abū Yazīd) arrived (near) to God, viewed himself as full, and did not look (for) more. But Muṣṭafā—peace be upon him—saw more every day and went further. (And) day by day, hour after hour, he witnessed more of the Lights, Grandeur, Power, and Wisdom of God. For this reason he said, “We have not known You as You deserve to be known.”

An earlier account was written by Mawlānā’s disciple, Sepahsālār, who wrote (about 40 years after Mawlānā’s death). According to this version (pp. 126-28), the two sensed each other’s presence in Konya, went in search, and ended up sitting on opposite benches. When Shams asked the question, he quoted Bāyazīd first and the Prophet second. Mawlānā replied,

Although Bāyazīd is one of the perfected saints and knowers among the attained companions of the heart, yet he held himself back when (he was) in the circle of sanctity in the known station and kept himself fixed there. The greatness and perfection of that station became revealed to him concerning the exalted qualities of his (own) station, and he declared the explanation of unification by these words. And although Ḥāzrat-é Rasūlullāh—may the peace and blessings of God be upon him—traversed seventy great stations every day, such that the first had no relation to the second, when he reached the first station he expressed gratitude (to God) and he knew that it was an extensive journey.

When he reached a second degree and he witnessed that it was a higher and more noble station than (the one before) it, he asked (Divine) forgiveness concerning the first level and his contentment with that station.

Both are then described as falling into a state of spiritual ecstasy, after which Mawlānā took Shams into a small cell that belonged to a close disciple (Shaykh Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkōb) for a period of six months.

An even earlier account, by Mawlānā's son, Sultān Walad (p. 34), provides only a brief poetic description of their meeting without any details of their initial conversation.

The earliest account is by Shams-é Tabrīzī himself, as recorded by his disciples begins with a criticism of Bāyazīd (p. 685):

And the first words I spoke with (Mawlānā) were these: “But as for Abū Yazīd, why didn't he adhere to following (the Prophet's example) and (why) didn't (he) say ‘Glory be to You! We have not worshipped You (as You deserve to be worshipped)?’” Then Mawlānā knew to completion and perfection (the meaning of) those words (of the Prophet). But what was the final outcome of these words? Then his inmost consciousness made him drunk from these (words), because his inmost consciousness was cleansed (and) purified, (and) therefore (the meaning of) it became known to him. And with his drunkenness, I (also) knew the pleasure and delight of those words—for I had been neglectfully unaware of the pleasure and delight of these words.

These accounts indicate that Mawlānā was already an advanced Sufi, as well as a religious scholar. And they suggest that Shams-é Tabrīzī found Mawlānā to be the hidden saint he had long searched for, one who was advanced on the Sufi path who continued to follow the Prophet Muḥammad, and who acknowledged that the Prophet journeyed far beyond any of the Muslim Sufi masters who came after him in the mystical worship of God.

A contemporary claim has been promulgated that Mawlānā and Shams-é Tabrīzī were “lovers” on the physical level as well as the spiritual. However, this view is ill-informed about significant features of medieval Persian culture: such a relationship would have been incompatible with the homoeroticism of the time. And to believe that such was the case misunderstands the nature of lover-beloved themes in Persian Sufi poetry that had been an established convention for three hundred years (Lewis, pp. 320-24). An example of one such theme relates to the Sufi practice of cultivating intense love of the spiritual master until there is “annihilation in the presence of the master” [fanā fī 'l-shaykh] as a stage on the path to “annihilation in the Presence of God” [fanā fī 'llāh]. Furthermore, such a claim ignores the basic master-disciple roles in numerous fields of knowledge, professions, and crafts throughout Muslim history—in particular, the training of a disciple by a Sufi master based on traditional Islamic ethics. Mawlānā condemned sodomy and effeminate behavior in numerous places in his poetry (such as *Mathnawī* 5:363-64, 2487-2500; 6:1727-32, 3843-68). And Shams-é Tabrīzī condemned homosexual acts as unmanly and blameworthy

in the presence of God (p. 773).

Mawlānā wanted to spend most of his time with his newly found spiritual master. During the initial period of Shams' stay in Konya (of about 16 months), Mawlānā's disciples had felt neglected and when their jealousy steadily increased, Shams-é Tabrīzī left Konya and went to Syria. Two dates were given by Aflākī for this departure: March 21, 1245 (p. 88) and March 11, 1246 (pp. 629-30); the later date is considered more reliable since it was written in Arabic (Lewis, p. 177; Muwaḥḥid, 2000, p. 207). It appears that he returned and left again for Syria a second time, seven days after his wife Kīmiyā died, about December 1246 (Aflākī, p. 642, Muwaḥḥid, p. 207). He returned only after Mawlānā sent his son, Sulṭān Walad, with a group to invite him back. According to Aflākī, Shams was murdered by some of Mawlānā's jealous disciples on a Thursday sometime during the Islamic lunar year that occurred between May 1247 and April 1248 (p. 686). The total time that Mawlānā spent with his greatest spiritual master appears to have been less than three years: from the end of November 1244 to April 1248, minus a seven month stay in Aleppo (mentioned by Shams himself, p. 359, a stay that apparently preceded going to Damascus) and minus his time in Damascus and the travel time between Damascus and Konya for two or three journeys.

Aflākī's claim (in his hagiography that was completed eighty years after Mawlānā died) that Shams was murdered has been challenged and rejected by scholars (Muwaḥḥid, p. 199-203 and Lewis, p. 185-93). First of all, it seems unlikely that Mawlānā's family and disciples could have kept such a murder secret from him. Neither his son Sulṭān Walad nor Sepahsālār mention a murder in their works that are earlier than Aflākī's work (Lewis, p. 185). No witnesses saw Shams die, because he supposedly disappeared miraculously after being wounded (Aflākī, p. 684). Although there is a shrine in Konya dedicated to Shams-é Tabrīzī, the claim that his body was thrown down a plugged-up well in Konya and buried next to the body of the founder of Mawlānā's religious college, Amīr Bahā al-Dīn Gawhartāsh (Aflākī, pp. 700-01), has been refuted because only one grave was found, presumably that of Gawhartāsh (Lewis, pp. 188-90). Even if Mawlānā was told that Shams was murdered in Konya, he clearly did not believe it, because he made two trips to Syria to look for Shams (Sepahsālār, p. 134). And finally, there is evidence that Shams-é Tabrīzī may have been buried, not in Konya, or in Tabrīz (where there is also an alleged tomb of Shams), but in the town of Khōy (now in Iran, about 50 kilometers east of the present Turkish border, on the road to Tabrīz), where a Sultan of the Ottoman Empire went to pay his respects to the tomb of Shams in the early 16th century C.E. (Mowāḥḥid, p. 209).

More pertinent are Shams' reported statements about leaving permanently, such as his threat to disappear in such a way that, "I will become so absent that no trace of me as a created being will be found" (Sepahsālār, p. 134; see Sulṭān Walad, pp. 50-51). And he hinted that he would need to leave permanently in order to further Mawlānā's development as a spiritual master. For example, in one speech recorded by his disciples (pp. 163-64) in which he appears to have addressed Mawlānā he said:

Since I am not in the situation where I might order travel for you, I will place (the need for) travel upon myself for the welfare of your work, because separation is a cook... What is the value of that work (of yours)? I would make fifty journeys for your welfare. My travels are for the sake of the (successful) emergence of your work. Otherwise, what's the distinction for me between Anatolia and Syria? There's no difference (if) I am at the Ka'ba (in Mecca) or in Istanbul. But it's certainly the case that separation cooks and refines (the seeker).

After Mawlānā made two journeys to Damascus and failed to find Shams, his son, Sulṭān Walad wrote (p. 50, 52):

He did not find Shams-é Tabrīz in Syria; (instead) he found him within himself, like the clear moon. He said, "Although we are far from him in body, without (consideration of) body and spirit we both are one light. Whether you see him or me, I am him (and) he is me, (O) seeker..." He said, "Since I am him, (for) what do I search? Now (that) I am his very substance, I may speak from my (very) self."

After a period of several years of suffering greatly because of the disappearance of Shams, Mawlānā declared (in 1249) that Shams had appeared to him in the form of one of his close disciples, named Shaykh Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Zarkōb. He put Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in charge of training his disciples, which made them almost as jealous as they had been toward Shams. But Mawlānā found out about this out and threatened to abandon his disciples completely unless they ceased complaining. In popular works about Mawlānā, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn tends to be portrayed as little more than a illiterate tradesman. Although he evidently could not read or write, he was actually the most senior dervish. He had been a Sufi disciple of Sayyid Burhān al-Dīn together with Mawlānā. In addition, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had also been a disciple of Shams-é Tabrīzī (Sepahsālār, p. 134). Furthermore, Mawlānā recommended that his son accept Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn as his Sufi shaykh (Sulṭān Walad, p. 275) and he arranged for his son to marry Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's daughter, Fāṭima, whom Mawlānā had taught to write and read the *Qur'ān* (Aflākī, p. 719).

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn maintained his post of teaching and training the disciples to become dervishes for a period of ten years and died in 1258. Mawlānā then saw the reflection of Shams in another disciple, Ḥusām al-Dīn Chalabī, whom he promoted to be the teacher of the disciples. It was Ḥusām al-Dīn who inspired Mawlānā to compose rhymed couplets [mathnawī] in the manner of Farīd al-Dīn al-Dīn °Aṭṭār, and Mawlānā then began to compose his *Mathnawī*.

After the death of Mawlānā in 1273, Ḥusām al-Dīn became his first successor until his death in 1283. Mawlānā's son, Sulṭān Walad, then humbly accepted the most senior and advanced dervish of his father's disciples, Karīm al-Dīn Walad-é Baktamūr, to be the chief trainer of the disciples for a period of seven years (Sulṭān Walad, p. 275). After Karīm al-Dīn died (about 1291 or 1292), Sulṭān Walad became the clear leader of the disciples and

founded the first branches of the “Mawlawī” form of Sufism beyond Konya. Other Sufi orders of the time commonly engaged in mystical practices involving music and ecstatic dance-like movements, but these practices became of central importance to the Mawlawī order. The ecstatic whirling so frequently done by Mawlānā during “mystical concerts” [samāʿ] was first formalized into the famous Mawlawī whirling prayer ritual by Pīr ʿĀdil Chalabī, who died in 1460 (Bausani, p. 394; Lewis, p. 444).

According to Aflākī, Mawlānā did not engage in the “mystical concert” in his youth, but was later encouraged to do so by his wife Kerrā’s mother. When he began to participate, he would mainly wave his hands, a common practices of Sufis in such sessions. Later, Shams-é Tabrīzī showed him how to whirl [charkh zadan] (Aflākī, p. 681). According to Sepahsālār, on the other hand, Mawlānā did not participate in such gatherings until after he met Shams-é Tabrīzī, who indicated to him, “Enter into the mystical concert, for that which you are seeking will become increased in the mystical concert” (p. 65). It should be stressed that Muslim Sufis had already been engaging in the ecstatic movements of the mystical concert for four centuries before Mawlānā’s time, since the middle of the 9th century C.E., starting in Baghdad, a practice that spread very quickly, especially among Persian Sufis (Dering, p. 1018). There are indications that Mawlānā composed poetry specifically to be recited, chanted, or sung during mystical concerts—and that he composed poetry while engaged in such sessions, especially when whirling (Lewis, p. 172, pp. 314-15).

Very rarely does one read in English the words, “Rumi was a Muslim.” In most of the popularized translations and versions of Mawlānā’s poetry, his strong adherence to Islamic piety is minimized or ignored: verses are changed or skipped in order to avoid references to the *Qurʾān* or the Traditions (Aḥādīth) of the Prophet Muḥammad, and even references to prayer and the mention of God are often avoided. Such minimizations of Mawlānā’s commitment to Islam have also helped interpretive poetic versions of his poetry to become amazingly popular in the United States (often misrepresented as “translations” when the authors do not read Persian). Many of these books give the impression that Mawlānā was so transformed by Shams-é Tabrīzī that he transcended his allegiance to Islam, became a universal mystic who was knowledgeable about other religions, was indifferent to the distinctions between forms of worship, and cared little about the religious adherence of people who were attracted to him. However, there is little evidence that he knew much about other religions, other than what he learned from a traditional Islamic education (Gamard, p. xv).

The following verses, translated from Persian or rendered into popularized poetic versions do not occur in the authentic works of Mawlānā, yet they are frequently claimed as his in books, articles, and lectures:

“What is to be done, O Moslems? for I do not recognise myself. I am neither Christian nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor Moslem” (trans. Nicholson, 1898, p. 125). “Not Christian, or Jew or Muslim, nor Hindu, Buddhist, sufi, or zen. Not any religion or cultural system” (Barks, p. 32). “Cross and Christians, from end to end, I surveyed; He was not on the Cross. I went

to the idol-temple, to the ancient pagoda; no trace was visible there” (trans. Nicholson, 1898, p. 71). “Come back, come back, no matter what you think you are. An idol worshipper? A non-believer? Come back. This gate, no one leaves helpless. If you have broken your vows ten thousand times, come back.” (trans. Abramian, p. 4). “Come, come, whoever you are, wanderer, worshipper, lover of leaving, it doesn't matter. Ours is not a caravan of despair. Come, come, even if you have broken your vow a thousand times, come—come yet again, come!” (Feild, ii). “That one who has tasted the wine of union with the supreme soul, In his faith, the Ka’be and an idol temple are one” (trans. Shiva, p. 33). “This is me: Sometimes hidden and sometimes revealed. Sometimes a devoted Muslim, sometimes a Hebrew and a Christian. For me to fit inside everyone’s heart, I put on a new face every day” (trans. Shiva, p. 178). “I go into the Muslim mosque and the Jewish synagogue and the Christian church and I see one altar” (Barks, p. 246).

However, Mawlānā’s authentic works show that he was a very devout and pious Muslim, as well as a great Muslim mystic and poet. His poetry is filled with references to the *Qur’ān* and the Traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad. For example, he wrote about his masterpiece, the *Mathnawī*, as “the roots of the roots of the roots of ‘the Religion’ (of Islām) in regard to unveiling the secrets of obtaining connection (with God) and (spiritual) certainty (of the Truth)... it is the remedy for hearts, the brightening polish for sorrows, the revealer of (the meanings of) the *Qur’ān*...” (Book 1: Preface). He said, “I am the servant of the *Qur’ān* as long as I have life. I am the dust on the path of Muḥammad, the Chosen one. If anyone quotes anything except this from my sayings, I am quit of him and outraged by these words” (*Rubā’iyāt*, F-1173, trans. Gamard and Farhadi, p. 2). And he also said, “Now, you should know that Muḥammad is the leader and guide. As long as you don’t come to Muḥammad first, you won’t reach us” (*Fīhi Mā Fīhi*, no. 63, trans. Gamard, p. 161).

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[Most of the material for this article was taken from the Introduction to *The Quatrains of Rumi*.]