

The Soul's Mirror is the Friend's Face
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Rumi and Friendship

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In his *Mesnevi*, Hazret-i Mevlâna—kaddasa ‘llâhu sirra-hu ’l-‘azîz—spoke profoundly about spirirtual friendship. I have translated fourteen verses from Persian to English, for which I have also translated relevant interpretations, mainly by Isma’il Ankaravi, the famous seventeenth century commentator who wrote in Ottoman Turkish (which I have in Persian translation); another is by Dr. Karim Zamani who is a contemporary Iranian commentator. First, I will read the central verse about the “mirror of the soul.” Then I will read the verses all together, and finally, I will read the verses one by one followed by brief commentary.

From the second book of *Mesnevi* by Mevlâna Rumi:

The mirror of the soul is none other than the face of the Friend,
the face of that Friend (of God) who is from that (transcendent) realm.

ayena’i can nist illa ruy-i yar/ ruy-i an yari ke başed z-an diyar

Since He (God) is calling me, I will see if I am worthy of His attraction or if I am ugly-faced.

I wonder how I may see my own face, and whether my color is (bright) like the day or (dark) like the night?

For a long time, I was searching for the image of my soul, but my (soul's) image was not shown by anyone.

Finally, I said, "What is a mirror for? So that anyone may know what and who he is."

The mirror of iron is for (seeing) the external shell, but the mirror for (seeing) the appearance of the soul is of great value.

The mirror of the soul is none other than the face of the Friend, the face of that Friend (of God) who is from that (transcendent) realm.

I said, "O heart, seek the Universal Mirror! Go to the ocean, for this matter will not be accomplished by means of a river."

In this quest, this servant arrived to your dwelling-place, (just as) the pains (of childbirth) drew Mary to the trunk of the palm-tree.

When your eye became an eye for my heart, this blind eye (of mine) became drowned in vision.

I saw that you are the everlasting Universal Mirror; I saw in your eye my own image.

I said, "Finally, I have found myself: I have found the luminous Way in his two eyes!"

My false imagination said, "Beware! That is (only) an apparition (of your mind): distinguish your essence from your (mind's) apparition."

My image gave voice from your eye, saying, "I am you and you are me in union;

For how can an apparition find the way into this luminous eye, which is viewing (divine) realities without cease?^[1]

(90) Since He (God) is calling me,* I will see if I am worthy of His attraction or if I am ugly-faced.

—*This refers to a verse in the Koran: "And God invites to the Abode of

Peace [*dâr as-salâm*]. He guides whom He wills to the straight path.”^[2]

—A: “When that True Beloved [*mahbub-i hakiki*] invites me... He invites His servant to the Abode of Peace and to the rank of forgiveness and nearness [*kurbat*].” And it may be added, to direct vision in Paradise of the Face of God. For, “Everything will perish except His Face”.^[3]

(92) I wonder how I may see my own face, whether my color is (bright) like the day or (dark) like the night?*

—*This refers to a verse in the Koran, “...on the Day when faces whiten and faces blacken.”^[4] And also: “Faces that Day shall be bright with happiness, gazing upon their Lord.”^[5]

—Z: “When will I be able to witness my own true face?”

(93) For a long time, I was searching for the image [*nakş*] of my soul, but my (soul’s) image was not shown by anyone.

—A: “...when I looked in the mirror of existence [*vucüd*] of anyone, the image of my soul became visible in no one.”

—Z: “I searched much for the image of my spirit and soul but I did not find myself in the mirror of truth [*hakiki*] of anyone.”

—This reminds us of the complaint of the reed-flute [*ney*] at the beginning of the *Mesnevi*: “Everyone became my friend [*yar*] from his (own) opinion; he did not seek my secrets from within me.”^[6]

(94) Finally, I said, “What is a mirror for? So that anyone may know what and who he is.”

(95) The mirror of iron is for (seeing) the external shell, but the mirror for (seeing) the appearance of the soul is of great value.

—Mirrors used to be made of iron which rusted and needed polishing. This reminds us of the verse:

“Do you know why the mirror (of your soul) reveals nothing? Because the rust is not separated from its face.”^[7]

—A: “...in other words, that mirror which shows the signs of the soul...”

—Z: “...but the inward mirror in which one is able to see the image of one’s soul and spirit...”

(96) The mirror of the soul is none other than the face of the Friend [yar] , the face of the Friend (of God) who is from that (transcendent) realm.

—A: “...the mirror of the soul that shows the inward aspects and qualities of the soul.” And: “The face of that Friend who is from that country and is connected to the city of Truth [*hakikat*].”

—Z: “The inward mirror of the soul is none other than the face of the beloved Friend [yar-e del-dar], for one is able to see inward aspects and states of oneself. This mirror is none other than the face of that same Friend who is from the region of higher truths and love--not from the world of dust.”

—Jawid Mojaddedi translated (into English): “This mirror for the soul is the saint’s face...”^[8]

(97) I said, “O heart, seek the Universal [kulli] Mirror! Go to the ocean, for this matter will not be accomplished by means of a river.”

—A: “The holy Master [*Hazret-e Hodavandgar*] is speaking to his noble heart and saying, ‘I said to my own heart, “Seek the Universal Mirror.”’ The meaning of the Universal Mirror is a name for the (human) essence [*zat*] and the completed man [*insan-i kâmil*], which is the mirror for the greatest Name of God [*ism-i Allâh-i a‘zam*], which joins together all the Attributes (of God), in which Holy God [*Hazret-i Hakk*] has shown all His Names and Attributes. This Completed Man is an all-encompassing Ocean of (divine) secrets and excellences; and the journeys of the sheikhs are connected to him like rivers and streams.”

—Z: “Here, *Hazret-i Mevlâna* speaks to his own noble heart to seek the Universal Mirror, which is the Completed Man [*insan-i kâmil*], the most excellent saint (of God) [*vali-yi fâzılı*] ...”

—The phrase, “Go to the ocean” reminds us of the story about a dervish named Dekukî, who was always seeking the elect ones of God [*hâss-ân-i Hakk*]:

“He said, ‘One day I was traveling like someone full of yearning, (hoping) that I might see in man the radiance of (God) the Friend [yar],

‘That I might see an ocean in a drop of water, a sun enclosed in a mote of dust.’”

God would say to him: “You have My love, so why do you seek another?” And: “When God is with you, why do you seek a human being?” He answered that, since He (God) placed neediness and supplication in his heart, he would seek the water in a jug even if he was in the middle of the ocean. Mevlâna then states that greed out of love for God is laudable, whereas greed out of love for the world is disgraceful. He tells how, similarly, Moses was seeking for the companionship of HIZIR.^[9]

(98) In this quest, this servant arrived to your dwelling-place, (just as) the pains (of childbirth) drew Mary to the trunk of the palm-tree.*

—*This refers to a verse in the Koran that mentions a palm tree (from which an angelic voice spoke to Mary).^[10]

—Z interprets this as a reference to Şems-i Tebrizi or Burhanuddin Muhakik Tirmizi or Salahuddin Zarkub, or possibly Çelebi Husamuddin—each of whom could have been a “mirror” for Mevlâna to “see” his own (spiritual) beauty and perfection.

(99) When your eye became an eye for my heart, this blind eye (of mine) became drowned in vision.

—A: “In other words, the moment when your true vision and clear witnessing arrived in my heart, my heart found your eye residing there and then my sightless eye was drowned in vision from end to end.” The “eye of the heart” is the spiritual eye that sees divine Realities.

Sometimes, Mevlâna depicts it as the “mirror of the heart” that reflects spiritual truths once it is “polished”.

(100) I saw that you are the everlasting Universal Mirror; I saw in your eye my own image.

—A: “O True Friend [*yar-i hakiki*], I saw that you are the Universal Mirror from time without beginning to time without end. In other words,

I saw that you are the place of manifestation of all the divine Names and Attributes. And the everlasting Universal Mirror is the Mohammedan Spirit [*ruh-i Mohammadi*]. Therefore, in every age, a completed one is the heir of that great Spirit, since he is the Universal Mirror.”

—Z: “O my True Friend, I saw you as the everlasting Universal Mirror from beginningless time to endless time.” “In other words, I saw you as actually the place of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of God. O Completed Man, and O saint joined (to God): In your eyes I have seen my image and witnessed my true form.”

(101) I said, “Finally, I have found myself: I have found the luminous Way in his two eyes!”

—A: “I said to myself, ‘At last, I have found the truth of myself and my essential being [*zat*]. and I have found the illuminated path, the straight way [*rah-i müstakimi*], in the two eyes of my Friend.’”

—Z: “I said to myself, ‘At last, I have found the reality [*hakikat*] of myself, and in the two eyes of my Friend, I made the shining way visible.’”

102) My false imagination said, “Beware! That is (only) an apparition (of your mind): distinguish your essence [*zat*] from your (mind’s) apparition [*hayal*].”

(103) My image gave voice from your eye, saying, “I am you and you are me in union [*ittihad*].”

(104) For how can an apparition find the way into this luminous eye, which is viewing (divine) realities [*hakaik*] without cease?”

—A: “You are me, but also you are my essential nature [*‘ayn*] in union [*ittihad*], without otherness or duality.”

—This reminds us of the story of the man who knocked on the door of a friend [*yar*] and when asked who he was, he answered “I,” and his friend responded “Since you are you, I will not open the door, for I do not know any friend who is ‘I’.” After a year, the man became “cooked” by the pain of separation from his friend [*dost*] and then returned. This time when he knocked and was asked who he was, he replied, “It is you who

are at the door.” Then the friend said:

“Now, since you are me, come in, O me, for there is no room in the house for two me’s.”^[11]

—And this reminds us of Mevlâna’s verse:

“I am not me, you are not you, and you are not me.

Yet I am me, you are you, and you are me as well.”^[12]

—We are also reminded of these well-known verses:

“That moment (is) joyous and blessed when we are sitting (together) in the veranda, you and I; with two forms and faces, (yet) with one soul, you and I

This is (even) more astonishing: that you and I (are) in one corner here, (yet) in this moment we are both in ‘Irâq and Khorâsân, you and I.

(We have) one form on this earth and another form on that (world) in everlasting Paradise and the (Home) Land of Sugar, you and I.”^[13]

—The meaning here is that Mevlâna’s soul was united with Şems’ soul in a state of Heavenly bliss, while at the same time their bodies were in different physical locations.

—Let us end with the following relevant verses:

“Property and gold are the profits of the body, but the profit of the heart is friendship [*dosti*].

An orchard without the Friend is a prison, but a prison with the Friend is a rose-garden.”^[14]

NOTES

^[11] M.2:90, 92-104; (<http://www.masnavi.net/1/25/eng/2/90/>).

^[12] K.10:25.

- [3] K.28:88.
[4] K.3:106.
[5] K.75:22.
[6] M.1:6.
[7] M.1:34.
[8] *Rumi: The Masnavi, Book Two*.
[9] M.3:1982-83, 1945-64.
[10] K.19:23.
[11] M.1:3063.
[12] D.R.1905.
[13] D.G.2214; (<http://dar-al-masnavi.org/gh-2214.html>).
[14] D.G.1926.

Abbreviations

K: Koran, M: Mesnevi, D: Divan, G: Gazel, R: Rubai, A: Ankaravi (seventeenth century commentator), Z: Zamani (contemporary Iranian commentator).

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