

ABSTRACTS OF RESEARCH REPORTS

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THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ

Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (1207-1273) was a Persian mystic or sūfī. He is also ranked as one of the greatest poets in Persian literature since most of his religious thought was expressed in rhymed verses. He had established himself as a religious scholar when he met a wandering derwīsh, Shams al-Dīn, in 1244. This encounter made him a sūfī. Later he founded the order of Mevlewī, which is well known as "the dancing derwīshes."

Sūfism (Islamic mysticism) actually arose in the late ninth century from some pious groups of men who were ascetics rather than mystics. The origin of Sūfism has been ascribed to some influences of foreign thought such as Neo-Platonism, Christian and Indian thought. Though we cannot deny these influences on the formative process of Sūfism, we should emphasize that the basic spirit of Sūfism is the cardinal doctrine of Islām itself: the oneness of God (tawhīd). The sūfīs became convinced that the complete submission to God is the way to realize the oneness of God by dying to one's self. The so-called union with God results from this conviction. The oneness of God cannot be realized so long as there are found two "I"'s, man's self and the divine Self. What prevents man from realizing the oneness of God is man's self, called nafs.

The keynote of Rūmī's religious thought is like this. Though man is the only creature to know God, the ordinary man is separated from Him or unaware that he owes his existence to Him. This separation or unawareness of God is the sin of man. The self-awakening to his sin makes him a seeker for God (ṭālib). Rūmī repeatedly tells people to become seekers. The seeker must be guided by a spiritual master who is utterly one with God. The end of the seeker is to die to his nafs.

Fanâ', translated as "passing away" or "annihilation", is to die to one's nafs. A seeker must attain fanâ'. However, the death of his nafs is not due to his own efforts but to the divine love. At the moment of fanâ', the nafs dies out and the oneness of God is realized. Moreover, man attains or returns to his origin (aṣl). This situation is called the union with God (waṣl). Finding one's origin or the fundamental self is related to baqâ', which means "to survive by receiving the eternal life." Fanâ' (the death of self) is, in principle and ideal, converted at once into baqâ' (the rebirth of self). In the actual case of man, however, there still arises a difficulty or hindrance. At fanâ', most sūfīs experience spiritual joy (hâl). After the fanâ'-experience some come to anticipate the hâl and become captivated by it. The

affection to the hâl implies that a sûfî loves his own feeling besides God, and that his self did not die out. In conquering the affection to the hâl, a sûfî really and completely attains to baqâ', which must also be the accomplishment of fanâ'. This highest stage is called "the second separation" (farq-i thâni), in which a sûfî opens his eyes onto the world and returns to the secular world. Needless to say, such a sûfî is completely one with God and every action of his participates in the Divine Act.