CHAPTER -I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Personality of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi
1.2 Personality of Kabir
INTRODUCTION

The essence of all major religions is to reach God, or the Truth, or the Absolute Reality. All the religions are like different rivers flowing into the Sea. They may have different ways, but their destination is the same. In this context, Maulana Rumi and Sant Kabir's messages are extremely relevant as it can feed a dearth of spiritualism at present experienced by mankind. Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi heralded the cause of Sufism at a time when the Mongol hordes had wreaked havoc in Asia and people were groping in the dark and striving arduously in search of truth and realization. Consequences arrived at by him, and the findings made by him, were based on his personal experiments rather than on theoretical knowledge in the field of realization. His personal experience of this truth inspired the great mystical revival in Iran and the Anatolian Peninsula. He was acclaimed as the resuscitator of the dormant Divinity of man by realizing which humanity throughout the world could be brought into one orbit of one family of God. He delivered a message of hope, love, faith, brotherhood, fellowship, amity, understanding, peace and charity throughout the world.

Likewise, Kabir was the first preacher of prominence to foster a spirit of unity among the Hindus and the Muslims. People liked the moral message in his song which poured out from his heart. He boldly condemned image worship in temples and mechanical prayers in mosques but also fought against superstitions, ritualism and cast-system. His mysticism is mainly based on three aspects, his concept of God or Brahma, his concept of soul or Atma, and his concept of Maya or the world as illusions. "The cult of Tawhid dominated him, his discerning eye completely gave
up any consideration for the pupil caring for externals, and began to speak without the veil. The superficial people linked him with heresy, but the agnostics with inner light considered him as sincere Muahid." According to him there was one God who could be described by various names, called him Ram, Rahim, Allah, Khuda, Hari, Govind, but he is one. He calls "Brahman the prime, principle or the essence. It is beyond time, space, qualities attributes. It is unaffected by any change, neither to the left nor to the right, nor in front, neither below not above, formless."

The spiritual preaching's of Kabir uplifted the oppressed humanity and gave strength to stand up on their feet and fight against all religion, social and political inequalities, and created a new universalism and culture based on oneness of ultimate reality, brotherhood of mankind irrespective of their racial, ethnic, linguistic or cultural differences. Kabir, by his vision of one humanity, which transcended all distinction of cast; creed, race, religion and country, inspired mankind to treat all human being as equal and with love and compassion. And apostle of peace and love, his response to the disharmony and chaos of the time in which he lived when religious intolerance was the real menace, was that of a spiritual reformer. His message both to Hindus and Muslims was one of humanity, religious tolerance and good will.
1.1 Personality of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi

Jalaluddin Muhammad, with whom the epithet Mawlana (our master) has acquired a unique meaning, was born on the 30th of September, 1207 in Balkh, currently situated in northern Afghanistan. Maulana Jalaluddin is also known to the world simply as Rumi, meaning from Roman Anatolia because Anatolia used to be called the "land of Rum (Romans)". Balkh, one of the principal cities of a region holding pivotal importance in the Anatolia tradition, that is to say Khurasan, was occupied, at the time of his birth, khawarzmshahs, and previously by the Seljuques and Ghaznavides. The Ghories, beginning from 1198, had briefly occupied the city, prior to the capture of it by Khawarzmshahs in 1206, after which emerged the ensuing Mongolian threat.¹

His father's name was Bahauddin. Bahauddin was a man of great learning and piety, an eloquent preacher and distinguished professor. Unfortunately, not content with declaiming against the philosophers and rationalist of the day, he seems to have indulged in political diatribes. According to Aflaki, he attacked the 'innovations' of the reigning monarchs, Muhammad Qutbuddin Khwarazmshah, surnamed Takash, who held in the North-East of Persia in Transoxiana. Another account depicts the king as jealous of his growing influence and popularity.² Also perhaps because he predicted the Mongol invasion he found it convenient to quit Balkh with his family and a few friends (about 607 A.H.) At Nishapur the

1. http://book.google.co.in/books?id=BuU3HBW-rFoc@dq=sufism
2. Selected Poems from the Divani Shams; Tabrizi, by R.A.Nicholson, p.xvi
travelers were met by the famous Sufi Fariduddin Attar, who gave Jalal at this
time a mere child, his Asrar Nama (books of mysteries) and prophesied that he
would attain the highest pitch of spiritual eminence. From Nishapur they went to
Baghdad, where they received the news of destruction of Balkh by Chenghis
Khan (608 A.H.), then to Mecca, Damascus, Malatia (Melitene). Four years were
spent at Arzanjan in Armenia, and seven at Laranda.

Baha walad Sultan al Ulama (king of the learned), was a notable scholar of
theology with an appreciation of Sufism. His early ancestors were jurist and
religious leaders. Thus early in his life Rumi came under the authoritarian image
of his ancestral family, especially his father. Rumi’s father adhered strongly to
traditional Islamic values, even when they conflicted with the powerful court of
‘Ala-al- Din Kharazmshah. Ordinary people respected him as a spiritual leader
but he gained the dislike of many intellectuals who acquiesced to the central
authority, ¹ and then by Burhanuddin Muhaqqiq Tirmidhi, who was a pupil of
Bahauddin at Balkh. Burhan-al-Din of Tirmidhi was well known Sufi in
Khorasan, visited Rumi and offered himself as a guide in understanding classical
Sufism. Rumi accepted the offer and associated with Burhan-al-Din for nine
years. In the first three years he increased his knowledge and changed his own
mental and behavioural status. He spent the next four years in travelling alone and
with his guide to other well known Sufi centres. Lastly, he became further
acquainted with the behavioural and contemplative steps of Sufism. On his

¹. Rumi the Persian, the Sufi, by A. Reza Aresteh, p 30-33
fathers death (628 A.H) Jalal succeeded to the vacant chair.¹

He also founded an order of Darvishes known as Maulavis, where he authorised music and religious dance. When asked why he introduced singing and dance at a funeral, such practice being contrary to custom, Jalal replied: “when the human spirit, after years of imprisonment in the case and dungeon of the body, is at length set free, and wings its flight to the source from where it come, is not this an occasion for rejoicings, thanks and dancing?” Jalal was an indomitable optimist. In his sayings, and still more in his poetry, we find an almost untrammelled ecstasy. The religious dances, known as Riza Kuli, may in same way account for Jalal’s occasional lack of care displayed in his poetry, and also for the author not for removed from insanity. We are informed by Daulat Shah that “there was a pillar in the Maulavis house, and when he was drowned in the ocean of love he used to take hold of that pillar and set himself turning round it.” It was while turning round the pillar that he frequently dictated much of his poetry. As Mr. Arthur Symens has stung:

I turn until my sense,

Dizzied with waves of air,

When to paint intense,

And spires and centres there.²

¹ Selected Poems from The Divani Shams Tabriz, By R.A. Nicholson, p xv
² Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p 33
After the death of Sheikh Burhanuddin of Tirimih he received further esoteric teaching from Shams-i-Tabriz, a "weird figure", as Mr. Nicholson calls him, "wrapped in coarse black fleet, who fits across the stage for a moment and disappears tragically enough".

Even his parentage is uncertain, some declare that his father, Khawand Ala'uddin claimed descent from Kiya Buzurgumid. Ala'uddin abandoned his ancestral sect (the Ismailis), burned their books and tracts, preached Islam in the stronghold of heresy, and privately sent Shams'uddin, a youth of rare beauty, to receive his education at Tabriz. According to others he was born in Tabriz, where his father carried on the trade of a cloth merchant. He is said to have studied under Baba Kand Jundi, Abu Bakr sila – Baf, and Rukanuddin Sanjari. He had travelled much, where he obtained the sobriquet, Paranda (the Flier).

His character was despotic and overbearing, he was extremely bitter in his sermons, and likened his learned auditors to oxen and asses. Perhaps this may be the cause why Dr. Sprenger calls him "a most disgusting cynic". He was comparatively illiterate but his tremendous spiritual enthusiasm, based on the conviction that he was a chosen organ and mouth-piece of Deity, cast a spell over all who entered the enchanted circle of his power. In this respect, and in many other, for examples, in his strong passions, his poverty and his violent that, Shamsi Tabriz curiously resembles Socrates; both imposed themselves upon men of genius, who gave their crude ideas artistic expressions, both proclaim the

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1. Literary History of Persia, by E.G. Browne, p 516
futility of external knowledge the need of illumination, the value of love; but wild
raptures and arrogant defiance of every human law can ill atone for the lake of
that 'sweet reasonableness' and moral grandeur which distinguish the sage from
the devotee.¹

We have sufficient evidence to prove that Jalal’s nom de guerre was an actual
person, and not a mythical creation on the part of the poet. This mysterious being
who fitted across Jalal’s life so tragically, seems to have had great personal
influence over the poet.²

Aflaki informs us: Shamsuddin demanded and received the obedience due to a
Sultan from the meanest of his slaves. To quote the vivid words of Riza kuli, he
(Jalal) was so transported and smitten, that for a time he was thought insane. He
renounced his teachings, and retired with Shams to solitary and desert places,
where in close communication they discussed the deepest arcane of mystical
philosophy.³

The pretension of Shamsi Tabrizi himself may be judged by an anecdote in the
Manaqib’l Arifin. One day a person met him in the market place and exclaimed,
“there is no God, save God; Shamsuddin is the apposite of God.” The people on
hearing this, raised a great hubbub and wished to kill him, but Shams intervened
and led him away, remarking, “my good friend, my name is Muhammad. Thou

¹. Selected Poems from The Divani Shamsi Tabrizi, by R.A. Nicholson, pxx
². Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p 34
³. Selected Poems from the Divani Shamsi Tabrizi, by R.A. Nicholson, pxxiii
shouldst have shouted, 'Muhammad is apostle of god.' The rabble will not take gold that is not coined!"\(^1\)

The scholars of Jalal looked upon the whole affairs as an unworthy infatuation on the part of their master, and on the part of Shams a shameful seduction. Their protests brought about the flight of Shams, who fled to Tabriz. But it was only a momentary separation. Jalal followed this strange figure and brought him back again. Most of his lighter poetry was composed during this separation. Another disturbance however, caused the departure of Shams to Damascus. We then have no clear record of him. Various legends, exist in regard to the death of this mysterious person. It may be safely stated that Shams met with a violent death, the exact nature of which it is impossible to say definitely.\(^2\)

Shams of Tabriz, son of Ali, the son of Malakdal, and twenty two years Rumi's senior, came from a family whose forbearers were Ismailis. Though information about his early life is not readily available, it is known that he received his training in Sufism under the master, Abu Jabbil Baf, a basket weaver in his native city. (It should be noted that almost all great Sufi's earned their living through productivity available in their simple culture.) Apparently, Shams attained a state of being in which his guide could no longer help him unfold the mysteries of life. Then, like Socrates, Shams heard his perfected voice- that of a fully integrated man. He began to travel and question the most learned scholars to discover if his

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1. Selected Poems from the Divani Shams Tabrizi, by R.A. Nicholson, pxxii
2. Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p 35
voice was genuine. The evidence suggest that he became aware of the limitations of conventional life and even revolted against classical Sufism, which offer the individual knowledge of its principles and identification with either God or the saints. He freed himself from all kinds of authority, internal and external, and frequently criticised traditional scholars and theologians who merely repeated others opinions, rather than take others as his example, he turned inward to discover his real self. Out of his travelling and self imposed exile he finally attained perfection. After years of unsuccessfully seeking a congenial soul he at last met Rumi whom he found to be his own potential soul.¹

This strange union is by no means unique in the history of world literature. The union, however, in this particular case is extremely difficult to rightly fathom. We may reasonably infer that Jalal’s intense poetic temperament became fascinated by the dogmatic and powerful Shams. The very treatment of this friendship, both in the lyrical poems and in the Masiawi is Sufi. The two following quotations, from many that might be cited, will prove sufficient to illustrate this point:

The face of Shamsuddin Tabrizi’s glory, is the sun.

In whose track the cloud-like hearts are moving.

O Shams Tabriz, beauty and glory of the horizons,

What king but is a beggar of thee with heart and soul.²

1. Rumi the Persian the Sufi, A Reza Aresteh, p.37
2. Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p 3
Shams qualities could only be described by a person who had undergone an identical experience and had the ability to objectify that experience. Such a man was Rumi himself who dedicated to Shams one of his major works, Diwan-i-Shams, the expression of a total personality. Its 2500 odes occurred spontaneously, and even its mere seems to match the human heart beat.

In a group of odes in which Rumi tries to identify himself with Sham's image there is further evidence of Sham's character, although Rumi admits that words do not fully describe him. He presents Shams as a free man, a magnetic, universal man, and one who understands an ocean of symbols beneath the inward state. Shams is the secret of secrets, or the light of illumination. To Shams love, though it is the life-giver is nothing, for a stream of love emerges from his own ocean of kindness. God like, he is the creative truth united with all, and one who has solved the subject-object relations. To Rumi, Shams was one who knew unity behind plurality and how the unity turned to plurality. Sham's was fully aware and experienced life in all existence and all essence of life. Being the same inside and outside, Shams was like a flower whose petals were identical on both sides: Shams was an unfolding of mankind in the memory of the universe in evolution. He had achieved happiness, experienced joy and had ceased to search, for he had passed the state of search and now stood at the threshold of the world of Form. He was the illuminist who had withdrawn the veil of name and perceived matter. Tearing aside the veils of attributes and qualities he had finally found in the evolution of the phenomenal world. He had passed from existence to nonexistence and beyond it. He lived in such a state that he needed no laws, no
religion, he lacked any sense of guilt and justice; truth and kindness marked his spontaneous acts. When he came in contact with his fellow human beings Shams was the remedy to all ills. He was peerless no one had seen anyone like him, nor did anyone posses his magnetic personality no one equalled his ability as a guide; no one possessed his wisdom. Rumi describes Sham's influence thus.

"When he stimulated method from the depth of my psychic sea, the phantom of light arose, Shams the light of the eye, the clarity of reason, the brightness of the soul and the enlightenment of the heart. Shams was a universal man who took away my reason and religion. He was the form of every happiness."

In Maqalat Rumi relates that Shams, in order to reinforce his quest, conveyed the secret of his attainment to him, and in the Diwan he presents Shams as a man who spoke very little. Indeed, his first advice to Rumi was to keep silent and to remain deaf externally so that insight could act. The Maqalat, which presumably reports the first few month of their meetings, presents Shams as a man of clarity, sincerity, simplicity and maturity. In this discourse the characters are God, Rumi and Shams. They discuss the realities behind the beliefs, the real and the unreal; they agree that man's ideas are behind both living and non living things. ¹

The meeting between Rumi and Shams is not only the most important occasion with regards to the transformation of Rumi's inner life, but is at the same time the most dramatic incident recorded in authentic history and corroborated by numerous contemporary sources. As was to be expected in such a rare and

¹. Rumi the Persian the Sufi, A Reza Aresteh, pp.38-40
perhaps unprecedented case, the poetic and fanciful imagination of some of the narrators and interpreters has woven a veil of legends around the incidents, so much so, that quite a few of the students of Rumi have been inclined to regard the contact and association between the two, as a mere illusion of the psyche and have expressed doubts whether Shams was actually somebody of consequence or merely a convenient of Rumi's own mind.

Despite numerous accounts that have come down to us, an unexclaimed mystery surrounds the meeting of Rumi with Shams, but what actually happened as a consequence of that meeting is no secret. The fire emanating from the eyes of Shams burnt down to ashes the book of speculative thought of Rumi, the philosopher. The sage and theologian was, all of sudden, transported from the world of word (Qul) to the realms of ecstatic experience (Hal).¹

Rumi is at his best in the Diwan. Here he excels himself as a poet. Most of the 3500 odes and the 2000 quatrains that he wrote must have been sung in the nocturnal sessions in which he led members of the Mevlavi order in an ecstatic dance. Reminiscent of these intimate and animated sessions is a beautiful ode addressed to the musicians in whom Rumi invokes the blessings of God. The musician has a role to play in the life of a mystic and Rumi is so grateful for the helping spiritual communication that he pleads passionately for this class which was generally looked down upon by the people.

God bless the musicians, he says, with the sweetness of honey, and gives their

1. Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 164
hands strength to play on the instruments. They are devoted to love and deserve their rightful place of honour. Their melody has helped revive many drooping heart; why then, should they not receive the recognition due to their merits in a loving tributes to the companions who contributed so significantly to the Sama evenings. Rumi says:

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خدايا مطربان را انگیزند ده
برای ضریب دست آهین ده
چو دست و پای وقت عشق کردند
تو همیشان دست و پای راستین ده
چو پر کردنده گوش نا ز پیغام
تو شان صد چشم بخت شاه بین ده
کبوتر وار نالاند در عشق
تو شان از لطف خود برخ حسین ده
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Dance and music have an important place in Rumi’s scheme of things but removed from the context of contemplation, they cease to sublimate, and in fact tends to be abused as a mere instrument of satisfying one’s carnal desires. Rumi is aware of this danger and warns against indiscriminate use of the fine arts by the vulgar and the uninitiated. In their hands Sama becomes a mockery and a

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1. Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 164
Rumi is no rhymester. He does not consciously sit down to write a poem. He does not gather his tools about in a workshop. There is no design or craftsmanship about him. He is a man possessed. Poetry simply gushes forth like clear sweet water from a spring. He sings essentially of love. There is a superficial monotony of theme but those who read him today finds his odes as fresh, original and inspiring as they must have been some seven hundred years ago when they moved men to rare heights of joy and ecstasy. Thousands of odes in the Diwan, hammer essentially on the same theme but the treatment is so subtle and sincere that it is hard to resist the power, beauty and movement of his verse. The theme recurs, no

1. Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 165
doubt, but every ode invests old words with a new meaning, unearths a fresh angle, and brings about a deeper and more sensitive perception of the emotion that is love.

Love, you must concede (in all fairness), leads to goodness but the trouble arise because of the evil nature of man. You style your lust by the name of love. But between love and lust there is a big distance.

The Diwan is a world of its own. There is nothing objective or scientific about it. Here the concept of time and space changes, the distinction between space and speechlessness disappears. A moment of love is transformed into eternity. There is no analysis, no explanation, no apologies for the bold assertion that Rumi makes about the intensely subjective experience which transforms his own life. He takes the reader along on his voyage of discovery and gently helps him share his own exhilarating joy and happiness in a complete voluntary surrender to the will and vagaries of his Beloved. There is no attempt to preach, to persuade, to convince. The many moods of love find spontaneous expression in some of the most moving poetry of ever written by man success to him is as beautiful as

1. Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 165
failure, sweet union as welcome as the pangs of separation. In his world good and evil cease to exist the distinction between ugliness and beauty disappears, the hymn of hate becomes totally unnecessary and irrelevant—there is only the symphony of love, truth and beauty. The veils are lifted, slowly but surely, the old idols crumble like a house of cards and Rumi guides one on the path—sure footed, supremely humble, and allows one a glimpse of the inner mystery and the majesty of love. It is no empty boast when he sees that his heart and tongue have had many a mind to grasp the secret and mystery of the soul.

In the one of the Diwan one comes across Rumi in all his moods. There are moments of joy and exhilaration, there are moods of sorrow and grief’s; oneness glimpses of union as one comes across the state of separation, but in all the turmoil and confusion of life one detects a quiet inner conviction, a telling determination to accept the challenge, resolve the conflict and create something truly immortal. With all the apparent agitation and restlessness, the emotional upheaval consequent on the separation from Shams is diverted to creative challenge where frustration gives way to a sense of fulfilment and promise. Despite all the agony and pain that Rumi has gone through one does not come across any shrieking cries in the Diwan. There are no violent senses, no loud

1. Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 166
complaints, no ugly protest, no demonstrative disagreement with the Beloved. On the contrary, he is able calmly to recollect the terrifying experience of the storm which once seems so completely to sway him off his feet.

Shams-i-Tabriz is of course the hero of the Diwan though Zarkob comes in for a fare portion of praise. The odes addressed to Shams, however, give some idea of the supreme surrender of Rumi to what he considers the symbol of perfect man. Shams is identified with the primeval man; he is Adam, Jesus and Merry, all rolled into one, is at once the secret and the revealers of mysteries to man; bitterness is rendered sweet by him, he converts disbelief into faith. At his touch to thorn turns in to a rose. He is Rumi’s life, his soul, his faith, his beliefs as well as disbeliefs. There is nothing higher than him- he is the sovereign of sovereigns and from him Rumi begs a share of faith and fortune.....

Shams is invested with all kinds of paradoxical qualities and it is to him that

1. Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 168
turns for guidance, help and support in the tortuous task of scaling slippery spiritual heights. Shams is at once his friends, confident, master and guide. He is the Nooh, the spirit, the conqueror and the Conquered. He is the light, the revelation. He is at the same time a drop and an ocean. He is both a mercy, grace and a terror. He is in brief a paragon of virtues which reduce desperate paradoxes into a pattern of harmony and unity. It is to him that Rumi turns time and again in the Diwan for inspiration.¹

The historian Al Aflaki in his collection of anecdotes called Menaqibu Arifin, gives a number of stories relating to the miracles and wise sayings of Jalal. Many of these miraculous performances were followed by the conversion of those who witnessed them. A marvel or a wise saying of Jalal was generally accompanied by music and dance, which reminds us of the jubilations of the Indian Gods after Rama’s victories over his enemies. These stories, interesting enough in themselves, can scarcely be credited to such a learned man as Jalal undoubtedly was. After all, the significance of Jalal lies not in these rather lamentable fairy tales, but in the fruit of his work. Jalal like the lord Buddha, suffered considerably from the addition of fabulous tales and fancies of no real moment of his teachings.

Al-Aflaki tells a pretty story concerning the tenderness of Jalal for little children. As the poet passed by some children, they left their play and ran to him and bowed, Jalal bowed in response. One little boy, some distance off, seeing the honour bestowed upon his playmates, cried to Jalal: “wait for me until I come!”

¹Life and Works of Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 169
And Jalal waited and bowed to the little child. This story is worth more than juggler's tricks.1

The lyrical- we have already noted the acceptance of the Asrarnama. Among the other literary influences, according to Mr Nicholson we may note the poems of Sanai, Sadi and Nizami. The fact that Jalal's poetry sometimes faintly resembles Omar Khayyam is too slight to be of any value. Mr Nicholson very ably sums up the nature of the Mathnawi and Divan respectively; "The one is a majestic river, clam and deep, meandering through immeasurable ocean; the other a foaming torrent that leaps and plunges in the ethereal solitude of the hills." The poetry of Jalal is not of equal merit. His work seldom if ever has the technical polish of Jami. There is too much of it; too much produced in the belief that all his poetry was inspired. He is fond of harping on certain words, and as far as the translations are concerned he has little sense of honour! There was certainly room for a touch of honour in the poet's description of Iblis receiving from God a gift of beautiful woman whereby to tempt mankind; but Jalal entirely ignores it. These weaknesses are almost lost in the strength and purity and lyrical grandeur of many of Jalal's poems. He carries us along on a torrent of heavenly music. The rhythmic swing of his wonderful dance is soul-stirring. We seem to move exultantly, ecstatically to the sound of the poet's singing, far behind the silver stars into the presence of the Beloved. With what reverence, with what a glow of smile and subtle suggestion he describes the Beauty of the Beloved! With what exquisite passion he foretells the External Union! Then there is a lull in this fierce spiritual

1. Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p. 36-38
song, and Jalal sings, ever so gently and with an infinite tenderness, about human tears being turned into "rainclouds". He sings about the meeting of two friends in paradise, with the oft-repeated refrain, "Thou and I." There seems in this poem an indescribable and almost pathetic on the idea of human friendship and the Divine Friendship, a yearning tenderness for that human shadow, passing shadow though it be. Jalal appears to have the power of producing almost orchestral effects in his music of the spheres. There is that terrific touch of Wagner about his poetry, and in those suggestive Wagner pauses there is tenderness of expression more touching, more truly great than the loud triumphant notes. Jalal has truly said, "Our journey is to the Rose-Garden of Union." He sang about the Divine Rose-Garden; but did not forget to sing about the roses that fade and the human hearts that ache. We seem to see Jalal ever bowing to the little child in all his wonderful singing.¹

Jalal is said to have forty three years engaged in writing the Mathnawi. Often whole night were spent in composition. Jalal recites and his friend Hasan copying it down and sometimes singing portions of the verse in the beautiful choice. At the completion of the first book Hasan's wife died, and two years elapsed before the work was continued. The Masnavi is full of profound mysteries, and a most important book in the study of Sufism- mysteries which must, for the most part, be the most part, be left to the discernment of the reader. Jalal himself has said that great love is silent. It is in silence that we shall come to understand and supreme Mystery of Love that has no comparison. The keynote to the Masnawi

¹. Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p.p.38- 41
may be found in the prologue to the first book. The poet here sings of the soul’s longing to be united with the Beloved. The fact that he, and all other Sufi poets, uses as an analogy the love between man and woman renders the spiritual meaning extremely vague. We have, however, already considered this point in the introduction and it needs no further explanation. The Mathnawi has all the pantheistic beauty of the Psalms, the music of the hills, the colour and scent of roses, the swaying forest; but it has considerably more than that. These things of scent form of colour are the Mirror of the Beloved; these earthy loves the journey down the valley into the Rose-Garden where the roses never fade and where love is.1

About music, an important element in the life of a mystic, Rumi explains:

رقص و چولان بر سر میدان کند

رقص اندر و خون خود مردن کند

چون رهند از نست خود دستی زند

چون جهند از نفس خود رقصی گکند

مطربا تشان از درون دف می زند

بحرها در شور شان کف می زند 2

‘Holy’ man dance and wheel on the (spiritual) on battle field: they dance in their

1. Rumi the Persian Mystics, by F. Hadland Davis, p.p. 41-42
2. Life and Works of Muhammad Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p. 78
own blood. When they are freed from the hand (domain) of self, they clap hand;
when they escape from their own imperfection, they make a dance.

From within them musician strike the tambourine; at their ecstasy the seas burst
into foam.

Ihiya “Ulum” is written in concise prose but much the same views are
expressed there in great detail. And look at these passage from Alchemy of
happiness. “the heart of man has been so constitute by the Almighty that, like a
fluent, it contains hidden fire which is evolved by music and harmony, and
renders man beside with himself with ecstasy, these harmonies are echoes of that
higher world of beauty which we call the world of spirits; they remind man of his
relationship to that world, produce in him an emotion so deep and strange that he
himself is powerless to explain it. The effect of music and dancing is deeper in
proper as the natures in which they act and simple and prone to emotion; they fan
into a flame whatever love is already dormant in the heart, whether it be earthy
and sensual, or divine and spiritual.”

Again on page 9 of the Mathnawi, we see this line:

Compare this with Ghazzali:

عَرَقَتْ رَبِّي بِرَبِّي وَلَوْلَا رَبِّي لَا عِرَاقَتْ رَبِّي
Of love Rumi says,

عشق هایی کزپی زندگی بود
عشق نبود عاقبت. لنگی بود

Again Rumi talks of the meaning of this world

این جهان زندان و ما زندانیان
حضره گی زنداد و خود را و رهان
چیست دنیا از خدا خالق بنن
نی قمتش و نتره و میزان و زن

In Book I of the Mathnawi, for example' Rumi narrates an interesting story of contention between the Greeks and the Chinese in the art of painting. This allegory, illustrating the difference between formal theology and mysticism, is related earlier by Ghazzali in 'Yahia Ulum' considering how often parables used in this chapter of Yahia appear in the Book I of the Mathnawi, it is highly probable that Ghazzali is the source. Nicholson pertinently points out that while in both the older versions of the Story it is the Chinese who polish a wall in order that the picture painted by the artist of Rum may be reflected on the shiny surface, Jalaluddin represents the painting as being done by the Chinese and the polishing by the Ruins. His reason for making the change is evident. Since the polishers typify Sufi saints and mystical adepts, a Rumi in a poem addressed to Rumi's

1. Life and Works of Muhammad Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p.79
could not fail to reverse the traditional roles; and of course the reversal is artistically right. The first readers of the Mathnawi must have enjoyed the triumph of Rum as much as they would have resented the tactlessness of the poet if he had told them the story just as he had received it.  

The analogy of light and colour is a favourite theme with Rumi:

How wilt thou see red and green and russet before (seeing) these tree (colours) thou see the light?

But since they mind was lost (absorbed) in (perception of) the colour, these colours because to thee a veil from (debarred thee from contemplating) the light.

In as much as at night those colours were hidden, thou sawest that thy vision of the colour was (derived) from the light.

There is no vision of colour without the colour without the external light. Even so it is with the colour of inward phantasy.

In Book II of the Mathnawi, we come across the story of a police Inspector who summoned a man who had fallen dead-drunk on the ground to go to prison.

It comprises six books, containing in all, according to Al Aflaki's statement, 26,660 couplets. The second book was begun in 1263 A.D, two years after the completion of the first, when the work was interrupted by the death of the wife of Hasan Husamud-Din, the author's favourite pupil and amanuensis. The first book

1. The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi, books i&ii, Commentary202-203, Nicholson
2. Life and Works of Muhammad Jalal-ud din Rumi, by Afzal Iqbal, p 80
therefore, was ended in A.D. 1261, but we have no means of knowing how long it
was probably begun some considerable time after the death of Sham's-i- Tabriz
and was completed before the end of A.D. 1273, when the death of Jalaluddin
took place. Its composition, therefore, probably extended over a period of some
ten years. Each book except the first begins with an exhortation to Hasan
Husamud- Din Ibn Akhi Turk, who is likewise spoken of in the Arabic preface of
Book-I as having inspired that portion also. As he became Jalaluddin's assistant
and amanuensis on the death of his predecessor, Salahud-Din Feridun Zar-Kub
("the Gold beater") in A.D.1258. It is probable that the Mathnawi was begun after
this period.

It is unnecessary to say more about Jalaluddin's life, of which the most detailed
and authentic account is that given by al-Aflaki in his 'Act of the Adepts', partly
translated by Red house. It is true that many of the miraculous achievements of
Jalaluddin and his predecessors and successors which are recorded in this work
are quite incredible, and that it is, moreover marred by a few anachronisms and
other inconsistencies, but it was begun only forty five years after the master's
death (viz, in A.D. 1318) and finished in 1353 and was, moreover compiled by a
disciple living on the spot from the most authoritative information available, at
the express command of Jalaluddin's grandson, Chelebi Amir Arif, the son of
Bahauddin Sultan Walad. 1

As regard the lyrical poems which form the so-called Diwan of Shams-i-Tabriz

implied by Dulatshah that they were chiefly composed during the absence of Shams-i-Tabriz at Damascus, while Rida Quli Khan regards them rather as having been written in memoriam, but Nicholson's own view, which is probably correct is "that part of the Diwan was composed while Shams-i-Tabriz was still living, but probably the bulk of belongs to a later period." He adds that Jalaluddin was also the author of a treatise in prose, entitled Fihi-ma fihi, which runs to 3,000 baits”. This work is very rare, and I cannot remember ever to have seen a copy”.

Both the Mathnawi and the Diwan are poetry of a very high order. For the former it is commonly said in Persia that it is “the Quran in the Pahlawi (i.e., Persian) language.” While its author describes it, in the Arabic preface to Book-I, as containing “the Roots of the Roots of the Religion, and the discovery of the Mysteries of Reunion and sure knowledge.¹

By 1261, the year he began the Mathnawi, Rumi had already integrated his personality. Having resolved the conflicts in his heart, he now experienced oneness with all. He had undergone rebirth numerous times and easily related himself to humanity, for whom he felt a great concern and desire to guide. At the request of a new bosom friend, Husam-al Din (generally known as Ibn Akhi), Rumi interpreted the human situation and the seeker’s path to perfection during his nightly dances, to the accompaniment of the reed, Rumi related to Husam al Din the essence of man’s inward state. This practice continued for about ten

years. In the sixth volumes of the Mathnawi, Rumi reveal the innermost activities of man’s soul in quest of innermost certainty. He calls the Mathnawi, “the root of the root of the root of religion in respect to its unveiling of the mysteries of attaining truth and certainty. It is as a station and most excellent as a resting place.¹

Rumi’s Mathnawi in the west

The Mathnawi of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi is one of the most highly acclaimed poetical works of the past ages, by the savants and sages. The first great compiler and interpreter of the immortal Persian literature, Prof. E.G. Browne, considered Rumi the most eminent Sufi poet and the Mathnawi as a great poem of all times. But what is most thought provoking and heart warming for us, is the life long devotion of the most eminent scholars like R.A. Nicholson and A.I. Arbery, who dedicated their creative efforts to the translations, interpretations, appreciation and propagation of the Message and Muse of the immortal Reed player of Konia, for the English knowing world.²

The saintly scholar, R.A. Nicholson, regarded the Masnawi as ‘Unique panorama of universal existence, unrolling itself through ‘Time and Eternity’ and according to Arbery ‘Rumi was the man who enriched humanity with a splendid and massive contribution to literature and thought, whose greatness is as much as acknowledged in the West as in the East.”³

1. Rumi The Persian, the Sufi, by A.Reza Aresteh, p.p. 91-92
2. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by dr. Khawaja Abdul hamid Irfani, p.1
3. ibid, p.2
These short representative reference from the three most widely revered scholar literatures, have been quoted to show how deeply the inner self of, even the twentieth century West, swamped by the stark naked material is thirsting for the seven hundred years old, the soul-stirring wine of love. The conscience of the West hopes to find solace and satisfaction, in the message of peace preached by the Masnawi. The divinely melody from the hills and dales of the East has found its echo from the hearts in the far off West.

Masnawi And the Muslims

As was to be expected the Masnawi been regarded by the Muslim scholars, Saints and sages through the past ages, as the most acceptable interpretation of the teachings of Islam. The last of the greatest classical and mystic poets, Maulana Jami (818-898 A.H. or 1414-1492 A.D.) has remarked that Masnawi of the spiritual leader Rumi is the Quran in the Pahlawi language.

مثنوي مولوي معنوی

هست قرآن در زبان پهلوی

The widely-revered and eminent philosopher-poet of the Shia World, Mulla Hadi Asrar Subzwari (1212-1280 A.H.) in his commentary on the Masnawi has said that ‘Masnawi is an exposition of the glorious Quran, and whatever the Masnawi puts forth is, infact, the true meaning and interpretation of their holy book Quran.

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by Dr. K.A.H. Irfani, p.2
In Pakistan and India

In the vast Indo-Pak sub-continent with its great and rich heritage of Persian literature and Islamic traditions the Masnawi occupied the highest place for any poem of its kind. Perhaps nowhere else in the world, one could find so many and so beautifully written and decorated manuscripts of the Voluminous Mathnawi as in the private and public libraries spreading from the East Bengal and Hyderabad (Deccan) to Kashmir, Peshawar, Punjab, Sind and more other parts of the land.

It could neither be possible nor it is deemed necessary to name or quote the numerous Muslims scholars and divines who have offered heart-warming commentaries on the Mathnawi during the past centuries; the short reference already quoted may give an adequate idea of how the great scholars and mystic thinkers have responded to the Mathnawi.1

The Mathnawi is a lament of love, issuing from the soul, yearning for a reunion with its original source the common ear, turned dull and deaf by the loud noise of the machine age, may not be able to hear the divinely noise, or the eye bedimmed or dazzled by the flashing of the electric light may not see the rose gardens of the paradise, but those with ears and eyes of divine understanding equipped with the new and improved instruments for a better understanding have found in the Mathnawi something more that their predecessors. The head and heart of man, with the aid of new research techniques, have penetrated deeper and further than man did ever before.2

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by Dr. K.A.H. Irfani, p.3
2. ibid, p.4
UNESCO has designated the year 2007 as the “year of Maulana” (the 800th anniversary of Rumi’s birth) taking into account that relations between the West and the Muslim world have reached their lowest ebb, creating a dangerous gulf which is growing every day. Through philosophical and mystical concepts in Hazrat Maulana’s works, his importance and spiritual eminence, in whose thoughts we can see a common and shared background for all humans, our dialogue would achieve harmony and unity deeply immersed in the love of and respect for others, whoever they may be. 1

The year 2007 marks the 800th anniversary of the birth of Maulana Jalalud-Din Rumi. To celebrate this occasion the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism organised an International Symposium. The Symposium was held on 8th -12th May in Istanbul and Konya. More than 150 scholars participated in the Symposium from Nationalities as diverse as America, Mexico, India, France, Spain, Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Singapore, Egypt, Syria, Bangladesh and Pakistan. To name some of the most prominent participants: Dr. Syed Hossein Nasr, William Chittick, James Morris, Carl Earnest, Omid Safi Abdul Karim Soroush. The scholars from Pakistan included Dr. Javed Iqbal, Mr. Suhyel Umer, Dr Shahzad Qaisir, Dr. Arif Naushahi and Dr. Safir Akhtar. The papers read at 34 parallel sessions of the Symposium covered scores of dimension of Rumi’s Thought, its meaning and significance for the contemporary world. Some of them included, for example, the structures and various themes of the Mathnawi, the place of the Quran, the Sunnah and the prophet in it, Rumi’s relationship with

other important Islamic figures like Ibn ‘Arabi, Sadruddin Qunais, Bayzid Bistami and others, his concepts of love, Reason, Justice and Generosity and the diffusion of his teachings in the contemporary world.

The opening ceremony was chaired by the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while the threaten the world today keynote address were delivered by Professor Dr. Kenen Gurosy and Prof. Dr. Seyyed Hossein Nasr. The latter emphasised in his address the importance of Rumi’s message for the present day world. He said that it is with help of Rumi’s teachings that we can fight against the dangerous trends that threaten the world today. As examples of this threat he mentioned the environmental crisis, deviational intellectual tendencies, like fundamentalism, secularism and feminism. He said if we want to present to true image of Islam to the world today, Rumi is the key. Dr. Nasr also emphasized the need to recognize the universality of his teaching and stop limiting him to Afghanistan, Iran or Turkey due to his relationship with certain cities in these countries. ‘We must save Rumi from our own pettiness’s. At the end he said that every lover of Rumi should be grateful to the Turks for preserving Rumi’s heritage for eight hundred years. In the inaugural Session of the Konya Symposium Mr. Tahir Akyurek, the mayor of central city of Konya, said that Rumi is an important asset against Islamophobia. He hoped that the symposium will contribute to peace and humanity.

Here is the gist of some of the papers read in this international symposium.

1. Dr. Jave Iqbal compared the Satanology of Rumi with that of Allama Muhammad Iqbal concentrating of Rumi’s treatment of “Iblis and Mu’awiyah,”
and Iqbal's famous poem "The Parliament of Iblis." He maintained that according to the mystical interpretation, the Satan is a lover in sufferance who aspires to take revenge from his rival due to him he was veiled from his Beloved. He said that according to him Rumi's divine mercy must prevail over everything including Satan. On the other hand, Iqbal depiction of Satan is quite different from the mystical interpretation. Satan appears in the said poem as cunning and cruel adversary of human being, though a lover of God's unity but diplomacy and deceit are his characteristic features.

2. Professor Carlaw Ernst elaborated in his paper the structure and Meaning in Prefaces of Rumi's Mathnawi. He said that according to Rumi's own contention the subject matter of Mathnawi is the root of the root of the religion. In his prefaces to the Mathnawi, Rumi sets his goals of sufī Education. Dr. Ernst highlighted Rumi's complain, like other mystics, of the inadequacy of language in spiritual matters because of the absolute transcendence of the divine essence. Dr. Ernst that in Rumi's views it is love that can provide remedy for this inadequacy, Dr. Ernst also noted that one characteristic feature of Rumi's style is 'brevity of text and richness of meaning. Regarding Rumi's preface to Book II, Professor Ernst said that in it Rumi emphasized the necessity of revealing wisdom in proportion of the capacity of the receptacle. Another scholar in the same panel, Dr. Muhammad Isā Waley also talked about the content and message of the prefaces to the six books of Mathnawi. He said that as Rumi is not a systemiser, it cannot be said that his prefaces encapsulate the entire message that the Mathnawi delivers. He said that the prefaces also do not deal with the themes of the
following books. Dr. Waley mentioned the essential themes of some of the prefaces. Thus he told the audience that the central theme of the preface to Book III is the attainment of science of Divine Transcendence, preface to Book IV, talks about the sources of hope and hold the thankfulness to God as the key. The preface of the Book V elaborate the distinction between Shari’ah, Tariqah and Haqiqah. In this very panel Seyed Safavi presented a theory of coherence in the contents of Mathnawi according to which Book III is divided into 12 discourses which are further divided into three groups in line with the division of Aql into Aql Juzi, Aql Rabbani and Aql Kul.

3. Professor Annabel Keller illuminated Rumi’s relationship with the great Sufi, Bayazid al Bistami. She said that Rumi’s reverence for the latter can be easily seen from the lavish titles he gives in the Mathnawi and from the fact that Bistami is the person to whom the largest number of lines is devoted in the Mathnawi. Rumi devotes 300 lines in his masterpiece to Bistami. One of the reason for Rumi’s fascination for Bistami might be that Bistami is the most charismatic figure in history. Rumi just mentions Bistami’s name, quotes some of his sayings or sometimes relates certain anecdotes about him. She said that the five anecdotes thus related by Rumi represent stages in the life of Bistami and his procession from Shariah to Tariqah to Haqiqah. In Dr. Keeler’s view, these anecdotes from Bistami are included by Rumi not as pieces of factual information but as illuminative examples for everyone. She said that Rumi tries to explain the ecstatic sayings attributed to Bistami in a number of ways. At times he refers to the latter’s being ‘intoxicated’ in divine love while sometimes he likens him to
someone who is possessed by the firm. Still at other occasions he declares Bistami as a self-less and annihilated mystic.

4. Omid Safi from Hamdard University, spoke about Rumi’s relation to the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, Safi started by saying that the teachings of Maulana help us turn to the deepest and the loftiest meanings of the Islamic tradition. Dr. Safi said that the modern Islamic world in which the slogans of ‘relation to Quran and Sunnah’ and raised the term ‘Muhammadanism’ is not liked as identical to ‘Islam’. However, if we see with Rumi, who speaks of the Sufi as the inheritors of the light of Muhammad and emphasizes the adorning of the self with the ‘Muhammadan morals, Akhlaq-i- Muhammadi, we can see a justifications in the use of this term. Dr. Safi then proceeded to elaborate how one sees the marvellous reflection of the character traits of the prophet, peace be upon him in the personality of Rumi. Dr. Safi concentrated particularly on humility and related several anecdotes from Rumi’s life, for instance his bowing down in respect before a Christian monk for more than thirty times, while the latter bowed only one in the beginning; Dr. Safi contrasted this to the attitude prevalent in the modern Islamic world. At the end he pointed to another dimension of the relationship of Rumi with the prophet, namely the prophet as a cosmic being and purpose of the creation of the whole universe.

5. Mariana Malinova spoke on the “The Dynamics in the image of Muhammmad in the writings of Jalaluddin Rumi”. From the prophecy to the station of seeing, she said that according to Rumi, because the prophet Muhammmad is personification of Islam, following the example of Muhammad is the first step of
the Sufi path and the Mi’raj is the archetype of the spiritual journey. His message contains all divine messages. She said that in the context of the problem of unity and multiplicity the concept of the al- Haquiqah al Muhammadiyyah is the key which is Universal spirit of everything and father of all creatures.

6. Clara Jane nadal’s paper was titled From the Spinning of stars to the spinning of the words. She started by mentioning Rumi’s predicament after his separation from Shams Tabrizi and the transformations of his heart went through, as a result of which, she maintained, it became one with Shams and then the macrocosm. She moved from the elaborate the element of movement as the essence of life, as represented in the traditional dances. This movement also represents the idea that human heart, which is the centre of human being thanks to its theomorphic nature, is capable of assuming all forms.

7. Muhammad Sid al- Maulawi read a paper titled ‘A personal Interpretation of Rumi’s teachings and the philosophy of Rotation’. In the beginning he shed light on the three phases of Rumi’s life: as jurist consult, meeting with Shams and after separation from Shams. Al Mawlawi said that the sole target of Rumi’s writings and teaching was the production of perfect human beings. The steps Rumi proposed for the task, said al- Mawlawi are first, the emancipation of reason, second, freedom of the will and third, contemplation in the depths of the human self. Al- Mawlawi elaborated that Rumi allowed his disciple to marry and engage in occupations and trade unlike other mystics and emphasized that an ascent to God cannot be made except with power. He concluded that ethics was at the centre of Rumi’s teachings.
Dr. Alice Husnberger compared the concept of reason in Rumi and Nasir Khusraw. She started by mentioning that the precedence of love over reason was controversy in the 13th century Sufism. She said that though Rumi and Nasir Khusraw came from two different intellectual traditions there are certain similarities between the two, for instance, both wrote in Persia for religious purposes and both were spiritual leaders. She said that Khusraw’s main source was neo-platonic philosophy and Ikhwan al Safa so according to him reason was at the highest level and love was inferior to it. On the other hand Rumi, a Sufi rather than a philosopher developed his own intellectual vocabulary. He believed in the supremacy of love over the reason and said that lovers are selfless and, unlike the philosophers fearful of death, dies to be drowned. Rumi says that the rationalist has wooden legs and he criticises the four juristic schools for having failed to understand the power of love. Dr. Hansberger concluded that when Rumi criticises reason he is not against the idea of universal reason but that of particular.

Jalalud-Din undoubtedly perceived his father as a man of great integrity and his mother a woman of great warmth and self-sacrifice. From him Rumi acquired knowledge of the times, and from observing him in action and speech he developed outstanding character traits. Moreover, the public expected such a distinguished family to set an exemplary life and impart social values. Thus, from the beginning people respected him and the respect increased as Rumi became an important spiritual leader.  

1. Rumi the Persian, The Sufi, by A Reza Aresteh, p.31
In the company of his father he had the privilege of meeting the most prominent spiritual leaders of the time, including many Sufis, among them ‘Attar’ who presented him with his mystical text ‘Asrar Nama.(Treatise on Secrets) and Al-Suhrewardi, the great illuminist. Rumi thus gained from his contact with both his father and the Sufies.

Professionally he gained some recognition in jurisprudence, Islamic Law and Theology by the time he was twenty four. Rumi is neither a jurist nor philosopher, nor yet a poet, but with regards to basic truths he possesses profound comprehension which scorns imitation. He cares little for logical contradiction, in expression of his thoughts and sentiments, for it was not his object to found a system of philosophy or theology. So he adopted verse in place of prose as his instrument of expression which helped to maintain constancy of argument without the necessity of removing local inconsistencies. A great and creative thinker takes up all the philosophies of life that have risen before his time weaves together their threads of many hues, and out of their contradictions ‘creates new unity’. Rumi had before him, on one side a vast structure of thought of purely Islamic origin on the other side was the vast volume of Greek thought, which was the creation of the highest minds. On one side was the wisdom of faith and the Quran and on the other the product of Reason. Rumi could not ignore any of these bodies of thought. He was not frightened by the that a certain opinion was logically inconsistent with the other. Honesty of thought has more value with him then

1. Rumi the Persian, The Sufi, by A Reza Aresteh, p.p.31-32
consistency. In all these religions and philosophies which have wrought revolutions and discovered new domains in the universes of mind or space there exist important elements which reason has so far failed to humanise.

Rumi is great philosopher poet, but his philosophy is enlightened with spiritual frenzy and creative madness. The object of his poetry is not to entertain, or please or impart information, but to inspire the heart and elevate the mind.  

Rumi being master in the realms of Reason give preference to love and experience over mere logical reason. He seeks to fortify self, instead of denying it. He contends that there is no contradiction between the Self and selflessness; the one without the other is indeed vain and meaningless.

He believe that Taqdir (Determinism) does not mean that actions and achievements of each individual have been determined by God before hand, but that ‘Taqdir’ is nothing more than the law of life.

Rumi believed that conditions otherwise contradictory are made one and harmonized in the Unity of Love. Love is the food of all life and cure of all ills. Love make man capable of absorbing God’s attributes in his ego and became a share in Godhood. Love is the soul of all religions and morality. “Annihilation means to live in God without losing individual identity; the ‘self’.”

Rumi believe that the words of matter as also of ideas, ideas and feelings are created by the Sef of man to serve as instruments as well as a measure of his

1. The sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.58
2. ibid, p.59
infinite and unending progress toward the Absolute Self.

Iqbal in his ‘Asrar o Rumuz’ tells us how one day Rumi in his ‘Ma'qtab’ at Halab (Allepo) was engrossed in discussing problems of Philosophy. He was explaining to his pupils the intricacies of Neo-Platonic thought as also the views of the skeptics. Heaps of books lay around him and he was shedding light of wisdom all around him as he sat in all his glory. Suddenly Shams, looking haggard and disheveled walked in; looked casually around, and asked:

ْکَنَتْ اَیْنَ غَوْرَا وَقَیْلَ وَقَالَ چَیْسَت
ْاِیْنَ گَیَاسَ وَہَمٌ وَاسْتَذِلالَ چَیْسَت

“what is all this noise and idle talk? What is this fruitless play of reason, fancy and argumentation?”

Rumi who did not like this intrusion in his discussions by an unknown stranger founded a little and then:

ْمُوَلْوَیٰ فَرْمَوَد نَادَانَ لَبَّ بَهِ بَندَ
ْبَرَ مَتاَلاَتِ خَرَبَتَندَانَ مَخَندَ
ْپَاَی خَوَیشُ اَزَ مَکَتَبِ بِنْرَ گَذَارَ
ْقَیِّلَ وَقَالَ اَسْتِ اَیْنَا تَرَا بَا وَی چَیَکَارَ
ْقَالَ مَا اَزَ فَهَمَ تَوْ بَالآَئِرَ اَسْتَ
ْشَیْشَه اَدَرَاکْ را رَوْشَنِگَر اَسْتَ

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.39
2. ibid., p.39
“Rumi(Maulavi) said shut thy mouth of fool!

Do not ridicule the discourses of the wise. Get out of my ‘’Maktab’’-

We are having discussions; it is no business of yours. Our discourse is beyond thy understanding. It brightens the mirror of perception.(knowledge)” And then:

سوز شمس از گفتگه ملا
آتشی از جان تبریزی کشور
بر زمین برق نگاه او فتاد
خاک از سور دم او شعله زاد
آتش دل خرمن ادراک سوخت
dفتر آن فلسفی را پاک سوخت 1

“Rumi hot words kindled the wroth of Shams and fire darted forth from Tabrizi’s soul. The lightning of his look fell on the earth and by the fire of his breath, flames kept up from the dust”.

Rumi who was completely bewildered by what had taken place before his very eyes, looked around in confusion and then addressed the old and haggard vision that stood there with a mysteriously meaningful smile on his lips.

گفت این آتش چسان افروختی؟
دفتر اریاب حکمت سوختی 2

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.40
2. ibid, p.40
He (Rumi) said, how didst thou kindle this fire? Thou hast burnt to ashes the books of the philosopher.”

The following report that Iqbal has put in the mouth of Shams, is in fact the enunciation of his most often quoted views regarding Reason and Love.

"The sheikh (Shams) said o Muslim caught in the infidel's snare (thread)! This is an ecstatic experience; no business of thine!

My flame is the crimson and coloured elixir. Thou hast made thy equipment and outfit out of the snow of philosophy.

From the cloud of thy through rain down only the hail stone.”

“Set alight a fire from thy heap of straw. Build up the flame from thy dust (earth)”

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.40
And Rumi’s soul was literally set aflame. We know of no parallel for such a roaring conflagration that enveloped the entire Being of the towering philosopher and theologian. Rumi’s own son, Sultan Walad has described in detail how Rumi left off his former way of life and gave himself up to the new influence. Just a few lines are quoted are to give a symbolic picture of the ‘Revolution’ in Rumi’s soul.

روز و شب در سماع رقصان شد
بر زمین همچون چرخ گردان شد
بانگ و افغان او به عرش رسید
ناله اش را بزرگ و خرد شدید

“Day and Night he danced in ecstasy; he whirled like the sky on earth. His calls and cries reached the highest heaven and were heard by all the big and the small.”

This sudden leap from the Head to the heart; from the traditional sanctuary of the ‘Maktab’ and the ‘Mosque’ on the open street has been variously commented upon. We quote here just the last two line of one of the Rumi’s object of Rubais...

سجاده نشین با و قاری بودم
با زیچه کورکان کویم کرده۱

“i was respectable religious guide- you (o Shams0 have made me the object of ridicule for the children in the street.”

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.41
The ascetic philosopher and jurist suddenly burst into rapturous and spontaneous melody, singing of the new-found fountain of love and Ecstasy. The erudite scholar who is not known to have composed any poetry before, began to pour upon his rapture and exclusion into the most heart warming "Ghazals", that have never been equalled in their over brimming emotion, exuberance, spontaneously, and some time, even the words, seem to ‘dance’ with the rhyme and the rhythm. A few lines are quoted just to give the reader a short glimpse into the great soul burning with Love and exulting in the new experience:

\[
\text{چنان مسمّ خنان مسمّ من امروز}
\]
\[
\text{که از چنبر برون حسّت من امروز}
\]
\[
\text{بجان بر آسانّ عشق رقتّم}
\]
\[
\text{بصورت گر درین پستّم من امروز}
\]
\[
\text{نمیانام کچایم؟ ایک فرخ}
\]
\[
\text{مقاسی کاندر و هسّت من امروز}
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\[
\text{گرفتم گوش عقل و گفتّم ای عقل}
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\text{پرون رو کرّتر و ارستّم من امروز}
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'I am so intensely intoxicated today that i seem to have leaped out of the canopy of the sky.'

1. The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.41
“In spirit, I have ascended the high heaven of Love, though in appearance, I am living down on this earth.”

“I know not where I am! But, full of bliss is the place (the state) where I happen to be today.”

“I held reason by the ear and said o Reason go away; I am freed of the thee today.”

Thus Rumi freed himself from the hair splitting reason and entered the domain of Love and Divine Frenzy. A new entered the rolling sphere of life’ giving it a new light and a new and higher meaning. It was a new birth and the singer of the most rapturous songs known to poetry and the composer of the noblest Poem in man’s worse, the Lay of the Reed, the Quran in Persian, was born. ¹

Rumi’s belief in the Quran and his regard for the prophet is deep-rooted. About the Quran, Rumi says...

The Quran is (dictated) from the lips of the prophet.

But if anyone says God did not speak it, he is an infidel.

¹ The Sayings of Rumi and Iqbal, by K.A.H. Irfani, p.42
² Rumi’s Impact on Iqbals Religious thought, by Nazir Qaiser, p. xiii
Again:

هاست قرآن مرترا همچون عصا
کفرها را در کشد چون ازدها

"To thee the Quran is even as the rod (of Moses). It swallows up (all) infidelities', like a dragon."

About the prophet, Rumi says:

احمدار بکشاید آن پر جلیل
تا ابد بی هوش ماند جبرمل

"If Ahmad should display that glorious pinion (his spiritual nature), Gabriel would remain dumfounded unto everlasting."

Again Rumi asserts that God 'bestowed an existence on the heavens because of His Love for the prophet.

Rumi's Love for the prophet Muhammad (ص) and the homage he pays thereon are expressed in different ways. In Mathnawi alone there are numerous sayings of the prophet which Rumi has quoted and made captain of his verses. This explicitly denotes Rumi's love and regard for the prophet. "Still is the Nat of Maulana Rumi well known in Turkey and the countries where Rumi's mystical poetry is reads."

1. Rumi's Impact on Iqbal's Religious thought, by Nazir Qaiser, p. xiv
2. ibid, xiv
Rumi is regarded as an eminent religious scholar. "The Muslim world has honoured him with the title of Maulawi-i-Man’nawi (The Doctor of meaning), a religious scholar who is capable of philosophising, of penetrating into the meaning physical and spiritual phenomena and lifting the veil of appearance to peep into the reality behind them." Undoubtedly "Rumi as a philosopher of religion stands shoulders above all those Muslim thinkers who are called hukana in the history of Muslim thought."

Rumi possesses an incontestable position as a mystic poet. The tribute paid to him by the western thinkers is particularly noteworthy in this respect. Dr. R.A. Nicholson expresses his views regarding Rumi's uniqueness as a mystic poet thus: "In Rumi the Persian mystical genius found its supreme expression. Viewing the vast landscape of Sufi poetry, we see him standing out as a sublime mountain-peak; the many other poets before and after him are but foot-hills in comparison. The influence of his example, his thought and his language is powerfully felt through all the succeeding countries; every Sufi after him capable of reading Persian has acknowledged his unchallenged leadership." Professor E.G. Browne terms him "the most eminent Sufi poet whom Persian have produced." "To professor I.J. Arbery 'Jalaluddin Rumi has long been recognised as the greatest mystical poet of Islam, and it can well be argued that he is the supreme mystical poet of all mankind."

Rumi is highly esteemed as a thinker not only for wide scope of his thought and profound insight, but also for being the forerunner of many modern streams of thought. His thought incorporates Voluntarism and spiritual Pluralism, the two
modern trends which reminds us of Nietzsche, Schopenhaner, Bergson, Lloyd Morgan, William James and James Ward in the post-Kantian period. Again in his thought Activism, Individualism, theory of Emergent Evolution and religious experience are blended into one—a fact which makes him an encyclopaedic thinker. His view of evolution is a great contribution in the history of philosophical and scientific thought. It has rightly been said of him in this respect: 'Neither modern philosophy nor modern science has left him behind. For about a century now the entire philosophical and scientific thought has been dominated by the concept of evolution.' Again, in the field of phrenology his thought is equally valuable. Erich Fromm rightly believes that Rumi was "a man of profound insight into the nature of man. He discussed the nature of the instincts, the power of reason over the instincts, the nature of the self, of consciousness, the unconscious and cosmic consciousness: he discussed the problem of freedom, of certainty, of authority. In all these areas, Rumi has a great deal to say which is important to those concerned with the nature of man.

Iqbal says that no equal has seen born after Rumi in the soil of Persia. He beautifully puts it thus:

نه انها پہر کوری رومی عجم کی لالہ زارون سی
وہی آب و گل ایران و ہی تبریج ہی ساقی 1

1. Rumi's Impact on Iqbal's Religious thought, by Nazir Qaiser, p. xii-xv
To Rumi self is not a datum; it is an achievement. Hence it is open to realization and development. Both Moses and Phararaoh are present in the self and for Rumi it is the choice of man to realize any of these possibilities.

Rumi believes that the self has great hidden potentialities and capacities of which man usually remains unaware. Rumi thus says:

"There is an illimitable fountain of milk within thee: why art thou seeking milk from the pail?"

Rumi advices man to fortify and develop the self. He asserts:

"If you are a grain, the little birds will peak you up; if you are a bud, the children will pluck you off.

Hide the grain (bait), become wholly a snare; hide the bud, become the grass on the roof."

2. ibid, 24
The fully developed self does not disintegrate. The really developed personality does not dissolve even with the Reality is seen face to face as in mystic experience. Rumi beautifully explains it thus:

رنگ آهن محو رنگ آتش است
ز آتش نی لاقه و خامش وش است
چون بصری گشت همچون زرکان
پش انا النار است لاقش بی زبان
شد ز رنگ و طبع آتش محتمش
گوید او من آتش من آتشم

The colour of the iron is naught in the colour of the fire: it (the iron) boats of its fieriness, though (actually) it is like one who keeps silence.

When it has become like gold of the mine in redness, then without tongue its boat is “I am the fir.”

It has become glorified by the colour and nature of the fire: it says, “I am the fire”, I am the fire.”

At this stage it is imperative to discuss Rumi’s concept of Fana. Fana literally means “passing away”. In pantheism, “Fana” is the disappearance and extinction of the individual in the universal”. But to Rumi it “means the annihilation of those

1. Rumi’s Impact on Iqbal’s Religious thought, by Nazir Qaiser, p. 28
experiences which bar the real self'. It is actually the transformation of the self or liberation from the conventional self. In other words it is cleaning one’s own consciousness of what Rumi calls fictions, idols and untruths, and purifying the heart of greed, envy, jealousy, grief, and anger so that it regains its original quality of becoming mirror-like to reflect the reality within it”.

Only after this state of Fana the self reaches the stage of Baqa, which is the subsistence and persistence of the self in the Divine attributes.

Dr. Nicholson expounds Rumi’s view thus “Fana is seldom a purely negative conceptions. Its compliment is the positive state (Baqa), in which the 'self' that has ‘passed away’ by transmutation rather than ‘annihilation’ of its unreal attributes. ‘Subsists or persists’ in the divine attributes with which it has become ended. 1

That Fana is liberation from the conventional self and its completion is Baqa is beautifully expressed by Rumi thus:

این چنین معدوم کو از خویش رفت

بهترین هستیها افتاد و رفت

او بستنی باصفات حق فنا است

در حقیقت در اور را باقی است 1


2. ibid, p. 136
"Such a non-existent one who hath gone from (become selfless) is the best of beings, and the great (one among them).

"He hath passed away (Fana) in relation to (the passing away of his attributes in) the Divine attributes, (but) in passing away (from selfhood.) He really hath the life everlasting (Baqa.)"

This is precisely the reason that Rumi highly esteems the man who is born twice. He say:

چون دوم بار آدمی زاده بزاد
پای خود بر فرق علت ای نهاد

"(But) when a son of man is born twice, he plants his foot upon the head of (all) causes".

This ‘rebirth’ may be called Baqa (living) which comes after the stage of Fana (transformation), as discussed before. However, this stage is very difficult to reach; as the transformation is not easy. One has to get Liberation from the conventional self.

Rumi says:

هر بنای کهنه کابادان کنند
نیکه که اول کهنه را ویران کنند

1. Rumi’s Impact on Iqbals’s Religious Thought, by Dr Nazir Qaiser, p. 32
“Whenever they (the builders) put an old building in good repair, do not they first ruin the old one?”

Rumi is a great advocate of freedom. According to him the self, by developing itself, has not only to shape its own destiny but also the destiny of the universe. And that cannot be possible without freedom of the will. Freedom of the will is both an acquisition and a precondition of deed.

To Rumi freedom of will is to be acquired by developing the personality. Thus it cannot be the lot of everybody. Rumi says that “complete freedom belongs only to the Perfect men”.

Rumi believes that the Self is free, and not determined. He says,

\[\text{امر ونهى و خشن تشريف و عتيب نیست جز مختار را ای پاک جیب} \]

“Command and prohibition and anger and conferment of honour and (bestowal of) rebuke concern him (only) who possesses the power of choice, o pure bosomed one.”

According to Rumi if the self is already determined, it will not develop and reach its cherished goal. This is why Rumi criticise Jabriyya and Necessitarianism which “assert that Divine omnipotence excludes the possibility of free action on the part of man.” Criticises the Jabriyya (Necessitarian), Rumi says:

\[\text{پسن تسفلت أمد این دعوى جبر لاحرم بدتر بود زین روز گیر} \]

“Hence this doctrine of Necessity is Sophisticism (Scepticism) consequently he (the Necessitarian), from this point of view, is worse than the infidel (believe in absolute Free-Will)”.  

1. Rumi’s Impact on Iqbals Religious thought, by Nazir Qaiser, p.35
2. ibid, 35
1.2 Personality of Kabir

Amongst the several saints that have blessed our country, Kabir Das, the well-known mystic poet, deserved a major credit for bringing about a revolution. He was a man of principles and practiced what he preached. People called him by different names like Das, Sant, Bhakta etc. As Das, he was referred to as the servant of humanity and thus a servant of divinity.¹

About Kabir's birth and parentage there is no unanimity among his biographers on the basis of external and internal sources and evidences. There is a near agreement on certain points.² Some legends state Kabir was the illegitimate son of Brahmin widow. One version of the legend is that he was conceived by a widow because of Ramananda's blessings and that like Christ, this occurred without a natural father. In order to protect himself from public slaver, the widow left her baby near a pond some way out of the city. A Muslim weaver called 'Ali, popularly known as Niru, saw the baby and being childless he and his wife Nima decided to adopt it as their own.³ Since they were issueless they adopted the baby who was christened as kabir by local Qazi. This view was accepted in the light of some verses of Kabir himself in which he describes the incident of his birth as a direct emancipation from God.

"I have just come from God
I was not born, nor did I dwell in a womb;

¹ http://www.thecolorsfindia.com/Kabir/index.html
² Unpublished article of Dr. Mansoor Alom. P. 2
³ A History of Sufism in India, by Sayid Athar Abbas Rizvi, p. 374
I have appeared a child as a Ian
I am not in heaven, or in earth, in any country.¹

But considerable researchers have however revealed that kabir was born into a family of weavers who were originally Nath Pandits and followers of Granthnath. But they were converted to Islam a generation or prior to the birth of Kabir. Dr. Mohan Singh, the author of "Kabir and Bhakti Movement" (Lahore 1934, p. 2-4) has also proved on the basis of the Holy Adi Grantha of the Shikhs that kabir was a Musalman by birth. Almost all European scholars who wrote on Kabir are of the same opinion that kabir was a Muslim by birth.

Sufis considered Kabir as a Muwahhid (follower of the Wahdatal-Wajud). Once Shaikh Ruzqu'llah Mushtaqi (1491-1581), a contemporary of Kabir, whether the celebrated Kabir, whose Bishunpads were on everyone's lips, was a Muslim or a Kafir. The reply was that he was muwahhid. The Shaikh then asked whether a muwahhid differed from both. Shaikh Sadullah replied that the truth was difficult to understand and such knowledge could only be acquired gradually.²

The Ain-i- Akbari mentions kabir in connection with the history of Orissa and Awadh. In both states he is referred to as muwahhid. At one places the author states that many subtle truths relating to his sayings and exploits were current among the people. Because of his catholicity of doctrine and charismatic personality he was friend to both Hindus and Muslaims. At another place he the author writes that Kabir

1. Unpublished article of Dr. Mansoor Alom. P. 2
2. A History of Sufism in India. By, Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizwi, p.373
muwahhid lived during the reign of Sikandar Lodi. Earlier Khwaja Yaqub, a son of Baba Farid, defined a muwahhid as follows:

"The Muwahhid is he whose main concern is good action. Whatever he does aims at seeking divine grace. Water does not drown him and fire does not burn him. Absorbed in Twahid (Wahdat al Wujud) he is in a state of self-effacement. A sufi or a lover belonging to this category is concerned with nothing, if he makes a quest for himself. When the lover is completely absorbed in the Beloved, the attributes of the lover and Beloved become identical."

Factual details of Kabir's life and activities are few and far between. His followers and the authors of the biographical dictionaries of the bhaktas, the Bhaktamal, constructed his life story mainly from legends and his own verses, which had generally been intended to satisfy the thirst of the soul to attain the return to God from whom it was separated. They were also a teaching device used to express beliefs. The Davistan-i-Mazahib gives Kabir's background according to the legends of the Vaishnavite vairagis (mendicants) with whom he was later identified. The only reliable facts about his life are that he lived in Banaras about the fifteenth century and was a weaver. The earliest authentic collection of his hymns and slokas was compiled in the Granth Sahib. A number of eighteenth century painters made portraits of him according to suggestions from their patrons.

Considerable controversy surrounds the name of his Guru. A Pir called Pitambar has been suggested as the person who filled this role. A Hindi scholar identified

1. A History of Sufism In India, by Athar Abbas Rizwi, p. 373.
Pitambar Pir with the Hindu God Rama. According to the Khazinatul-Asfiya Kabir was the disciple of Shaykh Taqi. Shaykh Taqi of Kara Manikpur, also a weaver by trade, should not be identified as Kabir's Guru for he was a disciple of Shaikh Salim Chisti (1478-1572). According to the Khazinaitul-Asfiya, Shaykh Taqi died in 984/1576-77 and Kabir died in (1003/1594-95). Nothing can be said about the authenticity of Shaikh Taqi's date of death but that for Kabir is undoubtedly incorrect. Another Shaykh Taqi lived in Jhusi, near Allahabad, although nothing else is known of him.

According to Vaishnavite devotional tradition Kabir was a disciple of Ramananda, however legends fail to suggest he was formally initiated by the saint. Some authors imply that Kabir had no earthly Guru and like Uwaisi Sufi, was directly in contact with a number of eminent Hindu saints and sufis. It is not unlikely Views on the Wahdat al-Wujud, expressed in Hindi impressed Kabir.

The Hindi verses called Dohas and doctrinal poems jointly known as Ranai'ni, from the majority of Kabir's poems. The most important of his verses were generally memorized by his disciples after they had been uttered, and then written down immediately or soon afterwards. This process gave rise to considerable interpolation and naturally many unauthentic verses are included. The verses in the Adi Granth, the Kabir Granthawali and the Bijak (treasury) are the most reliable.

Kabir was married and although he was unhappy with his role as a husband and father, he preached neither renunciation nor celibacy. Throughout his life when he

1. A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p. 374
was not travelling he lived the traditional life of a married man. Before his death he is said to have migrated from Banaras to Maghar. Some authors suggested that Maghar was close to Banaras, others believe it was in the district of Basti, near Gorakhpur in U.P. The decision was deliberately taken by Kabir in order to believe the current Hindu belief that one who died in Maghar would return in a following life as an ass. Of the many dates given for kabir's death 1505 is the most reliable.

After his death Kabir's body was claimed by both Muslims and Hindus, the former wishing to bury it and the later to cremate it. When the door of the room where the dead body was lying was opened it was missing. According to tradition only a bunch of flowers was found under the sheet and these were divided amongst the two groups.

Kabir's concept of Absolute Reality was founded on the dvaitavaite-vilakshana-vada of the Nath. Its compatibility with the Wahdat-al-Wajud was responsible for Kabir's fame as a muwahhid. He says

"As the bubbles of the river are accounted water and blend with the water of the ocean,

So the man who looketh on all with an equal eye'

Shall become pure and blend with the Infinite ¹

Another Kabir's hymn states:
"When a streme is lost in the Gan Ganges,
It becometh as the Ganges itself;
Kabir is similarly lost in God by invoking Him;
I ha The perfume of the sandal is communicated to the other trees,
They then become as the sandal itself.
He become as the true one and need not go elsewhere.
When the philosopher's stone is applied to Copper,
It becometh gold;
So Kabir having met the saints,
Hath become as God.

On the basis of the analogy of ice and water, Kabir wrote:

Water coagulates into ice
And ice melts into water
It (the Water) only changes its form
Now, nothing more can be added.¹

1. A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p.375
Kabir's Nirguna Brahma has bothered transcendental and immanent nature. He is God of Gods's Supreme Lord, primal and omnipotent. He is unfathomable, unknowable, stainless and changeless. He is neither low nor high; in Him is neither honour nor dishonor. He is eternal, all pervading, defused and equally contend in all things. He extinguishes worldly sparks from the heart of his saints and dwells in their hearts permanently. Their music is intoxicated with God's elixir. The man in whose heart nothing dwells but God is perfect, to sum up are Kabir's own words:

"Though styled inaccessible and invisible, dwelleth within the heart.

None can find the limit of the secret of the sustainer on earth;

He shineth in the plantain blossom and in the sunshine,

And hath taken this dwelling in the pollen of the lovers.

God's spell is within the twelve petals of the heart where the holy Lord of Lakshmi reposeth.

The great God reacheth from the lower of the upper regions of the firmament.

He illumineth the silent realm,

Where there is neither sun nor moon.

He was in the beginning, he is without stain and happy

Know that the pervadeth the body as well as the universe.

He batheth in Mansarowar (the lake of the heart);
His password is 'soham' (I am he).

He is not subject to merits or demerits,

Nor concerned with caste, with sunshine, or with shade; He is only found in the gurus asylums.

He who fixeth his attention on Him removeth it not,

Becometh released from transmigration,

And absorbed in the Infinite,

He who knoweth God in his heart.

And repeateth His name, becometh as He.

Saith Kabir, the mortal shall be saved

Who fixeth in his heart God's light and spell.¹

Kabir's void referred to sunya, a concept in Mahayana Buddhism and to Hindu esoteric philosophy. It represented his concept of the Ultimate Reality. In order to convey the idea of Reality transcending the casual relationship, he indulged in the ancient Indian practice of describing Reality through negatives; neti neti (not this, not this). It was only to Reality in more commonly known terminology that he used such words as Brahma, Om, Niranján, Kartar, Sa'īn, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna, Hari,

¹ A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A. Rizwi, p.376
Govind, Muriri, Visambhar, Gopinath, jagannath, Mahadev, Allah, Rahim, Karim and Khuda. The name most frequently used is Rama, who, as he himself explains, is Nirguna Rama. He reminds 'Kabir, call Him Ram who is omnipotent,

We must discriminate in mentioning the two Rams. The one Ram (God) is contained in all things; the other (Ram Chander) is only contained in one thing himself.

Again drawing on an everyday analogy in a sloka, Kabir wrote that God was like sugar scattered in sand, elephants could not find it, but the lowly ants could. Another example used was that he could feel himself absorbed in God just as the sound of a bronze vessel was absorbed back into the pieces after it was broken. Fearlessly and cuttingly Kabir criticized ritualism and preached craft, refusing to spare even monasticism in his scatting attacks. He also denounced hypocrisy, falsehood and deceitfulness in both religious and social ethics. Devotion, penance, austerity, fasting and ablutions were meaningless without knowing the way to love and serve God.

Frequently Kabir came into contact with Yogis, but he always remained unimpressed by their by their matted locks and unkempt appearance. In their emphasis on ascetic pursuits and obsession with physical exercises, he believed they had failed to inherit Gorakh's, real absorption with the supreme. To Kabir, one who was united with God was the real Yogi. Using the technical terms of Yogis in his verses, Kabir often argued with their beliefs. One such hymn is as follows:
Meditation and remembrance of God are my two ear-rings independence of the world my patched coat;

Dwelling in a silent cave my devotional posture,

The abandonment of worldly desires my sect.

My king, I am a (Jogi) without temporal love;

I repine not at death and separation.

In the regions of the universe I find my horn;

The whole world, which I hold as ashes, is my wallet;

Riddance of the three qualities and release from The world are my contemplative attitude.

I have made my heart and breath the two gourd of my lyre,

And unbroken attention on God its frame.

The strings are strong and break not;

The lyre playth spontaneously;

On hearing it the perfect are enraptured,

And I no longer feel the swaying of worldly love.

Saith Kabir, the soul which hath played in this way
Shall not be born again.

Kabir strongly denounced the idol worship. Often he said that if God was found worshipping stone, he would worship a mountain. He goes on to say 'Better than that stone is a hand-mill which grindeth corn for the world to eat.'

Kabir noted that sculptors while carving idols stood on them yet were not instantly struck dead. Idol worshipers offered food to their Gods, which in reality was eaten by Brahmanas, said Kabir and he expressed shock to see that people killed creatures in order to feed these clay gods.

To Kabir, the prayers, pilgrimages and fasting of the Muslims were equally abominable. He was critical of Qazis, Mulas and Shaikhs and reminded them:

Conscience its prime teacher;

Then O priest, call men to pray to that mosque
Which hath ten gates.

Sacrifice, wrath, doubt and malice;

Make patience thine utterance of the five prayer.

The Hindus and the Muslimans have the same Lord;

What can the Mulla, what can the Shaykh do for man?

Saith Kabir, I have become mad;
Stealing my mind's way from the world I have become blended with God.' 1

In one of his hymns Kabir tells Brahmans and Mulas alike that they should not condemn each other's religious texts as false. What was untrue was the attitude which prevented the understanding of the Reality. According to Kabir, jnana (knowledge) and Bhakti complemented each other; but jnana was a spiritual experience not to be acquired through books. The Hindu Vedas and the Gayatris to Kabir helped their readers forget God and argued that he himself had been saved through the repetition of God's name, one who relied totally on the Vedas would be last. In the same strain he declared that Smriti, 'the daughter of the Vedas; was a fetter for men, and could even be called a serpent. Those who kept themselves aloof from the Vedas and the sacred books of Islam were pure. His own goal was described as follows:

"The Musalmans accept the Tariqat;

The Hindus, the Vedas and Puranas;

But for me the books of both religions are useless,

A man ought to study divine knowledge

To some extent instruct his heart. 2

Kabir's criticism of contemporary religious beliefs and his own salvation do not

1. A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p.378
2. ibid, p.379
imply arrogance on his part. He considered himself to be the worst person alive and that everyone else was worthy. But he advised others to also to hold this view and even went to the extent of asking people to nothing and his salvation secured. There is one story that he became so disturbed by virtues that, in true malamati style, he pretended to be drunk and walked round the city with his own arm around the neck of a courtesan. Among the criticisms leveled against him like a police inspector and that his words were reminiscent of a dog's bark. 

Although Kabir's earthly guru is unknown, in his verses he speaks frequently of the necessity of a guru to assist the search for the Absolute, rather than to merely rely on Yoga. Without such a teacher, a man would slip and perish. Through the guru's instruction a man was taught to remember God's name in his heart and was released from eternal transmigration. On meeting his guru, Kabir relates a feeling of great comfort and peace of mind. He believed that Hari (God) was estranged one could seek refuge in a guru, but if the guru was alienated there was no shelter. Only true saints should be sought as companions and those who even spoke to them received blessings transferred by them. One of Kabir's slokas says:

'Kabir, associated with holy men even though

Thou eat only barely bran;

What will be, will be; associate not with the apostate

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1. A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p.379
Even though he give thee better fare.  

When Kabir's wife criticized him for neglecting his profession and associating with shaven headed saints Kabir told her they helped the spiritually needy, hence he accepted their protection. Breeding was unimportant in saintliness. The dust from a saint's foot had more value than a rosary or any other such objects. To Kabir saint's didn't really die they just returned home, while infidels and the unholy remained subject to the endless cycle of transmigration.

With regard to death, Kabir compared the body with an earthen pot filled with water which inevitably would burst. Death came suddenly, the things of this world were fleeting and it was then too late to repent for ignoring God's name. As one had to account for one's deeds in this life, it was necessary to work for an end to transmigration. A saint's life, says Kabir, was a triumph over continual re-birth for it resulted in supreme bliss.

"If while living thou be dead, while dead return to life by means of divine knowledge and thus become absorbed in God;

if thou abide pure amid impurity,

1. A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p.380
2. ibid.
thou shalt not again fall into
the terrible ocean of the world. ¹

According to Kabir remembrance of God in the form of repetition of his name succeeded in annihilating transmigration for through it sins could be obliterated. Although Kabir described heaven through the use of negatives, to him it was a society of saints; he himself however, craved only absorption with God. He says;

'Everybody saith he is going thither (to heaven)
I know now where heaven is.
They who know not the secrets of their own hearts
Glibly talk of heaven.
As long as man desireth heaven,
He shall not where heaven's gate is,
Nor it moat, nor it plastered fortress.
Saith Kabir, what more can I now say
Than that the society of saints is heaven?'²

                                             ¹ A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p 380
                                             ² ibid
Essentially a bhakta, Kabir was totally absorbed in his quest for the Supreme. But he was also deeply concerned with the religious differences between the founded on false notions of religious superiority, a man was courageous who ignored the rituals of his own caste and this could lead to saintliness and he rebuked Brahmanas who find defilement in almost everything, reminding them that no impurity was attached to those who had God in their hearts. Being a member of the lowly caste of weavers was a source of great pride to Kabir. He advised people fields, in the weaver's shop and in the humble households. Poverty, patience and humility were the strangers to religion. They were like animals whom stuffed themselves with food, forgetting their salvation above criticisms were directed against Muslims state officials. Those who accumulated wealth and property without spending it, were also targets for Kabir's attack.  

'God gave the miser wealth to keep, 

But the blockhead calleth it his own. 

When Death's mace toucheth his head, 

It shall be decided in a moment whose wealth it is. 

Again he reminds the wealthy: 

'Kabir, this body shall depart; put it on same road 

On which it may either hold converse with saints, 

Sings God's praises. 

1.A History of Sufism in India, by S.A.A.Rizwi, p 380
Kabir frequently referred to Maya, in the Rig Veda, the term is used, in the sense of magical power and the Upanishads use it in the sense of false knowledge. In Sankar's advaita, the phenomenol world of nature and all beings which have no real existence emanate from maya. According to a general interpretation, maya leads created beings to an infatuation with the transitory pleasures of the world and flesh. It is the counterpart of the sufi nafs-i-lawwama, and Kabir uses it in this sense. He calls it a thief which break in to the hearts of the worldly and deprives them of their virtue. In a hymn Kabir describes maya as a hideous and repulsive (woman), whose nose he says only a few discriminating people could chop off.

Kabir lived far from the Lodi capital. During the last days of the Sharqis and in the reign of Bahlul Lodi, the Banaras region where Kabir lived was plagued with civil war and political struggle. The saint remained detached from this situation, his main concern being only with social and ethical regeneration. Kabir noted with distress how people dealt in bronze, copper, cloves and betel nuts. Thakurs measured the fields and the villagers were never free of debts entered in the Patwari's books. To him the most important account were those with God.

According to tradition, early in the region of Sikandar Lodi, after crushing his rival, Barbak, the Sultan remained for a period in Banaras. There the Muslims, led by Shaikh Taqi and the Brahman community, complained that those who accepted Kabir's ideas automatically ceased to be Hindus or Muslims. Kabir was imprisoned but various supernatural feats saved his life. Although such a story would seem mythical, according historical sources during Sikandar Lodi's reign, a Brahman called Bodhan or Lodhan declared Islam and Hinduism as both true religions. The
Brahman may have come from either Lakhnawati in the Bijnor district or Lakhnur in Sambhal. In both these regions the impact of Kabir's ideas was not great. Lodhan seems instead to have been influenced by the spiritual milieu of the fifteenth century. Qazi Piyara and Shaik Budh gave conflicting features as appropriate retribution for such heresy. At his camp at Sambhal the Sultan convened an assembly of the empire's leading Ulema. The result was that Lodhan was imprisoned, instructed in Islam and after he refused to convert, was executed. Persecution, however, did not silence the bhaktas and saints and they continued to increase both in number and significance.

From his very childhood, Kabir developed a deep insight into Divine wisdom. Developing stage by stage, an intense desire from knowing the secret of life, he had to pass through periods of agitated suspense and restlessness. The quench of his thirst for Divine love, he had to contact sublimated personalities who could help him understanding the truth about God and life. His close contact with spiritual guides turned him into a spiritual figure of his time. 1

Kabir is believed to have been illiterate and it is certain that he himself never communicated anything writing. His teachings were mainly oral which were generally memorized by his disciples after they had been uttered and then written down immediately or soon afterwards. His own verse is quoted for his lack of formal education.

1. Unpublished Article of Dr. Mansoor Alom, p.3
I did not touch ink and paper;
Nor a pen in hand did I hold
Essence of four ages wisdom
By words of mouth I did unfold. ¹

He said, "I am not skilled in book knowledge nor do I understand controversy."

His utterance took the form of popular couplets. But due to his God gifted talent he became one of the most influential figures of North India and has been hailed as the Father of Hindi literature. His spiritual growth and mystical poetry equally guided by the sufi poetry of the great Persian mystics like Rumi, Sa'di, Hafiz and others. Although born and brought up in a Muslim family, Kabir found the means to initiate himself in sacred texts of the Hindus. In his early years he appears to have been influenced by the teachings of Gosai Astanand, a Hindu saint of Banaras. In his advance age he came in contact with a Hindu preacher Ramananda Bairagi (1299-1370) and undertook strenuous mystical disciplinary exercises, learnt the Vedanta philosophy in a modified and more acceptable form and studied the art of Indian Muslim saints. Kabir was a disciple of Shaikh Taqi Suhrawardi. The author of the Miratul Asrar (mirror of the secrets) says that Makhdum was Kabir's another spiritual guide who trained him in sufi doctrines. Besides, Kabir travelled place to place in search of the truth and came in contact with many Sufis and saints and took training in mystical doctrines and thoughts under them. He felt free to

¹ Unpublished Article of Dr. Mansoor Alom, p.3
discuss the profundity of human existence and aspirations and expressed his ideas with them. In respect of his spiritual training Dr. Tarachand writes:

"He (Kabir) did not remain long with his teacher, for tradition finds him soon after wandering from place to place and associating with ascetics and saints, He spent considerable time in the company of Muslim Saints of which he speaks in a Ramaini, " Manipur was the dwelling place of Kabir, where for long he listened Shaikh Taqi. The same teaching he heard at Jaunpur and the Jhansi (near Allahabad). He learnt the names of Pirs (Muslim preceptor). In that place they have record of twenty one pirs who read the prayers (khutba in the name of the prophet."

Kabir did not confine his spiritual training to Muslim preachers only. As stated above, he certainly was influenced by Ramananda, though according to Tarachand, "Ramananda passes out of Kabir's legends quite early and leaves only a shady impression upon the development of his ideas." However being fully equipped with both Islamic and Hindu mysticism, Kabir started propagating his thoughts and views through Hindi poetry and left to his credit a vast literature of his sayings in the form of Dohas, Sakhis, Ramainis and aphorism. He spoke the language of the ordinary people, infusing with brightness of his realization. In many popular verses, Kabir exhorts the supreme help afforded by a true master and praises the devotion in the disciple. His simple compositions were easy to remember and became popular immensely and enabled to grasp essentials of simple spiritual life. His utterances shaped the lives of countless members of human race and embodied the wisdom of essentially philosophic age. "The marvelous flashes of his poetry light up even the darkest canvas of human and transport it to a supreme height of bliss and ecstasy."
He communicated something through his utterances that has attracted spiritual seekers from almost every religion in the world, for hundreds of years.¹

According to some works written by Kabir panthis Kabir's knowledge of Islam, compared to that of Hinduism, appears to be superficial and wanting in accuracy, but as pointed out by Dr. Yusuf Husain. Kabir's teaching does not give preference to either Hinduism or Islam. He admires all that is good in the two cults and condemns all that is dogmatic. The cult which Kabir preached and propagated was mainly adopted by the Hindus of lower classes. They were galvanized in to life by a new spiritual message of Kabir where life and teachings represents the great synthesis of Bhaktia Yoga on the one and Hindu pantheism and Islamic mysticism on the other. With Hinduism as the background of his thought and influenced Muslim Sufi saints and poets, kabir preached a religion of love which would promote unity among all classes of people. Indian Vedanta and Islamic Mysticism mingled in him in such a way that it became difficult to distinguish from one another. His teachings touched the soul of Hindus and Muslims, although at the same time, it brought upon him the wrath of the orthodox pundits and Mullahs. In spite of oppositions from the communities Kabir sought to unite the conflicting streams of Hindus and Muslims by spirituals.

Teachings and thought of Kabir are reflected in his poetry, which "is a shining mantle woven of conviction and faith which address human character." His simple compositions Doha or chantic are complete in themselves and are considered the

¹. Unpublished Article of Dr Mansoor Alom, p. 6
best part of Hindi literature. His Bijak (invoice) is accepted as the most authentic record of his teachings. Although the language of Bijak, which was spoken in the neighborhood of Banaras and Gorakhpur, but contains more than 235 words of Persian and Arabic and Turkish. The importance of Kabir lies on the fact that his more than 500 verses are now the part of the Holly Granth, sacred text of the Sikhs. There is profound wisdom hidden in each couplet and they reflect Kabir's way of expressing the most profound thoughts on the simplest words. What makes Kabir's poetry great is the depth of his personal spiritual experiences and dignity of thought which he wants to convey in a very simple language and non- conventional way.  

The hallmark of Kabir's poetry is that he conveys in his two line verses (dohas) what other may not be able to do in many pages. Another beauty of Kabir's poetry is that he picks up situations that sorrowed our daily lives. His poetry is relevant and helpful in guiding and regulating our lives. For example he says'

Chatti Chakki Dekh kar, Diya Kabira Roye
Du patan ke beech mein sabit bacha na koye

(Looking at the grinding stones, Kabir laments
In the duel of wheel nothing stays intact)  

One of the chief characteristics of Kabir's poetry is that he did not care for the"Composed in Magadhi or Ardha dialecet of the 14th century, the soft cadences of the Banis (Lyrics) of Kabir are chemically pose in their simplicity and

1. Unpublished Article of Dr Mansoor Alom, p. 7
2. ibid, 7-8
language of the sophisticated in those days, namely Sanskrit or court language Persian but composed his verses and songs in a mixed language of his own which is now called by Hindi scholars Sadhukari (language of Sadhus) G.N. Das writes:-
"transparency of the large truth to touch and more any human heart worth name"¹

Regarding the salient feature of Kabir's poetry Hyden Carruth says in his articles entitled, "Kabir, By Marwin that "Kabir's mystical poem are natural, full of moons, trees, water, cities, music; compressed but light, sometimes even humorous; sometimes also spontaneously ironic or bitter." The popularity of Kabir lies in the fact that poet like Rabindranath Tagore translated his songs and introduced him to the world outside India. His translations are typical and retain the essential simplicity to his otherwise complex thought.

That Kabir was influenced by Muslims Sufis and poets and like them he also preached Love, Humanism, Universal's brotherhood, is described by Dr. Tarachand in these words:

"The expressions of Kabir's teachings was shaped by that by Sufi saints and poets. In the Hindi language he had no precursor, and the only models, which he could follow were the Muslim one e.g. the Pand Nama of Fartid-ud-Din Attar; a comparison of the headings of the poems of both brings that out clearly. He must also have heard the poems of Jalal-al-Din Rumi and Sadi besides the teachings of other Sufis, for there are echoes of them in his works".²

¹. Unpublished Article of Dr Mansoor Alom, p. 8
². ibid.
Kabir played the role of a teacher and social reformer by the medium of his writings, which mainly consisted of the two line verses called Dohas. He had a strong belief in Vedanta, Sufism, Vaishnavism and Nath Sampradaya.

He is one of the medieval saints of Bhakti and Sufi movement whose compositions figure in Sikhs scripture the Guru Granth Sahib. From among all of them Kabir's contribution is the largest, 227 Padas in 17 Ragas and 237 Slokas. Under each Raga or musical modes marking a section of the Holy Book, Kabir's Hymns appear at the head of Bhagat Bani, a generic name for the works of contribution other than the Gurus. The presence of a substantial amount of Kabir's verse in the Sikh scripture and chronologically he being the predecessor of Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh faith led some western scholars to describe him as the forerunner of Sikhism. Some have even called him the preceptor of Guru Nanak. There is, however, ample evidence to prove that Guru Nanak and Kabir had ever met their periods of time in fact do not coincide. Kabir's compositions do figure in what are known as the Bhaktas prepared in the time of Guru Amar Das, Nanak iii rd. They were included in the Guru Granth Sahib as well but these happened much later when Guru Arjan, 5th in spiritual line from the founder, compiled the Holy Book. Besides his own works and those of his four predecessors, he entered in it hymns of some saints and mystics, both Hindu and Muslim, Kabir was one of them.

Kabir through his couplets not only reformed the mindset of common villagers and low cast people but give them self confidence to question Brahmins. It was hundred years after him that Tulsi das broke the hegemony of Brahmins by writing Ram Charitra Manas. A poem of Ramayana at Banaras which went against the
tradition of Brahmins. Kabir was in fact first person to go against Brahmins and be so successful. Banaras was devastated by an attack by a Muslim invader Tamur Lang or "Taimur the Lame" during his time. Kabir also denounced Mullahs and their rituals of bowing towards Kaba five times a day. Because of open condemnation of established and popular religions, Kabir became an object of the wrath of both Hindus and Muslims in and around Banaras. Kabir travelled in and around Banaras to preach his beliefs.1

Kabir believed in self surrender and God's Bhakti. The Kabir panthis follow a lute of singing the praises of God, prayers and a simple and pure life of devotion. Kabir recommends ceaseless singing of God's praises. He virtually suggest withdrawal from the world. He is against all ritualistic and ascetic methods as means to salvation. It is true that Kabir refers to some yogic terms in describing the meditational and mystic methods of the Yogis. But, there is no ground to suggest that he himself recommends the Yogic path. In fact, far from recommending Yoga, he is quite strong in condemning ascetics or Yogic methods, and says that Yogis, in their meditations, become prey to maya. The point will, however be considered further while comparing radical Bhakti with Nathism. The moral tone is quite strong in Kabir's hymns. "Kabir deck thyself with garments of love. Love them is given honour whose body and soul speak the truth." "The Ruby of goodness is greater than all the minds of Rubies, all the wealth of three worlds resides in the goodness of heart. When the wealth of contentment is won, all other wealth is as dust." Where

there is mercy there is strength, where there is forgiveness there is He." "The man who is kind and practices righteousness, who remains passive in the affairs of the world, who considers creatures of the world as his own self, he attains the immortal Being; the true God is ever with him. Kabir suggest inward worship and remembrance of God. For him, true worship is only inwards. Put on the rosary inward. By counting beads, the world will be full of lights: He clearly suggest moral discrimination between good and bad deeds. What can the helpless road do, when the traveler does not walk understandingly what can one do, if, with lamp in hand one falls in the well" "or goes astray with open eyes. Discern you now between good and evil."¹

It is not surprising that Kabir's satire was brought to bear not simply on the vices and weaknesses of man but reached through and beyond them to the very System themselves. It was the authority of Vedas and Quran that more than the authority of Brahmin or Qazi which Kabir attacked he rebelled against the pretension of resolving by the means of books or by way of authority, the mystery of human condition and the problem of liberation( Moksha). He spent his last forty days living in a place where it was believed that if you die you will born as a Donkey in next life.

Kabir is a firm advocator of Ahimsha. His doctrine extends even to the non destruction of flower. "The life of the living you strike dead and you say yours

slaughter makes it dedicated. It is blood haunting you and those who taught you."

"They fast all day and at night they slaughter the cow, here murder, their devotion; how can these please God? O' Qazi, by whose order doth thou use thy knife." "When you declare the sacrifice of an animal as your religion what else is sin. If you regard yourself a saint whom will call a butcher?" "The goat eats grass and is skinned, what will happen to those who eat (goats) meat?" do not kill poor jiva, murder will not be forgiven even if you hear a million puranas. Among the fifty commandments laid down for the followers of kabir, vegetarianism is one of them. For Kabir, moral life involves adherence to Ahimsa.1

In common with all monastic, ascetic or other worldly sects, Kabir does not think well of women. There is almost a tirade against them in the hymns of Kabir. Women is characterized as "a black cobra", the pit of hell and the refuse of the world. "She is considered to be a hurdle in the path of the spiritual progress of men. He spoke, "Women ruins everything when comes near a man, devotion, salvation, divine knowledge no longer enter his soul". His view, about woman are also evident from al his vehement attacks against Maya. Almost everywhere he links Maya to a woman who is out to entice and entrap man, and destroy his spiritual life. Such views about woman from a married person are, indeed, quite uncommon. The cosmological views of Kabir gave a clear clue to his world view. He finds Niranjana

to be the creator of the world, Maya or woman. And this woman stands between man and God. She is there to entice him away from him.¹

Kabir composed no systematic treaties, rather his works consists of many short didactic poems, often expressed in terse vigorous language in the form of Padas, Dohas and Ramainis (forms of poetry in Indian languages). Besides his works recorded in 1604 A.D. in Guru Granth Shahib by Guru Arjandev and preserved inviolate since, two other collections exists- Kabir Granthawali and Bijak. In his poems he was quick to tell the illustrations of moral and spiritual truth in the incidents of everyday life and many of his similes' and metaphors are very striking.

¹http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhist/events/kabir.html