



## **Movement, Journey, and Tourism in Rumi's Poetry and Mysticism**

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### **Abstract**

In Mysticism, traveling and journeys are considered the essentials for self-knowledge, evolution, and theology. This research with a descriptive-analytical method tries to analyze the life, writings, and the legacy of Rumi - as one of the most prominent and influential mystics of history - in order to shed light on the concept, the roots, and the results of the journey from his point of view. In Rumi's mysticism, the journey can be evaluated from a physical or spiritual aspect, and this term is usually accompanied by the concepts of separation and distance in his poetry. Rumi sometimes considers the journey as the reason behind this separation, while he sometimes considers it as its solution. The concepts of 'whirling' and 'returning to one's origins' are among the other themes intermingled with the journey in his mysticism. These concepts can still be observed after hundreds of years in the 'Sama Dance' rituals in Konya. In general, Rumi considers movement, journey, and transformation as the basis for evolution and the transcendence of the human soul.

**Keywords:** Journey, Rumi, Mysticism, Poetry, Tourism, Mawlana.

## Introduction

Iran has always been the cradle of mystic thoughts and illuminations. Therefore, various prominent figures have been developed in mysticism and Sufism in this country during various centuries. One of these prominent figures is Jalāl ad-Dīn Mohammad Balkhī, who is also known as Mawlānā (our master) and Rumi.

Rumi is known as Jalāl ad-Dīn Mohammad Balkhī in Afghanistan, Mawlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Rumi in Turkey, and Rumi in Europe and the western culture. He has played a major role in shaping the mystic concepts of Persian literature.

His full name is Muhammad bin Muhammad bin al-Husayn al-Khatibi al-Balkhi al-Bakri, and he was born on 30 September 1207 in Balkh City in Khorasan, Iran. His father was Mawlānā Muhammad bin al-Husayn al-Khatibi, known as Bahā' al-Dīn Valad and Sultan al-Olama (Master of Scholars), and he was one of the significant figures of Sufism and a mystic individual, and one of the descendants of Ahmad Ghazali. In 1213, with the invasion of Genghis Khan, Sultan al-Olama left Balkh for the Haj pilgrimage. First, he went to Baghdad, and after going to Mecca and performing Haj, he went to the Levant. In this journey, his son accompanied him, and it is said that during his travels, he met Attar Nishapuri<sup>1</sup>. Attar praised Rumi and gifted him his 'Book of Secrets.' After staying for a while in the Levant, he went to Konya upon the invitation of Kayqubad<sup>2</sup> I, and he remained there until his death in 1231, and he was buried in that city (Moti, 2015, p.107).

After Bahā' al-Dīn Valad passed away, his students, including Burhan ud-Din Muhaqqiq Termazi<sup>3</sup> who was one of his devoted followers, gathered around Rumi and taught him what they had learned from his father so that he could be a great son for his father and continue his way of guiding and directing people. After a while, he went to Damascus to meet Ibn Arabi<sup>4</sup> to learn from his mysticism and thoughts. After returning to Konya and after the death of Burhan ud-Din Termazi, he taught religious science for five years, resulting in teaching 400 students (Moti, 2015, p.108).

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1. Abu Hamid bin Abu Bakr Ibrahim (c. 1145 – c. 1221) better known by his pen-name "Attar Nishapuri" (Attar means apothecary), was a Persian poet, theoretician of Sufism, and hagiographer from Nishapur who had an immense and lasting influence on Persian poetry and Sufism.

2. Kayqubad I or Ala ad-Din Kayqubad, the Seljuq Sultan of Rum who reigned from 1220 to 1237.

3. One of Bahā' al-Dīn Valad's prominent students who continued to train Rumi in the Shariah as well as the Tariqa for 9 years, until his death in 1240 or 1241.

4. Ibn Arabi (1165 – 1240) nicknamed al-Qushayri and Sultan al-'Arifin, was an Andalusian Muslim scholar, mystic, poet, and philosopher, extremely influential within Islamic thought.

About 1244, when Rumi was 37 years old, he met a passerby who changed his path forever; he was Shams al-Din Tabrizi, or the Sun of the Religion, who had a profound impact on Mawlana (Brefka, 2015, p.12). This encounter was one of the rarest and most valuable moments for these two great scholars and mystics who were always looking for the truth, resulting in the isolation of these two greats of Sufism and mysticism. Rumi, a religious teacher, a preacher, and a Faqih (an Islamic jurist, an expert in Fiqh, or Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic Law), was suddenly free of all of his shackles. He became so enamored and mesmerized by Shams that he abandoned teaching, discussion, and preaching and started composing poetry and mystic Sama dancing:

*I was an ascetic; you made me a singer/ you turned me into the master of  
dance and seeker of wine*

*I was a proud praying pious/ you made me the toy of the kids in the alley*

The changes in the lifestyle of Rumi, abandoning the teaching and praying mats, and becoming a follower of Shams Tabrizi were not acceptable for some religious teachers and some of the followers of Rumi, so they became jealous of Shams and his enemy. However, Shams did not want such a riot and complication, and he was afraid for his life, so he left Konya for Damascus without telling anybody (Moti, 2015, p.108).

After this event, Rumi wrote a lot of letters to him to convince him to return to Konya. He even sent his son, Sultan Valad, with a number of his followers to Damascus. Finally, Shams accepted the requests of Rumi and returned to Konya. Nonetheless, the same animosity and jealousy forced Shams to leave Konya again. This was a one-way trip that burned Rumi for years in the fire of separation and became the basis for many fiery sonnets (Moti, 2015, p.110).

Rumi searched for Shams for two years, and he even went to Damascus to find him. However, when he accepted that he would never find Shams in the external world, he was forced to search for him inside himself, which gave him a feeling of serenity.

On the other hand, by seeing Rumi, Shams found the one he was looking for, and now he could impact on him whatever he had in his heart and others could not understand. He was an irritable, impatient, and harsh individual, and he had a lot to say, but he could not find many ears and hearts that could hear and accept what he wanted to say. He has said: "I am a mute who had a vision,

and the people are all deaf. I cannot say and people cannot hear”. With regard to his own ambiguous and confused existence, he says in *Treatises of Shams* that: “...So that writer, would write in three different handwritings: one he could read and no one else could read, one he could read and others could read, and one he or nobody could read. I am the third handwriting since I say, but I do not understand, and no one else can understand.” (Moti, 2015, p.114).

After the disappearance of Shams, Rumi became friends with Salah al-Din Zarkoub<sup>1</sup>, and his friendship with this simple mystic again became the cause of jealousy for some. After the death of Salah al-Din Zarkoub, he selected Husam al-Din Chalabi<sup>2</sup> as his close friend, and the result of their meetings and discussions was the *Masnavi* or *Masnavi-ye-Ma'navi*.

Finally, Rumi passed away on December 17, 1273, due to a sudden illness that physicians could not treat. His tomb in Konya is a significant destination for his devoted fans, and each year, on the day of his death, many people from all around the world gather around his tomb and watch the Sama dance of his devotees as a sign of respect for him.

Although the importance of traveling and journey is obvious in mysticism (as many mystics have been great travelers and their travelogues are available today), few types of research have been done yet to investigate the attitude of Rumi toward this concept. This study with a descriptive-analytical approach aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the importance of the journey in Rumi’s mysticism and life?
2. How traveling and journey have been described in his poems?
3. What are the causes and the results of travel from his point of view?
4. What is the nature of turning (whirling) in his beliefs and how is it practiced in Sama dance?

In this qualitative research, data were collected through studying Rumi’s books (all sonnets related to the topic of the study, especially in *Masnavi-ye-Ma'navi* and *Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi*), and the available literature. The collected data are used for content analysis to answer the research questions. Content analysis is one of the classical methods of textual data used from media products to interview data (Flick, 2015, p.347).

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1 Salah al-Din Fereydoun Konyavi, known as Zarkub, was the 13th century famous Sufi, and a special friend and the first caliph of Rumi in Anatolia. He fascinated Rumi for 10 years.

2 Husam al-Din Chalabi, Ebn Akhi Tork (Turkish: Hüsameddin Çelebi) was a Muslim Sufi and a prominent disciple of Rumi. He encouraged Rumi to create his famous work *Masnavi* and contributed to writing and editing the book. [1][2] Rumi repeatedly praised Husam al-Din in his poetry and letters.

### **Journey in Rumi's Poetry**

Studying the works of Rumi, including sonnets and Masnavi, can help us understand the importance of the journey in his view. For Rumi, the journey can be a bitter or a sweet word. The majority of these journeys are not from one city to another; instead, they are journeys from the soul, whether journeys toward Shams Tabrizi or journeys toward one's internal layers.

When Rumi says, "*I have heard you are going on a journey, don't/ you are looking for another lover, don't*" or "*Shams Tabrizi turned and went on a journey/ tell me what the difference between the back and front of the sun is,*" the journey is a bitter word. However, when he says, "*you who left your home and city/happy coming back from Haj,*" the journey is a sweet word. "*I was traveling without feathers or feet/ I was eating sweets without lips or teeth*" refers to those journeys Rumi always mentions in his poems, e.g., "*if the heart journeys away from you/ the liver will be pulsating...*" (Jafari, 2017).

Now, does Rumi have experiences of traveling and journeys outside his poems? The answer is a clear yes. Rumi learned a lot when traveling with his father as a child.

The journeys of Rumi started in Balkh when he was a teenager. In 1220 or 1221, he was 13 or 14 (some say he was 6) accompanied his father, known as the master of the scholars in Balkh (modern Afghanistan), on a long journey. Some consider this journey had political reasons, some say it had family reasons, and some say it was because of the fear of Genghis Khan<sup>1</sup>.

Bahā' al-Dīn Valad, Rumi's father, went to Baghdad with his son and stayed there for several days. Then, the two went to Baghdad to go to Mecca, and they stayed in Baghdad for some time. Then, it was time for Haj, an event in Rumi's life whose influence can be seen in his poems:

*Days are dominated by difficulties of traveling, and nights are not serene/  
all for the love of seeing Kaaba and see Mustafa*

The journey of Jalāl ad-Dīn did not finish there. After the Haj, he went to Asia Minor at a time when Tatars were invading Balkh.

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<sup>1</sup> Genghis Khan (c.1158 – August 18, 1227), born Temüjin, was the founder and first Great Khan (Emperor) of the Mongol Empire, which became the largest contiguous empire in history after his death. He launched the Mongol invasions, which ultimately conquered most of Eurasia, reaching as far west as Poland and as far south as Egypt. Genghis Khan and his empire have a fearsome reputation in local histories.

Some narratives say that during these travels, Rumi married Gohar Khatun (the daughter of Khajeh Lalai Samarkandi, one of the great figures of that region) as commanded by his father (Jafari, 2017).

According to historical documents, Rumi entered Konya when he was 24 on December 7, 1244, and his father died in that same city. However, Rumi's journeys were not finished after Bahā' al-Dīn Valad passed away. His father's death made him start learning from great teachers and masters. Burhan ud-Din Termazi was one of Rumi's masters. He taught Dari Persian to Rumi and sent him on another long journey to learn more. He first went to Aleppo to learn from a great Faqih named Ibn al-Adim. Then he went to Damascus, i.e., a city that was the most famous religious learning center of Islam at the time because other knowledge centers of Islam, including Bukhara, Merv, Shahr-e-Rey, Neyshabur, and Baghdad, had been damaged or destroyed due to the invasion of Tatars. He met people like Ibn Arabi in that city (Jafari, 2017).

Rumi lived in Damascus for a while and later on and after Shams Tabrizi came to this city from Konya, he composed a sonnet to describe Damascus the best he could:

*We are insane longing lovers of Damascus/ we will give our lives and hearts to Damascus*

When Rumi returned to Konya after seven years, he started asceticism and teaching, and he became the greatest religious teacher of Konya. Everybody knew him as a popular teacher and scholar who could connect all parts of Islam.

Konya is where Rumi met Shams Tabrizi, and his life changed forever. This even may have never happened if it wasn't for the eventful journeys of Rumi.

According to historical documents, Rumi entered Konya on December 7, 1244; however, it is unclear exactly when he met Shams Tabrizi, i.e., the man in woolen clothes going to Konya on foot.

It is said that before his journey, Shams prayed to God: "Is there any creature from among your special servants who can withstand what I have to say?" At that moment, it was revealed to him that "if you want an equal who can understand you, you have to go toward the Sultanate of Rum".

During those years when Rumi met Shams, who traveled there from Tabriz, a storm of enthusiasm covered Konya. Rumi and Shams would talk to

each other for hours, and Shams would shake whatever Rumi had, changing him from a famous scholar into a distraught mystic. The companionship of these two only lasted for 16 months. Shams starts his travels and leaves Konya: a journey that upsets Rumi to a high degree. Many of Rumi's poems are about the journey and separation from Shams (Jafari, 2017).

It is said that one of the main reasons behind Shams leaving Konya was the reproach from the followers of Rumi. These people considered Shams a deviant, witch, and fraud, and they wanted to kill Shams to free Rumi from his grips. Before getting killed by these people, Shams left Konya for Damascus. While this journey satisfies the followers of Rumi, it causes mental changes and deep sorrow for Rumi.

Some of his poems narrate the story of this journey of Shams:

*Will he return one day? Yes/ will the beloved show his face? Yes*

*Does or wine bearer remember these drunks/ one more time with wine?*

*Yes*

*Will the spring come back to the garden/ the wet branches flower? Yes*

Some tell a different story of Shams leaving. Some researchers say that leaving Konya by Shams was, in fact, a method of mystic teaching so that Rumi could mature in love and forget his 'self.'

The famous poem of Rumi about Damascus was composed when Shams went to that city. The sorrow and distraught of Rumi because of being separated from Shams forced Sultan Valad, his oldest son, and his followers to go to Shams and bring him back to Konya. Shams accepted their invitation and returned to Rumi (Jafari, 2017).

With regard to the followers' request for him to return to Konya, it is said that: "they placed the gold and coins they brought in front of him and gave him a letter from the master. Mawlānā Shams laughed and said: don't try to convince me through gold and coins. Rumi's request is enough for me; how can one exceed and violate his orders?"

When Shams returns to Konya, Rumi's enthusiasm and happiness grow; however, this time, staying in Konya does not last, and Shams leaves the city because of the reproach and the animosity of the companions of Rumi: this time, he leaves for good. Historical documents say that he returned to his hometown of Tabriz, i.e., a city where there is a tomb attributed to Shams Tabrizi.

While after Shams leaves Konya, Rumi becomes distraught again, the enthusiasm and friendship of these two individuals have turned Konya into a mystical city all these years later. This city is the host to thousands of people each year who travel to the city from all around the world to celebrate the encounter of Shams and Rumi. Traveling to Konya might be an exciting journey for many people, but this city was sad for Rumi without Shams. He would say: “Swear to God, the city does not let me breathe without you...” (Jafari, 2017).

Therefore, journeys in Rumi’s poetry always remind us of Shams Tabrizi, a man who traveled from another city to Konya so that Rumi’s heart can always be in a journey:

*I have heard you are going on a journey, don't/ you are looking for another lover, don't*

*You are a stranger in the world, why make yourself more strange/ which sorrowful soul are you going to, don't*

#### **Four Journeys**

Four Journeys is a practical paradigm revealing the movement and plan of the journey of the mystic by defining four distinct journeys into the internal and external worlds of the mystic. Mystics have always used the simile of journeys and passing through various milestones to discuss spiritual and mystical transcendence. Among these similes, ‘four journeys’ as used in the title and the intuitive-philosophical structure of the transcendent wisdom of Mulla Sadra is the most famous metaphor: the journey of creation or the creature (Khalq) to the Truth (Al-Haqq), the journey in the Truth with the Truth, the journey from the Truth to creation with the Truth, and the journey with the Truth in creation (Mulla Sadra, 2010, p.16). The first two journeys have an introspective direction based on psychological principles, while the last two journeys have an extroverted direction toward presence among the creation and the people. According to the interpretations of various mystics with regard to these journeys, especially in the works of Mulla Sadra<sup>1</sup> and Telemsani<sup>2</sup>, one of the signs of the completion of the two last journeys can be the presence of

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1 Sadr ad-Din Muḥammad Shirazz, also called Mullā Sadrā (c. 1571/2 – c. 1635/40), was a Persian Twelver Shi'i Islamic mystic, philosopher, theologian, and 'Ālim who led the Iranian cultural renaissance in the 17th century. He is one of the most important and influential philosophers in the Muslim world in the last four hundred years.

2 Abu Rabi 'Sulayman ibn Ali Telemsani, known as Afif al-Din (1216-1291 AD), was a Sufi poet and writer in the seventh century AH.

the mystic and the mystic among the people and talking and conversing with them. Moreover, the entrance of the mystic into the first two journeys is accompanied by silence, internal movement, and patience. In this regard, the state of Rumi, when first meeting Shams and starting his journey and movement, can be considered the beginning of his first two journeys, accompanied by silence and serenity. Finally, in the third journey and the return to people through composing Masnavi, the journey becomes preaching to people and the desire to compose poetry. At the end of the first book, he reaches the end of the third journey through being repelled by the people, reaching the serenity of the fourth journey: the sea of immersion and the understanding of other meanings (Rouhani & Karimi Malayer, 2019, p.39).

In essence, the states and lives of mystics, including Rumi, change and move forward based on these four journeys, and this can be discerned and tracked by studying their lives and teachings. According to these principles, at first and at the beginning of the journey, there is an awakening and a sudden blow that makes the mystic aware and interested in the journey. Then, he will be immersed in the worlds of fighting selfish desires and becoming a spiritual being. After immersion into the world of union, he will again return to the people as a prophet and a helper. This type of prophetic mission among the people accompanied by the enthusiasm of telling and guiding will become dampened as time goes by since the mystic cannot find a hearing ear that is qualified to understand the truth. Therefore, the mystic again journeys from the creation and people toward the truth (the One) and will go through the initial steps in a wider spectrum and domain. This type of presence among the people is different for each mystic: it is sometimes filled with flattening roars. Sometimes, it is accompanied by silence and authoring various teaching books. However, the absolute truth is that this journey will happen, as can be seen in the jurisprudential and cautious works of a Sufi like Al-Ghazali, who is not afraid of talking about love and always captures the fire of the speech with the cold water of decorum (Sorush, 1994, p.147).

### **Mentioning the Spiritual Journey in Rumi's Poetry**

He provides the best and most beautiful description of the four journeys using the metaphors of the journey of water in the air, flood, mountain, stream, reaching the hub of the sea, and the desire to roar again (start these journeys again) in the following sonnet:

*Do you know why the sea roars so ferociously/believe me that we are the sea and I am inside a sea*

*It is crowded and searches for open space/ so it jumps towards the air and water*

*Since that water has journeyed into heavens/ into the air, the flood, the stream, and the river, my dear*

In total, there are 49 direct mentions of the spiritual journey in Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi (The Works of Shams of Tabriz, also known in Turkey as the Divan-i Kebir, is a collection of poems written by Rumi): 18 mentions of the first journey, 13 mentions of the second journey, 20 mentions of the third journey, four mentions of the fourth journey, and 19 mentions of the general concept of journeys. As can be seen, the third journey, the general mention of the concept of journeys, and the first journey have the highest frequencies, respectively. Moreover, the mentions to the fourth journey have the lowest frequency, which might be due to the awareness of the mystic during the third and first journeys as a form of reporting his own state and his immersion and drunkenness in the second and fourth journeys (Rouhani & Karimi Malayer, 2019, p.41).

In addition, Masnavi has brief mentions or long descriptions of this spiritual journey and its descriptive phenomenology can be discussed. Where the imaginary concepts trample the soul, and it has lost its purity and kindness due to the calculations of benefit and loss and fear and decline, so it cannot fly toward the sky.

### **Journey: The Cause of Parting and Separation**

Rumi has composed many sonnets on departure and separation from his partner (Shams al-Din) as well as his real love partner. The following couplet is the first couplet of one of the most famous and beautiful of his sonnets (Ibrahimi Kouhbanani, Ghafouri, & Tavakoli Kafiabad, 2011, p.8):

*I can live without anyone, but not you*

*My heart is marked by your love, it cannot abandon you*

According to Rumi, separation is the basis of perfection, and it cannot reduce the fire of love while it is the best way to reach spiritual maturity. This is also the reason for the disappearance of Shams: “For your benefit, I will go on fifty journeys. My journey is for elevating your level. If not, what is the difference between Rome and Levant for me? There is no difference for me

to be in Mecca or in Istanbul. The point is that separation nurtures and cleanses. Now, is it better to be purified and matured by being together or by separation? The person who hides in the room will lose everything” (Extract from Treatises of Shams, Cited in Chittick, 2007, p.231). It seems that this fictional conversation between Shams and Rumi is a recounting and a poetic interpretation of a real conversation between the two about the return of Shams from Damascus after the first time he left Rumi: “You are the one that you need! You are not the one showing strangeness and aloofness! That was your enemy! I hurt him because that was not you! How can I hurt you while I fear kissing your feet because my eyebrows may hurt your feet!” (Treatises of Shams, Cited in Saheb al-Zamani, 2008, p.72).

If Shams was always with Rumi, he would try to benefit from his being; however, he will never obtain this level of longing and maturity. His short absence and permanent disappearance threw Rumi into the furnace of love and separation to mature. This separation became a heavenly staircase, igniting real and authentic love in his soul: a love that gave him eternity and immortality, making Rumi ‘the Rumi’.

Finally, Rumi, who has described the pain of separation and longing in a way no one else could learn, realized that the beloved could not be separated from him after Shams al-Din left him forever (Schimmel, 1992, p.479). The truth is that the beloved is present in the soul, and it is never separate from the lover:

Oh wisdom, become bewildered, look not for attaining or separation

*How do you want to reach someone who is never absent?*

### **The Effects of Separation**

The effects of separation in Rumi's poetry can be discussed in two aspects, i.e., positive and negative effects. Some of the couplets talking about the difficulties and complications of the journey include (Ibrahimi Kouhbanani et al., 2011, p.12):

*Sleep left my eyes in such a way that it will never return/ my sleep drank  
the poison of your separation and passed away*

Or

*Separation broke my back/ left me with sorrow and longing*

Or

*My heart is a winding snake/orbiting your image like a mill*

However, separation is not always harmful; rather, it sometimes purifies the soul and the body, elevating one's soul and value:

*Oh, Shams Al-Hagh Tabrizi, your separation purified me/ if you purify me a hundred more times, you will find nothing but love*

Or

*My body deteriorated by the separation of Shams Tabrizi/ to elevate my soul again and again*

Or

*When the cloud of your separation covered your face/ thousands of gems started raining on my head*

*The Journey and the Eagerness for Reaching and Returning*

*He who abides far away from his home/ is ever longing for the day he shall return*

Nostalgia is the sense of longing of the poet caused by being away from the motherland, the desire to see one's home, and so on, which are not possible for the poet at the moment. Changes in the political and social conditions are highly effective in igniting this peculiar sense of nostalgia. Mysticism is the symbol of nostalgia, the examples of which in the works of a mystic poet like Rumi include the sorrow of homesickness, the separation of the reed from the reed-bed, the journey of the soul, and the difficulties of the body, giving this sense several beautiful manifestations. One of the issues created by the sorrow of separation and being away in the classic and contemporary works, especially in the valuable writings and poetry of Rumi, is the desire and eagerness for return to the previous and original state (Marghub & Sarami, 2018, p.305).

In general, it can be said that Rumi believes this general desire is present in all particles of this world, like a particle that desires for the light of the sun, and all opposites want to return and go back (Marghub & Sarami, 2018, p.307).

*When you break the wood, it calls out/this call is caused by the pain of separation*

Sometimes, the attraction and attempt are from the whole to the parts, such as God's calling for his servants to return to Him: "Verily we belong to Allah, and verily to Him do we return" (ibid.):

*If there were no attraction from the beloved/ the lover's attempt will not bear any fruits*

### **The Benefits of the Journey According to Rumi**

#### **1. The journey is a way to reach perfection:**

According to mystics, going on a journey is the way to become a mature individual because of facing the difficulties and the problems of the path, which will nurture the human being, clear and purify his heart, and manifest his real essence (Hasanzadeh, 2016).

As Rumi says:

*By traveling, the moon becomes (splendid, like) Kay Khusraw/ how it should become an emperor (khusraw) without traveling?*

*Through travel, the pawn becomes a noble queen/ and through travel, Joseph gained a hundred objects of desire.*

#### **2. The journey as a way to reach one's goals**

In addition, going on a journey is reaching a goal. In other words, the journey is a bridge for reaching one's goal. Therefore, one's goals cannot be achieved without going on a journey, and no one can reach Mecca without going through the difficulties of the desert. However, the sweetness of embracing the goal makes the journey shorter (Hasanzadeh, 2016).

*Separation from the Sadr-i Jahán had shattered (the Wakil's) foundations to pieces in his soul.*

*He said, "I will rise up and go back thither: if I have become an infidel, I will believe once more.*

*I will go back thither and fall before him-before its (Bukhárá's) kindly-thinking Sadr (Prince).*

*I will say, 'I throw myself before thee: revive (me) or cut off my head, like a sheep!*

*'It's better to be slain and dead before thee, O Moon, than to be the king of the living in another place.*

*I have put it to the test more than a thousand times: I do not deem my life sweet without thee."*

#### **The Circle, Whirling, the Physical Sama Dance**

Sama or Sema, the meaning of "hearing" in a dictionary, is an Arabic word. As a technical expression, Sama is a pray that Mevlevi (Rumi) Dervishes (followers) perform by feeling a sweet love and losing their

consciousness by whirling around themselves while holding their arms on both sides along with some musical instruments such as reed flute and music melodies. This religious ecstasy enables the soul to communicate directly with God (Gribetz, 1991, p.43).

Sama is one of the most important aspects of the Rumi Order. Sama symbolizes the rising of the human soul in his spiritual journey. It also symbolizes that the dervish turns towards the truth, intends the truth, rises by love, and finds eternity in Allah by abandoning his egoism. As a perfect man, he returns to the public to give loving attention and service. The aim in Sama is to improve religiously and progress on the way of Allah (Sargut, 2008, p.3).

The mystic's view of the world is circular. Everything orbits around itself and is in constant movement, and this is the result of the wheel. If human beings did not understand the concept of the wheel, they would not be able to invent cars. Even nature shows itself through the rainbow. The circle is the main key for understanding all types of Iranian-Islamic Sufi and mysticism schools. Rumi has a foot in the circle's center and another at the perimeter, turning and turning in his Sama dance. This Sama is his favorite dance amid the arena:

*On the one hand the wine-cup, on the other, the Beloved's curl/ to dance  
so in the midst of the arena is my desire.*

The Sama ceremony represents a spiritual journey; the seeker turns to God and truth, love through love, self-transformation as a means of union with God, and a return to life as a servant of all creation (Selkani, 2018).

The fact that Sufis, including Rumi, orbit the elder, organize their gathering in the form of a circle, use circles to keep their songs and compositions, dance in a circular manner, find the journey from God to God a circular one, and consider it a decreasing and increasing rainbow, play circular and repetitive musical tunes, use circular marbles in a circular formation to use as prayer beads, and have winding and circular internal lives wondering inside their own mind can all be the manifestation of the importance and significance of circles and being circular in mystic thought (Marghub & Sarami, 2018, p.314).

In 2005, the Rumi Sama Ceremony was proclaimed by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity (Badar & Chakradeo, 2016, p.44).

### **The journey from Self to Self**

In Rumi's version of self-realization, the journey is from self to self. Rumi encourages the audience not to be passive observers; rather, he wants the audience to understand this movement from their heart and utilize it in their transcendental journey (Hamzeian, Khami, & Zamani, 2016, p.7):

*If you have no feet to travel, journey into self/ like a gem accept the effect of the light*

*Journey from yourself into yourself/ such a journey made the dirt into gold*

The sonnets of Rumi, which are the arena for representing his mystic states and experiences, clearly show the changes and the movements he feels inside himself:

*Like a baby in the womb, I am nurtured by blood/a human is born once, I have been born many times*

*As much as you look at me, you cannot know me/ because I have gained hundreds of features because of being hidden*

According to Rumi, in its evolutionary path, the earth changes and becomes a human, and the human is the beginning of another journey to reach the origin of being, i.e., God. Therefore, there is no stopping:

*When you were the earth, you journeyed in hiding/ when you become a human, be careful it will not last*

*You are a traveler, move on, journey to the heavens/ you start moving, God will liberate you*

It can be said that according to Rumi, the purpose of creation is to move forward. He does not accept stability and constancy, and he reproaches the audience if they do not join this movement (Hamzeian et al., 2016, p.8):

*When you are with yourself, the beloved becomes torn/ when you are without yourself; the beloved cannot help you*

*When you are with yourself, you are prey for mosquitos/ when you are without yourself; elephants will become your prey.*

*When you are with yourself, the beloved wants to leave/ when you are without yourself, the wine of the beloved comes to you*

### **Journey from Self to Supernatural**

In the journey from self to the supernatural, Rumi focuses on the results of spiritual and supernatural journeys and discusses the benefits of this hierarchical journey. According to him, “the most important duty of each creature is to go to the higher level, and it can be said that Divan-i Shams-i Tabrizi revolves around this main thought” (Schimmel, 2001). Rumi considers voluntary and intentional death as a bridge for connecting to the origin of being, i.e., the thing that creates matter and forces it to move and change. Rumi uses the sinking of the ship to symbolize the perishability of the physical body and immersion in the sea of union and connecting to the Truth (the One), which is not possible without a spiritual journey (Hamzeian et al., 2016, p.8):

*Came the wave of Alast, created the ship of the body/ when the ship sinks  
and breaks down, it is time for connection and reaching*

Both in religious and mystic interpretations, death is a bridge between life in one world and life in the next. Staying on the bridge is not desired by any mystic; rather, one must walk on the bridge and go toward the supernatural. Raising from the earth and going into the heavens require movement (ibid.):

*Die, die in this love, die/ when you die in this love, you will get a soul*

*Die, die, and do not be afraid of this death/ when you raise from the earth,  
you will reach the heavens*

*Die, die, and abandon this self/ this self is like a prison and you like a  
prisoner*

### **Conclusion**

Mysticism believes that the purpose of creation is to be in constant motion to reach perfection. This motion in the material world is nothing but traveling and tourism. That’s why mystics would go on long journeys to purify their souls.

In Rumi’s poems, movement and journey have various meanings and layers. Since man is a being with two dimensions, spiritual and physical, and he has both birth and death, Rumi refers to man’s death as a journey that is a kind of change to get back to the creator. He also has dealt with the subject of travel and movement of humans in the material world by using excellent similes, contradictions, and paradoxes. With a closer look at the concept of travel from Rumi's point of view, we come to the abstract notion of “turning” or “cycling” that its physical manifestation can be observed in the whirling or

Sama dance. This notion refers to the necessity of returning to the origin of everything in the world, including the human's soul, as the final and praised goal of journeys.

Specifically, in his notable work *Masnavi-ye-Ma'navi*, the journey is described as walking on a green but uneven ground, which sometimes crosses the steep valleys and sometimes passes the hills and mountains. At the same time, Rumi keeps the audience determined and hopeful to continue the journey until reaching the destination.

In general, the discussion of the journey in Rumi's poems can be seen from three perspectives: a journey through nature, a journey from self to self, and a journey from self to the supernatural, which all three cases cause the person's spiritual transcendence.

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