

Persian Poets who Influenced the Society; the Case Study of Arthur John Arberry's Sufism as an Account of the Mystics in Islam

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Abstract

When Arthur John Arberry claims his work on "Sufism as an account of the mystics in Islam" as "the first concise history of Sufism to appear in any language", every common reader assumes what has been added new in this book. No doubt, Arberry has expertise in Islamic Studies, Iranian Studies and Sufism but when he discusses Persian poets and their notable works, no one finds his personal experiences about Sufism and its impacts on Persianate societies. When this study looks at the data collection methodology adopted by Arthur John Arberry during writing this book or his any other work related to that, it is found that the author only relies upon secondary sources but never visited Iran or any other major Persianate society (such as Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and/or Tajikistan). Otherwise, he could find a huge list of books related to addressed topics in every library in described countries including Iran. Moreover, this study provides critical findings from his book which could make this book more comprehensive if the author considered them.

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Introduction

Every common reader assumes that Persian poetry only belongs to Iran. However, this hypothesis is quite wrong. A huge list of Persian poets has been recorded from Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh,

India, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan (once the part of the Persian empire) (Green, 2019, p. 01). There are a lot of books and poetic works of Persian scholars defining Sufism and as a mystic in Islam. However, in the 10th chapter of the book “Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam”, Arthur John Arberry only discusses four significant Persian poets and their work. Likewise, the publisher of this book also claims that this is the sole book of such nature, but the fact is; every major library in Iran, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan has been filled with books defining Sufism in Islam and its relation with Persian poets (Arberry, 2007). Therefore, this study first examines the background of the author which assists the scholar to trace the reason why the author presented a false claim.

Background of Arthur John Arberry

This is a universal fact that the background of any author is matter if the content of any book has to be reviewed (Thomas & Nelson, 2011, p. 287). Although, the author has vast academic expertise in Arabic literature, Persian studies and Islamic Studies. His work shows his understanding of the philosophies of Rumi, Omar Khayyam and other Sufi saints. However, his research does not exhibit primary sources. His “experience-less” work on the Persianate poets can never allow him to trace how their work influenced the eastern or western societies. Therefore, even his academically sound interpretations of some poets’ significant work do not accept in Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan.

Moreover, libraries within respective countries are filled with more comprehensive books on Sufism and its relation with Sanai, Attar, Nezami, Rumi and Khayyam while he claimed to write a unique book. It means that he visited neither any Persian society (or country under Persian/Urdu influence) nor any library having Persian literature, but only got assistance from secondary research.

Review of the Book

As this book discusses four Persian poets Hakim Abul-Majd Majdud ibn Adam Sanai Ghaznavi, Abu Ḥamid bin Abu Bakr Ibrahim (Attar of Nishapur), Nezami Ganjavi and Jalaluddin Muḥammad Rumi in the 10th chapter, this study looks how their poetic work and philosophies affect the societies and what is the nature of their legacies within the mystic, spiritual and theological academia.

Hakim Abul-Majd Majdud ibn Adam Sanai Ghaznavi

Hakim Abul-Majd Majdud ibn Adam Sanai Ghaznavi (commonly known as Sanai) was a significant Persian poet, who belongs to Ghazni (the part of the Ghaznavid Empire at that time, but now located in Afghanistan) from 1080 to 1141. He followed Sunni-Hanafism and associated with the court of the Ghaznavid Bahram Shah who ruled from 1117 to 1157. He wrote various mystical verses, of which “The Walled Garden of Truth” or “Hadiqat al Haqiqa” is his masterwork and the first Persian mystical epic of Sufism. Dedicated to Bahram Shah, the work expresses the poet's ideas on God, love, philosophy and reason (Sanai, 1974, pp. 5-66).

For close to 900 years, “The Walled Garden of Truth” has been consistently read as a classic and employed as a Sufi textbook. According to Major T. Stephenson, “Sanai’s fame has always rested on his Hadiqa; it is the best known and in the East by far the most esteemed of his works; it is in virtue of this work that he forms one of the great trios of Sufi teachers — Sanai, Attar, Jalaluddin Rumi”. Sanai taught that lust, greed

and emotional excitement stood between humankind and divine knowledge, which was the only true reality (Haqq). Love (Ishq) and a social conscience are for him the foundation of religion; mankind is asleep, living in a desolate world. To Sanai, common religion was only habit and ritual (Sanai, 1974, pp. 5-66).

Compared to other valuable works of Sanai; such as his sonnets and odes, “Hadiqat al Haqiqa” has been the most ambitious and accepted by the character of more people over the centuries. In fact, “Hadiqat al Haqiqa” is one of the poem books that has influenced many poets. By composing this poem, Sanai opened a new chapter in composing mystical poems in the history of literature and mysticism. Great poets such as Khaqani in composing “Tuhfat al-Iraqayn” and Nezami Ganjavi in composing “Makhzan al-Asrar” were under the direct influence of “Hadiqat al Haqiqa”. Just a few years after “Hadiqat al Haqiqa” release, Attar of Nishapur and Rumi reached the peak of the development of mystical Masnavis (Sanai, 1974, pp. 5-66).

Rumi's companions, who gathered at his school, sometimes turned to the study of “Hadiqat al Haqiqa” of Sanai, which Rumi was interested in too. By knowing this, it has been proved that Sanai's poetry had a tremendous influence on Persian literature. He is considered the first poet to use the qasidah (ode), ghazal (lyric), and the masnavi (rhymed couplet) to express the philosophical, mystical and ethical ideas of Sufism (Sanai, 1974, pp. 5-66).

How his work spiritually guides, it's one of the examples is the poem given below;

راه دور از دل درنگی تست
 کفر و دین از پی دورنگی تست
 ورنه یک خطو تست راه بدو
 بنده باشی شوی توشاه بدو
 لقب رنگما مجازی کن
 خور ز در یای بی نیازی کن
 گفت بگذار و گرد کرد بر آی
 بنده مای گران ز خود بهشای

Its translation is;

The way is long because your heart is hesitant
 Infidelity and religion exist because of your hypocrisy (or duplicity)
 Otherwise, there is only one way toward him (God)
 If you are a servant, will become king with him (God)

Turn an unsighted eye to the splendor of the world

Feed on the sea of needlessness

Cease talking and start to perform

To undo the heavy shackles that burden you¹

Scholars examine Sanai's academic legacy by analyzing Rumi's quote where he says, "Attar is the soul and Sanai its two eyes, I came after Sanai and Attar". Moreover, it has been also verified that "The Walled Garden of Truth" was also a model for Nezami's "Makhzan al-Asrar" (Treasury of Secrets) (Sanai, 1974, pp. 5-66).

Abu Ḥamid bin Abu Bakr Ibrahim

Abu Ḥamid bin Abu Bakr Ibrahim is usually known as the "Attar of Nishapur". However, Information about his life is scarce and has been mythologized over the centuries. However, what everyone can know for certain is that Attar is a Persian poet, practiced the profession of pharmacist and personally attended to a very large number of customers. He is mentioned by only two of his contemporaries, Awfi and Tusi. However, all researches confirm that he was from Nishapur, a major city of medieval Khorasan (now located in the northeast of Iran), and according to Awfi, he was a poet of the Seljuq period (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12).

According to Reinert, "It seems that he was not well known as a poet in his lifetime, except at his home town, and his greatness as a mystic, a poet, and a master of narrative was not discovered until the 15th century". At the same time, the mystic Persian poet Rumi (Balkhi) mentioned, "Attar was the spirit, Sanai his eyes twain, and in time thereafter, Came we in their train" (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12). Likewise, he also mentions Attar in another poem as;

Attar toured through all the seven cities of love

While I am only at the curve of the first alley².

However, some family problems coerced him to abandon his pharmacy store and travelled widely - to Baghdad, Basra, Kufa, Mecca, Medina, Damascus, Khwarizm (now called Karakalpakstan), Turkistan, and India, meeting with Sufi Sheikhs - and returned to promoting Sufi ideas. According to some scholars, the company of Sufi Sheikhs made him a Sunni Muslim (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12).

Attar's most famous poem by far is his "Conference of the Birds" (Mantiq al-tayr). Like many of his other poems, it is in the masnavi genre of rhyming couplets. While the masnavi genre of poetry may use a variety of different parameters, Attar adopted a particular parameter, that was later imitated by Rumi in his famous Masnavi-yi Ma'nawi, which then became the masnavi parameter par excellence. The first recorded use of this parameter for a masnavi poem took place at the Nizari Ismaili fortress of Girdkuh

¹ Translated by the Nasir Gulshani and counter checked by the supervisor.

² Translated by the Mina Ansari and counter checked by the supervisor.

between 1131-1139. It likely set the stage for later poetry in this style by mystics such as Attar and Rumi (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12).

In fact, in the introductions of Mukhtār-Nāma and Khusraw-Nama, Attar lists the titles of further products of his pen;

- Mantiq-ut-Ṭayr
- Diwan
- Asrar-Nama
- Mantiq-ut-Ṭayr, also known as Maqamat-uṭ-Tuyur
- Muṣibat-Nama
- Ilahi-Nama
- Jawahir-Nama
- Sarḥ al-Qalb (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12)

He also states, in the introduction of the Mukhtar-Nama, that he destroyed the Jawahir-Nama and the Sarḥ al-Qalb with his hand (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12).

Although some recent researches confirm only Attar's authorship of the Diwan and the Mantiq-ut-Ṭayr, there are no grounds for doubting the authenticity of the Mukhtar-Nama and Khusraw-Nama and their prefaces. One word is missing from these lists, namely the Tadhkirat-ul-Awliya, which was probably omitted because it is a prose work; its attribution to Attar is scarcely open to question. In its introduction, Attar mentions three other works of his, including one entitled Sarḥ al-Qalb, presumably the same that he destroyed. The nature of the other two, entitled Kasf al-Asrar and Marifat al-Nafs, remains unknown (Attar, 2007, pp. 1-12).

1) Mantiq-ut-Ṭayr

In this poem, the birds of the world gather to decide who is to be their sovereign, as they have none. The hoopoe, the wisest of them all, suggests that they should find the legendary Simorgh. The hoopoe leads the birds, each of whom represents a human fault that prevents humankind from attaining enlightenment (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

The hoopoe tells the birds that they have to cross seven valleys to reach the abode of Simorgh. These valleys are as follows;

- Valley of the Quest, where the Wayfarer begins by casting aside all dogma, belief, and unbelief.
- Valley of Love, where reason is abandoned for the sake of love.
- Valley of Knowledge, where worldly knowledge becomes utterly useless.
- Valley of Detachment, where all desires and attachments to the world are given up. Here, what is assumed to be "reality" vanishes.
- Valley of Unity, where the Wayfarer realizes that everything is connected and that the Beloved is beyond everything, including harmony, multiplicity, and eternity.

- Valley of Wonderment, where, entranced by the beauty of the Beloved, the Wayfarer becomes perplexed and, steeped in awe, finds that he or she has never known or understood anything.
- Valley of Poverty and Annihilation, where the self disappears into the universe and the Wayfarer becomes timeless, existing in both the past and the future (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

Sholeh Wolpe writes, "When the birds hear the description of these valleys, they bow their heads in distress; some even die of fright right then and there. But despite their trepidations, they begin the great journey. On the way, many perish of thirst, heat or illness, while others fall prey to wild beasts, panic, and violence. Finally, only thirty birds make it to the abode of Simorgh. In the end, the birds learn that they are the Simorgh; the name "Simorgh" in Persian means thirty (si) birds (morgh). They eventually come to understand that the majesty of that Beloved is like the sun that can be seen reflected in a mirror. Yet, whoever looks into that mirror will also behold his or her image (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

Many scholars assume the described environment in this poem belongs to China. According to Idries Shah, China, as used here, is not geographical China, but the symbol of mystic experience, as inferred from the Hadith (declared weak by Ibn Adee, but still used symbolically by some Sufis); "Seek knowledge; even as far as China". There are many more examples of such subtle symbols and allusions throughout the Mantiq. Within the larger context of the story of the journey of the birds, Attar masterfully tells the reader many didactic short, sweet stories in a captivating poetic style (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

2) Tadhkirat-ul-Awliya

The Tadhkirat-ul-Awliya is Attar's only known prose work, known as a hagiographic collection of Muslim saints and mystics. This book consists of the collection of his compiled work throughout his life, and most probably it is analyzed that, this book has been extracted from the philosophy of Mansur Al-Hallaj (known as "I am the Truth" or "Un al-haq") (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

3) Ilahi-Nama

The Ilahi-Nama ("Book of God" or "Book of the Divine") is made of roughly 6500 verses and features anecdotal stories varying greatly in length, with some only 3 verses long and others around 400 verses long. Attar endeavored to open the "door to the divine treasure" with this poem and he believed that the final work praised Muhammad PBUH in a manner beyond any poet before or after himself (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

Work on the poem began around the same time as his Mosibat-Nama, all while Attar worked in a popular pharmacy in Nishapur, Greater Khorasan, during the age of the Seljuk Empire. During his time as an apothecary and physician, Attar remained busy with and affected by the ailments of his customers and his Ilahi-Nama reflects what he learned during his time at the pharmacy. Attar spent his later years in Nishapur, where he remained comfortably retired until he was violently executed as part of a massacre during the Mongol invasion of 1221 (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

Beyond the metaphysics of Sufism, this poem also exhibits Attar's secular knowledge as a man of medicine as he brings up an anecdote of a polymath's deft talent in removing a brain tumor. Aligned with his proficiency as an apothecary, Attar uses alchemy to mean the transformation of the body into the heart and of the heart into pain (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48). The text also contains high praise for the Prophet through Sufi-style mystical poetry, as Attar writes;

Muhammad is the exemplar of both worlds, the guide of the descendants of Adam.
He is the son of creation, the moon of the celestial spheres, the all-seeing eye.
The seven heavens and the eight gardens of paradise were created for him,
He is both the eye and the light in the light of our eyes³.

4) Mukhtar-Nama

Mukhtar-Nama, a collection of 2088 verses (called Ruba'is), is outlined with a coherent group of mystical and religious subjects, such as; the search for union, sense of uniqueness, distancing from the world, annihilation, amazement, pain, awareness of death, etc. It has also an equally rich group of themes typical of lyrical poetry of erotic inspiration adopted by mystical literature (the torment of love, impossible union, the beauty of the loved one, stereotypes of the love story as weakness, crying, separation) (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

5) Divan

The Diwan of Attar consists of poems in the Ghazal style (also called "lyric form"). There are also some Qasidas ("Odes"), but they amount to less than one-seventh of the Divan. His Qasidas expound upon mystical and ethical themes and moral precepts. They are sometimes modeled after Sanai. The Ghazals often seem from their outward vocabulary just to be love and wine songs with a predilection for libertine imagery, but generally imply spiritual experiences in the familiar symbolic language of classical Islamic Sufism. Attar's lyrics express the same ideas that are elaborated in his epics. His lyric poetry does not significantly differ from that of his narrative poetry, and the same may be said of the rhetoric and imagery (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

Attar is one of the most famous mystic poets of Iran. His works were the inspiration for Rumi and many other mystic poets. Attar, along with Sanai were two of the greatest influences on Rumi in his Sufi views. Rumi has mentioned both of them with the highest esteem several times in his poetry. Rumi praises Attar as follows;

"Attar has roamed through the seven cities of love while we have barely turned down the first street" (Attar, 2007, pp. 41-48).

Nezami Ganjavi

Nezami Ganjavi or simply called Nezami was the 12th-century Sunni Muslim poet, famous for his greatest romantic epics in Persian literature. His heritage is widely appreciated and shared by Afghanistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Iran (including the Kurdistan region of Iraq, Syria and Turkey) and Tajikistan.

³ Translated by Mina Ansari and counter checked by the supervisor.

Nezami lived in an age of both political instability and intense intellectual activity, which his poems reflect; but little is known about his life, his relations with his patrons, or the precise dates of his works, as the many legends built up around the poet color the accounts of his later biographers. He dedicated his poems to various rulers of the region as was the custom of that time for great poets, but avoided court life. Nezami was a master of the Masnavi style (double-rhymed verses) (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

Nezami's main poetical work, for which he is best known, is a set of five long narrative poems known as the *Khamse* or *Panj Ganj* (Five Treasures);

- *Makhzan-ol-Asrar* (The Treasury or Storehouse of Mysteries)
- *Khosrow o Shirin* (Khosrow and Shirin)
- *Leyli o Majnun* (Layla and Majnun)
- *Eskandar-Nâmeh* (The Book of Alexander)
- *Haft Peykar* (The Seven Beauties) (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29)

The first of these poems, ***Makhzan-ol-Asrar***, was influenced by Sanai's monumental *Garden of Truth*. The four other poems are medieval romances. *Khosrow and Shirin*, *Bahram-e Gur*, and *Alexander the Great*, who all have episodes devoted to them in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, appear again here at the center of three of four of Nezami's narrative poems. The adventure of the paired lovers, Layla and Majnun, is the subject of the second of his four romances and is derived from Arabic sources. In all these cases, Nezami reworked the material from his sources in a substantial way (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

The second one is "***Khosrow o Shirin***" a story of pre-Islamic Persian origin that is found in the great epico-historical poems of *Shah-Nameh* and is based on a true story that was further romanticized by Persian poets. The story chosen by Nezami, was commissioned and dedicated to the Seljuk Sultan Toghril II, the Atabek Muhammad ibn Eldiguz Jahan Pahlavan and his brother Qizil Arslan. It contains about 6,500 distiches in length, the story depicts the love of Sassanian Khosrow II Parviz towards his Armenian princess Shirin. Khosrow and Shirin recount the story of King Khosrow's courtship of Princess Shirin, and the vanquishing of his love-rival, Farhad. The story has a complex structure with several genres exploited simultaneously; and contains many verbal exchanges and letters, all imbued with lyrical intensity. Khosrow endures long journeys, physical and spiritual, before returning to Shirin, his true love. They are eventually married, but finally, Khosrow is killed by his son and Shirin commits suicide over the body of her murdered husband. Pure and selfless love is represented here embodied in the figure of Farhad, secretly in love with Shirin, who falls victim to the king's ire and jealousy (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

This poem actually exhibits Nezami's connection between astrology and mysticism which added a unique academic taste to Persian literature.

On the other hand, the "***Leyli o Majnun***" is a story of Arabic origin that was later adapted and embellished by the Persians. The poem of 4,600 distiches was dedicated, in 1192, to Abu al-Muzaffar Shirvanshah, who claimed descent from the Sassanid King, whose exploits are reflected in Nezami's "*Seven Beauties*" (*Haft Paykar*). The poem is based on the popular Arab legend of ill-starred lovers: the poet Qays falls in love with his cousin Layla but is prevented from marrying her by Layla's father. Layla's father forbids contact with Qays, so Qays becomes obsessed and starts singing of his love for Layla in public. The obsession

becomes so severe that he sees and evaluates everything in terms of Layla; hence his sobriquet "the possessed" (Majnun). Realizing that he cannot obtain union, even when other people intercede for him, he leaves society and roams naked in the desert among the beasts. However, the image of Layla was so ingrained in him that he cannot eat or sleep. His only activity becomes composing poetry of longing for Layla. Meanwhile, Layla is married against her will, but she guards her virginity by resisting the advances of her husband. In a secret meeting with Majnun, they meet, but have no physical contact. Rather, they recite poetry to each other from a distance. Layla's husband dies eventually, which removes the legal obstacles to a licit union. However, Majnun is so focused on the ideal picture of Layla in his mind, that he fled into the desert again. Layla dies out of grief and is buried in her bridal dress. Hearing this news, Majnun rushes to her grave, where he instantly dies. They are buried side by side and their grave becomes a site of pilgrimage. Someone dreams that in Paradise they are united and live as a king and queen (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

Nezami composed his romance at the request of the Shirvanshah Akhsatan. Initially, he doubted that this simple story about the agony and pain of an Arab boy wandering in rough mountains and burning deserts would be a suitable subject for royal court poetry and his cultured audience. It was his son who persuaded him to undertake the project, saying; "wherever tales of love are read, this will add spice to them". Nezami used many Arabic anecdotes in the story, but also adds a strong Persian flavor to the legend (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

An important aspect of Layla and Majnun is the poet's highly humanitarian approach. During the war by Nawfal in favor of Majnun, the latter is unhappy wishing for the termination of the war. Majnun gives away his horse and amours to save a gazelle and a stag (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

Nezami gave a Persian character to the poem by adding several techniques borrowed from the Persian epic tradition, such as the portrayal of characters, the relationship between characters, description of time and setting, etc. Further, he adapted the different stories about Majnun to fit a well-crafted Persian romantic epic (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

The Story of Layla and Majnun by Nezami, was edited and translated into English by Swiss scholar of Islamic culture Rudolf Gelpke and published in 1966. A comprehensive analysis in English containing partial translations of Nezami's romance Layla and Majnun examining key themes such as chastity, constancy and suffering through an analysis of the main characters was published by Ali Asghar Seyed-Gohrab (Serageldin, 2021, pp. 2-29).

Likewise, **Eskandar-Nameh** is the description of the romance of Alexander the Great contains 10,500 distiches. There are differences of opinion on whether this or the Haft Paykar was Nezami's last epic. The names of its dedicatees are uncertain, but the ruler of Ahar, "Nosart al-Din Bishkin b. Mohammad" has been mentioned. The story is based on Islamic myths developed about Alexander the Great, which derive from Qur'anic references to the Dhu'l-Qarnayn as well as from the Greek Alexander romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes. It consists of two books, Sharaf-Nama and Iqbal-Nameh. The poem narrates the three stages in Alexander's life; first as the conqueror of the world; then as a seeker after knowledge, gaining enough wisdom to acknowledge his ignorance; and finally, as a prophet, traveling once again across the world, from the west to east, and south to north to proclaim his monotheistic creed to the world at large. The

Sharaf-Nameh discusses the birth of Alexander, his succession to the throne of Rum (Greece), his wars against Africans who invaded Egypt, his conquest of Persia and his marriage to the daughter of Darius. The episode also discusses Alexander's pilgrimage to Mecca, his stay in the Caucasus and his visit to Queen Nushaba of Barda and her court of Amazons. Alexander conquers India, China, and the land of the Rus. The Sharaf-Nameh concludes with Alexander's unsuccessful search for the water of immortal life (Yousaf, 1881, pp. i-vii).

The Iqbal-Nameh is a description of Alexander's personal growth into the ideal ruler on a model ultimately derived, through Islamic intermediaries, from Plato's Republic. He has debates with Greek and Indian philosophers and a major portion of the text is devoted to the discourses he has with seven Greek sages. The poet then tells of Alexander's end and adds an account of the circumstances of the death of each of the seven sages. Nezami's image of Alexander is that of an Iranian knight. An English translation of the Sharaf-Nama by Henry Wilberforce-Clarke was published in 1881 under the title "Sikandar Nama-e-Bara" (Yousaf, 1881, pp. i-vii).

The Last one is "**Haft Peykar**" (also known as Bahramnameh), which refers to the Sasanian king Bahram Gur a romantic epic written in 1197. This poem forms one part of his Khamsa. The original title in Persian "Haft Peykar" can be translated literally as "seven portraits" with the figurative meaning of "seven beauties". Both translations are meaningful and the poet doubtless exploited intentionally the ambiguity of the words. The poem was dedicated to the Ahmadili ruler of Maragha, Ala-al-Din Korpe Arslan bin Aq-Sonqor. The poem is a masterpiece of erotic literature, but it is also a profoundly moralistic work. In the early 1940s, to mark the 800th anniversary of Nezami Ganjavi, Azerbaijani composer Uzeyir Hajibeyov planned to write seven songs for the seven beauties of the poem. However, he only wrote two songs; "Sensiz" (Without You, 1941) and "Sevgili Janan" (Beloved, 1943). In 1952, Azerbaijani composer Gara Garayev composed the ballet Seven Beauties based on motifs of Nezami Ganjavi's Seven beauties. In 1959, a fountain with a bronze sculpture "Bahram Gur" depicting the hero of the poem killing a serpentine dragon at his feet was erected in Baku. In 1979, the Nezami Gancavi subway station in Baku was decorated by Azerbaijani painter Mikayil Abdullayev with mosaic murals based on the works of Nezami. Three of these murals depict the heroes of the Seven Beauties poem (Ganjavi, 2015, pp. 05-11).

Jalaluddin Rumi

Jalal al-Din Muḥammad Rumi (more popularly known simply as Rumi) was a 13th-century Persian poet, who followed Sunni-Hanafism under Maturidi theological school along with Sufi mysticism. He belonged to Greater Khorasan in Greater Iran. Rumi's influence transcends national borders and ethnic divisions; Iranians, Tajiks, Turks, Greeks, Pashtuns, other Central Asian Muslims, as well as Muslims of the Indian subcontinent have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy for the past seven centuries. His poems have been widely translated into many of the world's languages and transposed into various formats; written mostly in Persian, but occasionally he also used Turkish, Arabic and Greek languages in his verses. His Masnavi (Masnavi) composed in Konya, is considered one of the greatest poems in the Persian language. His works are widely read today in their original language across Greater Iran and the Persian-speaking world. Translations of his works are very popular, most notably in Turkey, Azerbaijan, the United States

and South Asia. His poetry has influenced not only Persian literature but also the literary traditions of the Ottoman Turkish, Chagatai, Urdu, Bengali and Pashto languages (Iqbal, 1999, pp. i-xx, 170 & 318).

- His best-known work is the *Maṭnawiye Manawi*. The six-volume poem holds a distinguished place within the rich tradition of Persian Sufi literature, and has been commonly called “the Quran in Persian”. Many commentators have regarded it as the greatest mystical poem in world literature. It contains approximately 27,000 lines, each consisting of a couplet with an internal rhyme (Iqbal, 1999, pp. i-xx, 170 & 318).
- His other major work is the *Diwan-e Kabir* (Great Work) or *Diwan-e Shams-e Tabrizi* named in honor of Rumi’s master Shams. Besides approximately 35,000 Persian couplets and 2,000 Persian quatrains, the *Divan* contains 90 Ghazals and 19 quatrains in Arabic, a couple of dozen or so couplets in Turkish (mainly macaronic poems of mixed Persian and Turkish) and 14 couplets in Greek (all of them in three macaronic poems of Greek-Persian) (Iqbal, 1999, pp. i-xx, 170 & 318).

Shahram Shiva asserts that “Rumi can verbalize the highly personal and often confusing world of personal growth and development in a very clear and direct fashion. He does not offend anyone, and he includes everyone. Today Rumi’s poems can be heard in churches, synagogues, Zen monasteries, as well as in the downtown New York art/performance/music scene” (Helminski, 2017, pp. 231-239).

Rumi’s poetry also forms the basis of much classical Iranian and Afghan music. Contemporary classical interpretations of his poetry are made by Muhammad Reza Shajarian, Shahram Nazeri, Davood Azad (the three from Iran) and Ustad Mohammad Hashem Cheshti (Afghanistan) (Helminski, 2017, pp. 231-239).

The Mevlevi Sufi order was founded in 1273 (in the areas currently called Turkey, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan and Adjara) by Rumi’s followers after his death. His first successor in the rectorship of the order was Husam Chalabi. However, after his death, Rumi’s son “Sultan Walad” (popularly known as the author of the mystical *Maṭnawi Rababnama*, or the *Book of the Rabab*) was installed as grand master of the order. The leadership of the order has been kept within Rumi’s family in Konya uninterruptedly since then. The Mevlevi Sufis, also known as Whirling Dervishes, believe in performing their dhikr in the form of Sama (still practicing in many places within Turkey, Azerbaijan, Pakistan and India). During the time of Rumi (as attested in the *Manaqib ul-arefin* of Aflaki), his followers gathered for musical and “turning” practices (Helminski, 2017, pp. 231-239).

Findings

As this study investigates only stories and tales of poets within the book rather than looking at their work and how affecting society, now findings from the works of described Persian poets are being presented below;

- Sufism is a part of Islam, and gives the lesson of tolerance for mankind regardless of religion, sect, color, caste, or race. it is extracted from the “Charter of Madina” and the last verse of Surah Kafirun which means, “for you, your religion; and for us, our religion” (Asim, 2022).
- Sufism provides ethical and spiritual growth. It allows every Muslim to accept plurality. Regardless of rigidity and conservatism, Sufism provides continuous-connection with the God (Asim, 2022).

- Sufism preaches love and dignity for humanity, and this is the major source of promoting Islam (Asim, 2022).
- Restrictions and boundaries always damage the freedom of personalities. Hence, Sufism teaches liberalism and openness for everyone (Asim, 2022).
- Besides the historical conflict about whether Sufism or Dervishism was extracted from Shamanism, its universal acceptance shows its worth not only among Muslims but in other societies as well (Asim, 2022).
- Although some of the Islamic sects only follow Quran as their sole guidance and reject Sufism, Sufi sheikhs never criticize them for their aggressive or militant acts (Asim, 2022).
- Sufism ensures interfaith harmony in multicultural and cosmopolitan societies (Asim, 2022).
- For a deep understanding of Sufism and its impacts on society, no one can judge by books or content reading but verify by personal visits to the societies following its mystic, spiritual and theological principles (Asim, 2022).
- Interpretations about any fact are whether perfect in their academic nature but primary sources collected by the author personally make the research more acceptable in the society, to which, the research belongs to (Asim, 2022).
- Sensitive research could not be rephrased by reading holy or note bale books but conducted through personal visits, conducting interviews and surveys, and primary observations (Asim, 2022).

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