

ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL'S PERSPECTIVE ON SUFISM AND RUMI

Musa KAVAL



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Annemarie Schimmel

Annemarie Schimmel was born on April 7, 1922 in Erfurt, Germany. She was the only child of a middle-class but highly cultured family in the city. Therefore her childhood was filled with literature and poetry. Being a clever student, she skipped two grades in middle school. At the age of fifteen, Schimmel introduced the Islamic world through Rumi's poems. As a talented student she finished high school at the age of sixteen. Next year Schimmel continued her education at the University of Berlin at the age of seventeen. During her university years her inspiring teacher Hans Heinrich Schaeder recommended her to study Rumi's Divan. After her first readings, Schimmel caught the idea in the poems that struck her like lightning and could not stay away from them throughout her life. She always kept Masnavi with her, which she described as a balm that relieved her pain during her difficult days.

In January 1941, at the age of nineteen, she received the doctorate degree with the thesis on the recent period of Medieval Egypt. She taught Islamic History courses at the "camp university" established after the end of the First World War. In 1945, she received second doctorate thesis on Mamluk History. In the same year, she started working with Friedrich Heiler, a professor of History of Religions. In 1946, she successfully passed the teaching proficiency exam. In 1951, she received his PhD in the History of Religions from the Protestant Theology Faculty of Hamburg with the thesis of "The Mystical Love of Islam".

She made many trips to Turkey until she was fifty-one. she gave his first conference in Ankara in 1953. At the end of these travels, the researcher was offered the Chair of History of Religions in Ankara University Faculty of Theology. She gave lectures in Turkey between 1954-1959, and often went to Konya, the city of Rumi, whom she fell in love with. She took her place as an indispensable scientist of Şeb-i Arus ceremonies and a fan of Rumi. She helped Rumi and his teachings to be understood more accurately, with the help of his vast knowledge of religion, history and literature, in a way that would won the appreciation of both the East and the West. Apart from Sufism, she also conducted

research on Islamic culture and arts in the Muslim countries she visited with the method of natural observation. She is one of the leading orientalist who draws attention with her comments on literature, poetry, architecture, music and almost every field of fine arts.

In later periods, Muhammad Iqbal attracted her attention. With insistence of her friends in Turkey, she translated Iqbal's *Cavidname*. In this way, he made a trip to Pakistan in 1958. The interest paved the way for her to Harvard University. Because she attended the 11th meeting of the International Association for the History of Religions in California in 1965. She met Wilfred Cantwell Smith from Harvard at the meeting. Smith and his friends persuade her to work at the Indo-Muslim department at Harvard University. She lectured at Harvard only in the spring semesters. She used to travel to Pakistan every autumn. A boulevard in Lahore, the capital of Pakistan, was named after her. There was a high attendance at the courses she taught and she was listened to with admiration by the students. She wrote more than a hundred books, mainly in German, English and Turkish. She received honorary doctorates, many awards and medals. She retired from Harvard in 1992. She returned to Bonn and settled there. She was not idle in Bonn, lectured seminars and wrote articles. On January 15, 2003, she received the Peace Prize of the prestigious German Book-Trade Association for her successful work on improving the understanding of East and West. She had First Degree Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany (1980) and First Degree Presidential Medal (1981). In addition to other awards she received in her own country, she was also rewarded by Muslim countries as a result of her outstanding efforts. She was deemed worthy of the following awards by Islamic countries; Writers Union of Turkiye Distinguished Service Award (1995), Egyptian Presidential First Degree Science and Art Medal (1996), Pakistan Sitâre-i Kâidia'zam medal (1965), Republic of Uzbekistan Friendship Medal (2002).

Schimmel suddenly fell ill on June 26, 2003 and left this world, due to some complications following the surgery. She married a Turkish young man whom she met while working in Turkiye, once in her life, but this marriage does not last long. She has no other living relatives other than his cousin's children who live in New York.

FOREWORD

When Sufism, or in other words the mystical pattern of Islam, is considered and discussed, Rumi is one of the first name that come to mind. He is a sufi poet known and admired not only in Turkiye and Iran but also in Western societies. Also his works have become among the most read books in the USA. Researchers have undoubtedly made great contributions to Rumi's introducing and sharing the spiritual experiences of his works with other people. However, all these developments have brought with them a number of different problems. For example, the primary problem is to what extent have Rumi and his thoughts been understood? To what extent did the researchers who examined it conduct their studies in the light of objective, scientific values, free from prejudice? To what extent have they been able to present their research clearly, ignoring different elements that arise from various reasons and do not clearly reflect the truth? To what extent could one reach the essence of a work written seven centuries ago, and in a different language?

The deep emotions that Rumi, who is considered the greatest master of sufi love poetry, reflected in the concrete world with words seven centuries ago, still maintain their freshness. Because Rumi sang the unforgettable melodies of his endless love for humanity, whether the Anatolian people, other Muslim communities or Westerners. His couplets full of pain and longing, coming from the soul in which he emptied himself completely for his beloved, also influenced Annemarie Schimmel. This love, which started with the Masnavi couplets she heard from his teacher when she was only fifteen years old, continued to increase until the end of her life. With this enthusiasm, Schimmel became one of the rare scientists to be cited for his research on sufism and Rumi.

Today, Rumi is one of the most talked about sufi poets. A lot of research has been done and works have been written about him. However, all these studies do not reflect Rumi as he is. Because many orientalists could not understand Rumi correctly, due to superficial knowledge obtained from the verses or some conditioned judgments, without doing the necessary background studies. Therefore, it is natural that some of what is conveyed is problematic. Many

different, even completely opposite, intellectual systems read verses from Rumi and felt close to them. Some have gone further and argued that it is a representation of their own personal or global thoughts.

We can find almost all kinds of sufi ideas in his poems. It is useless to try to find a superficial sense of belonging in Rumi. Differences and contrasts form a harmonious whole in his verses, which appear as a natural result of deeply experienced love. The fixed end of the compass that circles the circle of humanity focuses on Islam and unites two nations. In *Masnavi*, which Rumi calls “the shop of unity”, he combines all the differences in the same sema.

Annemarie Schimmel, who meticulously examined sufism in general and Rumi in particular, in line with scientific principles, provided important information. The researcher has proven this by writing more than a hundred works, several of which are reference books. As is known, as a general view, some orientalists understood sufism and Rumi differently due to their prejudices and some subjective evaluations. Various claims have been put forward regarding the origin of sufism, the changes it has undergone until today, and sufi practices. Contrary to all these claims, Schimmel sees sufism as a natural product of Islam. The Orientalist states that we can see sufism until the time of the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, she tried to be a clear mirror of Rumi, whose works she studied meticulously. She explains how he was gradually burned after the figurative love he experienced with Shams. Since Schimmel defines sufism in the right place, she understood Rumi more easily and accurately. Schimmel makes it clear that the statements made by Rumi as a result of ecstasy, unlike other sufis, are not philosophical products. Therefore, the solid foundation of Rumi’s masterpiece poems is the religion of Islam, and the rising steel body is divine love. Schimmel tries to explain that since Rumi was actually a strict implementer of the Quran and the Sunnah, he was far from some movements of belief and thought as claimed.

The language, metaphors, symbols and stories he used in his poems, in which high sufi thoughts can be found from the daily lives of ordinary people, the street and the market, emerged with the shining of his Sun of Love. Shams, or rather Shams’s longing, made Rumi a mystical poet. Schimmel, who won the appreciation of the relevant people both in the East and the West, who interpreted Rumi’s symbols and stories in a wonderful way, became a scientist who activated her mission. Since she is an expert in the fields of history, philosophy and linguistics, she produces original information as a result of meticulous research on Rumi’s life and the literary aspects of his poems. The importance of auxiliary sciences is

better understood in the fact that it may be necessary to spend a lifetime to reach the correct knowledge of sufism, which has a secret structure.

Rumi lover Annemarie Schimmel was appreciated both in the West and the East, and with her scientifically objective attitude and meticulousness, she carried out very important works for the correct understanding of Rumi. Annemarie Schimmel's deep knowledge of sufism and its sub-sciences, as well as her command of the history of religions, history, philosophy and linguistics, made it easier for her to better understand Rumi holistically and internally. Therefore, we can think that relations and knowledge transfers are more robust.

In the first part of the it has been tried to reflect the West's first encounter with sufism and by whom and at which levels the first information was obtained. We try to explain the origin and meaning of the word sufism in the Western geography. At the end of this section, Schimmel's evaluations about some of the ideas put forward about the origin of sufism, which is a much-discussed topic, are presented.

In the second part; a short biography has been presented about the life of Rumi, the great poet of love and inspiration, based mostly on the information given by Schimmel. Later some information is given about the works that Rumi created by putting his love chants into words, the content, form and literary aspects of the works.

In the third part; It has been witnessed at what stages the pain of longing for the beloved, which made Rumi a poet, led him to reunion. It has been tried to express with what spiritual experience and heart affection he, as a sufi poet, produced his works by using different themes. While making these determinations, they were turned into headings specifically for the topics discussed by Schimmel.

In the fourth chapter, which is the last part, an effort has been made to provide information about the influence of the famous love poet on the Indian subcontinent and the West in the light of Schimmel's findings.

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