

Notes on Rumi

March 14, 1925 **The Sea of Love**

The Greek name for Venus, Goddess of Love and beauty was “Aphrodite,” which means “from the dew’ or “from the foam.” She is often called “foam-born.” She has no father or mother but rose from the midst of the sea. What has Love to do with a material sea?

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Rumi is, in some respects, the most saintly of all the eastern poets. In fact, he is regarded as a saint this day by people of diverse races and by Sunni and Shiah alike. Rumi does not shout about his love, he is not overcome with intoxication, but there is an ever gentle flow from the spring of his heart. He never wearies of telling of his love, but he does not shout it from the housetops. His love is like a pearl rather than a diamond, or like so many pearls that he has become used to them. (This shows the very highest state of spiritual development.)

Jelal-ud-din was ever a practical man living a practical life with the people of his time. He does not seem to effect to be a poet, or anything but a humble soul. Yet he spread the light and brought it to others. He was ever eager to show men the right path, to spread happiness and peace.

Jelal-ud-din in many ways resembles Dante. Dante was the greatest mystical poet of the West and, while not necessarily the greatest poet, his *Divine Comedia* is the greatest poem. Rumi’s *Masnavi* is the greatest poem of the East. Both were political exiles writing far from home. Jelal-ud-din resigned himself to his condition and became a good Turk, although he did not write in Turkish, while Dante ever longed for Florence. Nevertheless, Jelal-ud-din was the founder of Turkish poetry and Dante was the founder of Italian poetry. Rumi was, therefore, the beginner of the arts in Turkey, while Dante has always been known as the forerunner of the Renaissance.

Like most mystics, both Jelal-ud-din Rumi and Dante Alighieri use esoteric language, largely because that is the only language that can be used to express the Light of the Divine Countenance. While Rumi ever sings of his Beloved, Dante ever sings of Beatrice. Yet we cannot be too sure that Beatrice was a woman. “Beatus” in Latin, means “blissful” or “blessed” and could easily be anthropomorphized in the name of a woman, for Dante’s vision was a blissful one. It is interesting to note that Virgil, in the *Divine Comedia*, could only lead Dante to Heaven—he himself had to enter. In this poem Virgil plays the part that Shams-i-Tabriz actually played in Jelal-ud-din’s life.

Both Rumi and Dante sing of love, and both married and were fathers. There is nothing mysterious about them; they were flesh and blood men. But there is a strange difference between them. Dante, after his wonderful vision, remained an apparently orthodox Catholic, and Heaven was for his creed alone. Non-Christians and heathens could not enter (and Mohammed was consigned to one of the lowest Hells). For Rumi, the Divine Vision as well as the Divine Message were for all alike. And what a strange result: Dante is not revered save by Roman Catholics (and by few of them), while Jelal-ud-din Rumi, with his really catholic¹ message, has been sainted and revered by Sunni and Shiah, Jew and Christian.

[¹ catholic: 1. Universal; general; all-inclusive. 2. Broad and comprehensive in interests, sympathies or the like. —Ed]