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## **Status of woman in Rumi's teachings**

The Prophet (SAW) says, "Heaven is under the feet of mothers. By loving this land as a mother, as a beloved by protecting it. our nation not only possesses a heaven but will inherit heaven in the spiritual world. In all holy Books it is said, that at the beginning of the creation Eve was created from a part of Adam's body. But woman continues her being, without separation from man, as a mother of all humanity. So as a result of this Divine equilibrium (balance), man and women complete each other and form an undivided and unified whole. According to us, woman who is the course of our existence is a monument to generosity, affection and love.

Maulana Jalaludin Rumi, the most prominent mystic poet in Persian literature is among the Sufi masters who have gone beyond the boundaries and Sufi traditions to open a broader space in their teachings for the women. In his spiritual teachings, not only do feminine images and metaphors have great significance, but women are held in high regard in his spiritual circle as followers - Murid, companions and spiritual guides. Rumi's family itself had a long tradition of recognizing the spiritual

beauty and wisdom of women. It has his grandmother, the princess of Khorasan, who first lit the spark of inquiry in Rumi's father, Bahaeddin Valad. Under her care, he grew to be the "Sultan of the learned men" (Ulema) and a great spiritual light in his time. Rumi's mother Mumine Khatun a pious and saintly lady, was very dear to him played a very influential role in Rumi's life. She died shortly after Rumi's own marriage to Gower Khatun, the daughter of one of Bahaeddin's closest disciples. Rumi was not married to two women at the same time. He married Kerra Khatun after death of Gower Khatun. (1)

Throughout his life, he gave lessons to woman, conversed with them; attended gatherings organised by them and permitted them, as a part of Turkish tradition to hold their own celebrations and ceremonies among themselves. After him, this practice, which had become customary, was carried on for a long time. It spread even into villages, where woman participate in ceremonies along with men.(2)

In his works, he considered women primarily as a person. In his works, he discussed male-female relationships enlightening the public. He addressed himself to women regardless of the good or bad reputation they had in society.

In order to maintain, the dignity of women here it is very significant to discuss two of Maulana's letters which have contributed a lot to highlight the dignity, and status of women. One of these significant letters documented in the Maktubat is



written to Governor Atabak-e A'zam about a young woman from a notable family who was supposed to marry him. The governor had postponed or cancelled the wedding due to the spread of gossip about his bride-to-be. This letter indicates clearly Rumi's position against the social habit of defaming and disgracing women, which, in his understanding, was not only harmful and even life-threatening to them but also damaging to their families' dignity.

In this letter, Rumi defends the accused girl by pointing to the history of the harmful social habits, reminding the grand governor that people of weak judgement have throughout history not only accused women but also the saints, prophets and even God. In this letter, Rumi defends the girl and stands firmly behind the dignity of her family by mentioning that disgracing and defaming her would be equivalent to disgracing him, Rumi, and his family. He considered dealing with this issue - which in his opinion, amounts to a social sickness - so important that he assigned his representative, Hesam al-Din, to follow up the case relentlessly with the accusation -----until the accusation is clear.(3)

Another account of Rumi's encounter with a prostitute indicates his awareness of women's social hardship not to be limited to the notable families, his Murids or the female members of his extended family. Aflaki relates that passing through a famous caravanserai in Konya, Rumi encounters a woman of bad

fame, of bad reputation, who lived with her servants. She respectfully approaches Rumi, who instead of ignoring or insulting her - a common behaviour of many religious scholars and Sufis towards such women - starts a long conversation with her. At the end of the conversation, Rumi expresses his admiration for her sincerity, and later he explains that his respect for the prostitute lies in the fact that her appearance and outward image is in harmony and balance with her inner self, contrary to many pious people's hypocrisy and insincerity; she is who she is.(4)

We should not ignore the possibility that these kinds of accounts might have been inflated (exaggerated) to a certain extent by Rumi's Murids and devotees before being recorded by his biographer, Ahmad Aflaki. Nevertheless, the significance of such narrations remains highly invaluable, since it indicates that for Rumi's followers, the respect of this spiritual leader for a woman of bad reputation was not a sign of imperfection - rather, it was considered to be sacred as the wondrous act of Keramat .

Again in the "Fiha Ma Fiha" , (5) Maulana Rumi points out that if a woman has an element of corruption in her nature, she will certainly find a way of bringing this out in her actions. To illustrate that, secrecy arouses curiosity, Maulana Rumi uses the examples of a city where the streets are full of loaves of bread, and even the dogs refrain from eating them. But if there were a loaf that is wrapped and hidden, it would attract every one's attention.



Thus, Maulana Rumi says, "What is a woman, what is the world? Whether you say something or not, whatever is, is. It will not desist from what it does. It gets even worse as you give warning of it, such as the interest of the populace in the loaf of bread that you hide under your arm, under your sleeve, where the attraction will go beyond all bonds. This is because people go after what is forbidden. So long as you command woman to hide, the desire to show herself off increases. The more a woman hides, the more the people desire to see her. In this case your position excites the desire of both parties. Then you consider this the righteous way, whereas this is complete defeat in itself. It is in nature of woman not to do evil, whether you say do or don't she will follow her good nature, clean essence and behave accordingly. If, on the contrary her nature is corrupt she will follow her own path. In truth to say please don't do this or that, don't expose yourself, increase desire and serves no other purpose".(6)

On this topic as well, Maulana makes no distinction between man and woman, he informs us that "in each person's body is hidden a world of freedom"(7). This means that compulsion is against human nature. A woman who has strong instincts knows how to behave according to the person. Maulana says the mind has to provide guidance, the soul follows. Virtue cannot be protected by covering under pressure or just by covering. In the Mesnevi, Maulana says, "people with heart will not be able to withstand women and will be defeated by

woman"(8). "When you mention women, there must be a man. When you mention a judge, you need someone to be judged."(9). Yet, again in Mesnevi, he indicates that men seem superior to women but shows with concrete examples, occasions when women are victorious over men.

Maulana defines women as one of the great manifestations of the Highest Creator, the most perfect example of God's creative power on earth. His aphorism, "woman is light of the God, not just the beloved. It is as if she is creative not be created", (10) reflects the value he attached to women.

### **References:-**

1. Maulana Rumi, Hayat Wa Afkar p.142
2. Ibid p.170
3. Fiha Mafiyah, Table takks of Maulana Rumi, p.123, Discusses of Rumi (Fiha Ma Fiya), p.231
4. Ahmad Aflaki, Manakibul Arifeen .
5. Fiha Mafiya , part 20
6. Kulyati Masnavie Manavi , p.187, The Mathnavi of Jala-ul-Din Rumi , p .234, The Sufi path of love ; The spiritual teachings of Rumi, p 321.
7. Fiha Mafiya part 23.
8. Masnavi :vol 1 Verse 2437
9. Fiha Mafiya prat 37
10. Masnavi vol 1 , verse 2437.

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