

An Overview of Life and Works of Jami & His Perception of Love

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An Overview of Life and Works of Jami & His Perception of Love

Abstract

Abd al-Rahman Jami (817/1414- 898/1492) is regarded as the last grand classical poet of Persian literature and a great Sufi of his time. Towards the end of his life, he compiled his *Divan* in which one can trace his life pattern that he has divide into three main phases. These include: 1) the period of his childhood and early phases of education, which is reported in *Fātiḥah al-Shabāb*; 2) his mid-life phase as elaborated in *Wāsiṭah al-Aqd*; and, 3) the last stage of his life, discussed in *Khātimah al-Ḥayāt*. In the latter, Jami tends to evaluate his life span in search of elixir of salvation. This search led him to an elevated stage of self-realization where he questioned his previous actions and all that which he was praised for, i.e. a prolific writer, an imaginative poet, and a distinguished commentator of Sufi thought. This spiritual self-assessment eventually directed him to the path of 'love' – the transforming power that reveals the essential meaning of life, realization of the inner divine self, and that which could bring about union with God. This paper intends to trace Jami's transformation of thought, character and worldview. It begins with a bibliographical account followed by an elaboration of the three phases of Jami's life, his status as a poet, a melting pot of Sufism, and, finally his perception of true love and its transforming and purifying effect on the seeker of truth.

Keywords

Abd al-Rahman Jami, Persian Literature, Love, Sufism, 'Ishq

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اسیر عشق شو کازاد باشی
غمش بر سینه نه تا شاد باشی

Be a slave to love, and taste liberation

Embrace the agony of love, and taste elation¹ - (Jami)

Introduction

Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414 - 1492) was one of the most accomplished and lastingly influential figures across many fields of Islamic thought, literature, and religious life; he was a masterful and prolific poet (in a wide range of genres), the most famous theologian and philosopher, a dedicated Sufi teacher and hagiographer, and a significant figure in the artistically prolific Timurid court.² He wrote in all poetic forms, especially *ghazal* (Persian poems usually on love, with monorhyme) and *mathnawī* (Persian poem in rhyming couplets, mainly for didactic, romantic, and heroic themes). He was also an artist known for his good calligraphic skills. In Persian literature, Jami is remarkably dignified as "the last great classical poet of Persian language" (*Khātimat al-Shu'arā*).

Jami was greatly influenced by the mystical and literary aspects of Ibn 'Arabi's school of thought.³ He has also been a Persian Sufi poet,⁴ who synthesized the two major currents of Sufism;⁵ the love-oriented school of Khurāsān⁶ and the intellectual Sufi

¹ Jami, Nurud-Din Abdur-Rahman, *Haft Awran: Yusuf & Zulaykha*, Translated to English by Amir Zekrgoo.

² He has magnificent features in *Naqshbandiyya* order and the Islamic culture of Subcontinent of South East Asia and Central Asia.

³ Muhyiddin Muhammad Ibn Arabi (d.1240) was the theosophist. He considers as the great master of Sufi theosophy, and he greatly impressed later Sufi thought and poetry. He developed the mysticism of Unity and his ideas spread throughout the Persian and Turkish-speaking areas. In his school of thought, the "Numen" a Latin term for "divinity," or a "divine presence" or "divine will", is considered as the "Being beyond all being, or even the Not-Being, because it cannot be described by any of the categories of finite thought; it is infinite, timeless, spaceless, the Absolute Existence, and the Only Reality. By contrast the world possesses only a "limited reality." Which derives its conditioned existence from the Absolute Existence of Divine." (Annemarie Schimmel, p. 5)

⁴ It is important to know that mystical poetry and Sufi poetry are not one – the pure mystical poetry and romantic/amorous poetry. A mystical poetry is clearly concerned with mystical meaning.

⁵ Sūfism (*tasawwuf*) is the spiritual dimension of Islam. According to the Sūfīs, Islam has two aspects: the outward aspect, which includes the *Sharī'ah* (the precepts of Islamic law), and the inward aspect; *Ṭarīqah* (the spiritual way). The confluence of the two leads one to *ḥaqīqah* (the Truth). Sufism appear clearly in the teachings of the Prophet of Islam is something recognized by scholars, who demonstrated the essentially Islamic nature of Sufi doctrine. The major centers of the ascetic and mystical movement in early Islam were Iraq, Egypt, and Khurasan. Most of the important founders of Islamic mysticism were of Persian ancestry, from Greater Khurasan (today, north-eastern Iran, western Afghanistan and

school of Ibn ‘Arabi, in the history of Iran. While the first current concentrates more on the relationship between the lover and the Beloved,⁷ the second current focuses more on philosophical aspect of Sufism. Such is Jami’s influence in uniting the two schools of thought.⁸

Therefore, Jami’s mystical system is a combination of two major Sufi currents; love-oriented Sufism of Rumi and philosophical-oriented Sufism of Ibn Arabi.⁹ However, since Ibn Arabi’s teaching had a colossal impact on his school, he may be considered as one of the interpreters of Ibn Arabi’s school.¹⁰

BIOGRAPHICAL SOURCES OF JAMI

Jami’s life is recorded in four main biographical accounts.¹¹ People of his time had favoured him and respected him and his works; as a result, most of Jami’s writings, including poetry

Central Asia.) where, in the late eighth century, the first Sufi Khanaqahs, or meeting-houses, were established. By the early ninth century, Islamic esotericism as the “Sufi Path,” or *tariqa* had spread throughout the entire Islamic world, in virtually a fully developed form, with its own institution, rites, and doctrines.” See: Lewisohn, Leonard, *The Wisdom of Sufism*, UK, Oneworld Oxford, 2001, p. vii.

⁶ The Khurāsānian Sufis had a great impact upon development of Sufism, they initiated a number of ideas in the Sufi teachings which can be considered as the theoretical parts in Sufism; their initiation is based on literary expression and lovely phrases.

⁷ Love as experienced by the early Sufis is a strong personal and existential commitment. The mystics felt that the love they experienced was not their own work but was called into existence by God’s activity. As Quran says: “He loves them, and they love Him (Sura 5:59) a word that shows that God’s love precedes human love? Only when God loves His servant can he love Him, and, on the other hand, he cannot refuse to love God, since the initiative comes from God. See: Schimmel, Annemarie, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (University of North Carolina Press: 1975), p. 138.

⁸ Jami is a dual personality by been able to merge the two schools together; it has never occurred to anyone before Jami that the two schools could be merged, he removed the marginal differences and difficulties between them, hence giving us what can call ‘the united school of Khurasan and Ibn Arabi’. Jami’s importance therefore lies in his ability to present Ibn Arabi’s ideas in very simplistic way people can understand, using his Khurasanic background.

⁹ Among mystic poets of this age, few poets, such as Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī (731AH-832AH/14th century) and Jāmī had less mystical flavor than Attar and Rumi. However, many of them followed the dissemination of Ibn Arabi’s teachings. For example, Jami’s poems were devoid of mystical flavor and are not as sweet as Rūmī’s, but it is greatly influenced by Ibn Arabi’s thought. He uses poetry in describing Ibn Arabi’s thought which was previously hard to understand. Poetry for Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī is like a tool used in expressing mystical teachings and definition of terms used in Ibn Arabi’s school of thought. Shāh Ni‘matullāh Walī’s works may be considered mystical treatises in poetry, but it is not an artistic masterpiece as does that of Hafiz. Although Jami’s poetry was fewer flavor than that of Rumi, it has a solid Khurasan love-oriented school’s heritage background. See: Lewisohn, Leonard, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari*(London:1995), p.16.

¹⁰ In this regard, Jami tries to describe Ibn Arabi’s works because in Jami’s period many people who were interested in Ibn Arabi’s concepts were not opportune to understand his strong language and expression. So, it was Jami who re-presented Ibn Arabi’s ideas in poetry and prosas clearly and make it easy to understand for those people, using his advantage of being an heir of Sana’i, Attar, and Rumi. See: Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Sufi Essay*, (London:1982),p.99; and also Schimmel, p.280.

¹¹ These four main biographical accounts are: 1) *Maqāmāt-i Jami* by ‘Abd al-Wasi’ Nizami-yi Bakharzi; 2) *Takmillā - yi Nafahāt al-uns* by ‘Abd al-Ghafur Lari; 3) *Rashahāt ‘ayn al-hayāt* by Fakhr al-Din ‘Ali Safi; and finally 4) *Khamsah al-mutahayyirīn* by ‘Alishir Nawāi.

and prose, in both Arabic and Farsi—some of which are in his own handwriting—have reached us in an authentic form.

One of the main sources of his biography is “*Rashḥ-i bāl bi sharḥ-i ḥāl*”, a *qasida* he composed some five years before his death, wherein he provided a summary of his life. The *qasida* informs us about Jami’s time of birth, the nature of his activities in childhood, the subjects that he studied during his youth, his talent in composing poetry, as well as various other achievements. His emphasis on “love” and its transforming power is another aspect that is elaborated in his *qasida*.¹²

THREE PHASES OF LIFE

In his three *dīwāns*, composed towards the end of his life, Nūruddin Abdul-Rahmān Jami (d.898/1492) divides his life into three main stages, namely *Fātiḥah al-Shabāb* (in his youth), *Wasitat al- 'Aqd* (his middle age) and *Khāṭimah al-Ḥayāt* (towards the end of his life). The first *dīwān* includes Jami’s poems until he was 65 years old, the second *dīwān* was composed between age 66 and 75, and the third *dīwān* bears the work of the final three years of his life.¹³

The First Stage: Childhood and Education: During the first stage, in his youth (*Fātiḥah al-Shabāb*), Jami appears as a competent theologian, believing faithfully in the *Sunnah* and *Ḥadīth*, teaching at religious schools, and writing poetry. According to this very account, he, ‘Imad al-Din ‘Abd al-Rahman (Jami), was born on the 23rd of Sha’ban 817/ Nov. 7, 1414 in Khargird/Kharjird, a village near the city of Jam in the province of greater Khurasan, Iran.¹⁴ His family was originally from Dasht, a small town in the province of Isfahan. In the 9th/15th Century his father, Nizam al-Din Muhammad bin Shams al-Din – a respected scholar who was a judge and jurist in Khargird – left Dasht with his family and settled in Khargird in the province of Khurasan.¹⁵

‘Abd al-Rahman began to write poetry with the penname (*takhallus*) *Dashti*, referring to Dasht, where his ancestors had once settled¹⁶; later he changed his penname to *Jami*.¹⁷ He

¹² Jami, *Diwān*, ed. A'alakhan Afsahzadeh, Tehran: Mirath-i Maktub, 1378, pp. 35-39.

¹³ Ibid, Afsahzadeh, p. 316-328.

¹⁴ ‘Abd al-Wasi’ Nizami-i Bakharzi, *Maqāmāt-i Jami*, ed. Najib Mayil Heravi, Tehran: Intisharat-i Ney, 1992, p. 12.

¹⁵ Lari, p. 40, Safi, Vol. 1, p. 233-234.

¹⁶ Muhammad Mu’in, *Farhang-i Farsi*, v. 5, Tehran: Intisharat-i Amir Kabir, 1371, p. 423.

¹⁷ Safi, Vol. 1, p. 233; See also *the Ecnyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1380 Sh., p. 5.

has explained that he chose his *takhallus* for two reasons: one because of the famous Sufi of Jam, Sheikh al-Islam Ahmad Jam, and second, because his birthplace was Jām.¹⁸ Jami's disciple, 'Abd al-Ghafur Lari, in his *Takmila*, shows that Jami's choice for his penname is best explained in the following *qit'a* (poetical segment):

مولدم جام و رشحة قلمم
جرعه جام شيخ الاسلامى است
لاجرم در جریده اشعار
بدو معنى تخلصم جامى است

*My birthplace is Jam and dripping from my pen,
Is from the Sheikh of Jam,¹⁹
So undoubtedly, in the registrar of poems,
For two reasons my penname is Jami.²⁰*

At the age of thirteen he moved with his father to Herat where he studied under Maulana Junayd Usuli in the Nizamiyya School,²¹ and after that, despite his young age, he managed to complete his study under Khwajah Ali Samarqandi,²² within a short period.²³ This impressed his master who acknowledged his genius. At the age of 20, he went to Samarqand,²⁴ and studied under Qazizada-yi Rumi (d. 835/1436), 'Ali Qushji (d. 879/1474) and Fath-Allah Tabrizi (d. 867/1462).²⁵ It has also been said that the purpose of Jami's move to Samarqand was not merely educational, but rather a failed love affair.²⁶

In Samarqand, he studied Arabic grammar, religious sciences, Islamic theology, *tafsir* and *hadith*, *fann-i mu'ammā* (the skill of enigmas) as well as music under the

¹⁸ Afsahzad, *A Critical Study*, p. 127.

¹⁹ Sheikh-i Jam, is the reference to Sheikh Ahmad Jam (d.1141), the famous Sufi mystic of Jam.

²⁰ Lari, *Takmilah*, p. 40. Also cited in the work of Ali Asghar Hikmat, *Jami*, Tehran: Intisharat-i Tus, Tehran; 1363/1984, p. 59.

²¹ Nizamiyya School, or Nizamiyya Madrasa was a Saljuk foundation dating from the mid-fifth/eleventh century near the Iraq gate in the western part of the city, located at Baghdad, the seat of the caliphate. It was the most important among the institutions founded by Nizamulmuluk, the great vizier (d. 1092). He had founded colleges (*madrasa*) all over the Saljuk territories. This *madrasa* with the zeal of adherent of Ash'arite theology, served as training institutions for theologians and proved to be models for later colleges in the Muslim world. See: Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press 1975), pp. 90-92. Also see Hamid Algar, *Makers of Islamic Civilization Jami*, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 15)

²² Khwajah Ali Samarqandi, a student of Sharif al-Din Jurjani (d.816/1413). Jurjani was broadly accomplished scholars in many fields, his respective students in Herat instructed Jami in *kalam* as well as in the sciences of the Arabic language. See: Hamid Algar, p. 16.

²³ Safi, vol 1, p. 237.

²⁴ Lari, p. 11-12. Safi, *Rashahat*, pp. 238-239. Safi writes that Jami was interested in beauty (*giriftari dil ba yiki az mazahir husn va jamal buda ast*). One day, Jami's feelings were hurt by the latter (probably a young man) so he left Herat for Samarqand and continued his education there.

²⁵ Lari, p. 11-12.

²⁶ *Takmilah*, 12; *Rashahāt*, 238-239.

masters.²⁷ He also spent his time in self-study and writing for a few years and after 850 A. H., returned to Herat.²⁸

The Second Stage: His Mid-Life Phase (*Wāsiyat al-'Aqd*): During this stage, he appeared as a Sufi and joined the *Naqshbandiyyah tariqa*.²⁹ Not long after his return from Samarqand, he joined the *Naqshbandiyyah* order, probably around 1452/53.³⁰ He got married at the age of 50 and had four sons.³¹

Jami's disciple, Razyyeddin 'Abd al-Ghafur Lari, reported that Jami, his master, was really a humble, generous man.³² He always ate simple food moderately and dressed in plain, unadorned clothes. It is said that if a stranger entered a room looking for him, due to Jami's simple appearance, he could not distinguish him from others.³³ In literary sessions, he sat among the ordinary people despite his status.³⁴

Despite having a thorough knowledge and understanding of Sufi thought and practice, and while being known as a *Naqshbandiyyah* master, Jami avoided giving lectures about mysticism³⁵ in Herat. His sophistication in a variety of knowledge, skills and arts created multiplicity and diversity in his works in prose and poetry, and it was for this reason he became the most well-known poet in the 15th century, and the most comprehensive figure in the field of literature and Islamic studies of his age.³⁶ His *Al-Durrat al-Fākhira*, discussing theology, is one of the best resources on the subject of knowing God from a philosophical perspective.

Jami was an artist; he was known for his good handwriting and his vast knowledge of music. In fact, he had copied a number of his own works such as *Shawāhid ul-Nabuwah*,

²⁷ Safi, vol. 1, p. 238; Arbery, p. 388.

²⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 239.

²⁹ Naqshbandiyyah tariqa is different than many respects from most of the medieval mystical communities in the central Islamic countries. The man who gave it his name, Baha'uddin Naqshband (d.1390), belonged to the Central Asian tradition, which traced its lineage back to Yusuf Hamadhani (d.1140). The Naqshbandiyyah order had taken an active role among the Timurid rulers. But during Khawja Ahrar (1404-90), the leadership of the order, Central Asia was virtually dominated by the Naqshbaniyya. (See: Schimmel, p. 365)

³⁰ Bakharzi, *Maqamat*, pp. 87-88.

³¹ Jami married with grand-daughter of Sa'adadin Kashqari when he was 50 years old; Safi, vol 1, p. 282-283; Mayel Heravi, p. 55.

³² *Takmilah*, p. 20.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ *Mathnawi Haft Urang*, Uwrang 1: *Silsilat al-Zahab*, p. 75-76.

³⁵ The mysticism contains something mysterious, not to be reached by ordinary means of by intellectual effort. The words *mystic* and *mystery* come from the Greek word *myein* means "to close the eyes." Mysticism has been called "the great spiritual current which goes through all religions." It also may be defined as the consciousness of the One Reality – be it called Wisdom, Light, Love, or Nothing (Schimmel, p. 3-4).

³⁶ Baber, p. 112-113.

Silsilat al-Zahab and *Subhat al-Abrār*.³⁷ He was known as a supporter of art and of the young artists; some of them depended on his support for their livelihood.³⁸

The Third Stage (Khatimat al-Hayat): Towards the end of his life, Jami expressed his unhappiness about his mystical/spiritual growth. He blamed himself for not having reached the peak of selflessness and unconditional love for everyone, regardless of their beliefs, inclinations, and associations.

In *Khātimah al-Ḥayāt*, his third *dīwān*, he expressed his disappointment by writing: “O Jami! You have passed the stage of perfection in poetry; it is time to go into isolation. You grew old blackening the paper. I am afraid you may lose your mind in this trade. The foundation of your work is *qasida* and *ghazal*; for how long you will write lies on *karām al-katibīn*?!³⁹ The most generous of all writers is God.”⁴⁰

Apparently, Jami’s health after the age sixty was deteriorating;⁴¹ he complained about his weakness, old age and inability to do his works.⁴² Jami passed away on the 17th or 18th of *Muharram* 898 (11th of November, 1492) after a brief illness.⁴³

Nava’i provided a detailed account of Jami’s death in *Khamsat al- Mutahayyirīn*,⁴⁴ and Lari wrote that his master whispered the following couplet by Sa’di during his last days:

بسی تیر و دیمه و اردیبهشت
برآید که ما خاک باشیم و خشت

Many Teer, Daymah, Urdibihisht (names of three months in the Persian calendar)
Will come that we will be dust and brick

Lari continued that a few days before his illness, Jami left the city and went to his village. When his stay lasted longer than usual, his disciples went after him and asked him

³⁷ There is a *Subhat al-Abrar* manuscript in Jami’s own handwriting in Kabul museum (Afsahzadeh, p. 133); In addition, there is a complete manuscript on Jami’s *Kulliyat* with his own handwriting at the Institute of Oriental Languages of the Saint Petersburg (Leningrad) and it is introduced in the Victor Romanovich Rosen’s collection.

³⁸ CF. Afsahzadeh, p. 134-135.

³⁹ *Karam al-katibin* is one of the ninety-nine names of God in Islam.

⁴⁰ Jami, *Khatimat al-Hayat*, p. 661.

⁴¹ Afsahzadeh, p. 136.

⁴² For example, see *Mathnawi Haft Urang, Urang 5: Yusuf and Zulaykha*, p. 739-70; 745-746.

⁴³ Lari, *Takmilah*, pp. 40-42; See also Safi, Fakhridin, Vol. 1, p. 282; Afsahzadeh, p. 137-138.

⁴⁴ ‘Ali-shir Nava’i, *Khamsat al-Mutahayyirin*, pp. 76-79.

to return, so he did. Then, three days before he fell ill, he told one of his closest disciples: “You are my witness that there is no connection left for me to this world”.⁴⁵

JAMI: MELTING POT OF SUFISM

Jami’s tendency to Sufism began from his early education period in Samarqand.⁴⁶ During that time, he became familiar with *Naqshbandiyyah* thoughts and, after his return to Herat, chose Sa’adaddin Kashghari (d. 860/1456) as his spiritual teacher (*shaykh*).⁴⁷ According to Lari and Safi, Jami’s earliest association with *Naqshbandiyyah* is a dream Jami had in Samarqand. In that dream Sa’adaddin Kashghari (Jami would be future master)⁴⁸ commanded him to come back to Herat.⁴⁹

Jami was homesick in Samarqand. However, according to Lari, “it was a love affair that led Jami to Samarqand [and that it was] his emotional state [that] prepared him for such an experience, and as Kashghari relieved him of that state, Jami became attached to him.”⁵⁰ In a dream, he saw Kashghari who advised him to take refuge only in the Beloved so that He [the Beloved] could take care of him [Jami].⁵¹

After Kashghari’s death, Jami met Khwaja ‘Ubayd Allah Ahrar (d. 895/1490) – the *Naqshbandiyyah* figurehead – and made an impression on him.⁵² In 885AH, upon the advice of his Shaykh, Khawja Ahrar, Jami distanced himself from the scholarly circles and joined a *Naqshbandiyyah* order.

At this stage, Jami engaged in discussions about *Naqshbandiyyah* doctrines, methods on traveling along the spiritual path (*siyr- u sulūk*), and Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi’s (d.1240) thoughts. He was very much influenced by Khawja Ahrar’s character and his views; Jami’s works illustrate his relationship with his spiritual master.⁵³ His *Lawāyih*, for instance, which reflects elaborations of Ibn Arabi’s doctrine, was an outcome of long and elaborate

⁴⁵ Lari, *Takmilah*, p.40.

⁴⁶ Jami mentioned that he was of spiritual descent and was a family member of the famous Sufi of Jām, Sheikh al-Islam Ahmad Jām (d.1141) (See Bakharzi, *Maqāmāt*, pp. 294-295.)

⁴⁷ Heravi, p. 222; Afsahzadeh, p. 130.

⁴⁸ Jami was a disciple of the famous influential leader of the order in the 15th century, Khwaja Nasir al-Din ‘Ubaydollah Ahrar (1404-1490), who is the most studied leader of the order. He was referred to as *pir-i sani*, (second elder), a borrowed term from the Bektashi Order for him.

⁴⁹ *Rashahat*, 238-239; *Takmilah*, 12. Interestingly, Bakharzi did not mention this dream in *Maqamat*.

⁵⁰ *Takmila*, p. 12.

⁵¹ *Takmila*, p. 12 “رو در یاری گیر که ناگزیر تو بود”، *Rashahat*, 239.

⁵² Afsahzadeh, p. 130.

⁵³ Jami, *Moqadameh ye Abedi*, 1370, Sh p. 9-10.

discussions with his master. Jami's role in the promotion of *Naqshbandiyyah* is significant. His treatise on *Naqshbandiyyah's* connection system is a testimony to the fact.⁵⁴

As a Sufi and commentator of Sufism, Jami contributed numerous works to the area. At the early stages of his encounter with Sufi writings, he found them difficult to comprehend. This led him to the task of representing Sufism and Islamic spirituality in a language simple enough to be understood by ordinary people; he actually made a vow to do this,⁵⁵ and it eventually led to the compilation of *Nafahāt al-Uns* and other commentaries that he wrote on Sufi works.⁵⁶ His clear writing and systematic approach contributed to further understand Sufism.⁵⁷ The impact of his contribution went beyond the borders of Iran. A significant number of Sufis in East Asia as well as South East Asia followed Jami's thoughts. Works by Hamzah Fansuri (d. 1607) and Palimbani (d.1790), for instance, are testimonial to this claim.⁵⁸ He also had a deep influence in the development of Sufism (*tasawwuf*) in the Eastern part of the Muslim world. In fact, the Iranian school of Sufism, which was almost purely love oriented, was given a philosophical edge by Jami.⁵⁹ Jami also acted as a bridge that connected the Sufi Schools of the West, especially that of Muhiyuddin Ibn 'Arabi and Sadruddin Qunawi (d. 1274), to Sufi schools of the East—such as Iran and Afghanistan.

Jami's comprehensive discussions pertaining to the concept of divine existence based on the reformulation of Ibn 'Arabi's ideas in Persian are of special significance. Qazvini, the author of *Tazkira-i Maykhāna*, refers to Jami as “*qarina* [the mirror image] of *Sheikh Muhi al- Din b. Arabi*”.⁶⁰ Jami's clear and systematic exposition of Ibn Arabi's *waḥdah al-wujūd* (unity of being), was in itself a major achievement because the original source is written in an exceptionally difficult style. This is reflected in his elaboration of Ibn

⁵⁴ Mayel Heravi, p. 230-231.

⁵⁵ Jami, *moqadameh ye Abedi*, p. 18-19.

⁵⁶ *Nafahāt al-uns min hazarāt al-quds* (Breezes of intimacy with the holy ones) was a continuation of Ansari-yi Heravi's (d. 1089) translation of Muhammad Hussein Sullami Nishaburi's (d. 1044) Arabic work, *Tabaqat al-Sufiyya*. Jami translated the work into Persian and included biographies of six hundred and fourteen male Sufi saints and thirty-three female Sufi saints.

⁵⁷ Safa, Vol. 4, p. 353.

⁵⁸ Zekrgoo & Tajer, “An Introduction to Hamzah Fansuri's Sharābul-‘Āshiqīn, Asrārul ‘Ārifīn and Al-Muntahī: A Translation Project in Progress,” in *the Civilisational and Cultural Heritage of Iran and the Malay World, A Cultural Discourse*, Edited by Syed Farid Alatas & Abdolreza Alami, Gerakbudaya Enterprise, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 2018, pp. 107-118.

⁵⁹ Heravi, p. 252-253; Sahfi'i Kadkani, p. 407-409.

⁶⁰ Mulla Abd al-Nabi Fakhr al-Zamani-i Qazvini, *Tazkira-i Maykhana*, ed. Ahmad Gulchin- Ma'ani, Tehran: Iqbal Pub., 1375, 6th edition, p. 103. Also Heravi, Jami, p. 279.

Arabi's school of thought throughout the accounts such as *Asha's dar Sharh-i Lama'āt* and *Naqd ul- Nusūs dar Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ*.⁶¹

JAMI: THE POET

In Persian literature, Jami is remarkably dignified as “*the last of the great classical poets of Persian language*” (*Khātām al-Shu'arā'*). His *Mathnawi-i Haft Awrang*, for instance, is known to be among the best works in Persian literature. In *Baharistān*, he follows meter and rhyme. Most sources identified fifty-four works in prose and poetry which were written by Jami.

Lari writes that his master's mind, from his youth to his old age, was always occupied with poetry. He was either writing, or thinking about it, though it did not take much time for him to do so.⁶² He adds: “*Poetry was a cover for the secrets, and being a poet was a cover for that honourable one. Thus, poetry and being a poet in reality was a mask over his virtue and perfection*”.⁶³ Lari continues to praise his master by saying that Jami “*could easily absorb knowledge in different subjects when he was full of excitement and love and his mind was occupied with poetry*”.⁶⁴

Jami was well aware of his aptitude in composing poetry, the superiority of his verses over his contemporaries, and his ability to appeal to his Sufi audience through his poetry.⁶⁵ While great poets of Persian literature focused on only one genre of poetry, i.e., Firdowsi in epic poetry, Nizami in storytelling, Unsuri in *qasidas*, Sa'di in love lyrics, and Hafiz in *ghazals*, Jami was versatile, writing in all poetic forms, especially *ghazal* and *mathnawi*, competing in this regard only with Maulana Jalaludin Rumi.⁶⁶ However, in borrowing from his predecessors, he was criticised for copying and imitating the work of masters such as Nizami Ganjavi or Amir Khusrau Dihlavi.⁶⁷

In his own defense, he explained that he intended to 'renew' the old poems by simplifying them and by removing the lavish ornamentation style, consciously attempting to

⁶¹ *Naqd al-Nusus fi Sharh Naqsh al-Fusus* is a rich and beneficial work in the understanding of Ibn Arabi's thoughts; *Naqd al-Nusus* may not be seen as a critical assessment of Sufi thought, but Jami's effort in translating difficult texts to be understood by the masses is definitely a valuable contribution.

⁶² Lari, *Takmilah*, p. 7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ Jami, *Wasitat al-'Iqd*, p. 377, line 3986.

⁶⁶ Heravi, *Jami*, p. 142.

⁶⁷ Jami, *Fatihah al-Shabab*, p. 331, line 3370. Jami was quite aware of his critics. In this poem he writes: ‘My sayings are well calculated and in harmony, if the jealous one reproaches me, it is because of his unsound nature.’

revitalize them. In one of his poems, he writes: “*My charming verse has made a cage out of the world for me, and I am the sweet-talking parrot inside*”.⁶⁸

MYSTICAL LIFE OF JAMI

Perhaps the universal symbol for the relationship between the mystic and the Divine goal is 'love'. Mystics in all cultures have adopted it as an essential part and main foundation of mysticism. It is no exaggeration therefore to say that love is the binding book of Sufism. The historical transformation of the concept of love in Persian Sufi literature (prose) could be traced to Rabi'ah al- 'Adawiyah (d. Ah 185/801), emphasizing the Qur'anic verse “*He loves them and they love him*” (Surah 5: 59), particularly, the “*love of God*” (*ishq-i ilāhī*). In Persian Sufi poetry; mystical love, gradually appeared from the 5th century, first in Khurasan and then in other regions. As a result, a number of terms related to love entered into Sufi literature.⁶⁹

From Jami's *Dīwāns*, one can trace the strong presence of 'love' in all three stages of his life, and that composing poetry was a means by which Jami could express himself accurately, confidently and smoothly. His *ghazals* indicate that he might have experienced different stages of love – earthly love to divine love.⁷⁰ He wished to live, die, and be resurrected with that love. In his *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*, Jami shares his thoughts and deep passion towards love:

براه عاشقی بودم سبک سیر	بحمدالله که تا بودم درین دیر
به تیغ عاشقی نافم بریده	چو دایه مشک من بی نافه دیده
ز خونخواری عشقم شیر دادست	چو مادر بر لبم پستان نهادست
هنوز آن ذوق شیرم در ضمیر است	اگر چه موی من اکنون چو شیر است
دمد بر من دمامد این فسون عشق	به پیری و جوانی نیست چون عشق
سبکروچی کن و در عاشقی میر... ⁷¹	که جامی چون شدی در عاشقی پیر

I give thanks to God that from the moment I arrived in this world, I have always blithely followed the path of love. As soon as I was born, and my mother put my lips to her breast, she suckled me on love, along with her milk. And now that my hair is as white as that milk, I still cherish in the depths of my heart the delicious taste of the

⁶⁸ Jami, *Wasitat al-'Iqd*, p. 91, line 758.

⁶⁹ See footnote No.7.

⁷⁰ The word 'love' that Jami uses could mean earthy love or divine love, because Jami believes that a worldly beauty is the reflection of God's creation on earth. So love of God's creation is equal to love of God.

⁷¹ *Haft Awrang*, (5th Awrang: Yusuf and Zuleikha), p. 594.

milk of love. There is nothing – whether in old age or youth – which can compare with love. And every moment love earnestly entreats me: ‘Jami, you have grown old in love: may you persevere and serenely die in love...’⁷²

In a number of his *ghazals*, especially those in which he describes the physical beauty of the Beloved, one feels a metaphorical approach; the earthly metaphors may also be interpreted as referring to divine love. In his *Mathnawi's Laily wa Majnūn, Salamān wa Ābsāl*, and *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā*, despite the subject matter that revolves around lovers in an earthly sense, the symbolic treatment of the story often implies a higher level of spiritual affection toward the Divine.

References to worldly love could also be traced in his *Fātiḥat al-Shabāb*, a review of his experiences at a young age. His concept of love also extends to different types of intimacy including the states of devotion, friendship and love for one’s homeland. He adopted different terminology like love, lover, beloved and expresses himself by using symbolic words such as ‘beautiful Turkish boy’, ‘Turkish sweetheart’, ‘Turkish eyes and lips’, themes that could be representative of worldly love and beauty, or metaphors that lead to the realm of spiritual ecstasy. It is important to note, however, that the symbolic use of terms becomes more extensive in his later collections. Perhaps, the richness of Jami’s emotional experience in the earlier stages of his life was the cause of his choosing these symbols. It is also necessary to bear in mind that since Jami definitely wrote his *mathnawis* in his old age (especially after years of engagement with the Naqshbandiyyah Order), his understanding of love evolved into a mystical one. In the third stage of his life, he tends to use more of Ibn Arabi’s mystical terminology, such as ‘Unity of Being’, ‘Reality’ and ‘Truth’. In one of his *Rubā’is* he stresses on the necessity of secretly having one’s inner eye in the direction of the “beloved”, even while engaged in social acts, for the sake of salvation.

سر رشته دولت ای برادر بکف آر وین عمر گرامی به خسارت مگذار
دایم همه جا با همه کس در همه کار می دار نهفته چشم دل جانب یار⁷³

In a sweet prayer, in the beginning of his treatise *Lawā’ih* (Flashes of Light),⁷⁴ Jami explains the termination of his purpose of the different stages of traversal of the path (*sayr u sulūk*) briefly and frequently:

⁷² Hakim Nuruddin Abdurrahman Jami, *Yusuf and Zuleikha*, Abridged (ed.), David Pendlebury (tr.), London, the Octagon Press, 1980, p. 6-7.

⁷³ Jami, *Ruba’ayyat*, p. 61.

⁷⁴ *Lawā’ih*: This book has become one of the most widely used manuals of later Sufi teachings but it has intellectual and rational approach to the divine truth, its high technical expression about absolute existence and relative being, from the intense earnestness and simplicity of Khawje Abdullah Ansari.

*O God, deliver us from preoccupation with worldly vanities, and show us the nature of things 'as they really are'. Remove from our eyes the veil of ignorance, and show us things as they really are. Show not to us non-existence as existent, not ease the veil of non-existence over the beauty of existence. Make this phenomenal world the mirror to reflect the manifestations of Thy beauty, and not a veil to separate and repel us from Thee. Case these unreal phenomena of the universe to be for us the sources of knowledge and insight, and not the cause of ignorance and blindness. Our alienation and severance from Thy beauty all proceed from ourselves. Deliver us from ourselves, and accord to us intimate knowledge of Thee.*⁷⁵

He continues:

*Remove the veil of ignorance from the vision of our wisdom. And show us everything the way that really are, and do not present non-being as being. Do not cover the beauty of being with the veil of non-being. Let the imaginary forms display your beauty, not a veil over it, nor a cause for our blindness.*⁷⁶

Referring to the above prayer, which is found in the introduction of *Lawā'ih* (Flashes of Light), one may conclude that the author believes that his true vocation in life is to walk along the spiritual path through selfless engagement in mystical love. Man himself is the cause of his ignorance; his own veil. So, Jami asks God not to “*leave us to ourselves, bless us by liberating us from ourselves, and bestow upon us self realisation*”.⁷⁷ He continues his preface with a devotional prayer:

آه شب و گریه سحرگام ده	یارب دل پاک و جان آگام ده
آنکه بیخود وز خود به خود راهم ده	در راه خود اول از خودم بیخود کن
وز جمله جهانیان مرا یک سو کن	یارب همه خلق را به من بدخوکن
در عشق خودم یکجهت و یک رو کن	روی دل من صرف کن از هرجهتی
راهی دهیم بکوی عرفان چه شود	یارب برهانیم زحرمان چه شود
یک گیر دگر کنی مسلمان چه شود	بس گیر که از کرم مسلمان کردی
وز افسر فقر سرفرازم گردان	یارب زدو کون بی‌نیازم گردان
زان ره که نه سوی تست بازم گردان ⁷⁸	در راه طلب محرم رازم گردان

Make my heart pure, my soul error free,

⁷⁵ Nur-Ud-Din Abd-Ur-Rahman Jami, *Lawa'ih*, translated by E. H. Whinfield, M. A., & Mirza Muhammad Kazvini, New introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, London, Theosophical Publishing House LTD, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Lawa'ih*, introduction.

Make tears and sighs my daily lot to be,
And lead me on Thy road away from self,
That lost to self I may draw near to Thee!
Set enmity between the world and me,
Make me averse from worldly company:
From other objects turn away my heart
So that it be engrossed with love to Thee.
How were it, Lord, if Thou shouldst set me free
From error's grasp and cause me truth to see?
Guebres by scores Thou makest Muslulmans,
Why, then, not make a Musulman of me?
My lust for this world and the next efface,
Grant me the crown of poverty, and grace
To be partaker in Thy mysteries,
From paths that lead not towards Thee turn my face.”⁷⁹

LOVER, BELOVED AND THE ACT OF LOVE

With what we have seen so far, Jami may be regarded as a typical Sufi theologian, with his original intentions and doubts. He works hard to construct a reasoned basis for Sufism, but finally realizes that his logical definitions and syllogisms cannot express the truth as it really is, and add nothing to the grounds on which the convictions of Sufis must always rest. It is only by means of the spiritual clairvoyance generated. Those who have these spiritual intuitions do not need demonstrations, are useless.⁸⁰

In other words, the spiritual journey, whether it finds manifestation or remains veiled, is the core substance of Sufism. This journey takes place on two levels or stages: the initial stage is known as *Seyr ila Allah* which literally means ‘*journey towards God*’, while the second and higher stage takes place ‘*within God*’, i.e. *seyr fi Allah*. The two stages are metaphorically expressed as two bows; the bow of necessity and the bow of possibility.⁸¹ In this transcendental stage, the servant sees his Creator in the mirror of his soul. It is as if, in

⁷⁹ Nur-Ud-Din Abd-Ur-Rahman Jami, *Lawa'ih*, translated by E. H. Whinfield, M. A., & Mirza Muhammad Kazvini, New introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, London, Theosophical Publishing House LTD, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Lawa'ih: A Treatise on Sufism*. 2nd ed. New Introduction by Syed Hossein Nasr, reprinted with additions and corrections. London: the Eosophical Publishing 1978, p. xv.

⁸¹ Hikmat, Ali Asghar, *Jami*, p. 144-145.

Jami's words, *Haq* (Truth) unveils to the servant, in a manner one sees one's face in a mirror.

Jami refers to "love" as a mean to attain eternal felicity. He designates this liberating love as 'the king of love', which flows and manifests in the entire existence and makes all barriers disappear. At this stage of selflessness, everything loses its identity in the Truth. The lover ('*āshiq*), beloved (*ma'ashuq*) and love ('*ishq*) all become manifestations of *Haqq*, but each represents Him according to their capacity.⁸²

صیاد هم او، صید هم او، دانه هم او

ساقی و حریف و می پیمانه هم او

The hunter is Him, so is the prey and the bait;

He is the wine bearer, the partner, the wine and the wine bowl.⁸³

According to Jami, each particle in the universe is a mirror reflecting the eternal splendor of the creator – the Beloved. Each atom, therefore, carries the fragrance of 'the whole'.

از آن لمعه فروغی بر گل افتاد زگل شوری به جان بلبل افتاد

رخ خود شمع از آن آتش برافروخت بهر کاشانه صد پروانه را سوخت

A portion of that effulgence fell on the rose,
which drove the nightingale mad with love.
Its around inflames the candle's cheek, and
hundreds of moths came from every side
and burnt themselves on it.⁸⁴

But the reality of love is to be experienced and words cannot penetrate its depth, and so Jami prescribes silence:

زبانی و زبان‌دانی ندارد

خمش کاین قصه پایانی ندارد

⁸² In mystical poetry, an author may describe God in terminology taken from a pure love relation. The relation between man and God is perceived as that of creature and Creator, of a slave in the presence of his Lord, or of a lover yearning for his Beloved (schimmel, p. 5).

While the key concept of love appears to be a fundamental element for spiritual experience, in Persian literature love is a guiding light or leading agent that assists the wayfarer to attain eternal felicity. The lover ('*āshiq*) and beloved (*ma'shūq*) become manifestations of Love ('*ishq*) – which is sometimes used as a synonymous term for God/Truth (*Haqq*). Love/Truth makes the lover (seeker of the Truth) submit to the will of the beloved (manifestation of the Truth) with whom he desires to unite. See: Leyla H. Tajer, 'The Ingredients, Stages and Experience of Love: A Parallel Exposition of Jalaluddin M. Rumi and Ananda K. Coomaraswamy', PhD Thesis (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur 2014), p. 113.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 145.

⁸⁴ Jami, *Yusuf and Zulaikha*, edited and abridged and translated by David Pendlebury, London, Octagon Press, 1980.

همان بهتر که هم در عشق پیچیم که بی این گفت و گو هیچیم هیچیم

Let us be silent, since this tale has no end and there is neither a language nor a poet that is equal to it. So it is better for us simply to be involved in love; for without that we are nothing, absolutely nothing.⁸⁵

In the fifth *Awrang* (of his *Haft Awrang*), Jami claims that there is nothing—young or old—which can be compared with love. He offers thanks to God for bestowing him with the blessing of love throughout his life, and feels responsible to retell the story of love as his legacy and as a debt to the One who has bestowed upon him the bounty of affection: Jami, you have grown old in love: may you persevere and serenely die in love, but first write a story about the game of love, so as to preserve a trace of yourself in the world. Draw with your subtle pen a picture which will remain behind you when you leave,⁸⁶ for a ‘heart which is free of lovesickness is not a heart at all; the body bereft of the pangs of love is nothing but clay and water’.⁸⁷ If you would be free, become a captive to love. If you wish joy, open your breast to the suffering of love.⁸⁸ And he says: “you may try a hundred things, but love alone will release you from yourself. So never flee from love – not even from love in an earthly guise – for it is a preparation for the supreme Truth. How will you ever read the Qur’an without first learning the alphabet?”⁸⁹ But do not linger in the abode of appearances: cross that bridge quickly if you wish to arrive at the supreme goal.⁹⁰

According to Jami, the beloved inspires all deeds that issue from the lover. All aspects of the lover are an extension of the beloved and his deeds are extensions of the beloved’s being or desire. On the other hand, though there are a number of different forms, the real singularity and unity remains in itself, and a multitude (*katharāt*) of forms does not have any impact on the singularity (*wahdat*). Therefore, a beloved has a variety of manifestations and a lover has different talents. A lover’s essential duty is to increase his capacity

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Jami, *Mathnawi-i Haft Awrang*. Eds. Jabliqadad Alishah, Asghar Ganfada, Zahir Ahrari, and Hussein Tarbiat. Tehran: Mirath-i Maktub, 1378/1999; Also cited in *Hikmat*, p. 593.

⁸⁷ دل فارغ ز درد عشق دل نیست تن بی درد دل جز آب و گل نیست

⁸⁸ اسیر عشق شو کاراد باشی غمش بر سینه نه تا شاد باشی

⁸⁹ بیگیتی گرچه صد کار آزمائی همین عشقت دهد از خود رهایی

متاب از عشق رو گر خود مجاز نیست که آن نهی حقیقی کارساز نیست

بلوح اول افل بی تا نخوانی زقرآن درخس خواندن کی توانی

⁹⁰ Hakim Nuruddin Abdurrahman Jami, *Yusuf and Zuleikha*, Abridged (ed.), David Pendlebury (tr.), London, the Octagon Press, 1980, p. 6. ولی باید که در صورت نمائی وزین پل زود خود را بگذرانی

and to elevate his status so that he may get the most from the offerings (manifestations) of the beloved.⁹¹

In *Lawa'ih* XXI Flash, he says:

In me Thy beauty love and longing wrought: Did I not seek Thee how couldst Thou be sought? My love is as a mirror in which Thy beauty into evidence is brought. Nay, what is more, it is the 'Truth' who is Himself at once the lover and the beloved, the seeker and the sought. He is loved and sought in His character of the 'One who is all'; and He is lover and seeker when viewed as the sum of all particulars and plurality.⁹²

In V Flash of *Lawa'ih*, Jami says:

رفتم بتماشای گل آن شمع طراز
چون دید میان گلشنم گفت بناز
من اصلم و گلهای حسن فرع منست
از اصل چرا بفرع می مانی باز

The Loved One's rose-parterre I went to see,
That beauty's Torch espied me, and, quote He,
I am the tree; these flowers My offshoots are.

Let not these offshoots hide from thee the tree.⁹³

The attributes related to love may be divided into attributes of existence (*sifat-i wujudi*) and attributes of non-existence (*sifat-i adami*). Attributes of existence belong to the beloved and the attributes of non-existence to the lover. In this worldview, everything that exists is an extension of the beloved, while all that are non-existence are related to the lover. The lover's act and pleasure must be led by the beloved's wishes. The beloved then is seen as all rich and needless, while the lover is constantly the manifestation of need. However, as all opposites are defined by their complementary counterparts, the very notion of needlessness is dependent on the thirst or need, and visa versa. The lover's actions consist completely of *niyāz* (asking and petitioning), whereas the beloved is made of perfect *nāz* (coquetry); beyond this contrast lays the unity in love. The poverty that attracts the needless beloved is an exalted spiritual state; it is a virtue that is found in devotion and pure intentions. The lover must preserve this status through not having personal desire or willingness – qualities

⁹¹ Hikmat, *Jami*, p. 146; see also *ibid*, p. 190.

⁹² Nur-Ud-Din Abd-Ur-Rahman Jami, *Lawa'ih*, translated by E. H. Whinfield, M. A., & Mirza Muhammad Kazvini, New introduction by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, London, Theosophical Publishing House LTD, p. 23. لا بلکه هم محب حقست و هم محبوب او و هم طالب هم حقست و هم مطلوب او مطلوب و محبوبست در مقام جمع احدیت و طالب و محبت در مرتبه تفصیل و کثرت

⁹³ *Lawa'ih*, translated by E. H. Whinfield, M. A., & Mirza Muhammad Kazvini, p.7.

that are strictly that of the beloved's. This selfless attitude can elevate the lover to the same spiritual age as the beloved. The higher the beloved the more elevated the state of the lover's being and, eventually, the union with the ultimate Beloved (*ma'ashuq-i azali*) would prevail and salvation is experienced in its totality. In order to reach this state, Jami prays to be relieved from his 'self'.

چه شود کز خودم خلاص دهی جام از باده‌های خاص دهی
برهانی چنان زخویشتم که نیایم خبر ز خود که منم

Relieve me from my self; will You?

Offer me a cup of Your special wines; will You?

Liberate me from the chains of my ego

Erase my trace from my being's show.⁹⁴

CONCLUSION

Jami tends to evaluate his life span in search of elixir of salvation. This search led him to an elevated stage of self-realization where he questioned his previous actions and all that which he was praised for, i.e. a prolific writer, an imaginative poet, and a distinguished commentator of Sufi thought. This spiritual self-assessment eventually directed him to the path of 'love' – the transforming power that reveals the essential meaning of life, realization of the inner divine self, and that which could bring about union with God.

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⁹⁴ Jami, *Mathnawi Haft Awrang, Sisilat al-Zahab*

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