



ABSTRACTS

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The image of qalandar in the Divan of ‘Attar

*Those drunk with the wine of love have gone into this desert.
I remain [here], but there is no trace of my remaining.
Whether, like me, the two worlds of creation exist or not,*

In the desert of love, [their existence] makes neither a flaw nor a perfection. (‘Attar)

I shall start my discourse with some remarks on the etymology of the word “qalandar”. In brief, it seems to be an Arabized form of the Persian word “kalandar”, meaning literally “an unhewn log (or block)” and figuratively “a rude and ill-bred person”. In both senses, the notion of rudeness and insensitivity is distinctly present. I hold that rudeness and insensitivity are precisely the qualities in which both unhewn logs and accomplished mystics (qalandars) take a share. I think the above lines explicitly testify to this insensitivity and indifference of the qalandar, which he has obtained through some stunning and stupefying experience. Further, this may not be utterly wrong to describe this experience as witnessing the self-disclosure of the Essence (tajalli-ye dhāfi) of the Real. Among four types of self-disclosures (those of essence, (its) names & attributes, acts and traces) this is said to be the highest – the one, which utterly destroys the locus of its manifestation (the heart of mystic), thus annihilating it and lifting all veils of entifications (ta ‘ayyunat).

However, mystics differ in their views on the true character of this annihilation. Some (e.g., Shabistari) seem to believe that the veils of entifications can be actually lifted; others lifting of all entifications is itself just another veil and entification. According to ‘Attar, what a mystic can achieve is a complete submersion (istighrāq) in (the light of) the Beloved.

*When a black-faced coal becomes a red-hot ember,
Don’t consider this coal [to be] anything but an amber.
When wine and a transparent cup become one,*

*The twoness goes, [so] don’t consider the wine and the cup [as two different things].
When a money-changer thaws copper in gold,
The copper becomes gold, don’t consider it anything but gold.
Don’t become an incarnationist (hululi) here,*

But, likewise, don’t consider this mystery [to be] anything but a submersion in the Beloved.

To sum up, “qalandar” denotes a perfect mystic, whose entity (or, to put it more precisely, its traces and properties) has been destroyed by the essential self-disclosure of the Real (or, if you like, submerged in the light of His manifestation). As a result, he has become rude and insensitive to the refinements, which constitute the very heart of common courtesy (adab) and form the patterns of everyday behaviour. Needless to say, this insensitivity is just a trace (which manifests itself as negation of all other traces): as for the qalandar’s essence, it is indefinable and indescribable. By virtue of being the locus of the essential self-disclosure of the Real, it is free of all limitations and entifications like the Real himself.

In quest for the abdal: reflections upon the tale of Daquqi in Rumi’s “Mathnawi”

Without doubt, Rumi’s “Mathnawi” as a whole, despite its outward plainness and simplicity, is one of the most mysterious works ever written (let us keep in mind that Rumi himself, long before Jami, compared his work with the Qur’an and spoke of its seven levels (butun) of understanding). However, among its numerous tales, there are ones that allow them to be interpreted as simple (sometimes primitive and obscene) anecdotes or, at best, samples of common wisdom – and there are others which bear too distinct traces of visionary experience to regard them as mere illustrations of truisms.

One of such enigmatic tales is that of Daquqi (vol.3, verses 1878 – 2305), which describes the latter’s encounter with the seven (hidden) friends of God. Recent commentators of the “Mathnawi” – such as R.A.Nicholson and Badi’ al-Zaman Furuzanfar – have explored almost all possible avenues in their quest for the “real” historical Daquqi – but was there ever one?

On the other hand, Sufi teachers whom we have consulted have told us that they don’t care about the existence of any historical & real Daquqi, since the spiritual message of the tale is fairly simple: God has a group of His chosen friends, whose lips are sealed, i.e., who do not make any supplications – or, to quote Rumi himself,

*I know another tribe among God’s friends,
/those, / whose mouths have been shut for supplications. (Mathnawi, 3:1880)*

In my paper, I shall try to show that Daquqi who spends most of his life looking for the hidden friends of God, eventually meets them and then loses them again through making an inappropriate supplication in his thoughts during the prayer, is none other than Rumi himself.

Apart from the striking similarity between the image of Daquqi in the “Mathnawi” and that of Rumi himself in his son’s “Waladname”, literally everything that we know about Rumi’s (spiritual) life shows him as a tireless searcher for the abdal.

Now, the word “abdal” (literally “substitutes”) itself is used in Rumi’s writings in a rather peculiar way: instead of naming a specific class of God’s friends (as this is the case with Ibn al-‘Arabi, Ala’ al-Dawla Simnani etc.), here it simply describes all God’s friends as people whose substance has been changed (“substituted”) by God:

*Who are the abdal? Those who become substituted,
Through God’s substitution their wine become vinegar. (“Mathnawi”, 3:4000)*

As we know from Aflaki’s “Managib al-‘arifin”, Rumi refers to himself as one of the “abdalan” in several cases (in one case he does so in order to distinguish himself from Sadr al-Din Qunawi & his followers, who represent the “regular” Sufism).

More importantly, apparently there is a difference in ranks between the abdal themselves. The visionary tale of Daquqi, as well as the real story of Mawlawi and Shams Tabrizi, tells us that encounter between the abdal of different ranks (or “capacities”) entails unavoidable separation, which, in turn, results for the participants either in a bodily death (in case of Shams) or in a life-long grief (Rumi / Daquqi).