

LEGENDS OF THE SUFIS

SELECTED ANECDOTES

FROM THE WORK ENTITLED

THE ACTS OF THE ADEPTS

(MENĀQIBU 'L 'ĀRIFĪN)

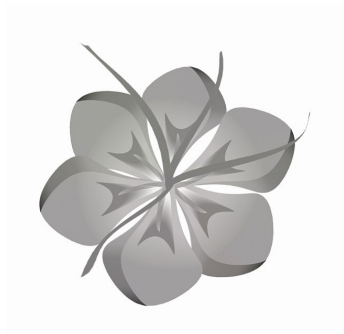
BY

SHEMSU-'D-DĪN AHMED, EL EFLĀKĪ

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AZAFRAN BOOKS

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THERE is little argument regarding Jalaluddin Rumi - often referred to as *Maulana* or *Mevlana* meaning 'Our Master' – as being one of the very greatest saints and mystics of all peoples. He was also a Master of the Way, in Sufic terminology. This book is a selection of anecdotes about the teachings of Rumi as well as his associates, family, and associates. It is an important document in the life and teachings of the Mevlevi School, as is one of the five source books generally regarded as accepted material on this tradition: the others are the *Mathnavi*, *The Divan of Shamsi-i-Tabriz*, the Letters of Rumi, and *Fihri ma Fihri*.

This collection of anecdotes often comes under the title of *Acts of the Adepts*, as was its original title in English (translated by James Redhouse). However, similar to many works of antiquity, there is no one authoritative version of this collection. Various compilations of Eflaki's work exist, in a range of languages. The book is in effect what we would call in modern parlance a hagiography. Under such circumstances there are stories, tales, and anecdotes that may seem 'unbelievable' or 'exaggerated' to a modern mind. Perhaps the reader of today should consider that such a collection functions upon several levels, and one of these may be as form of teaching material. It is well documented that Sufic materials often lend themselves as a means to test the mind and reaction of the hearer. Stories and tales taken at face value, and processed by a literal mind, may create their own obstacles in the reading. It is likely then, we must consider, that some of the contents of this collection also fare upon such levels above and beyond the literal. Other anecdotes were included, no doubt, because they were genuinely perceived to be reports of Rumi and his associates after the death of the great Master. It is a facet of human nature that tales and stories of saints and mystics are often eulogized and worshiped as 'gospel.' The reader of today should be mindful of this character flaw.

In recent years Rumi's life and work has undergone a popular revival in the western world. His work is now among the best-selling poetry of today, aided by translations that place his verse and meaning within modern verse styles. As is common among Sufic materials there is a pattern that renders them amenable to present-day terms, and which buffers them against becoming crystallized or succumbing to dogmatism. As in all human systems, there are those that are traditionalists and those that are innovators.

Legends of the Sufis, as the title suggests, contains miraculous or apparently supernatural events that appear frequently throughout. Yet the reader should bear in mind that they are not there merely to impress upon the gullible witness or to incite an emotional response. They have their purpose and function within the context of such literature. That this book, and its content, adheres to Sufic materials is without doubt. As such, it addresses a psychological aspect of the reader that many books lack. The information herewith has been available to potential readers for more than seven hundred years; still, there are those who seek to imitate its practices, such as the famous whirling dance. I can only suggest that the reader consider processing the material that they hold in their hands rather than imitating the actions of a bygone era.

Legends of the Sufis may contain everything or nothing for the modern person. As in all things, one must leave the distinction clearly at the feet of the honourable reader.

Solomon James, September 2017

CHAPTER I

Bahā'u-'d-Dīn, Veled, Sultānu-'l-'Ulemā (The Beauty of the Religion of Islam, Son, Sultan of the Doctors of the Law).

1.

THE king of Khurāsān, (1) 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn Muhammed, Khurrem-Shāh, uncle of Jelālu-'d-Dīn Muhammed Kh'ārezm-Shāh, and the proudest, as he was the most handsome man of his time, gave his daughter, Melika'i-Jihān (Queen of the World), as to the only man worthy of her, to Jelālu-'d-Dīn Huseyn, el Khatībī, of the race of Abū-Bekr.

An ancestor of his was one of the original Muslim conquerors of Khurāsān. He was himself very virtuous and learned, surrounded with numerous disciples. He had not married until then; which gave him many an anxious and self-accusing thought.

He himself, the king, the king's daughter, and the king's Vazīr were all four warned in a dream by the Prince of the Apostles of God (Muhammed) that he should wed the princess; which was done. He was then thirty years old. In due course, nine months afterwards, a son was born to him, and was named Bahā'u-'d-Dīn Muhammed. He is commonly mentioned as Bahā'u-'d-Dīn Veled.

When adolescent, this latter was so extremely learned that the family of his mother wished to raise him to the throne as king; but this he utterly rejected.

By the divine command, as conveyed in the selfsame night, and in an identical dream, to three hundred of the most learned men of

the city of Balkh, (2) the capital of the kingdom, where he dwelt, those sage doctors unanimously conferred upon him the honorific title of Sultānu-'l-'Ulemā, and they all became his disciples.

Such are the names and titles by which he is more commonly mentioned; but he is also styled Mevlānāyi Buzurg (the Greater or Elder Master). Many miracles and prodigies were attributed to him; and some men were found who conceived a jealousy at his growing reputation and influence.

2.

In A.H. 605 (A.D. 1208) he, Bahā'u-'d-Dīn Veled, began to preach against the innovations of the king and sundry of his courtiers, declaiming against the philosophers and rationalists, while he pressed all his hearers to study and practise the precepts of Islām. Those courtiers maligned him with the king, calling him an intriguer who had designs on the throne. The king sent and made him an offer of the sovereignty, promising to retire elsewhere himself. Bahā answered that he had no concern with earthly greatness, being a poor recluse; and that he would willingly leave the country, so as to remove from the king's mind all misgivings on his score.

He accordingly quitted Balkh, with a suite of about forty souls, after delivering a public address in the great mosque before the king and people. In this address he foretold the advent of the Moguls to overturn the kingdom, possess the country, destroy Balkh, and drive out the king, who would then flee to the Roman land, and there at length be killed.

So he left Balkh, as the prophet (Muhammed) had fled from Mekka to Medīna. His son Jelālu-'d-Dīn was then five, and the elder brother, 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn, seven years old.

The people everywhere on his road, hearing of his approach or forewarned in dreams of his coming, flocked to meet him and do him honour. Thus he drew near to Bagdād. Here he was met by the great Sheykh Shahābu-'d-Dīn, 'Umer, Suherverdī, the most eminent man of the place, deputed by the Caliph Musta'zim to do him honour. He became the guest of the Sheykh.

The Caliph sent him a present of three thousand sequins, but he declined the gift as being money unlawfully acquired. He also refused to visit the Caliph; but consented to preach in the great mosque after the noon service of worship on the following Friday, the Caliph being present. In his discourse he reproached the Caliph to his face with his evil course of life, and warned him of his approaching slaughter by the Moguls with great cruelty and ignominy. The Caliph again sent him rich presents in money, horses, and valuables, but he refused to accept them.

Before Bahā'u-'d-Dīn quitted Bagdād, intelligence was received there of the siege of Balkh, of its capture, and of its entire destruction, with its twelve thousand mosques, by the Mogul army of five hundred thousand men commanded by Jengīz in person (in A.H. 608, A.D. 1211). Fourteen thousand copies of the Qur'ān were destroyed, fifteen thousand students and professors of the law were slain, and two hundred thousand adult male inhabitants led out and shot to death with arrows.

Bahā'u-'d-Dīn went from Bagdād to Mekka, (3) performed the greater pilgrimage there, proceeding thence to Damascus, and next to Malatia (Melitene, on the Upper Euphrates), where, in A.H. 614 (A.D. 1217), he heard of the death of Jengīz. The Seljūqī Sultan, 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn Keyqubād, was then sovereign of the land of Rome (Rūm, *i.e.*, Asia Minor), and was residing at Sīwās (Sebaste). In A.H. 620 (A.D. 1223) Sultan Jelālu-'d-Dīn, the dispossessed monarch of Kh'ārezm (Chorasmia) was killed in a battle fought by him in Azerbāyjān (Atropatene) against the Sultans of Rome, Syria, and Egypt, when his forces were totally defeated. And thus ended that great dynasty, after ruling about a hundred and forty years.

Bahā'u-'d-Dīn went from Malatia and remained four years near Erzinjān (the ancient Aziris, on the Western Euphrates), in Armenia, at a college built for him by a saintly lady, 'Ismet Khātūn. She was the wife of the local sovereign, Melik Fakhru-'d-Dīn. She and her husband both died, and then Bahā'u-'d-Dīn passed on to Larenda (in Cataonia), in Asia Minor, and remained there about seven years at the head of a college, the princess Melika'i-Jihān, his mother, being still with him.

Here it was that his younger son, Jelālu-'d-Dīn Muhammed, the future author of the Mesnevī, attained to man's estate, being then eighteen years old; when, in A.H. 623 (A.D. 1226), he married a young lady named Gevher Khātūn, daughter of the Lala Sherefu-'d-Dīn, of Samarqand. She gave birth in due course to Jelāl's eldest son, 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn.

The king had now returned to his capital, Qonya (the ancient Iconium). Hearing of Bahā'u-'d-Dīn's great learning and sanctity,

the king sent and invited him to the capital, where he installed him in a college, and soon professed himself a disciple. Many miracles are related as having been worked at Qonya by Bahā'u-'d-Dīn, who at length died there on Friday, the 18th of Rebī'u-'l-ākhir, A.H. 628 (February A.D. 1231). The Sultan erected a marble mausoleum over his tomb, on which this date is recorded. Many miracles continued to occur at this sanctuary. The Sultan died also a few years later, in A.H. 634 (A.D. 1236).

(After the death of Bahā'u-'d-Dīn Veled, and the acquisition of still greater fame by his son Jelālu-'d-Dīn, who received the honorific title of Khudāvendgār—*Lord*—the father was distinguished from the son, among the disciples, by the customary title of Mevlānā Buzurg—*the Greater or Elder Master*. The traditions collected by Eflākī, relating to this period, vary considerably from one another on minor points of date and order of succession, though the main facts come out sufficiently clear.)

3.

Jelāl's son, Sultan Veled, related to Eflākī that his father Jelāl used frequently to say, "I and all my disciples will be under the protection of the *Great Master*, my father, on the day of resurrection; and under His guidance we shall enter the divine presence; God will pardon all of us for His sake."

4.

It is related that when the *Great Master* departed this life, his son, Jelālu-'d-Dīn, was fourteen years old. (This is apparently a copyist's error for "twenty-four." Jalāl is said to have been born in A.H. 604—A.D. 1207.) He married when seventeen (or eighteen); and often did he say in the presence of the congregation of his friends, "The *Great Master* will remain with me a few years. I shall be in need of Shemsu-'d-Dīn of Tebrīz (the capital of Azerbāyjān); for every prophet has had an Abū-Bekr, as Jesus had His apostles."

5.

Shortly after the death of the Great Master Bahā'u-'d-Dīn Veled, news was received by the Sultan 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn of Qonya of the arrival of Sultan Jelālu-'d-Dīn Kh'ārezm-Shāh on the borders of Asia Minor. The Sultan went and prayed at the tomb of the deceased saint, and then prepared to meet the Kh'ārezmians, who were in the neighbourhood of Erzenu-'r-Rūm (Erzen of the Romans, the ancient Arzes, now Erzerum). Scouts brought in the intelligence that the Kh'ārezmians were very numerous; and great anxiety prevailed among the Sultan's troops. He resolved to see for himself.

He put on a disguise and set out with a few followers, on fleet horses, for the Kh'ārezmian camp. They gave out that they were nomad Turks of the neighbourhood, their ancestors having come from the Oxus; that latterly the Sultan had withdrawn his favour from them; and that, in consequence, they had for some time past been looking for the Kh'ārezmian advent. This was reported to the king, Jelālu-'d-Dīn, who sent for them and received them kindly, giving them tents and assigning them rations.

During the night King Jelālu-'d-Dīn began to reflect that every one had hitherto spoken well of Sultan 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn, and a doubt arose in his mind in consequence respecting the story of these newcomers, especially as he learned that the Sultan was on his march to meet him. Consulting with the Prince of Erzenu-'r-Ram, further perquisition was postponed until the morrow.

But at midnight the deceased saint of Qonya, Bahā-Veled, appeared in a dream to Sultan 'Alā'u-'d-Dīn, and warned him to fly at once. The Sultan awoke, found it was a dream, and went to sleep again. The saint now appeared a second time. The Sultan saw himself seated on his throne, and the saint coming to him, smiting him on the breast with his staff, and angrily saying, "Why sleepest thou? Arise!"

Now the Sultan did arise, quietly called his people, saddled horses, and stole away out of the camp. Towards morning King Jelāl caused guards to be placed round the tents of the strangers to watch them. But afterwards, when orders were given to bring them to the king's presence to be questioned, their tents were found to be empty. Pursuit was attempted, but in vain.

After an interval the two armies came into collision. The Sultan of Qonya was victorious. From that time forward, whenever difficulties threatened, he always betook himself to the shrine of the saint, Bahā Veled, who always answered his prayers.

(As Sultan Jelālu-'d-Dīn Kh'ārezm-Shāh has already been stated to have died in battle in Azerbāyjān in A.D. 1223, whereas the saint of Qonya did not die until A.D. 1231, eight years afterwards, the

discrepancy of that date with the present anecdote is irreconcilable.)

6.

The Great Master, Bahā Veled, used to say that while he himself lived no other teacher would be his equal, but that when his son, Jelālu-'d-Dīn, should succeed him at his death, that son of his would equal and even surpass him:

7.

Seyyid Burhānu-'d-Dīn Termīzī (4) is related to have said that one night the door of the mausoleum of Bahā Veled opened of itself, and that a great glory shone forth from it, which gradually filled his house, so that no shadow fell from anything. The glory then gradually filled the city in like manner, spreading thence over the whole face of nature. On beholding this prodigy the Seyyid swooned away.

This vision is a sure indication that the whole human race will one day own themselves the disciples of the descendants of the great saint.

8.

Before he quitted Balkh, Bahā Veled one day saw a man performing his devotions in the great mosque in his shirt sleeves, with his coat upon his back. Bahā reproved him, telling him to put on his coat properly and decently, then to continue his devotions. "And what if I will not?" asked the man in a disdainful tone. "Thy dead-like soul will obey my command, quit thy body, and thou

wilt die!” answered Bahā. Instantly the man fell dead; and crowds flocked to become disciples to the saint who spoke with such power and authority.

9.

When Sultan ‘Alā’u-’d-Dīn had fortified Qonya, he invited Bahā Veled to mount to the terraced roof of the palace, thence to survey the walls and towers. After his inspection, Bahā remarked to the Sultan, “Against torrents, and against the horsemen of the enemy, thou hast raised a goodly defence. But what protection hast thou built against those unseen arrows, the sighs and moans of the oppressed, which overleap a thousand walls and sweep whole worlds to destruction? Go to, now! Strive to acquire the blessings of thy subjects. These are a stronghold, compared to which the walls and turrets of the strongest castles are as nothing.”

10.

On one occasion Sultan ‘Alā’u-’d-Dīn paid a visit to Bahā Veled. In lieu of his hand the latter offered the tip of his staff to be kissed by the Sultan, who thought within himself: “The proud scholar!” Bahā read the Sultan’s thoughts as a seer, and remarked in reply thereto: “Mendicant students are bound to be humble and lowly. Not so a Sultan of the Faith who has attained to the utmost circumference of the orbit thereof, and revolves therein.”

11.

A certain Sheykh Hajjāj, a disciple of Bahā Veled and one of God’s elect not known to the herd of mankind, quitted the college

after the decease of his teacher, and betook himself to his former trade of a weaver, therewith to gain an honest livelihood. He used to buy the coarsest brown bread of unsifted flour, mash this up with water, and break his fast with this sop alone. All the rest of his earnings he saved up until they would reach to two or three hundred piastres. This sum he would then carry to the college, and place it in the shoes of his teacher's son, Jelālu-'d-Dīn, the new rector. This practice he continued so long as he lived.

At his death a professional washer was appointed to perform the last ablution for Sheykh Hajjāj. In the execution of his office the washer was about to touch the privities of the deceased, when the defunct seized his hand with so strong a grip as to make him scream with pain and fright. The friends came to rescue him, but they were unable to release the imprisoned hand. They therefore sent word to Jelālu-'d-Dīn of what had occurred. He came and saw, knew the reason, and whispered into the ear of the deceased man: "The poor simpleton has been unaware of the high station of thy sanctity. Pardon his unintentional transgression for my sake." Immediately the poor washer's hand was released; but three days afterwards he was himself washed and borne lifeless to his grave.

12.

The Sultan had a governor of his childhood still living, the Emīr Bedru-'d-Dīn Guhertāsh, commonly known as the Dizdār (Castellan), whom he held in great esteem. One day, as Bahā Veled was lecturing in the mosque, in presence of the Sultan and his court, he suddenly called upon the Dizdār to recite any ten verses of the Qur'ān, saying he would then expound them to the

congregation. The Dizdār had been admiring the eloquence of the preacher's expositions. Upon this sudden call, without the slightest hesitation and without ever having committed them to memory, he recited the first ten verses of chapter xxiii., "The believers have attained to prosperity," etc., which Bahā forthwith explained in such a manner as to draw down the plaudits of the assembly. The Dizdār, with the Sultan's permission, went to the foot of the pulpit and declared himself a disciple to Bahā. "Then," said the preacher, "as a thank-offering for this happy event, do thou build and endow a college where my descendants shall teach their disciples after me." The Dizdār did so, and richly endowed it. This is the college where Jelālu-'d-Dīn afterwards lived. When the Dizdār died he left all his possessions to enrich the foundation. (See chap. III. No. 69.)

13.

The Sultan had a dream (something like one of Nebuchadnezzar's). He saw himself with a head of gold, a breast of silver, a belly of brass, thighs of lead, and shanks of tin. Bahā Veled explained the dream as follows:—"All will go well in the kingdom during thy lifetime. It will be as silver in the days of thy son; as brass in the next generation, when the rabble will get the upper hand. Troubles will thicken during the next reign; and after that the kingdom of Rome will go to ruin, the house of Seljūq will come to an end, and unknown upstarts will seize the reins of government."

1. Eastern Persia.
2. The ancient *Bactra*, sometimes called *Zariaspa*, the capital of Bactria.
3. Incorrectly written Mecca by Europeans.
4. Of Termīz (Tirmez), on the north bank of the Oxus, near to Balkh.