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**THE SCIENTIFIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHAMS TABRIZI AND  
JALALUDDIN RUMI**

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**Annotation**

This article explores the spiritual, intellectual, and historical dimensions of the relationship between Shams-i Tabrizi and Jalaluddin Rumi (Mevlana), emphasizing how their meeting marked a turning point in Rumi's life – leading to a spiritual transformation and deep mystical awakening.

**Keywords:** Shams Tabrizi, Jalaluddin Rumi (Mevlana), Sufism, spiritual companionship, mystical transformation, Aflaki, R. A. Nicholson, Tabriz.

**INTRODUCTION**

The scientific relationship between Shams Tabrizi and Jalaluddin Rumi is one of the most pivotal and transformative interactions in the history of Islamic mysticism (Sufism), reshaping not only Rumi's personal spiritual journey but also the entire trajectory of his scholarly and poetic output. Shams Tabrizi was not merely a mystic but also a sharp intellect and a deep spiritual seeker. His encounter with Rumi in Konya around 1244 CE was not accidental but the result of a long search for a soul capable of comprehending deep mystical truths. According to Shams' own reflections in *Maqalat* (Discourses), he had asked God to show him a friend who could “drink from the same cup”.

Their initial meeting is reported to have included a provocative and deeply philosophical conversation, comparing the spiritual states of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Bayazid Bistami, raising profound theological questions that ignited Rumi's deeper spiritual reflection. This marked the beginning of an intense spiritual and intellectual companionship.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

After the death of his master, Sayyid Burhan al-Din, Mevlana (Rumi) met Shams Tabrizi in Konya five years later. Known among the spiritual masters of the time as the “Perfect One from Tabriz”, and referred to as «Shams-i Parande» (Shams the Flying) due to his extensive travels, Shams had initially served Sheikh Abu Bakr al-Salabaf in Tabriz and later held

discussions with many Sufis. According to Aflaki, Shams arrived in Konya on the 26th of Jumada al-sani, 642 AH (13 November 1244 CE).

In Maqalat, Shams narrates how he once prayed, “Let me meet Your saints”, and in a dream was told, “We shall make you the companion of a saint.” When he asked where that saint was, he was told the saint was in Anatolia, but the time for their meeting had not yet come. There are different reports about their first encounter. Sipehsalar relates that Shams arrived in Konya at night and settled in the inn called Pirincciler Han. The next morning, while he was sitting on a bench in front of the inn, Mevlana passed by. Their eyes met, and the first spiritual impact took place. Mevlana sat down on a bench opposite Shams, and for a long time they gazed at each other in silence. Then Shams spoke, recounting how Bayazid al-Bistami, out of his devotion to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), refrained from eating melons all his life because he didn’t know how the Prophet ate them, yet still uttered phrases like, “Glory be to me, how great is my station,” and “Within my cloak there is none but God.” In contrast, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “Sometimes my heart becomes clouded, and I ask forgiveness from God seventy times a day.” Shams asked how these sayings should be interpreted.

Mevlana replied that although Bayazid was among the perfected saints, he expressed the grandeur of the station he had reached in those words. In contrast, the Prophet, who ascended seventy spiritual stations daily, would see the previous station as inferior in light of the next one and ask forgiveness for being content with the lesser. Shams was so moved by this response that he stood up and embraced Mevlana.

According to Aflaki, when Shams came to Konya, he stayed at the Sekerciler Han. One day, Mevlana was riding his mule with his students after leaving one of the four madrasas where he taught, namely Pamukcular Madrasa. Suddenly, Shams appeared before him, grabbed the bridle of his mule, and asked, “O expert in the currency of both worldly and spiritual truths, who is greater – Prophet Muhammad or Bayazid Bistami?” Mevlana responded, “Muhammad the Chosen One is the head of all prophets and saints.” Shams then asked, “But while he said, “Glory be to You, O God, we have not known You as You deserve”, Bayazid claimed, “How great is my station. I am the sultan of sultans”. How do you explain this?” Mevlana answered, “Bayazid’s thirst was little, so he was quenched with a sip. His cup of understanding filled quickly. But the Prophet’s thirst kept increasing; his chest was expanded by God, and he constantly longed for more closeness”. On hearing this, Shams fainted from spiritual ecstasy, and after a while, they walked together to the madrasa.

Abdurrahman Jami, who narrates the story as Aflaki does, also recounts that once Mevlana was studying beside a pool with his books open when Shams approached and asked, “What are these?” Mevlana replied, “These are discussions and debates”. Shams threw the books into

the pool and, seeing Mevlana upset, retrieved them – all unharmed by the water. Mevlana, astonished, asked, “What is this mystery?” Shams answered, “This is taste (shavq), this is state (hol); you know nothing of this”.

In Devletshah’s “Tazkirah”, Shams’ question is: “What is the purpose of spiritual struggle, asceticism, and knowledge?” Mevlana answered, “To understand the manners of the Sunnah and Sharia”. Shams replied, “These all concern the outer aspects”. When Mevlana asked, “What lies beyond that?” Shams said, “Knowledge is that which leads one to the known (ma’lūm).” He then quoted Sana’i: “Ignorance that doesn’t take you away from yourself is better than knowledge that does.” Deeply moved by this, Mevlana gave up reading books and teaching and began spending all his time in Shams’ company.

After meeting Shams Tabrizi, Mevlana completely withdrew from the public, gave up teaching at the madrasa and guiding his disciples, and devoted himself entirely to conversing with Shams. This caused resentment among his disciples, who felt separated from their master by a stranger they did not understand. Rumors began circulating among the townspeople who were deprived of Mevlana’s sermons. Eventually, Shams left Konya without warning, which deeply saddened Mevlana. Realizing the worsening situation, the disciples apologized. After some time, they learned through a letter that Shams was in Damascus, and Mevlana sent him heartfelt letters, begging him to return.

According to Aflaki, during this separation, Mevlana wore a “fereci” (a long robe) made of mourning fabric called “hindiban”, wrapped a turban in the style of “shekeraviz” over a cone-shaped cap made of honey-colored wool, and turned the four-stringed rebab into a six-stringed one, thus initiating the musical sema gatherings. Sipehsalar states that it was Shams who encouraged Mevlana to perform sema. Sultan Veled later recounts that his father sent him to Damascus, and after much insistence, Shams agreed to return to Konya with him.

Sultan Veled compares the relationship between Mevlana and Shams to that of Moses and Khidr. Just as Prophet Moses, despite being a prophet, sought Khidr, Mevlana too, despite having reached a unique spiritual station unmatched in his time, went in search of Shams.

## **Conclusion**

The scientific relationship between Shams Tabrizi and Jalaluddin Rumi was not merely about knowledge transfer – it was an alchemical transformation. Shams acted as the mirror in which Rumi saw his deeper self. Through love, paradox, and ecstatic discourse, their dialogue remains one of the most powerful intellectual-spiritual friendships in Islamic history.