

Subject: Spiritual Human

Article: 3

The Sufi Poet: Yunus Emre

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Yunus Emre was an Anatolian mystic poet who lived during the thirteenth century. It is believed that he was born on 1238 but neither his birth date, nor his birth place are known for sure. Yunus Emre was guided by a wise person called Taptuk Emre who belonged to the Bektashi order. This order was founded by Hacı Bektash Veli (1209-1271) who came to Anatolia from Turkistan.

At the time Anatolia was in turmoil, torn apart by internal civil wars, the Eastern threat of the Mongol invasion, the Western attacks of the Crusades and the Byzantine empire, Yunus Emre was advocating peace, brotherhood, friendship and mystic love. His humanistic conception of life, his open hearted approach to all religions and his deep sense of love towards the Creator, has been and still is an inspiration for the Turkish society for more than six centuries.

He explained the basic tenets of Sufism in very simple and clear statements. Even today one can understand his poems without referring to a dictionary. The following poems of Yunus Emre have been translated by Talat Halman (**Yunus Emre-Selected Poems**, Talat Halman, Publication of the Ministry of Culture, Ankara-Turkey, 1988).

**Knowledge should mean a full grasp of knowledge,
Knowledge means to know yourself, heart and soul.
If you have failed to understand yourself,
Then all your reading has missed its call.**

**What is the purpose of reading those books?
So that Man can know the All-Powerful,
If you have read but failed to understand,
Then your efforts are just a barren toil.
Do not boast of reading, mastering science,
Or of your prayers and obeisance,
If you do not identify Man and God,
All your learning is of no use at all.**

**The true meaning of the four books,
Is found in the alphabet's first letter.
You talk about that first letter, preacher,
What is the meaning of that –could you tell?**

**Yunus Emre says to you,
Make the holy pilgrimage if need be
A hundred times, but if you ask me,K
The visit to a heart is best of all.**

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**God permeates the whole wide world,
Yet His truth is revealed to none.
You better seek Him in yourself,
You and He aren't apart-you're one.**

**The other world lies beyond sight.
Here on earth we must live upright.
Exile is torment, pain, and blight.
No one comes back once he is gone.**

**Come, let us all be friends for once,
Let us make life easy on us,
Let us be lovers and loved ones,
The earth shall be left to no one.**

**To you, what Yunus says is clear,
Its meaning is in your heart's ear:
We should all live the good life here,
Because nobody will live on.**

The Sufi believes that the human being is the reflection of God on earth. In this understanding, Yunus says that he loves all men because of his love towards God. He sees all men on earth as equal and he claims that the great **`truth of God`** cannot be expressed verbally. He claims that we should behave as if we are lovers and loved ones, which means that we should care, protect, understand and forgive each other. The external appearance may deceive and mislead us but when we go beyond observation and participate in this internal reality, we will realize that all human beings and God are part of an indivisible unity. This is why he says "You and He are not apart, you are one".

It is not possible to discriminate between nations or religions once the reality of God is deeply felt inside the person. For Yunus this unification is not a wish or an

intellectual abstraction but a very tangible reality, as the following poem clearly demonstrates.

**As I kept roaming and marveling here,
A stunning secret came to me, brother,
View the same secret in your own being,
The Friend is in me, I can see, brother.**

**I looked deep into my soul and I saw,
What is truly mine and what is in me.
What is the spirit inside this body,
I learned my true identity, brother**