

26 June 2007

**Statement of H.E. Ms. Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa,  
President of the 61st Session of the General Assembly,  
on the Occasion of the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Jalal-Ud-Din  
Balkhi Rumi**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“If you grant me a pen, I shall destroy swords and spears”

This enlightening verse is from the Sufi poet Jalal-ud-Din Rumi’s seminal work “Mathnawi.” Today the world celebrates the 800th Anniversary of his birth and the continued relevance of his work. The essence of this verse illustrates one of the central themes that defined both his work and life. Over the centuries his work has epitomized the most revered humanistic qualities of love, tolerance, understanding and respect of the other no matter what creed or color.

Jalal ud-Din Rumi’s focus on knowledge is reflected in his writing. The virtue of knowledge, he affirmed, is that it granted Man superiority over all other creatures of the seas, the mountains and the deserts. Furthermore, he said “knowledge is Solomon’s ring, for the entire world is an image whose spirit is knowledge”.

Jalal-ud-Din Rumi places great value on the role and significance of criticism in distinguishing right and wrong. This is evident in his statement: “if there were no true criticism in the world, would it then be possible to produce false criticism?” This perspective is reflected in the tale that Rumi narrates of the great Sultan that visited the land of the blind. The blind rushed to greet the Sultan and started touching his elephant. No one could conceive how large the elephant was and each mistook the part they touched of the elephant for the whole elephant. This story underlines the danger of approaching reality from a narrow perspective and the yearning for total knowledge.

The celebration of knowledge is not only confined to the spiritual dimension of Rumi’s work, but transcends it to deal with all aspects of life and the universe.

Rumi was no less of a pioneer when he addresses equality between men and women, when he talks about the flute and its effects on men and women as well as other themes in his poetry; he emphasizes the similarities between men and women as nostalgic partners to one origin and the creator.

It is only axiomatic that Rumi would consider men and women as equal, since he regards all creatures as products of the creator.

When he talks about this fundamental binary nature of creation, he breeds hope, for a solid rock turns green in the spring and roses of every color spring out of dust. The fragrance for Rumi was the guide that we chase to our heavens and to immortality. Fragrance is the light of vision and songs like music signal the day of reckoning.

Rumi paid great attention to music as a noble expression of beauty and harmony. He assigned a loftier place than allocated to it by Sufists and in Sufism. The human life he breathed into objects and entities around him was so sublime that it found its ultimate expression in this famous line: “listen to the flute, recounting its story bereaving over the pain of separation”

For Rumi, the serenade of senses is a celebration of life and the creator. The Sufi poet’s experience is one of the more distinct spiritual voyages in human history. Indeed, it could come in handy in today’s world of conflict and disputes.

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rumi, like other great visionaries, did not simply impact his age, his poetry is timeless as it belongs to all ages. His themes deal with humanity and the universe with no bounds or borders.

The Sufi culture founded by Rumi liberates religion from rigid readings; it encourages thinking especially at a time when Islam is synonymous, for some, with extremism and terrorism; and, when rising suspicion among peoples of all cultures and religions is the name of the day.

And because the heart is the ideal way to experience divine presence, Rumi believes that our prayers are not simply a distinct way of life to which we belong, but a call for a universe of true love. In this respect, he views life through love believing that “love is a seed, that when planted in the heart, grows only in a manner commensurate with reason”.

In such a spirit, we, the Member States of the United Nations, must invoke Rumi’s spirit in our combined efforts to address the challenges of today’s world. His message was based on the noble aims on which this Organization was founded. Rumi believed that the stumbling blocks we face should not be an excuse for despair and pessimism but rather a positive force that would bolster our common objectives.

Finally, I would like to thank the Permanent Missions of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey for organizing this important event.

Thank you.