

# Out of the Hidden Root

*Reflections of Bahauddin, Father of Rumi*

*Translated by Coleman Barks and John Moyne*

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*The following are excerpts from the Maarif, a collection of writings by the Sufi religious leader Bahauddin Valad (1152–1231), father of the mystic poet Rumi. A diarylike record of his inner life, the Maarif gathers together visionary insights, stories, commentaries on the Qur'an, gardening and medicinal advice, and musings on many subjects, both earthly and divine.*

## EATING A PIECE OF BREAD

While you are eating a piece of bread, try to recall the events that collaborated to let this take place. The oven's heat that baked the bread, the plowed earth before that, sunlight, rain, harvest, the winnowing, the being carried to and from the mill, the complex idea and the building of the mill itself. The many motions of weather in the turning of four seasons. And don't forget the knife that cuts the bread, the metallurgy and the skill of forging that blade, and your teeth, those original grinding devices. Then there's your stomach digesting the crust and there's the rest of your body being nourished, each part in unique ways.

Two hundred and forty-eight bones, five hundred and thirty muscles, three hundred arteries, ligaments, tendons, cartilage, your organs and limbs, your brain. As the bread dissolves, many intelligences within you are deciding and peacefully agreeing on how to divide the benefits. If there were discord, you would feel pain and cry out, but you don't.

Now notice the unified human awareness thoughtfully living inside your body with a soul in communion with other spirit-intelligences. Observe how it sits at the junction of two worlds as a human being looking with kindness on other human beings. Some say this is the culmination of the body's long development and the beginning of the next transformation, that you that live with gratitude for food and thankfulness also for any difficulty, pain, or sudden disappointment, seeing those too as grace,



that you live inside and outside time as an angelic breadeating witness taking in this myriad convergence of providential motions and that you are in yourself an individual soul being made from divine wisdom.

### BREAD AND PRAISE

I was thinking about the piece of bread I have just eaten and the drink of water I have taken. This revelation came: Each bit of bread and taste of fruit has a tongue and a language of praise that gets released when it enters a human body.

The same analogy of transformation extends to the influences that came from the stars and transmuted matter into the elements: earth, air, ether, fire, and water. Those in turn became plants which became animals, then human beings with their flexible way of speaking that can become praise for the compassion as well as the anger of God.

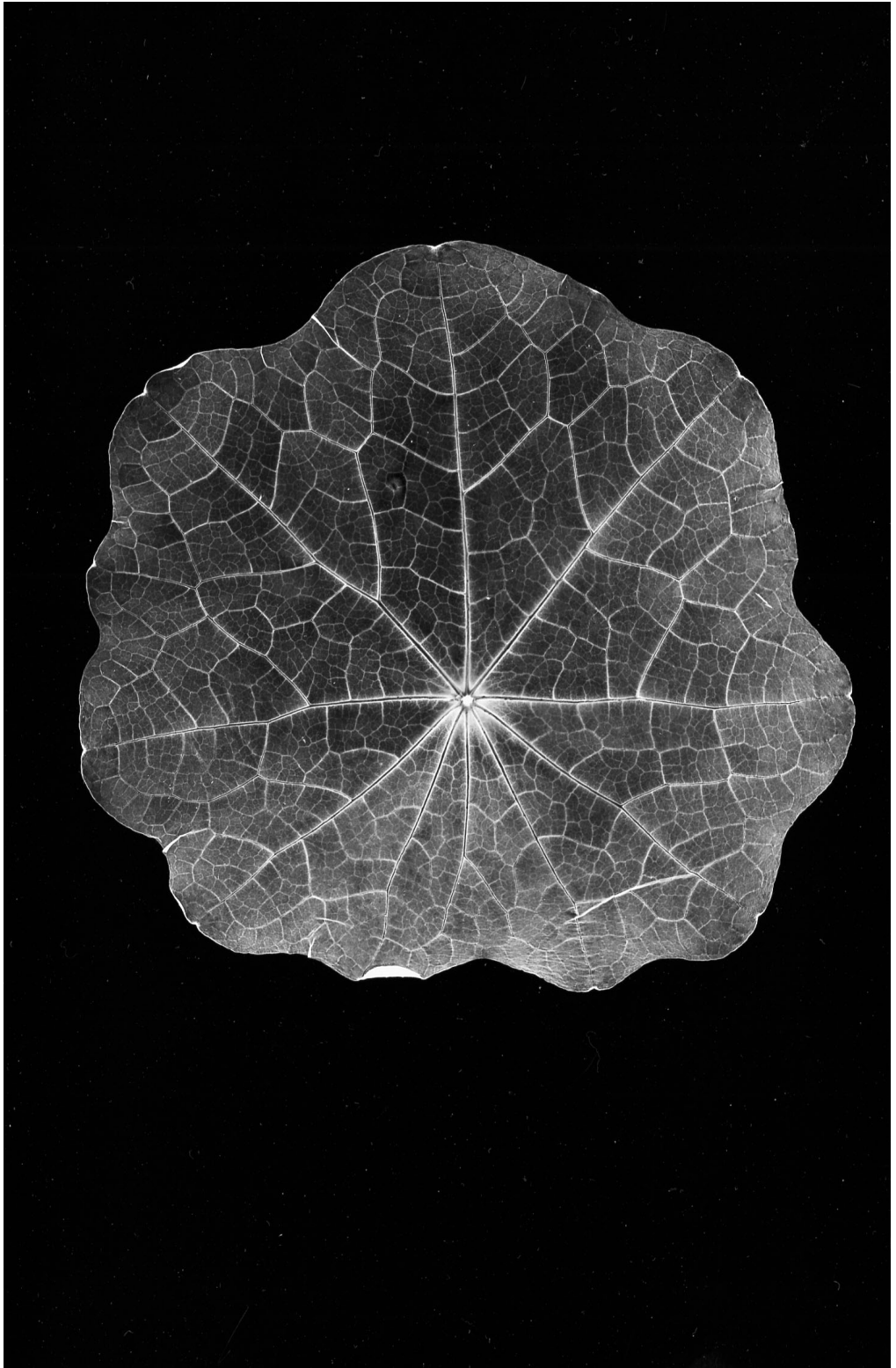
### RIGID AND ETHEREAL

Looking at hardpacked clay, the clods in it like rocks, I am amazed at the miraculous variety God grows out of it; not just greenery, but our lives, these intelligent friendships and love, awareness and soul, the method of water inside the ground—there are so many delicate extrusions and enthusiasms pouring through the harsh matrix of this high desert plain. Think of the thick metallic petals that close around the soft cotton fiber.

The mystery arranges what is rigid and what is ethereal so that they work together. If there is a shortage of density, it transforms porous to bricklike, the model being the way climatic moisture loosens a tightshut seed, then how the plant that grows from that seed draws up and holds *encased* the ambient rain.

### STILL GROWING

Inside and outside my body I see clear cold streams beside the flowers, and after I die, the corpse will find its way back to those and the soft air around them. Our soul-seeds come from the invisible, and here we are, still growing. We fade and go to seed. We die.



New seeds slip into the ground of the unseen, each to grow its own unique lineage beside the water. God provides this continuing.

Qur'an 64:14 reminds us that there may be enemies among those close to us. Be careful, and remember that when you forgive and overlook insults, you are letting grace dissolve resentment.

## THE TWO TREES

The world is a tree growing from a jewelseed planted in raw nothingness. Its roots are water and wind, its trunk the earth. Its branches the sky, its leaf-tips the stars, none of which resemble the original seed. Oak trees do not look like acorns. Each tree, every growing thing, has two roots, one in the visible, another in the unseen. Many acknowledge only this visible. They do not understand that the juice, the taste, the thickness of the trunk, and other qualities come not from this palpable place but from the mystery, out of the hidden root. Now, there is another tree. It has roots here and branches and fruit in the unseen. That is the tree we call surrender, submission, *islam*.

## PLANETS AND PLANTS

By the stars that leave and come back (86:11), by the ground that opens to let plants grow (86:12), planets are both star and plant. They open to let starlight reach into us here, and plants are like planetary bodies, moving through the seasons, and nobody knows where they go when they die.

Someone wakes at dawn confused. Why should the sky be the cause and earth the affected? Why not the other way?

Every star is a leaf-tip on the sky-tree, whose leaves are the size of a country, with the night sky turning under the sun's leaf. It will not be surprising in the spirit if a great assembly gathers under a leaf, leaves there being many times the size of this universe. □

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