



**The View on Virtue and Vice by Sulţān Walad:  
A Comprehension of Iblīs**

*Sultan Veled'in Fazilet ve Kötülük Anlayışı:  
İblis Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme*

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**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to reveal the Sulţān Walad's practical thought as a spiritual master and administrator of the Mevlevī order, examining his opinion about Iblīs (Satan). Basically, his writings were intended to preserve and transmit the tradition of his father, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, to future generation of the Mevlevī order. A lot of his interpretative works confirm that he puts the highest priority on further comprehension of Rūmī's thought. Therefore, it is expected that Sulţān Walad's works are based on the thoughts of his father Rūmī and his original mind is more or less restrained. However, unexpectedly, his arguments about Iblīs shows clear distinction from his father's thoughts. This article focuses on their opinions on Iblīs, analyzing their differences on their theory of vice and virtue. From Sulţān Walad's attitude toward Iblīs, we could observe that he considered carefully on vice and virtue as a spiritual master and administrator of the Mevlevī order. Not only did Sulţān Walad inherit his father's thought, but he tried to reshape his father's legacy adjusting to the reality of the order.

**Keywords:** Sulţān Walad, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Mevlevī order, Iblīs, Virtue and Vice

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## INTRODUCTION

Sultān Walad (d. 1312)<sup>1</sup> is famously known as the son of the world-renowned sūfī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273). Compared to his father, his fame was established as an administrator of the Mevlevī order. Indeed, Sultān Walad managed the order after Ḥusām al-Dīn (d. 1284/1285).<sup>2</sup> Lewis points out that without Sultān Walad's decisive role and endeavor, the Mevlevī order would have dwindled and never maintained or achieved any formal structure outside its local jurisdiction.<sup>3</sup> Küçük analyzes Sultān Walad's significant contribution to the order from seven dimensions.<sup>4</sup>

Sultān Walad's ability as a shaykh (master) of the order reveals his balanced character as a spiritual master and practical administra-

tor. His disciples applauded that his teaching made an ignorant person a sage.<sup>5</sup> In addition to his talent as a spiritual master and his reputation among disciples, he was presumably an effective facilitator who could solve complicated problems. Disciples highly estimated his practical talent by saying, "All enemies became friends. All hatred and hostility are gone."<sup>6</sup> As a result of Sultān Walad's positive attitude toward harmony, the number of Mevlevī orders allegedly increased during his time.<sup>7</sup> He reports that many deputies (*khu-lafā'*) of the order were chosen by him, not only in Anatolia but all over the world.<sup>8</sup>

Sultān Walad states that he is faithful to his principle that preserves his father's<sup>9</sup> thoughts. To better comprehend Rūmī's thought, Sultān Walad attempts to interpret his father's works. His aspiration to follow and preserve his father's tradition motivates his writing.<sup>10</sup> In his *Ibtidā-nāma*, Sultān Walad comments on the reasons for writing as follows:<sup>11</sup>

1 His fullname is Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Walad. Yet, he is more famously known by his nickname Sultān Walad. He was named after his grandfather, Sultān al-'ulamā' Bahā' al-Dīn Walad (d. 1231) (Gudrun Schubert, "Sultān Walad", *The Encyclopedia of Islam (2nd Edition)*, (Lyden: E.J. Brill, 1997), 9: 651-652). Although Rūmī had sons other than Sultān Walad, it seemed that he preferred Sultān Walad by saying, "He (Sultān Walad) resembles me most in the physique (*khalq*) and character (*khulq*) than others." (Aflākī, Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Manāqib al-Ārifīn*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1980), 2: 785; Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Muwahḥid and 'Alī Rizā Ḥaydarī, (Tihārān: Khwārizmī, 2010), 20.)

2 The exact year of Sultān Walad's installation as a leader of Mevlevī order is not clear, but according to Lewis, Sultān Walad was in a leadership position around 1291 after the death of Ḥusām al-Dīn (Franklin Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teaching and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi*, (Oxford: Oneworld, 2008), 232-233).

3 See Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 235.

4 Küçük analyzes the contribution of Sultān Walad from following seven dimensions: 1) Establishing the Order's History: Promoting Leading Figures of the Early Mevlevī Tradition, 2) Commenting on Mawlānā Rūmī, 3) Establishing the Status of Chelebism, 4) Formation of the Mevlevī Sūfī Order, 5) Establishment of Mevlevī Sūfī Rituals, 6) Foundation of Branches of the Mevlevī Sūfī Order, 7) Propagation of Mevlevī Sūfism through his Disciples and Successors (Küçük, Hülya, "Sultān Walad's Role in the Foundation of the Mevlevi Sufi Order," *Mawlana Rumi Review* 3, 1 (2018): 22-50.)

5 See Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 133.

6 Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 134.

7 Ibid. 161.

8 Ibid. 158.

9 Schimmel estimates Sultān Walad certainly not as a creative mind but a faithful interpreter, not a fiery soul but a mirror holder for those whom he loved and whose beauty his poetry tried to reflect (Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalāloddin Rumi*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 370).

10 Concerning the details of Sultān Walad's works, see Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 237-241.

11 In other works, Sultān Walad likewise refers to the aim of his writing as preserving the tradition set by his father:

[The great person who asks me to compose the poem said to me,] Write another book. Since your poetry that you composed resembles and follows the way of that great person [Mawlānā], it would be preferable to compose the book with this [mathnawī] meter. Because, to follow or to resemble means following the most beautiful and perfect [part] in all dimensions [the mathnawī meter is better]. Therefore, at the request of this great person, I [Sultān Walad] decided to commence this *Mathnawī* with "rabab" which form the basis [of this book], since I suppose that "rabab" is indeed characteristic and appropriate for Mawlānā

The reason I write *Mathnawī-i waladī* explains the secrets (*asrār*) of the divine oneness. It consists of the history of previous saints (*awliyā'*), their miracles (*karāmāt*), and mystical stations (*maqāmāt*), which are referred to in *Mathnawī* by my father, my tutor, my shaykh, the king of scholars and sages Maulānā Jalāl al-Ḥaqq wa al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Balkhī—May God praise his name.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, his enthusiasm for accomplishing his principle to explain his father's discourse is evidenced by the fact that many of his paragraphs from *Ibtidā-nāma*, *Rabāb-nāma*, and *Intihā-nāma* commence with the word "about the explanation of... (dar bayān-i...)." The works of Sulṭān Walad are based on the thoughts of his father Rūmī, while his own thoughts may have been limited.

However, contrary to this presumption, Sulṭān Walad shows some notable differences from his father's thoughts in his texts that explain his father's sayings. In this article, I comparatively analyze Sulṭān Walad's opinion on *Iblīs* (Satan) with that of Rūmī's to reveal Sulṭān Walad's tactics as a spiritual master and administrator of the Mevlevī order.

(Sulṭān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, ed. Gird Farāmarzī and 'Alī Sulṭānī, (Tih-rān: Mu'assasa-i Muṭāla'āt-i Islāmī-i Dānishgāh-i Makgīl, 1980), 1-2.)

The first book is explained along with the following order: explanation about the spiritual state of Maulānā, and his chosen friends, who were good friends with him especially, are coming. During [the explanation about] their spiritual state, I will refer to the conditions on the way [of Sūfism]. Then another book comes that follows mathnawī meter of Maulānā. In this book, the meaning [of Maulānā's *Mathnawī*] will be commented on repeatedly until the end, (Sulṭān Walad, *Intihā-nāma*, ed. Muḥammad 'Alī Khazānadarlū, ([Tih-rān]: Intishārāt-i Rawzana, 1997), 3.

12 Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 19. After explaining the first reason of writing for his *Mathnawī-i waladī*, Sulṭān Walad adds another reason: to train his pupils to be accustomed to the tradition of *shaykhs* (Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 20).

## I. RŪMĪ'S COMPREHENSION OF *IBLĪS*

According to the analysis of Anushiravani, the image of *Iblīs* in Rūmī's texts is multidimensional and complicated. He points out that prior research could only partially comprehend Rūmī's Satan because of this complexity.<sup>13</sup> Taking the previous analysis of Rūmī's Satan into account, his image of Satan can be summarized into the following three points,<sup>14</sup> 1) the image of *Iblīs* as a symbol of evil, 2) the image of arrogant *Iblīs*, and 3) the image of *Iblīs* as God's love.

Thus, Rūmī simultaneously describes *Iblīs* as a wicked creature, and a sincere lover of God, thus offering a complex image of *Iblīs*. The reason for this complexity is found in his way of explaining religious matters. Rūmī says the differences in the explanation are attributed to the level of the listener:

[My] disciples and their spiritual states (*aḥwāl*) are like a school. There are teachers in the school, and the school pays each teacher according to their abilities (*istī'dād*). [For instance,] 10 for someone and 20 for others, 30 for others. I also give my words following the power and abilities of each one. It is said that [in *ḥadīth* also]: "Speak to people in the measure of their intellects."<sup>15</sup>

13 See Alireza Anushiravani, *The Image of Satan in Rumi's "Mathnawī," Dante's "Divine Comedy" and Milton's "Paradise Lost"* (Ph. D. diss., University of Illinois, 1992), 36. Anushiravani classifies previous studies on Rūmī's Satan into two types: 1) Persian scholar's studies, and 2) European scholar's studies. Regarding the former image, he interprets Rūmī's Satan as moralistic and one-dimensional, merely as a symbol of evil. Whereas for the latter, he regards its ambiguous depiction as insufficient analysis. (Anushiravani, *The Image of Satan*, 36-42).

14 I mainly refer to the research of Anushiravani and Awn. In his *Mathnawī*, Rūmī mentions *Iblīs* as *Shayṭān*, *Azāzīl* or *Dīv*.

15 Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, ed. Badī' al-Zamān Forūzānfār, (Tih-rān: Intishārāt-i Zawwār, 2008), 109.

There is a possibility that Rūmī changed the interpretation of *Iblīs* to match the listener's ability. For instance, Rūmī preaches about the principle of virtue and evil, "Good deed will be rewarded and sinful deed will be punished", quoting the example of arrogant *Iblīs* who protested against God saying, "Prostrate yourselves before Ādam" (Q7/12).<sup>16</sup> Since this explanation is intended for a "caviling" listener of his sermon, Rūmī evidently chooses a simple and typical satanic image of *Iblīs* for "normal" outward-looking listeners.<sup>17</sup> However, Rūmī depicts *Iblīs* as a more complicated character in the texts of *Mathnawī*. The most famous story about *Iblīs* in *Mathnawī* is the story of Satan waking Mu'āwiya up by saying, "Get up, it's time for prayer!"<sup>18\*</sup> In this story, *Iblīs* plays an intricate role in trying to wake Mu'āwiya for ritual prayer. Unfortunately, the insistence of *Iblīs* to wake Mu'āwiya up for prayer does not persuade Mu'āwiya, who is skeptical about the good conduct of *Iblīs*. This results in *Iblīs* admitting his hidden intent behind the trick.

Although the implication of this story is not entirely clear as to whether the author criticizes Mu'āwiya for his inability to trust or *Iblīs* who tries to cheat him, it is suggestive of the contents of excuses of *Iblīs*. In this story, *Iblīs* justifies himself several times,

trying to convince Mu'āwiya that he just woke Mu'āwiya to tell him the time for prayer was ending. As he excuses himself, Rūmī lets him talk about his previous job and status:

He (*Iblīs*) said: "I was an angel at the start,  
Traveling the path of obedience to God with all my heart.

Mystical travelers, as good friends, I've known,  
Including those who now sit near God's throne.

You can't forget skills you learned long before,  
Just as your first affection lasts for evermore;

Although while traveling stunning sights you'll see,  
Love of your home still lasts eternally.

I've also got drunk from His wine,  
When I was a famed lover of the Lord.

Our cord was cut for the affection of Him,  
And in my heart, seeds of His love were sown"<sup>19</sup>

Here, Rūmī's *Iblīs* mentions his previous job and status when he enjoyed the special grace of God as His intimate companion.<sup>20</sup> Then, he laments the separation from God after losing his status. Since *Iblīs*'s profound affection for God causes his sorrow, he seems to be

16 Rūmī also refers to the same verses of *Qur'ān* and concludes that the reason for punishing *Iblīs* is disobedience of the order of God (Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 109). Concerning the quotation from *Qur'ān* in this article, I refer to Nasr's translation and mark (Q). As for the Rūmī's opinion on the sin of *Iblīs*, Chittick points out its spiritual blindness (William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 83). Therefore, *Iblīs* is symbolized by ego while angels are identified with intellect in Rūmī's texts (see Chittick, *ibid.*, 88-89).

17 See Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 77.

18 Maulānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, ed. Muḥammad Isti'īlāmī, (Tihārān: Intishārāt-i Sukhan, 2014), II: (v.) 2627-2803.

\* As to the English translation of *Mathnawī*, I refer to Mojaddedi's edition, adding only partial alteration.

19 Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II: (v.) 2627-2632.

20 As for the angel-ness of *Iblīs*, there is a lot of argument not only in Sūfism but also in Sunnī tradition. Many interpretations of *Qur'ān* introduce the argument that agrees to and opposes his angel-ness (see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān: Tafṣīr al-Ṭabarī*, (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001), 1: 257-262; Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafṣīr al-kabīr*, (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001), 1: 427-448). For the traditional interpretation of *Iblīs* in the Islamic world, see (Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblīs in Sufi Psychology*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 18-56).

a sincere lover of God in this story.<sup>21</sup> In the succeeding argument of *Iblīs* and Mu‘āwiya, *Iblīs* narrates his story at length. Considering the contents of his complaint, the main issue is his denial to bow before Ādam. In the narration of *Iblīs*, we can see his consistent attitude toward fate.

I spurned prostration because of my  
jealousy (*hasad*) that I possessed  
It occurred from love, not from dismiss-  
siveness.

All jealousies we feel arise from affec-  
tion,  
The wish to sit with none but Him above  
(...)

That was just a game, and I lost the  
game.

I threw myself into the misfortune,

In this misfortune, I taste deep pleasure  
still:

I’ve been check-mated by Him——  
that’s His will<sup>22</sup>

In the above quotation, *Iblīs* convinces himself that the denial of prostration was due to his love for God and God’s intention. It means that *Iblīs* dares to accept his fate because his beloved one burdens this calamity. *Iblīs* mentions his ultimate attitude of reconciliation by saying, “Both faith and unbelief are equally His work, part of His rich tapestry”.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the statement by *Iblīs* reveals Rūmī’s respect for the oneness of God.

21 Anushiravani regards this sorrow of *Iblīs* as equal to that of a human’s as depicted in the first lines of Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* (see Anushiravani, *The Image of Satan*, 62-63).

22 Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II: (v.) 2652-53; 2656-57.

23 Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II: (v.) 2661. In addition to the above quotation, Rūmī states a similar notion in *Fīh mā Fīh*, “Both unbelief and faith are devotees (*musabbih*).” According to him, since both unbelief and faith are pursuant to God’s orders in *Qur’ān* and are in accordance with God’s intention, unbelief and faith follow God in reality (see Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 199).

In other texts, Rūmī explains the ultimate divine oneness, integrating vice and virtue, while quoting the example of making a tent for God. According to his explanation, there are many jobs for servants such as twining thread, sewing the tent, weaving cloth, and so on. While each of them appears to be a distinct task, they are all in fact working toward the same thing. Rūmī says everything in the world works similarly:

The situation of this world is also the same because we could see that everyone is serving God, even the wrongdoer, good person, disobeyer, obeyer, Satan, or angel. For example, when a king wants to test (*imtiḥān kardan*) his servants, he tries various ways to distinguish a reliable person from an unreliable, faithful person from a faithless, fidelity from infidelity. Then, he needs a temper (*muwas-wisī*) or an agitator (*muhayyij*) to distinguish whether one is reliable. Therefore, the temper and agitator also serve the king. The king wanted to do this.<sup>24</sup>

In the above explanation, Rūmī stresses the integration of various appearances at the internal level. According to Rūmī, both virtue and vice play a role in distinguishing between the good and bad, and both integrate into the oneness of God.

In Rūmī’s opinion, if the role of vice is to distinguish between good and bad, the role of *Iblīs* is the same. Indeed, in *Mathnawī*, *Iblīs* interprets his role as a “touchstone”:

Satan said, “Untie the knot,  
I am the touchstone that detects real gold  
from counterfeit

I give God’s test to dogs and lions too,  
The God’s test of gold and counterfeit.

How can I ever blacken gold that’s real;  
Like money changers I can only deal:

24 Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 58.

I guide good persons,  
while I break off dry branches<sup>25</sup>

From the above quotation, the work and role of *Iblīs* becomes understandable. He works just as a touchstone and does not have the power to change good to bad or vice versa.

Although this is a reasonable conclusion for Rūmī who stresses the oneness of everything in God, this role of touchstone is interestingly assigned to prophets or saints in Rūmī's *Fī-hi mā fīhi*: "Prophets and saints are the manifestations of divine light. As a consequence [of this light], friends [of God] are distinguished from the foes, the people of the oneness of God from foreigners."<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the comprehension of *Iblīs* by Rūmī reflects his opinion of God's oneness. He admits the roles of vice such as *Iblīs*, and virtue such as prophets or saints, as touchstones to distinguish between good and bad.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the prophets and *Iblīs* are performing a single task that makes the Hidden Treasure manifest by inciting people to display their inward natures.<sup>28</sup> Because of his description, the listener is likely to misunderstand Rūmī's proposal to reverse the typical image of maleficent *Iblīs*.

25 Rūmī, *Mathnawī*, II: (v.) 2682-2684.

26 Rūmī, *Kitāb Fīh mā fīh*, 89.

27 Of course, Rūmī seems to be conscious of the fundamental differences of the role of *Iblīs* and prophets as touchstones. Rūmī refers to the differences in the simile of the robber as follows:

For instance, if a robber commits robbery, he is condemned to hang. But this robber is also a preacher for faith, simultaneously, because people could understand that if someone commits robbery, he or she would become such a situation. Whereas, a person who does a good deed is bestowed a vestment. This man is also a preacher for faith. However, the robber [preaches] with this tongue, while the faithful [preaches] with that tongue. Beware of the differences between these two preachers (Rūmī, *ibid*, 199).

28 See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love*, 89.

## II. SULTĀN WALAD'S COMPREHENSION OF IBLĪS

As mentioned in the introduction, Sultān Walad's motivation to write is derived from his intention to interpret his father's thoughts. Although he respects the original meaning of Rūmī's thought, there is a subtle difference in their comprehension of *Iblīs*. In this chapter, I analyze Sultān Walad's way of understanding *Iblīs* to reveal his true intentions.

Compared to Rūmī's description, Sultān Walad's depiction of *Iblīs* can be estimated with relative simplicity. Regarding the scene in which he chooses to explain *Iblīs*, Sultān Walad selects the denial of prostration in almost all the referrals to *Iblīs*. He treats *Iblīs* as an undesirable existence who disclaimed God's order. The fact that Sultān Walad added the reason of denial of prostration as *Iblīs* "didn't want to prostrate except for God because he will not worship anyone other than God", is an interesting difference from his father.<sup>29</sup>

Haven't you heard the story about *Iblīs*?  
And about why he was alienated from  
sanctity.

This is because God ordered to angels  
all prostrate before Ādam.

Everyone bowed from the heart,  
*Iblīs* disobeyed the order,

saying, "My existence is created by fire.  
It will be a shame, if I prostrate before  
clay.

Why the good thing before bad,  
have to bow curing myself like a ser-  
vant?

Oh, my unique God, I will never  
bow except before you, even if I would  
be killed"<sup>30</sup> \*

29 See Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 41.

30 Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 41.

The above-mentioned description of *Iblīs* also reflects the opinion of Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 922).<sup>31</sup> In his famous thought about *Iblīs* in his *Kitāb al-Ṭawāsīn*,<sup>32</sup> Ḥallāj insisted that *Iblīs* denied prostration against Ādam because *Iblīs* did not want to bow to anyone except for God. By *Iblīs*'s confession of the reason for denial, Ḥallāj developed a theory that *Iblīs* recognized himself as “lover of God (*muḥibb*)” who denied religious conduct except for God<sup>33</sup> or even a “martyr (*shahīd*)” who accepted the destiny of a curse because of his love for God.<sup>34</sup>

\* Besides the above quotation, Sulṭān Walad describes the scene of the denial of prostration by *Iblīs* as follows:

“Then angels heard the voice saying,  
All hurry up to him (Ādam) and bow.  
So then, Angels bowed immediately.  
However, *Iblīs* denied it because malice and doubt  
was filling him

God the supreme enraged by him and asked,  
“Why you denied, aberrant?”

(*Iblīs*) said, “I will not bow except before you, my lord.  
I do not want to prostrate, so then I refused”

(Sulṭān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, 76).

31 Many researchers point out the influence of Ḥallāj on Sulṭān Walad's thought. For example, Lewis comments that Sulṭān Walad seems to include Ḥallāj in *silsila* of Mevlevī order (see Lewis, Rumi: Past and Present, 235). Yet, multiple *silsilas* of Mevlevī order are reported, and almost all other Mevlevī orders' *silsila* do not include the name of Ḥallāj (see Abdūlbāki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlānā'dan sonra Mevlevīlik*, (İstanbul: İnkılâp, 2018), 189-193; Alberto Fabio Ambrosio, *Vie d'un Derviche Tourneur: Doctrine et Rituels du Soufisme au XVIIème siècle*, (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2010), 377-378). Indeed, Sulṭān Walad often refers to Ḥallāj in his works and he highly estimates Ḥallāj's thought. To include the name of Ḥallāj in *silsila* is rather uncommon compared to the names of Junayd (d. 910) or Bastāmī (see John Spencer Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1998), 12).

32 As [God] said [to *Iblīs*], “Bow;” [*Iblīs*] said, “I will not prostrate other [than God].” Then God said, “If you will not, you must be cursed.” [*Iblīs*] said, “I will not prostrate other [than God]” (al-Ḥusayn ibn Maṣṣūr al-Ḥallāj, *Le livre «Ṭawāsīn» de Hallāj: Commentaire de Rûzbehân suivi du Jardin de la Connaissance*, ed. Stéphane Ruspoli, (Beyrouth: Dar Albouraq, 2007), 346).

33 Ibid. 347.

34 Ibid. 348.

Although Sulṭān Walad adds the reason for denial, he does not agree with Ḥallāj's point of view. He stresses that *Iblīs* was destined to be denied by God from the primordial past. He had been unfaithful and rejected constantly, although he attended on God.<sup>35</sup> In adopting the original malicious nature of *Iblīs*, Sulṭān Walad's image of *Iblīs* has no space for the possibility of a hidden lover of God or the victim of God's destiny, as suggested by his father and Ḥallāj.

In addition, Sulṭān Walad explains the life history of *Iblīs*, especially his past, in detail:

Before [creating] Ādam, *Iblīs* had not  
been accursed.

He was high up in heaven with angles.

Regarding knowledge, he was a teacher  
of angels.

Everyone regarded him as truthful

In the path of obedience to God (*ṭā'at*),  
he was a leader

His service (*bandigī*) was firm and perfect<sup>36</sup>

However, the angelic nature and high position of *Iblīs* in the primordial past are argumentative, and one of the traditional interpretations in orthodox or Sūfī tradition.<sup>37</sup> Compared to other Sūfīs, Sulṭān Walad tends to devote pages explaining the high position and pure belief of *Iblīs*. Consequently, the “revealing” of the malicious nature of *Iblīs* by the emergence of Ādam becomes conspicuous in his description of the scene of prostration.

Because of the nature of original evil and the revelation of the process of maliciousness, Sulṭān Walad's *Iblīs* cannot be a touchstone that distinguishes between good and bad,

35 Sulṭān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, 470. We can see the same insistence in *Rabāb-nāma*, 273 too.

36 Sulṭān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, 134. We can see the same insistence in *Rabāb-nāma*, 115 too.

37 See also the example of Rūmī on page 4 in this article.

even though he explains the touchstone following the example of his father. For Sultān Walad, the role of a touchstone should be borne by people of the highest virtue, such as prophets:

Each prophet were exchangers (*ṣarrāf*),  
By him, someone became worthless,  
others became great

Until now, he saw around Ādam and  
distinguished each person high and low

*Iblīs* was one of the angels in heaven.  
He was distinguished from them by the  
light of Ādam

He sat by God's side, but he was rejected  
from the primordial past.  
He was always infidel (*kāfir*) and re-  
fused.

In *Qur'ān*, it is said that he was one of  
the infidels.

He denied the order [of God] and was  
cursed in this world.

However, until Ādam came into exist-  
ence,  
His counterfeiting ability had not been  
revealed, and [among angels he was]  
identical.

Although God was praised by everyone  
in this world,

No one had faith like him in this world<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned above, the malicious nature of *Iblīs* is screened out by the existence of Ādam, the virtue prophet. Thus, Sultān Walad shows a clear distinction between vice and virtue, standardizing the image of *Iblīs* as vice.

As a result of standardizing the image of malicious *Iblīs* and limiting the role of touchstones to God's chosen people such as prophets, Sultān Walad's argument sometimes develops very different dimensions from that of

his father or Ḥallāj. In short, Sultān Walad insists on the importance and uniqueness of the touchstone's power:<sup>39</sup>

The people of truth and righteousness were gathered under the right prophet and placed in the heart (*dil*). As time goes by, since they were blended with an imitator (*muqallid*), they seem similar in the people of truth. [It is said that] *You were one community*.<sup>40</sup> The blessed touchstone (*mahak-i fazl*) and the balance with justice (*mīzān-i 'adl*)<sup>41</sup> do not regard an imitation and a real thing (*shibh wa gawhar*), pure gold and gold coin, copper (*mis*) and gold, or a hawk (*bāz*) and a crow (*zāgh*) as similar that belongs to the same class. Mūsā—May God's peace on him—surpassed the sorcery of Pharaoh or other witchcraft. Then, he revealed [his power was] other [than the power of Pharaoh]. He also revealed about the people of Egypt (*sibṭiyān*) and the people of Israel (*qabṭiyān*) [were other]. The prophet of the last moment, Muḥammad—May God have mercy upon him—was also the same. In short, before Muṣṭafā—May God's peace on him—appeared, Abū Jahl (d. 624) and the truthful one [Abū Bakr (d. 634)] were similar. However, Abū Jahl's name was Abū al-Ḥakam, because of his infidel and denial [of faith] his name became Abū Jahl. Finally, they disappeared from the world. Since saints and truthful shaykhs are inheritors (*wārith*)

39 Sultān Walad also recommends service for the descendants of saints in the scene of the journey of Ḥidr and Mūsā that is based on verses of *Qur'ān* (Q18/65-82). He insists that people who serve the descendants of saints in this world will be rewarded in the hereafter (see Sultān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 52).

40 This expression is based on the verse of *Qur'ān*: "And truly this community of yours is one community" (Q23/52).

41 This expression is based on the verses of *Qur'ān* (Q6/152).

38 Sultān Walad, *Rabāb-nāma*, 470.



of prophets, they have the same light, breath (*dam*), and spirit (*nafs*). Therefore, they lead creatures to have faith in God, just like prophets.<sup>42</sup> (Sulṭān Walad 1988, 35-36).

By the grace of the prophet as a touchstone, the hidden vice is revealed and vanished in the end. Sulṭān Walad suggests that the aim of discriminating between morality and immorality is to eliminate vice and lead people to the right faith. According to him, the role of a touchstone is now inherited by saints. In following quotation, he shows the example of Abū Yazīd al-Baṣṭāmī (d. 874/877) as touchstone saint when Baṣṭāmī distinguished imitators among his pupils:

Abū Yazīd said in intoxication (*masḥūn*), “Glory be to me, how magnificent is my status! There is no God but God in my clothes.” Pupils opposed and with cold looks said to Abū Yazīd, “Even if you say it that way, you don’t deserve it.” Since it became clear to Abū Yazīd that they were just imitators, he said, “If there were some who accepted it, by some companionship (*ṣuḥbat*) with me, my soul would influence them and my sayings would enter into their ears, and they [would be intoxicated and] would not regain consciousness. Now pupils are unaware. Since [they are] not in such a status, I will injure them with their swords. I will cut off their headless head with their blades.”<sup>43</sup>

Baṣṭāmī distinguishes imitators among pupils and laments that his pupils are witless. He then suggests that if someone accepts his status, they will become intoxicated by God. Here, Baṣṭāmī recommends acceptance without criticizing and doubting his sayings or

42 Sulṭān Walad, *Ma‘ārif*, ed. Najīb Māyil Harawī, (Tihārān: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1988), 35-36.

43 Ibid. 33-34.

the state of *shaykh*. Indeed, after the above discussion, when pupils accept and follow the sayings of Baṣṭāmī, they reach the intoxicated status.<sup>44</sup>

By quoting the story of Baṣṭāmī, Sulṭān Walad explains the power of saints or *shaykhs* as touchstones and recommends that pupils should accept the sayings of saints or *shaykhs* to reach a higher state.

Behind Sulṭān Walad’s supportive attitude toward saints, there may exist a distressing situation of touchstone saints that he witnessed. Indeed, the emergence of Shams-i Tabrīzī (d. 1247) occasioned a stir in Rūmī’s community. With the spiritual guidance of Shams, Rūmī awakened as an eminent spiritual master, whereas pupils complained about the change in their master.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, they expelled Shams permanently from their community.<sup>46</sup> Thus, Sulṭān Walad could have witnessed the classification by Shams as saints and touchstones and understood the real power and tragedy of classification as touchstone. Sulṭān Walad blames the pupils who are dissatisfied with Shams and doubt Rūmī’s favor toward Shams as “They revealed malignancy and all these pupils were ignorant (*bī-khabar*) like a herd”<sup>47</sup> In consequence, their hostility became “the thirst for his (Shams’s) blood”.<sup>48</sup>

Therefore, in the case of *Iblīs*, Sulṭān Walad regards *Iblīs*’s skepticism on the order of prostration as most problematic. Since he puts a lot of importance on the bad influence of doubting God, saints, or *shaykhs* in his argument, the role of *Iblīs* is defined as

44 Ibid. 86.

45 As for the unfavorable reaction of Rūmī’s pupils after his encounter with Shams, see (Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 55).

46 Concerning the disappearance or assassination of Shams, Lewis discusses in detail (Lewis, *Rumi: Past and Present*, 185-193).

47 See Sulṭān Walad, *Ibtidā-nāma*, 55.

48 Ibid. 55.

a permanent and fundamental malevolent existence. It seems that there is no space as necessary evil for *Iblīs*. For Sultān Walad, rather, the presence of touchstones is important. Even though with the appearance of touchstones, the real nature of people will be revealed, the strong belief in God, saints, or *shaykhs* will prevent people from straying into feelings of doubt and keep the community from disintegration.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, I focused on the argument of *Iblīs* by Rūmī and Sultān Walad to clarify the differences in their understanding of virtue and vice.

As for Rūmī's characteristic view in the comprehension of *Iblīs*, he lays emphasis on the oneness of virtue and vice on a divine level. He considers that all creatures perform their roles, including good and bad deeds and all integrate into one aim for God's sake. According to Rūmī, even the denial of prostration of *Iblīs* is a part of God's intention. In short, God wants to make *Iblīs* accomplish the job of a touchstone that distinguishes between good and bad, and *Iblīs* dares to do this job by accepting a tragic fate.

Thus, his opinion admits the co-existence of ambivalence, dissolving the border of virtue and vice. While he sometimes shows a straightforward and typical opinion on *Iblīs* or righteousness and wrongdoing, especially for "normal" people, he develops a complicated argument that fundamentally insists on the goodness of necessary evil.<sup>49</sup> Suggesting the possibility of goodness in *Iblīs*, Rūmī follows Ḥallāj's outlook and shows a friendly atti-

tude toward Ḥallāj.<sup>50</sup> Although it appears that Rūmī is sympathetic toward Ḥallāj as a lover of God, he does not accurately refer to him.

Compared to his father, Sultān Walad describes *Iblīs* as a vice by nature consistently. Contrary to his father, he avoids the complex image of *Iblīs* and attempts the unification of the impression of *Iblīs*. In addition, he tends to add a reason behind the refusal to bow by *Iblīs* saying, "I will not bow other than You". To add the saying, he seems to restrict the sin of *Iblīs* to "doubt God's intent", unlike the typical comprehension that his denial of prostration consists in his arrogance. As a result, Sultān Walad's argument of sin to have a doubt against God's intent develops into a recommendation of unquestioning obedience to God and God's chosen people such as prophets or saints. According to the work of touchstones in this world that they distinguish the faithful from unfaithful, there is no difference of opinion between Sultān Walad and his father. However, Sultān Walad limits touchstones to good people such as prophets or saints, ordinary people, especially pupils of the order, would spiritually mature through the entrustment of *shaykhs* or saints. Sultān Walad seems to prioritize a basic and simple understanding of the thoughts of his father for members of the order, stressing the effectiveness of *shaykhs*. Avoiding the complex ideas of vice and virtue of Rūmī, Sultān Walad's interpretation is universally acceptable and influences the smooth administration of the order. In addition to Sultān Walad's tactical thought, his accurate quotations and supportive attitude toward Ḥallāj's works are also noteworthy.<sup>51</sup> Given the fact that Sultān Walad

49 Shams comments that Rūmī speaks God-given words without thinking if these words will benefit the listener or not, whereas he uses divine words for "leading" people (Shams-i Tabrīzī, *Maqālāt-i Shams*, (Tih-rān: Nashr-i Markaz, 2018), 173). It is possible that Shams was complaining about this attitude of Rūmī.

50 For example, Rūmī estimates Ḥallāj's intoxicated saying (*shāḥ*) "I am the Truth (al-Ḥaḳḳ)" as showing humbleness (*tawāḍu'*) that admits the complete annihilation of self. Then Rūmī evaluates him as God's lover (*āshiq*) (Rūmī, *Kūtāb Fīḥ mā fīḥ*, 56, 57). The same insistence is seen in (Rūmī, *ibid*, 189).

51 Küçük comments on the tendency of Sultān Walad to inwardly approve of Shams, and outwardly reason with Sūfīs. However, he does not exaggerate his

repeatedly refers to Ḥallāj's persecuted situation with some compassion,<sup>52</sup> he is conscious of the tragic situation of touchstone-saints or *shaykhs*. Since the touchstones such as Shams or Ḥallāj smoke out the hidden viciousness of virtuous-looking person, they are sometimes regarded as a burden who trigger a disorder in people. To prevent this unavoidable discord, Sultān Walad urged on the importance of the trust on saints or *shaykhs* to members of the order. From his way of explanation, we can realize his intention of building a *shaykh*-centered united community.

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- 52 For example, Sultān Walad explains the situation of Ḥallāj's execution (Sultān Walad, *Ma'ārif*, 10-11), and his persecution (ibid, 166).
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