

Hundred and seventy-fifth session

175 EX/11 Rev.2
PARIS, 3 October 2006
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Item 56 of the provisional agenda

UNESCO MEDAL IN HONOUR OF MAWLANA JALAL-UD-DIN BALKHI-RUMI

SUMMARY

This item has been included in the provisional agenda of the 175th session of the Executive Board at the request of Afghanistan and Egypt, supported by the following Members of the Executive Board: Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Congo, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Yemen.

This initiative has been favourably welcomed by Albania, Congo, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya and Turkey.

An explanatory note together with a proposed decision is attached.

Decision proposed: paragraph 11.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

UNESCO MEDAL IN HONOUR OF MAWLANA JALAL-UD-DIN BALKHI-RUMI (MEVLANA CELALEDDIN BELHI-RUMI)

1. Listen to how this Reed complains, narrating the tale of separations.¹ This music of the reed is fire, not wind: who so has not this fire, may be naught! It is the fire of love that is in the reed, it is the fervour of love that is in the wine. Love wills that Word should be shown forth: if the mirror does not reflect, how is that? (*The Mathnawi*).

The prominent Persian language poet, thinker and spiritual master Mawlana Jalal-ud-Din Balkhi-Rumi (Mevlana Celaleddin Belhi-Rumi) was born in 1207 in Balkh, presently Afghanistan. He lived almost all of his life in Konya, presently Turkey, and died there in 1273. He remains one of the greatest comprehensive thinkers and scholars of Islamic civilization. He addressed humanity as a whole:

“I do not distinguish between the relative and the stranger.”

Nonetheless the people of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey consider him to be their own poet.

2. At the time of the Mongol invasion of Central Asia, Rumi’s father, Baha-ud-Din Walad, a renowned preacher and jurist known as “Sultan al-Ualama – “the Sultan of Islamic scholars” – left Balkh with his entire family on a journey to Baghdad and Mecca that eventually brought him to Konya. On the way to Anatolia, Mawlana met one of the most famous mystic Persian poets, Attar, in the city of Nishabur Iran. Attar immediately recognized Balkh-Rumi’s spiritual eminence; as he saw the father walking ahead of his son he said, “Here comes a sea followed by an ocean.” He gave the boy his *Asrarnama*, a book concerning the entanglement of the soul in the material world. This meeting had a deep impact on Mawlana’s thoughts and later proved a source of inspiration to him in his work.

3. In his forties Mawlana encountered a great mystic, Shams-e Tabrizi, which was the major turning point in his life. It was this meeting which allowed his poetic talent to flourish and his passion to manifest itself.

4. The oldest and most reliable biography of Mawlana is *Manaqib al-Arefin*, written in the fourteenth century by Shams ud-din Ahmad Aflaki which remains the primary source of reference for all scholars engaged in the study of his life.

5. Mawlana spent 12 years on the composition of the six volumes of his masterwork, the *Mathnawi*. His other masterpiece is Ghazaliyyat-e Shams-e Tabrizi, which expresses his thoughts in the form of lyric love poetry (ghazal). There are also several prose works extant by Mawlana: 145 of his letters, “Maktubat”; the Seven Sermons, “Majalis-e-Sa’ah”; and 71 of his spiritual lectures or discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi. His works have frequently been translated from the Persian language to many languages and widely disseminated.

6. Mawlana was laid to rest beside his father in Konya in a splendid shrine, located in the garden offered to his father by the Seljuk King Kai-Qubad I, which is now a museum. The epitaph inscribed over his tomb reads:

¹ The opening line of the *Mathnawi*, “The Reed” here referred to is Mawlana himself.

“When we are dead, seek not our tomb in the earth, but find it in the hearts of men of knowledge.”

7. In their passion, honesty, and gorgeous imagery, the writings of Mawlana have become a means of connecting directly with the Divine. His works, thoughts and teachings bear supreme witness, in a manner transcending all national, cultural and civilizational boundaries, to the sweet mysteries of divine truth. His religious thought and understanding is an exemplary manifestation of a transcendental school of the divine message.

8. The world of Mawlana is not exclusive, but is rather the highest state of a human being – namely, a fully evolved human. He offends no one and includes everyone, as a perfect human being who is in search of love, truth and the unity of the human soul.

9. Mawlana’s very broad appeal, highly advanced thinking, humanism and open heart and mind may derive from his genuinely cosmopolitan character, as during his lifetime he enjoyed exceptionally good relations with people of diverse social, cultural and religious backgrounds. Mawlana was familiar with the core message of all of them and therefore was appreciated by believers of many religions. Most of those scholars who have studied Mawlana admit that there was no more beautiful tribute to Mawlana’s universality than his funeral, a 40-day marathon of grieving attended by distraught and weeping Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists and Zoroastrians who mourned in such a manner that one would have believed that Mawlana belonged to each one of them.

10. Let us therefore honour Mawlana Jalal-ud-Din Balkhi-Rumi, one of the great humanists, philosophers and poets who belong to humanity in its entirety, by issuing a UNESCO Medal in his name in association with the 800th anniversary of his birth in 2007 in the hope that this medal will prove an encouragement to those who are engaged in a deep and scholarly dissemination of his ideas and ideals, which in turn would in fact enhance the diffusion of the ideals of UNESCO.

Proposed draft decision

11. Following the inclusion of this item in the provisional agenda of the 175th session of the Executive Board, the draft decision hereunder is presented by Afghanistan and Egypt and supported by the following Member States of the Executive Board:

Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Congo, Fiji, France, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Togo, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Yemen.

The Executive Board,

1. Having examined document 175 EX/11 Rev.,
2. Referring to the Approved 33 C/Resolution 63 by which the General Conference decided that UNESCO be associated with the celebration of 63 anniversaries in 2006-2007,
3. Taking note of the fact that the 800th anniversary of the birth of Mawlana Jalal-ud-Din Balkhi-Rumi (Mevlana Celaledin-I Belhi-Rumi), poet and philosopher, is included in the list of these celebrations,

4. Bearing in mind that Mawlana's vision, works and thoughts that search for inner peace, happiness and divine truth, are in conformity with UNESCO's objectives and its mission,
5. Believing that the issue of a UNESCO medal, in honour of Mawlana, will be welcomed by the international intellectual communities and the public at large,
6. Decides that UNESCO issues, in 2007, a commemorative medal on the occasion of the 800th anniversary of the birth of Mawlana Balkhi-Rumi.

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ADDENDUM

Add the following Member States to the summary and to paragraph 11 (proposed draft decision):

Canada, Cape Verde, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Luxembourg, Namibia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Uganda, Uruguay, Venezuela.