The Vain Imagination of a Fly

A donkey urinated so much that as it flowed away, blades of grass started flowing with it. A fly sat on one of the dry blades of grass as it flowed away on top of the urine. It felt as if it was sailing along on the ocean and imagined the flowing blade of grass to be his boat. In comparison with other flies, he felt himself to be superior. Never before did he feel this superiority. He felt inclined to announce his superiority and high rank and said:

A fly on a blade of grass sailing along in a donkey's urine
Like a ship, shakes his head and announces:
"I have studied the sea and sailed by boat
And in this study have I spent quite a time".

Maulana Rumi (Rahmatullah Alaihe) explains: Just as this fly is involved with a greatly foolish notion, so, too, are the misguided intelligentsia of our age who term their imaginations and crooked thoughts to be research. They consider it insulting and humiliating for them to derive benefit from Divine Revelation. They consider it perfect to invite humanity to those false ideologies. Maulana gives advice to those stupid ones:

"He who with his wrong interpretations turns away from Divine Revelation
Is like that fly on the blade of grass sailing along in the donkey's urine."

This person looks upon his imagination and ideas as his saving grace and means of success, and even tries to make Divine Revelation subject to his own opinions. At every step, he is bound to say: "I think this or that", "My opinion is this ". He goes so far as to pass Judgment on those matters of Deen on which there is a general consensus of agreement, and even those aspects which are proven through continuous authentic transmission. He even wants to impose his views over the judgments of the Sahabah and their beliefs. Such a person is in the same boat as the fly in this story. He is like the fly flowing along on a blade of grass in the urine of a donkey; imagining that he is an expert sailor.
Thereafter, Maulana Rumi (Rahmatullah Alaihe) shows the way in which such a person can reform himself:

"If the fly does not enter wrong interpretation into his opinion. And repent from wrong interpretations. Fate will make that fly become blessed".

In other words, the fly will become so full of blessings that he will be saved from having to sit on feces and from being mixed with impurities. He will then enter the ranks of the pure ones. The author of these lines says that Maulana's reference in this couplet is to the Quranic verse:

 وإن التَّفَاوُتْ لَا يَفْعَلْنَى مِنْ الحَقِّ شَيْئًا

"And conjecture avails nothing against truth."

And the verse,

وَاتَّبِعُوهُمْ سَبِيلَ مِنْ آتَابِيَّ

"And follow the path of him who returns (in repentance) to Me".