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### Rumi: A Spiritual Path to a Divine Love

#### Abstract

This paper primarily focuses upon Rumi's main pre-occupation in his poetry. The very essential theme of his poetry is love. He portrays this in his poetry as an element of divinity and spiritualism. He treats it as the bridge between the two souls and the path leading the world to words divinity. This paper explores how Rumi, being the dominant poet of the 13<sup>th</sup> century Sufi tradition in Middle East Asia, excavates love and devotion lead the world to the spiritual world. It is studied here that the poet Rumi uses very ordinary and day to day images to show the mystical element of the love. And love is the essence of life. Further, this paper sheds light on the oneness (union) of man and woman is possible only by love. He does not merely speak of bodily love, but, divine and spiritual love.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Body, Divinity, Earth, God, Heaven, Love, Metaphysics, Philosophy, Poetry, Poetics, Religion, Spiritualism, Sufism, Worldly.

#### 1. Introduction

No poet in Western Literature is as subtle, mystical, metaphysical and multifaceted as Rumi was and is. His poems are the true flavor and essence of the Eastern aesthetics and poetry and to some extent philosophy. Literally his poems are of fervor of Romanticism; but, subtleness and intricacy his poem show are unique. In Metaphysical poetical world he is often quoted and discussed poet. His poems are of preaching as well as whispering songs of lovers and hymns of the sages. The very core aspect of his poetry is that he strongly upholds

the idea that oneness is the state which lovers long to reach. By being lost into one another through the means of love one must attain that state. He says it is a divine state. Love, he says, just serves as a bridge and pays a way to reach the oneness. The concepts of Prakruthi (woman) and Purush (man) and similarly the sky and the earth have the main preoccupations in his poems. His poems are direct and subtle at the same time. This blend has been the beauty of his poems.

The time when he was writing was mayhem. When he was twelve years old, his native place Balkh was being troubled and attacked by Mangols. This made him and his family to leave home town to go on exile. His family travelled almost for a decade facing uncertainty. During this time he lost his mother. When he moved from Afghanistan to Konia a town in Turkey, he was exposed to many cultures and traditions. At that time this town was like a meeting point of various traditions and practices like Islamic, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist. In that town three languages like Turkish, Persian and Arabic were being spoken. All these experiences had impacted on him in shaping his mystical and poetical sensibilities. He dealt mainly with subjects like loss, love, separation, memory, and spiritualism.

## 2. The Main Discussion

Jalalu l-Din Rumi is a poet who has occupied a unique space in world poetry. He is regarded as the greatest mystical poet of Persia, was born in Khorasan in 1207. Rumi's life can briefly be said that he was born into a rich family in Balkh of Afghanistan. His father was Bahul-ud-Din Walad. He was married at 21 and had two children. After his wife died, he got married second time and had two children.

He studied Theology and Law. He studied under the Sufi mentor Burhan Aldin for nine years, travelled extensively in Middle East Asia. He met Shams. Their friendship lasted for three years. Shams was 22 years older than him. Both of them discussed various issues like philosophy, religion, truth, love, life, cosmos, creation, love, Sufism and metaphysics. Their companionship was like the relation between Akkamahadevi a 12<sup>th</sup> century mystic poet and the Lord Shiva (Channamallikarjuna); Krishna and Radha. The result of their friendship was a wonderful collection of poems called 'Diwan-i-Shams'. His literary output was very large. This Diwan-i-Shams had included about 2500 mystical odes. In addition to it he wrote another magnum opus called 'Mathnawi' having about 25000 poems and the 'Rubaiyat' of about 1600 quatrains. Many translations of his poems have come out by world reputed translators

like Reynold A Nicholson and Coleman Barks. Reynold A Nicholson has captured the very poetical and metaphysical sensibilities of Rumi in his ground breaking book on Rumi entitled Rumi: Poet and Mystic. He expressed it in poem called Prelude which serves as an introduction to the world of Rumi:

*Deep in our hearts the Light of Heaven is shining  
Upon a soundless Sea without a shore.  
Oh, happy they who found it in resigning  
The images of all that men adore.*

*Blind eyes, to dote on shadows of things fair  
only at last to curse their fatal lure,  
Like Harut and Marut, that Angel-pair  
Who deemed themselves the Purest of the pure.*

*Out Ignorance and self-well and vicious pride  
Destroy the harmony of part and whole.  
In vain we seek with lusts unmortified  
A vision of the One Eternal Soul.*

*Love, Love alone can kill what seemed so dead,  
The frozen snake of passion. Love alone,  
By tearful prayer and fiery longing fed,  
Reveals a knowledge schools have never known.*

Rumi's poems are very very down to earth. His sensibilities are very closed to the nature and life. In a common life he tries to catch the metaphysical and celestial experience of love. This is the core element in his poetical career. Whatever he writes, he revolves around it only. But in each poem he excavates new imageries and expressions. The petrichor (the smell of the soil after the rain) can be felt in each of his lines. His poems are worldly as well as spiritual and mystical. In a true sense his poems are highly metaphysical. His poems long for the sky being deeply rooted in the earth. He was like Chile's Neruda, the people's poet. Through common expressions he makes us feel heavenly about the divinity of love. Osho, in his 'Spiritual Path: Buddha Zen Tao Tantra', writes that life cannot be put into a theory; it is so vast, infinite. A theory by its very nature is closed. A theory has to be closed; if it is a

theory it cannot be open-ended, otherwise, it will be meaningless. He gives a wonderful example of navel. If doctor is asked about it , he will simply explain in medical terms, but Osho says that navel is that which connects child and the mother. It has transcendental purpose showing the past of the child. So empirically and in clear and concrete terms life cannot be defined. It is beyond our human definitions. This is how Rumi also in his poems does connecting the life and spiritual world (which is not outside the world; in this world and life Rumi tries to show us the celestial experience).

Rumi was largely influenced by Sufism and Sufi poets namely Sana-I of Ghaznah and Faridu'l Din. The sole idea of Sufism is that living life being completely surrendered to the God. Men and women who sought to unite themselves with God. Lover, seeing himself by the light of the God, realizes that himself and his Beloved are not two but one. In his poems 'I' has no value but 'You' has. 'I' is to be merged and united with 'You'; then only it will be complete one. This is apparently seen in the poetry of Akkamahadevi of 12<sup>th</sup> century in Karnataka. She rejects the husband and longs to be with her divine lover the Lord Shiva.

Reynolds A Nicholson rightly observes that a platonic type of mystical love had been cultivated by Sufis long before Rumi declared that he and Shams-i-Tabriz were 'two bodies with one soul.' In this union of loving souls all distinctions vanish: nothing remains but the essential Unity of Love, in which 'lover' and 'beloved' have merged their separate identities. Further he writes saying that in calling his lyrics the Diwan (poems) of Shams-i-Tabriz, Rumi uses the name Shams as if Shams and himself had become identical and were the same person. Keeping this personal detail of Rumi, one can read his poems as if a deep lover who passionately longs and wishes for the true love of his beloved. In one of his beautiful love poems he writes that a lover goes and knocks the beloved's door. The Beloved asks him who he is , he says it is 'I' who has come in search of you. The beloved does not open the door. After some time he goes and knocks the door, when asked who he is , he says it is 'you' , then she opens the door. In simple terms he touches the truth and divinity.

*The minute I heard my first love story,  
I started looking for you, not knowing  
How blind that was.*

*Lovers don't finally meet somewhere,  
They're in each other all along.*

The love Rumi speaks is of purely worldly as well as divine one. It has no second thought and calculations. It is a great philosophy , by which, Rumi's poems say, life is

running. Loosing ego, anger, social barriers, and preconceived notions is love. No distance between the worshipper and the worshipped and similarly the lover and the beloved.

Love in an ordinary world and life gives an extraordinary and an ethereal and blessed feelings. He writes in the poem 'The Song of the Reed' -

*Hearken to this Reed forlorn,*

*Breathing, even since 'twas torn*

*From its rushy bed, a strain*

..

*The secret of my song, though near,*

*None can see and none can hear.*

*Oh, for a friend to know the sign*

*And mingle all his soul with mine!*

*'Tis the flame of love that fired me,*

*'Tis the wine of Love inspired me.*

'Love in Absence' is another meaningful poem, it mainly speaks of the divine union of the two souls.

*When men and women become one, Thou art that One;*

*When the units are wiped out, lo, Thou, art that Unity.*

The beloved is the substance. She is every where . As Margaret Atwood, in one of her famous poems 'This is a Photograph of me', the beloved has been merged with the nature.

'Oneness' has been the strong element of his poems. This oneness can be seen in love which brings man and woman together. In the poem 'The Marriage of the True Minds' he writes:

*Happy the moment when we are seated in the palace, thou and I,*

*With two forms and with two figures but with one soul, thou and I.*

As salt dissolves into water he is with her she with him. To be lost in one another. There is no separatedness. This is how Rumi directly writes to our hearts rather than minds.

One of the beautiful and unforgettable compositions in Diwan-i-Shams is 'I Turn Toward Thee'. In it he flies the very fragrance of love into unfathomable greater extensions. The human mankind needs no ego, selfishness and anger to be fully in love. This will only makes man a true human being. If there is no love in life and between relationships, life looks to be ugly and corrupted. Ultimately man's end in life is knowing the truth. As Keats in his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' expressed, beauty and truth of the life. Love is beauty and truth. That is

what artists, poets, philosophers, thinkers, and sages try to excavate. Love is like a divine path by which any one can reach the sublimity.

*O Thou Who art my soul's comfort in the season of sorrow,*

*O Thou Who art my spirit's treasure in the bitterness of*

*Death!*

*That which the imagination hath not conceived, that*

*Which the understanding hath not seen,*

*Visieth my soul from Thee; hence in worship I turn toward Thee.*

Seeing has been a believing in today's world. Man has lost patience and time to introspect, look at the things coolly, understand the relationships and see the beautiful world. Though man has been surrounded by the abundant beauty in the world, he is so obsessed with violence one side and artificial beauty on the other hand. As Wordsworth said in his sonnet 'World is Too Much with Us', to the modern man materials have been more important than loving souls. The thing of beauty (Keats) is joy forever. But man has shown his interest only in temporary beauty and happiness. Rumi's poems say that in love only man can have a true spirit and pure soul. He blends philosophy, spiritualism, metaphysics, and day to day worldly life and its experience together. This is the unique quality being seen in his poetry. For which of course he was much influenced by Sufism. It is generally believed that in the Sufi traditions, souls can be of three such as (i) sensual- having the animal urge; it is full of uncontrollable emotions. W.B.Yeats' lines can be remembered here: 'full of passionate intensity'. (ii) Intellectual. (iii) The transcendental that which connects between the life and beyond life. Something, which cannot be understood in spoken words or to five senses, can be of transcendental. Rumi says:

*The faithful are many, but their Faith is one; their bodies*

*Are numerous, but their soul is one.*

*Beside the understanding and soul which is in the ox and*

*the ass, Man has another intelligence and soul.*

...

*When the bodily houses have no foundation remaining, the*

*Faithful remain one soul.*

(The Faithful Are One Soul)

Most of the poets in the world literature, when they write of love, they romanticize or idealize the love. But his poems do not belong to that category; they portray love in a very novel way plus rational as well as practical sense. Rumi does not like to be categorized or

branded, his poems very subtly questions and fundamental mind sets and boldly show the reality and truth. As said before, he was of people's poet; as how Buddha and Gandhi being with people understanding the true pulses of the ordinary folks and their grievances and sufferings, Rumi's poems also reflected the true spirit and emotions of the ordinary folks. His poems are not merely with imageries but tried at best reveal the hidden secrets and truth of the life. Kashmiri mystic poet Lalla (Lalleshwari) rightly puts in her poem:

You won't find the Truth

By crossing your legs and holding your breath.

Day dreams won't take you through the gateway of release.

You can stir as much salt as you like in water,

It won't become the sea.

By this simple poem, Lalla has condemned and criticized the show-off attitude of the people who are obsessed with physical beauty and outer appearance. Lalla says that enlightenment cannot be obtained if the seeker practices blindly ascetism rather than as a divine act and inspired practice. Ranjith Hoskote, in his book 'I, Lalla: The poems of Lal Ded', while interpreting this poem, writes that the seeker will accomplish nothing if the fervency of his desire for transcendence is not matched by the strenuous effort of understanding and modulating the body's letences, and the mastery of the techniques of right of mindfulness.

Rumi writes:

*The intellectual is always showing off,*

*the lover is always getting lost.*

*The intellectual runs away,*

*afraid of drowning;*

*the whole business of love*

*is to drown in the sea.*

...

*Love is like musk. It attracts attention.*

*Love is a tree, and the lovers are its shade.*

In this plain and simple poem, he delineates the beauty of the love. Love is like a great revolution, it makes the age old things up-side down.

In this 'When the rose is gone and the garden faded' Rumi has beautifully portrayed saying that beloved is cosmos or nature in which man is to be lost. Without her he is merely a bird without wings. He is complete. To be complete he is to fully be lost in her. Living life is living it at most being completely surrendering to it. As W.B Yeats says in one of his poems,

that dance and dancer cannot be separated apart. This same oneness is expressed in this small and beautiful poem. Rumi writes:

*When the rose is gone and the garden faded  
You will no longer hear the nightingale's song.  
The Beloved is all; the lover just a veil.  
The Beloved is living; the lover a dead thing.*

..

*The lover is left like a bird without care,  
The lover is left like a bird without wings*

..

*If the light of the Beloved is absent?  
Love wills that this Word be brought forth.*

Passionate intensity and longing for love has been running through all most all the poems written under the title 'Diwan-I-Shams'. Beloved without lover is a fish out of water. Nothing tastes him. Life will be boring and dull. Beloved is the light and enlightenment. Love is the path. Without which life will be pathless. To meet the end she is means. Withfull of fresh and new imageries the poet Rumi has intensively portrayed in the poem ' Because I cannot sleep' the feelings happened when beloved and lover are not together. He writes:

*Without Love's jewel inside of me,  
Let the bazaar of my existence be destroyed stone by stone.*

The Rumi rejects all intellectual definitions made on love. By doing so he rejects the old values. In India in the name of love jihad the very sanctity of love is being lost. Quiet often it is seen in relation with religion and caste. In Rumi's poems there is a ray of hope and inspiration for the troubled times and a cure for the wounded civilization. Love is something which needs to be looked at in a broader perspective. He says in the poems entitled, 'Ode 314'

*This love is beyond the study of theology,  
That old trickery and hypocrisy.  
I you want to improve your mind that way,  
Sleep on.  
I've given up on my brain.  
I've torn the cloth to shreds  
And thrown it away.*

*Sleep on.*

*If you're not completely naked*

*Wrap your beautiful robe of words*

*Around you.*

*And sleep.*

In a three line poem Rumi speaks of love which sounds to be his life and death question. Meditation and love are alike. The end of both is uplifting the disturbed life and making it tolerable and beautiful. He is in an ordinary usages and expressions showing the human mankind the divine path towards love. Love is not simply worldly; instead spiritual in totally practical sense. He cannot romantically idealize it.

*A life time without Love is of no account*

*Love is the Water of Life*

*Drink it down with heart and soul!*

The eastern philosophy and poetics is that which cannot be understood empirically, but metaphysically. Of course this metaphysics is not the one Donne and others in English literature dealt with, but intuitive. Seeing the divine quality in ordinary life is an act of ordinary thing. God can easily be with common folk. By doing so, artists and thinkers and poets in the eastern philosophy and poetics cut the gap between heaven and earth. There is no distance between these two. The idea of time and space is looking to be fluidic. A noted mystic poet of the 12<sup>th</sup> century kannada vachana poet Allama Prabhu says:

*Poets of the past*

*Are the children of my concubines.*

*Poets to come*

*Are infants of my pity.*

*The poets of the sky*

*Are babies in my cradle.*

*Vishnu and Brahma*

*Are my kinsmen and sidekicks.*

*You are the father-in-law*

*And I the son-in-law,*

*O lord of the Caves.*

What is to be seen in the above poem the union of divine and earth; the celestial and the ordinary and the God and the devotee and the lover and beloved can be seen alike in Rumi's poem as well.

*Last night you left me and slept*

*Your own deep sleep. Tonight you turn and turn. I say,*

*“you and I will be together*

*Till the universe dissolves.”*

### 3. Conclusion

Love is the transformative force and transcendental experience that have subtly and aesthetically with the touch of reality have suffused every poem by him. His appeal is timeless. He touches upon the elemental issues of human's life importantly transitoriness of the world and life. His poems have been stood to be the moral conscience of the society where bloodshed and violence are being spread. His poems have healing effect as well as moral guide to our minds, hearts and souls. He writes: *How long will you say/ 'I will conquer the entire world and fill it with myself?' Even if snow covered the world completely the Sun would melt it with a grace.* His poems need inner energy to understand. They endorse that it should apply to life and love as well. Evil character, darkness and negative force often try to dominate the goodness and love, but Rumi's poems tell the world that all such negative forces can be wiped out by true spirited love. His poems have universal appeal and they cannot be branded by religion or any other ideology. It can be concluded saying his own words- 'I am yours. Don't give myself back to me.'

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