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¹² It is the flexibility of the orientation of attention which allows a humble person to say on an occasion “I am humble” without that automatically being evidence for their lacking humility.

¹³ Roberts has made the very important point that humility does not always contrast with arrogance, so in some cases the absence of one need not imply anything about the other. Robert C. Roberts, “The Value of Pride,” *Faith and Philosophy* 26 (2009): 119-33

¹⁴ This could be either pride or humility, each of which can contrast with humility although in different ways. With a different emphasis and use, Schueler has also made the point that humble people do not view any success their projects might have as a reason for them to think of themselves as personally successful and so not grounds for pride. G. F. Schueler, “Why Is Modesty a Virtue,” *Ethics* 109, no. 4 (1999): 835-41

¹⁵ There are parallels here with Max Scheler’s definition of humility. Humility, Scheler states, is “a steady inner throbbing of spiritual readiness to serve in the core of our existence, a readiness that is directed toward all things” (Scheler, “On the Rehabilitation of Virtue,” p. 23). The context makes clear that, for Scheler, this readiness for service is a human counterpart to the divine lowering of itself in the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. Consider, for instance, the following quote: “Humility: this is precisely the movement of self-humbling, hence the movement of coming down from above, of arriving from the heights, of God allowing himself to come softly down to man; of the holy man descending to the sinner” (Scheler, “On the Rehabilitation of Virtue,” p. 31).

¹⁶ For similar reasons I take it to be dangerous at best to inculcate any attitude which systematically encourages people to view themselves as being worthless even when directed towards the noble end of developing an orientation of attention that is not directed towards the self.

¹⁷ For a similar interpretation of how Moses could be humble see John Dickson and Brian Rosner, “Humility as a Social Virtue in the Hebrew Bible?,” *Vetus Testamentum* 54, no. 4 (2004): 459-79

¹⁸ Depending on how broadly we interpret God’s promise to provide for his people, such thinking may also be behind the promise in Matt 6:33: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

¹⁹ Heb 5:11-14 envisages a similarly tight connection between the practice of obedience (training oneself to distinguish good from evil) and wisdom (solid food).

²⁰ Samuel T. Coleridge, “Know Thyself,” 1832.

THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TOLERANCE IN RUMI

Sayed Hassan “Akhlaq” Hussaini

INTRODUCTION

Jalal al-Din Muhammad al-Balkhi Rumi (1207-1273), often referred to as Mawlana (lord/master) or Rumi, is one of the most important figures of Islamic Sufism. Rumi’s work, I shall argue, is particularly timely today. There are tendencies among contemporary Muslim intellectuals to accept the Sufi interpretation of Islam and to present a picture of Islam as tolerant and peaceful, not only to counteract Western Islamophobia but also to counteract extremism within Islamic societies.¹

In this paper, then, I wish to introduce some aspects of Rumi’s thought and, specifically, his ideas on tolerance. The present discussion will focus on: knowledge of God and tolerance; human identity and tolerance; and spiritual journey and tolerance. My contention is that Rumi’s concept of tolerance is not only of academic and historical interest, but of particular relevance to current discussions in Islamic intellectual life.

BACKGROUND

Rumi is known in Islam as one of the most important scholars and mystical poets in its history. He is famous for his love poems that have been translated into many languages. But Rumi is celebrated for another reason. His followers established a mystical order called the “Mawlawiya,” known in Western culture as the “Whirling Dervishes” or “Sama.”²

Rumi was born in Balkh (today, in northern Afghanistan) to a religious scholarly family. After leaving Balkh because of the Mongol invasion, the family lived in various Middle Eastern cities during the next decade. Rumi was about 20 years old when they settled in the central Anatolian city of Konya. After his father died, Rumi was given a position in the local court and became a religious leader.

In November 1244, he met an itinerant Sufi named Shams ad-Din (1185-1248) from Tabriz (in northwestern Iran).³ Shams influenced Rumi to such an extent that Rumi’s personality changed completely. Rumi described his spiritual journey in the following way: “The outcome of my life is not more than three words: I used to be raw, then I was cooked, and now I am on fire.”⁴ Rumi saw in Shams a perfect manifestation of God, a perfect man whose being, speech, behavior, and moods were signs of God. He was devoted to Shams and left his position as a religious leader and preacher. However, Rumi’s students forced Shams to leave the city. Rumi was so devastated that he composed the *Divan-e Kabir*, a lyric poem of some 35,000 verses, in Shams’s honor.

The Islamic intellectual movement includes three main schools: philosophy, theology, and Mysticism/Sufism. The first emphasizes reason (*Aql*), the second, religious tradition (*Naql*), and the last, love and intuition (*Kashf va shuhood*). Rumi belonged to the third school, but he also knew much about the first two schools and, to that extent, his ideas are particularly comprehensive.

THE ‘MATHNAWI’

Rumi wrote much more than the *Divan-e Kabir* – he also authored a book of discourses and a collection of letters. But his most influential work is the 27,000-verse didactic poem, *Spiritual Couplets (Mathnawi-yi ma’nawi)*,⁵ a record of his discovery of Sufism. This book has been recognized by many commentators, both within the Sufi tradition and outside it, as the greatest mystical poem ever written.⁶ Referring constantly to Quranic verses and Islamic authorized narrations, the *Mathnawi* tries to explain mystical issues in metaphors and examples in order to help people reach God. Moreover, it has played a significant role in spreading Sufi ideas worldwide. The *Mathnawi* is for Sufism as important as the Holy *Qur’an* is among Muslims. Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492), the great Muslim Sufi and hagiographer, described Rumi’s book as follows: “What can I say in praise of that great one? He is not a Prophet but has come with a book; The Spiritual Masnavi of Mawlavi is the Quran in the language of Pahlavi (Persian).” Similarly, a poem by Shaykh Bahai (1547-1621), a great philosopher and Muslim jurist, states: “I do not say that this respected person is a prophet, but he has the book. His *Mathnawi* is a guide like the Quran that leads some people and misleads others.” Finally, Mulla Hadi Sabzavari (1797-1873), an Iranian philosopher and mystical theologian, calls the *Mathnawi* “a poetic interpretation of the Holy Quran” and tries to show it as consistent with Mulla Sadra’s transcendental theosophy.⁷ (It should be also be noted that not only classical philosophers like Sabzavari, but modern philosophers like Muhammad Taqi Jafari (1923-1998), Muhammad Iqbal of Lahore (1877-1938), and the Islamic reformer Ali Shariati (1933-1977), were influenced by Rumi’s ideas on Islam.)

What, exactly, is the subject matter of the *Mathnawi*? The *Mathnawi* is clearly the most detailed, systematic, and methodical of Rumi’s poetic works. The *Divan-e Kabir* is limited to feelings and dialogues between the lover and the beloved, and it presents Rumi’s experiences without reference to the rules of reason and logic, belief or unbelief, traditions and morals, or even the relationship between language and meaning. The *Mathnawi*, however, presents ideas regarding the rules of Islamic Sharia, theology, theosophy, public traditions and general morals, as well as the relationship between language and meaning. In other words, while the *Divan-e Kabir* is the immediate reflection of Rumi’s mystical experiences, the *Mathnawi* gives a mediated reflection through language; the difference is like that between the emotional mode and the reaction or

expression of a depressed person.⁸ This explains in part why I focus here on the *Mathnawi*, capturing the common transferable concepts, and pointing out how these ideas relate to the subject of this paper. However, this approach involves a paradoxical method.

Rumi is well-known as the master of love⁹ – one who had experienced love in his entire being, especially after his meeting with the mysterious Sufi, Shams. What he says in both the *Divan-e Kabir* and the *Mathnawi* represents the outburst of his soul, and the words of the Beloved. He talks about love through stories: “The King and the Maid” in Book I of the *Mathnawí*, “Moses and the Shepherds” in Book II, “The Life of Sadr-e-Jahan” in Books III and IV, “The Story of Mahmood and Ayaz” in Book V, and “Leili and Majnoon” in Book VI; these provide only a few examples of Rumi’s discussion of the concept of Divine love.¹⁰ Also, in Rumi’s perspective, all love is related to the love of God. He writes: “Except love of the most beautiful God everything, though (outwardly) it is (pleasant like) eating sugar, is (in truth) agony of spirit” (*Mathnawí*, Book 1:3684).

Rumi’s approach is simply to share these insights, because it is not possible to teach them. His account of love is based on his personal and unique experiences, both in the style of his language and his style of life. Rumi was very flexible in style of speech, personality, and formation of his ideas. For example, he chose a very simple name for his great book: “The Spiritual Couplet.” However, as history has shown, it had a huge impact on Farsi and Islamic culture, so that eminent Sufis and poets even tried to choose a special name for the work. Many strange forms are used in his poems, but are made natural.¹¹

There is a well-known story in the *Mathnawi* entitled “How four persons quarreled about grapes, which were known to each of them by a different name” (Book 2:3668-3699), that encourages us to break free from the prison of language and names. It begins with this wonderful poem:

Pass on from the name and look at the attributes, in order that the attributes may show thee the way to the essence.

The disagreement of mankind is caused by names: peace ensues when they advance to the reality [denoted by the name] (Book 2: 3666-3667).

Because Rumi left formal study, stopped his teaching, and changed his scholarly approach towards people, his students turned against his master Shams. His positive view of Sufi dance was not common among religious scholars and should, again, be recognized as a sign of his flexibility. In the whirling dance, people leave behind all selfish pride and attachments.¹² Moreover, his telling of love is more a kind of self-unveiling. Here, we do not have a sermon and advice, but a statement of the facts of life. Rumi did not merely advise people as a common preacher, but exposed his soul, as well as our unknown souls, to his readers. He asked people to make a decision to change themselves.

One of the key aspects of Rumi's doctrine of love is his emphasis on tolerance. Rumi's invitation to tolerance is based on his understanding of God, the world, human being, and social life. Concerning tolerance, there is an interdependent relationship between the different aspects of Rumi's view and the foundations of Islamic Sufism. To see this, let us now turn to the most important and initial elements of Rumi's viewpoint on tolerance.

KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND TOLERANCE

The best-known name for Sufism in contemporary Persian literature is "عرفان" "Erfan," the Gnostic school.¹³ This name indicates a relationship to special knowledge of God. With regard to our subject, if a person knows God with his or her heart through love and intuition, that by itself means reaching God, and the person will be tolerant. The question is: why and how?

"Reaching" God is the main purpose of the spiritual journey in Sufism.¹⁴ What does reaching God mean? According to Rumi, it is appropriating as many of God's attributes that human capacity allows.¹⁵

God created us in His image: our qualities are instructed by [and modeled upon] His qualities (*Mathnawí*, Book 4: 1194).

Since the angels perceived in him [Adam] the rays of God, they fell in worship and hastened to do homage (*Mathnawí*, Book 1: 1247).

As I will explain later, each person is a unique manifestation of God. There is also a unity between the different names and attributes of God. Everybody must try to be more like God.¹⁶ One name of God is the "Patient" (*Helm*). He constantly sees that people do many wrong deeds and have bad ideas, but does not intervene. He respects His creation and the fact that all people are different. According to Rumi's poem, God says:

Within My [infinite] patience (*Helm*¹⁷) [the patience of] a hundred fathers and a hundred mothers at every moment are born and vanish.

Their patience is [but] the foam of the sea of My patience: the foam comes and goes, but the sea is [always] there (Book 1: 2673-4).

Here is another poem from Rumi that explores the manifestation of the Divine's "*Helm*" on the earth:

This earth has the mark of God's clemency, in that it got filth and gave flowers as the produce:

In that it covers our pollutions, [and that] buds grow up from it in exchange. (Book 2:1793-1794)

If the spiritual traveler, the desired audience of Rumi, tries to obtain God's attributes and realizes God's names, he or she has to become more patient and tolerant. As a matter of fact, Rumi added that life in this world is not possible without tolerance, not even a life of self-ignorance.

Heedlessness (delusion), then, is in sooth the pillar [support] of this world (Book 4:1330, see also Book 1: 2065)

However, Rumi advises that we have to focus more on reaching God. We may ask: Can we reach God? How do we become aware of God's attributes? The position of people in relation to God in Sufism explains the point. What is the position of human beings to God? From Islamic mysticism's viewpoint (which differs from other orthodox points of view about creation), the world is God's manifestation¹⁸:

Those progenies are not [produced] by means of these four [elements]; consequently they are not seen by these eyes.

Those progenies are born of [Divine] illumination; consequently they are covered [from sight] by a pure veil.

We said "born", but in reality they are not born, and this expression is only [used] in order to guide [understanding]. (Book 6 :1812-1814)

According to Rumi, the position of human beings in the world is the highest manifestation of God.

The deliciousness of milk and honey is the reflexion of the [pure] heart: from that heart the sweetness of every sweet thing is derived.

Hence the heart is the substance, and the world is the accident: how should the heart's shadow [reflexion] be the object of the heart's desire? (Book 3: 2263-4)

This spiritual humanism is considered the main ethical point of Sufism:

The tiara *We have honored* [the sons of Adam] is on the crown of thy head; the collar *We have given* thee hangs on thy breast.

Man is the Substance, and the celestial sphere [the world] is his accident, all things are [like] a branch or the step of a ladder [secondary and subsidiary]: he is the object.

O thou to whom reason and foresight and intelligence are slaves, how art thou selling thyself so cheaply?

Service to thee is imposed on all existence as a duty: how should a substance beg for help from an accident? (Book 5:3574-3577)

This shows that the creativity and knowledge of humanity and the creativity and knowledge of God can be linked together. One cannot know God unless one knows oneself:

Hence the Prophet expounded this [Matter], [when he said], “Whoso knoweth himself knoweth God” (Book 5: 2114)

There is no authenticity for each person in the person itself. It occurs only as a manifestation of God, as we will see – a special manifestation that dances, imitating other powers and songs:

A babe does not contend with its nurse, but it weeps, although it knows neither evil nor good.

We are as the harp and thou art striking [it with] the plectrum [playing on it]: the lamentation is not from us, it is thou that art making lamentation.

We are as the flute, and the music in us is from thee; we are as the mountain, and the echo in us is from thee.

We are as pieces of chess [engaged] in victory and defeat: our victory and defeat is from thee, O thou whose qualities are comely!

Who are we, O thou soul of your souls, that we should remain in being beside thee?

We and our existences are [really] non-existences: thou art the absolute Being which manifests the perishable [causes of phenomena to appear].

We all are lions, but lions on a banner: because of the wind they are rushing onward from moment to moment.

Their onward rush is visible, and the wind is unseen: may that which is unseen never fail!

Our wind [that whereby we are moved] and our being are of thy gift; our whole existence is from thy bringing [us] into being.

Thou didst show the delightfulness of Being unto not-being, [after] thou hadst caused not-being to fall in love with thee. (Book 1: 597-606)¹⁹

But the limitations of reality allow us to realize only some aspects of God and of our being. This leads to differences in each being. So, if we wish to know this wisdom, we will try to examine God in its different manifestations, and do our best with “others.” This alone will create a better world. So, the first thing is to understand and do your best with “others,” instead of wanting to change them.

Therefore [*a fortiori*] in the case of the [human] essences, which are the foundation of all fundamentals, know that there [too] there are differences and divisions.

Neither is his [one man's] life like his [another man's] life, nor is his death like his death.

Never deem his [this one's] grave like his [that one's] grave. How indeed shall I describe the differences [between them] in that [other] world? (Book 2: 3009-3011)

KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN IDENTITY AND TOLERANCE

According to Rumi, the real identity of mankind is knowable by its relation to God as well as by its awareness of its limitations. How is this so?

Another way of reaching God is self-improvement, a fact that has a connection with tolerance. Rumi saw tolerance as a way that leads us to self-improvement. As mentioned above, it means that a spiritual traveler tries to discover his or her inner capacity and, thus, the names and attributes of God. Now, I have to add that the unity between the different names and attributes of God as well as common characteristics found in people reflect a number of things to those who want to learn. We can learn about our positive and negative characteristics by examining other personalities. We cannot know good things without facing bad things.

He [God] continually turns you from one state [of feeling] to another, manifesting opposites by means of the opposites in the change. (Book 2: 1544)

Thou dost not know evil till thou knowest good: [only] from [one] contrary is it possible to discern [the other] contrary, O youth. (Book 4: 1345)

And here is one more noteworthy point:

The contrary is secretly enclosed in the contrary: fire is enclosed in boiling water.

A [delightful] garden is enclosed in Nimrod's fire: revenues grow from giving and spending (Book 6: 3570-3571).

Everybody discovers a side of reality that is one shade of Truth. In Islamic doctrine, all things belong to God and He is the origin and the purpose of all. "All the beautiful names" (Quran 7:189; 59:24) – that is, the names of beauty (*jamal*), majesty (*jalal*), and perfection (*kamal*) – belong to this absolutely one and transcendent God. The divine names represent God's face toward the world and are the vessels to finding God in and through His creation.²⁰ His *Jamal* is visible in pleasurable things, as His *Jalal* in non-pleasurable things, and His *Kamal* in everything.²¹ The finding of God in all

things is the ideal of the Sufis. This is also self-improvement. Thus, human self-improvement is based on love that is the result of spiritual knowledge. Rumi explicitly emphasizes a combination of knowledge and love:

By love bitter things become sweet; by love pieces of copper become golden;

By love dregs become clear; by love pains become healing;

By love the dead is made life; by love the king is made a slave.

This love, moreover, is the result of knowledge: who [ever] sat in foolishness on such a throne?

On what occasion did deficient knowledge give birth to this love? Deficient [knowledge] gives birth to love, but [only love] for that which is [really] lifeless. (Book 2: 1521-1525)

Thus, we not only have to tolerate “others,” but also must respect them as manifestations of God and as the best guide to self-improvement:

The prophet said, “God has not given faith to any one in whose nature there is no patience.” (Book 2: 598)

Oh, Happy the soul that saw its own fault, and if any one told [found] a fault, wished eagerly [to take] that [fault] upon itself! – Because half of him [every man] has always belonged to the realm of faults²², and the other half of him [man] belongs to the realm of the Unseen. (Book 2: 3021-3022)

No one who perceives faults [*Aybdan*²³] has got [even] a scent [inkling] of him that knows the things unseen [*ghaybdan*]. (Book 3: 571)

[Yet] the bad associate is good [for you] because of the patience [which you must show him in overcoming desires], for the exercise of patience expands the heart [with spiritual peace].

The patience shown by the moon to the [dark] night keeps it illuminated; the patience shown by the rose to the thorn keeps it fragrant.

...The patience shown by all the prophets to the unbelievers made them the elect of God and lords of the planetary conjunction. (Book 6: 1407-1410)

God created hundreds of thousands of elixirs, [but] man hath not seen an elixir like patience. (Book 3: 1852)

So, looking at things in a negative way shows a lack of the spiritual knowledge that is necessary for a life of love and self-improvement.

Self-improvement is not possible without self-consciousness as the core of ethical life. What is the ethical value of tolerance? Lack of a fair and understanding attitude toward others means that one seeks deficiencies in others, rather than in oneself. In regards to Rumi's ethics, this lack leads to two hard positions: ignorance of self, and ignorance of the unseen world. How can we consider ourselves and others at the same time? This ignorance will prohibit us from seeing the unseen world through the heart and is the main ethical problem: we will lose ourselves without gaining others. Consequently, the lack of self is not a benefit. Rumi wrote:

Thou knowest what is the value of every article of merchandise;
[if] thou knowest not the value of thyself, 'tis folly. (Book 3:
2650)

There is a beautiful story in the *Mathnawi* titled "Story of the Indian who quarreled with his friend over a certain action and was not aware that he too was afflicted with [guilty of] it." This story shows the possibility of ignorance of self in activities concerning others, including in worship. Rumi ended the story with this point:

The faultfinders went astray more [than he who made the
original mistake]. (Book 2: 3020)

Patience [shown] to the unworthy is the means of polishing
[purifying] the worthy: wherever a heart exists, patience
purifies it. (Book 6: 2041)

Thus, if we want to be ethical beings, we have to focus on ourselves rather than on others. If we are concerned with others, we will not have time to reform our own personality and reach the unseen side of the world.

One outcome of self-consciousness is an awareness of the essential difference of people. Why are human beings different? According to Sufism, and as exhibited in Rumi's writings, each person is uniquely determined.²⁴ There is only one reality: God (*Haq*). Other entities are only His manifestations²⁵:

Know that [the world of] created beings is like pure and limpid
water in which the attributes of the Almighty are shining.

Their knowledge and their justice and their clemency are
like a star of heaven [reflected] in running water.

Kings are the theatre for the manifestation of God's
kingship; the learned [divines] are the mirrors for God's wisdom.

Generations have passed away, and this is a new generation: the moon is the same moon, the water is not the same water.

The justice is the same justice, and the learning is the same learning too; but those generations and peoples have been changed [supplanted by others].

Generations on generations have gone, O sire, but these Ideas [Divine attributes] are permanent and everlasting.

The water in this channel has been changed many times: the reflexion of the moon and of the stars remains unaltered.

...

The beautiful are the mirror of His beauty: love for them is the reflexion of the desire of which He is the [real] object.

This cheek and mole goes [back] to the Source thereof: how should a phantom continue in the water forever?

The whole sum of pictured forms [phenomena] is a [mere] reflexion in the water of the river: when you rub your eye, [you will perceive that] all of them are really He. (Book 6: 3172-3183).

Humanity is the center and the perfect manifestation in which all creatures are included:

Therefore Man is in appearance a derivative of the world, and intrinsically the origin of the world. Observe that!

A gnat will set his outward frame whirling round [in pain and agitation]; his inward nature encompasses the Seven Heavens (*Mathnawi*, Book 4: 3766-7).

The outward [aspect] on those stars is our ruler, [but] our inward [essence] has become the ruler of the sky.

Therefore in form thou art the microcosm, therefore in reality thou art the macrocosm (Book 4: 520-1)²⁶.

This manifestation happened in a special and necessary order; God, His names, the permanent archetypes, and human destinies and talents. This is called the secret of determined destiny, “*Serre Qadar*,” in Islamic mysticism.²⁷ It is the essential motive of our life as well as our way and purpose. Rumi wrote:

[Only] that matters which has existed before the body: leave [behind you] these things which have newly sprung into being.

That which matters belongs to the knower [of God], for he is not squinting: his eye is [fixed] upon the things first sown.

That which was sown as wheat [good] or as barley [relatively evil] – day and night his eye is fastened on that place [where it was sown].

Night gave birth to nothing but what she was pregnant withal: designs and plots are wind, [empty] wind.

How should he please his heart with fair designs who sees the design of God [prevailing] over them?

He is within the snare [of God] and is laying a snare: by your life, neither that [snare] will escape [destruction] nor will this [man].

Though [in the meanwhile] a hundred herbs grow and fade, there will grow up at last that which God has sown.

He [the cunning man] sowed new seed over the first seed; [but] this second [seed] in passing away, and [only] the first is sound [and enduring].

The first seed is perfect and choice: the second seed is corrupt and rotten.

Cast away this contrivance of yours before the Beloved-though your contrivance indeed is of His contriving.

That which God has raised [and that alone] has use: what He has at first sown at last grows.

Whatever you sow, sow for His sake, inasmuch as you are the Beloved's captive, O lover. (Book 2: 1047-1058)

The positive side of this idea is the importance of respecting and accepting difference; the uniqueness of every person means that we cannot expect others to live, think, believe, behave, and feel like us. Moreover, if they are in a situation that seems wrong and bad to us, it is not actually so. They also reveal God's name and attributes.

In addition, Rumi tells us about the influence of circumstances. Do we live in an isolated condition? Rumi notes the effects of circumstances on our views and behaviors. For example, in narrating a speech (*Hadith*) about the Prophet Muhammad, he tells us of the impact of village and city life over its inhabitants.

Do not go to the country: the country makes a fool of a man. It makes the intellect void of light and splendor.

O chosen one, hear the Prophet's saying: "Dwelling in the country is the grave of the intellect."

If any one stay in the country a single day and evening, his intellect will not be fully restored for a month (Book 3: 517-520).

There is a famous story in the *Mathnawi* about God rebuking the prophet Moses, who had asked from an ordinary man same faith that he had:

I have bestowed on every one a (special) way of acting: I have given to every one a (peculiar) form of expression.

In regard to him it is (worthy of) praise, and in regard to thee it is (worthy of) blame: in regard to him honey, and in regard to thee – poison...

... In the Hindus the idiom of Hindi (India) is praiseworthy; in the Sindians the idiom of Sindi is praiseworthy. (Book 2: 1743-1747)

Thus, given that we live in circumstances that are predetermined (Serre Qadar) and that these conditions influence us, why do we not respect others? Why are we so proud?

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY AND TOLERANCE

Rumi's texts on the connection between God and His people lead us to a tolerant viewpoint and to being more tolerant about behavior. What happens on the Spiritual Journey that serves as a connecting link to God? From one perspective, the spiritual journey is nothing but the different features of a person that appear to him or her.²⁸ On such a journey, we see the faces of different human beings who have different abilities. This means that we cannot categorize human beings as simply completely right and good or completely wrong and bad.

Hence there is no absolute evil in the world: evil is relative. Know this (truth) also.

In (the realm of) Time there is no poison or sugar that is not a foot (support) to one and a fetter (injury) to another –

To one a foot, to another a fetter; to one a poison and to another (sweet and wholesome) like sugar.

Snake-poison is life to the snake, (but) it is death in relation to man.

The sea is as a garden to the water-creatures; to the creatures of earth it is death and a (painful) brand.

...

Zayd²⁹, in regard to that (particular) one, may be a devil, (but) in regard to another person he may be a (beneficent) sultan.

...

Zayd is one person – to that one (he is as) a shield, (while) to this other one (he is) wholly pain and loss.

If you wish that to you he should be (as) sugar, then look on him with the eyes of a lover.

Do not look on that Beauteous One with your own eye: behold the one Sought with the eye of a seeker.

Shut your own eye to that Sweet-eyed One: borrow eyes from His lovers.

Nay, borrow eye and sight from Him, and then look on His face with His eye.

So that you may be secure from satiety and weariness: on this account the Almighty said, "God shall belong to him:

I shall be his eye and hand and heart," to the end that His fortunate one should escape from adversities.

Whatsoever is loathed is a lover and friend when it becomes thy guide towards thy beloved. (Book 4: 65-80)

There is a mirroring of our inner moods and the outer features of people. The different moods of humans can produce different characters. We are not allowed to reduce people to their deeds or speeches:³⁰

Do not judge from the (normal) state of man, do not abide in wrong-doing and in well-doing.

Wrong-doing and well-doing, grief and joy, are things that come into existence, those who come into existence die: God is their heir. (Book 1: 1804-1805)

Thus, we have to understand and respect others rather than assess and reject them. "Others" are outer signs of God that lead us to our inner selves. Rumi extended this principle to cover people who are known as bad:

Hark, you must not disdain them that have a bad name: you must set your mind on their inward parts (spiritual qualities) (Book 6: 2919)³¹

We will come back to the ethical aspect of this issue later. The only situation in which Rumi allows the spiritual traveler to separate him- or herself from others is when others are obstacles to his or her spiritual way, his or her way to self-realization!

The main device of this spiritual journey is purification. Let us examine the departure and arrival point of the spiritual journey. Because the highest manifestation of God is in human beings, human limitations toward God and to the human itself are the starting point and the end point of the spiritual journey (*Sulok*).³² In this regard, the spiritual journey is only a self-unveiling (*Tazkiya*). This purification is the opposite of the 'education' (*Ta'lim*) that other Islamic intellectual schools emphasize. Rumi tells us:

Hence all the world have taken the wrong way, for they are afraid of non-existence, though it is (really) the refuge (in which they find salvation).

Whence shall we seek (true) knowledge? From renouncing (our false) knowledge. Whence shall we seek (true) peace? From renouncing peace (with our carnal selves).

Whence shall we seek (real) existence? From renouncing (illusory) existence. Whence shall we seek the apple (of Truth)?

From renouncing the hand (of self-assertion and self-interest). (Book 6: 822-824)

Why did Rumi, following Sufism, focus on purification instead of education? Because he believed that our creation is already the best form. Thus, we have to discover our souls, our inner selves, instead of trying to add to our minds by collecting from outside objects and other persons. In this process of purification, we constantly throw away the masks which others (such as the educational system, our parents, society, advertisements, politicians, institutional religion, and so on) impose on us.

Since colorlessness (pure Unity) became the captive of color (manifestation in the phenomenal world), a Moses came into conflict with a Moses.

When you attain unto the colorlessness which you (originally) possessed, Moses and Pharaoh are at peace (with each other). (Book 1: 2466-2467)

Rumi explicitly said that we usually evaluate others instead of ourselves. We strive to change others, instead of trying to improve ourselves. We must respect and tolerate others, and continue reforming ourselves. We reach God by concentrating on our being. In other words, God is more visible in the inner world than the outer world.

Rumi was a religious man³³ and we can embark on this spiritual journey through religion. Is religion a simple entity? Rumi saw different levels of religion. The first and common level is that of formal rules – both individual and social – for worship and for dealing with others. This is called “*Al-Shariah*” (religious laws). The second level deals with ethical values; it tries to create moral and ethical people. It is called “*Al-Tariqah*” (the Path). The last and the third level is “*Al-Haqiqah*” (the Truth), the inner essence of religion that appeared in the prophet Muhammad.³⁴ Rumi, in the preface to the *Mathnawi*, described it as “the discoverer of the roots of the roots of faith principles,” the highest level of religion.³⁵ This idea is well-known in the Islamic tradition through this gradual metaphor: “Sometimes you only have an Image of candle, sometimes you can see the flame or candle, and maybe you become a flame.”³⁶

Thus, referring to the prophet David, Rumi tells us the clear difference between faith based on common sense and faith based on existential sublimation:

(If) thou regardest as the (only) light this (light of the sun) which the animals too have seen, what, then, is (the illumination signified in the text) “*I bestowed honor on My Adam?*”

I am plunged in the Light, like the sun; I cannot distinguish myself from the Light. (Book 3: 2405-2406)

Here are two examples from Rumi explaining differences between the form and the spirit of the Mosque and the Holy Quran:

Know that words of the Quran have an exterior (sense), and under the exterior (sense) an interior (sense), exceedingly overpowering;

And beneath that inward (sense) a third interior (sense), wherein all intellects become lost.

The fourth interior (sense) of the Quran none hath perceived at all, except God the peerless and incomparable.

In the Quran do not thou, O son, regard (only) the exterior: the Devil regards Adam as naught but clay.

The exterior (sense) of the Quran is like a man's person, for his features are visible, while his spirit is hidden.

A man's paternal and maternal uncles (may see him) for a hundred years, and of his (inward) state not see (as much as) the tip of a hair. (Book 3: 4242-4247)

Fools venerate the mosques and exert themselves in maltreating them that have the heart (in which God dwells).

That (mosque) is phenomenal, this (heart) is real, O asses! The (true) mosque is naught but the hearts of the (spiritual) captains.

The mosque that is the inward (consciousness) of the saints is the place of worship for all: God is there. (Book 2: 3096-3098)

Thus, if there are rigid rules in Islamic laws against others, we do not have to follow them. Rumi many times condemned Islamic *Ulama* (lawful authorities) who judged others without looking at the higher levels of Islam. Here is an example:

He knows a hundred thousand superfluous matters connected with the (various) sciences, (but) that unjust man does not know his own soul.

He knows the special properties of every substance, (but) in elucidating his own substance (essence) he is (as ignorant) as an ass.

Saying, “I know (what is) permissible and impermissible.”³⁷ Thou knowest not whether thou thyself art permissible or (impermissible as) an old woman.³⁸

Thou knowest this licit (thing) and that illicit (thing), but art thou licit or illicit? Consider well!

...

Thou hast become acquainted with the fortunate and inauspicious stars, thou dost not look to see whether thou art fortunate or unwashed (spiritually foul and ill-favored).

This, this, is the soul of all the sciences-that thou shouldst know who thou shalt be on the Day of Judgment.

Thou art acquainted with the fundamentals (*Usul*) of the (Islamic) Religion, but look upon thine own fundamental (*asl*) and see whether it is good.

Thine own fundamentals are better for thee than the two fundamentals³⁹ (of the Islamic Religion), so that thou mayst know thine own fundamental (essential nature), O great man. (Book 3: 2646-2654)

On this view, tolerance based on love can change everything. The difference between appearance and substance, the accidental and the essential, and the priority of substance and essence to appearance and accident, are essential points in Rumi's perspective. Moreover, he looks at the goal of religiosity.

The above notes show that Rumi was not an ordinary religious man. Why? The answer is related to his reading of religion. On Rumi's view, the relationship between religion and humanity is the relationship between goal and vehicle. People are the goal and religion is the vehicle. The person becomes religious in order to find a more ethical and spiritual personality, not to be limited by legalistic religious laws:

Mourn for thy corrupt heart and religion, for it (thy heart) sees naught but this old earth.

Oh, if it is seeing (the spiritual world), why is it not brave and supporting (others) and self-sacrificing and fully contented?

In thy countenance where is the happiness (which is the effect) of the wine of (true) religion? If thou hast beheld the Ocean (of Bounty), where is the bounteous hand?

He that has seen (found) a river does not grudge water (to the thirsty), especially he that has beheld that Sea and (those) Clouds. (Book 6: 802-805)

Religious rituals without the proper disposition cannot help people:

O soul, in the first place avert the mischief of the mouse, and then show fervor (zeal) in garnering the corn.

Hear (one) of the sayings related from the Chiefest of the Chief (the Prophet): "No prayer is complete without "presence" (concentration of the mind on God)."

If there is no thievish mouse in our barn, where is the corn of forty years' works (of devotion)?

Why is the daily sincerity (of our devotions) not being stored, bit by bit, in this barn of ours? (Book 1:380-383)

The soul of religion is to change the person, not just to do and repeat some formal practices; religious practices are accidental but our attitude or personality is essential:

You have a substance (essence) human or asinine (bestial): (bring that to God): how can you bring (to Him) these accidents (of word or deed) which have passed away?

As regards these accidents of prayer and fasting – since (that which) does not endure for two moments becomes naught –

'Tis impossible to carry over the accidents (into another state); but they (may) take away diseases (defects) from the substance,

So that the substance becomes changed by means of this accident, as when disease is removed by abstinence. (Book 2: 941-944)

Thus, there are goals and vehicles in regard to religion. The absence of seeing religion as a vehicle is a seed of religious radicalism. The substance and spirit of religion is freedom – freedom from bigotry and from all things except human entities.

The house that is without a window is Hell: to make a window, O servant (of God), is the foundation of the (true) Religion.

Do not ply the axe on every thicket: oh, come and ply the axe in excavating a window (Book 3: 2402-2403).

His soul has never known the delight of (spiritual) freedom: the chest of (phenomenal) forms is his arena.

His mind is for ever imprisoned in forms: he (only) passes from cage into cage.

He has no means of passing beyond the cage (and going) aloft: he goes to and fro into (successive) cages (Book 6: 4510-4512).

Since prophethood is the guide to freedom, freedom is bestowed on true believers by prophets.

Rejoice, O community of true believers: show yourselves to be “free” (pure and noble) as the cypress and the lily (Book 6: 5441-5442).

On Rumi's view, there are more arguments for going beyond formal religious behavior, like the spiritual grades of the Sufi, the common substance of all religions, and so on – but we cannot examine them here due to the limitations of this paper. Furthermore, Rumi knows that salvation is a principal idea in religion; who will finally be saved? Clearly, religions try to save their followers in this world from suffering in the next world. The problem appears when they limit salvation only to their ways and followers. It leads generally to a lack of tolerance. But Rumi tried to expand the realm of saved people, especially nonbelievers. He does it based on two points: our ignorance about the final condition of a person, and the possibility of the salvation for so-called 'non-believers.' Here are some of his thoughts regarding this topic:

Do not regard any infidel with contempt, for there may be hope of his dying a Moslem.

What knowledge have you of the close of his life that you should once (and for all) avert your face from him? (Book 6: 2451-2452)

Rumi said on behalf of a spiritual Director who is described as “a heavenly Candle on the face of the earth”⁴⁰:

I have pity for all the unbelievers, though the souls of them all are ungrateful.

...

He (God) brought the saints on to the earth, in order that He might make them *a mercy to (all) created beings*.

He (the saint) calls the people to the Portal of Grace; he calls unto God, saying, “Give (them) release in full!”

He earnestly strives to admonish them in regard to this, and when it does not succeed, he says, “O God, do not shut the door!” (Book 3: 1798-1804)

Thus, if you are not an exclusivist about salvation, there is no reason for intolerance. Since there is no way to be certain that you yourself are saved and others unsaved, you cannot conclude that you are blessed by God's mercy and that others are not.

CONCLUSION

Rumi, as a master of love, teaches us that tolerance is the outcome of the love for all, based on special knowledge: knowledge of God, of human identity, and of the spiritual journey. Tolerance is a necessity for a life that includes a relationship to God but also to one's fellow human beings. Here, the necessity of tolerance is not that it is scientifically or philosophically determined, but that it is required by the rule of love.

The preceding presentation of Rumi's views on tolerance reveals that he invites his readers to a spiritual and peaceful life. Rumi's work is a call to go beyond actions, human beings, religious advice, and even mystical schools. It is a search for transcendence and a higher level of religion, wisdom, and values. Nevertheless, it seeks to avoid a fundamental relativism and epistemological pluralism. It offers a positive tolerance, based on knowledge and love, not a negative tolerance based on nihilism and skepticism. This is why many find Rumi's view so encouraging, even after eight centuries. I would insist, then, that, even today, people need to listen to Rumi, because humanity needs tolerance more than ever.

Let us end our discussion with a poem of Rumi:

This world is even as the tree, O noble ones: we are like the half-ripened fruit upon it.

The unripe (fruits) cling fast to the bough, because during (their) immaturity they are not meet for the palace.

When they have ripened and have become sweet-after that, biting their lips⁴¹, they take (but) a feeble hold of the boughs.

When the mouth has been sweetened by that felicity, the kingdom of the world becomes cold (unpleasing) to Man.

To take a tight hold and to attach one's self strongly (to the world) is (a sign of) unripeness; so long as thou art an embryo, thy occupation is blood-drinking. (Book 3: 1291-1295)

NOTES

¹ The work of a contemporary Iranian philosopher, Abdul Karim Soroush, on Islamic theology is a good example of this kind of effort. Also see: Nevad Kahteran, "Rumi's Philosophy of Love in the Era of U-turned Islam", *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, 2-2 (March 2009), pp. 51-62. My books, *From Mawlana to Nietzsche* and *From the Tradition of Balkh and the Modernity of Paris*, include some chapters discussing the potential in Rumi's ideas for Islamic modernization – e.g., an adjustment between Islamic doctrine and human rights, rationality, and humanism.

² *Sama* is a significant part of their spiritual path. The word "*Sama*" in Arabic means "the audition". The *Sama* dance consists of three parts: classical music, recitation of mystical poetry, and various forms of ritual and whirling movement. In Islamic mysticism, *Sama* started with Abu Said Ibn Abi L-Khayr (967-1449), who first introduced this dance. Ahmad Ghazzali (d. 1126) expanded the theory of *Sama*. Attar (1145-1221) and Iraqi (1213-1289) developed rules for the dance. It was finally completed by Rumi.

There is a significant debate on Rumi's view and position on *Sama*. The following poem by Rumi is a good example that shows that *Sama*

reminds us of the place people came from – Paradise – and offers an inspiration to peace:

We all have been parts of Adam, we have [heard] those melodies in Paradise...

Although the water and earth [of our bodies] have caused doubt to fall upon us, something of those (melodies) comes (back) to our memory....

Therefore *Sama* (Music) is the food of lovers (of God), since therein is the phantasy of composure (tranquility of mind) (*Mathnawi*, Book 4: 736-742)

³ For translations of the main descriptions of this meeting, see Franklin Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings and Poetry of Jalal al-Din Rumi* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 154–61. My reading of this event appears in: Sayed Hassan Akhlaq, *From Mawlana to Nietzsche* (Qum: Sulok-e Javan, 1386/2007), p. 23.

⁴ Rumi's poems from the *Mathnawi* are cited from the translation by Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, the great translator of the *Mathnawi* into English, unless otherwise indicated. See Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, (translator and editor), *The Mathnawi of Jalal ud-din Rumi* (Tehran: Research Center of Booteh Publication Co., 1381/2002).

⁵ A good comparison between the *Mathnawi* and the great books of European poetry is drawn by Nicholson:

“Judged by modern standards, the *Mathnawi* is a very long poem; it contains almost as many verses as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* together and about twice as many as the *Divina Commedia*; and these comparisons make it appear shorter than it actually is, since every verse of the *Mathnawi* has twenty-two syllables, whereas the hexameter may vary from thirteen to seventeen, and the *terza rima*, like the Spenserian stanza, admits only ten or eleven in each verse, so that the *Mathnawi* with 25700 verses is in reality a far more extensive work than the *Faerie Queene* with 33500”. Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Jalal ud-din Rumi*, p. li.

⁶ Mojaddedi Jawid, tr. and intro., *Rumi, The Masnavi* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. xiii.

⁷ Hadi Sabzavari, *Sharh-e Mathnawi* (Tehran: Intesharat-e Vezarat-e Farhang va Ershad-e Islami, 1373), Vol. 1, p. 9.

⁸ Sayed Yahya Yasrebi, *Zabaneh-e Shams va zaaban-e Mawlavi* [The Fire of Shams and the Language of Rumi] (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1386), pp. 46-48.

⁹ For instance see: William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); Alireza Anushiravani and Fahima Nasser, “A Comparative Reading of George Herbert's and Rumi's Epistemology of Divine Love,” in *Journal*

of Religious Thought: A Quarterly of Shiraz University (Shiraz, Iran) (winter 2005), No. 13.

¹⁰ Anushirvani and Nasser, "A Comparative Reading of George Herbert's and Rumi's Epistemology of Divine Love," p. 9.

¹¹ He describes his writings as follows: "How should I – not a vein of mine is sensible – describe that Friend who has no peer?" (*Mathnawī*, Book 1: 130); "When I speak of "lip," 'tis the lip [shore] of the Sea; when I say "not," the intended meaning is "except"." (Book 1: 1758); "What I am saying is according to the measure of your understanding: I die in grief for [the absence of] a sound understanding." (Book 3: 2096, also see Book 5: 1517). Rumi explicitly justifies his style of writings by saying that he did not want to say anything, but the words wanted to come: In such (mystical) intoxication (as his) observance of due respect (to the formal rules) will not be there at all; or if it be, 'tis a wonder (Book 3: 1392).

¹² Yasrebi, *Zabaneh-e Shams va zaaban-e Mawlawi*, p. 287. Here, he relates the well-known story of the grape (see Book 2: 3668-3688).

¹³ It is proper that the term "Sufism" refers mostly to the social style of life for this group, while the term "Erfan" refers more to cultural and theoretical aspects of this group, especially in Farsi countries. See Mutaheri Murteza, *Ashenae Ba Olume Islami; Kalam, Erfan, and Hekmat-e Amali* (Tehran: Sadra, 1376/1997), p. 83.

¹⁴ Here is a good example: Dawud Qaysari (d.1350) began his introduction to the interpretation of Ibn Fariz's "Taeeyat" as follows: "You [...] have to know that there are two ways to reach God: speculative and practical. Although, the practical one is subject to speculative one. Since the doer has to do according to his knowledge": Sayed Yahya Yasrebi, *Erfane Nazari* [Theoretical Gnosis: a study of Sufism's development, principles and matters] (Qum: Bustan-e Ketab, 1384/2005), p. 205. In regards to Sufi doctrine in Arabic, Ibn Farez (d. 1235) is similar to Rumi. It is narrated that Ibn Al-Arabi (d. 1240), the father of speculative Sufism, asked him for permission to interpret his poem. Ibn Farez answered that Ibn Al-Arabi's big book, *Futuhāt Al-Makeyah* (The Meccan Openings) was sufficient (Ibid, p. 170). Several great Sufis have interpreted them.

¹⁵ See Abd Al-Hussain Zarrinkub, *Bahr dar Kuzeh* (Sea in a jug) (Tehran: Elmi, 1378), p. 45. Here is a clear story of the human journey, moving gradually, from God to God – from an inorganic state, endowed with growth, attaining animal life, becoming Adam, reaching out among the angels, escaping from the angelic state, and finally becoming non-existent, so that we return unto Him (Book 3: 3899-3904).

¹⁶ See Yasrebi, *Erfane Nazari*, p. 254.

¹⁷ Nicholson translates "*Helm*" as "clemency," but I prefer "patience."

¹⁸ Muhyiddin Ibn Al-Arabi, *Fusus Al-Hekam*, Abu Al-Ala Afifi, ed. (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Arabi, 1980), p. 80.

¹⁹ Though we abandon our attributes, we obtain those of God in the

spiritual journey (Book 1:1743-1749).

²⁰ Qamar-ul Huda (ed.), *Crescent and Dove* (USA: United States Institute of Peace, 2010), p. 9.

²¹ Yasrebi, *Erfane Nazari*, pp. 248-253. To see a good example of the marriage of beauty and glory as attributes of God, or the unity between different attributes of God, in the *Mathnawi*, look at Book 1:1565-1570.

²² i.e. the world of evil.

²³ A Persian word that refers to one who notes incomplete points.

²⁴ There are two reasons for the Sufi claim of personal uniqueness: first, the constant manifestations of God as they appear in the Quran ["Every day (moment) He is (engaged) in some affair" (*Quran*, 55:29)], and, second, the position of humankind. The poems of Rumi remind us of these reasons: "Every moment the world is renewed, and we are unaware of its being renewed because it remains (the same in appearance). Life is ever arriving anew, like the stream, though in the body it has the semblance of continuity" (*Mathnawi*, Book 1: 1144-5); "This abode (the world) does not contain any form (that is) one (with any other one), so that I might show forth to thee as (complete). Still, I will bring to hand an imperfect comparison, that I may redeem thy mind from confusion" (Book 4: 423-4).

²⁵ Ibn Al-Arabi, *Fusus Al-Hekam*, p. 80.

²⁶ Rumi wrote these poems using this significant title: "Explaining that (while) philosophers say that Man is the microcosm, theosophists say that Man is the macrocosm, the reason being that philosophy is confined to the phenomenal form of Man, whereas theosophy is connected with the essential truth of his true nature" (Book 4: 1042).

²⁷ Ibn Al-Arabi, *Fusus Al-Hekam*, pp. 81-83 and 106.

²⁸ For more on "continuity of the self" in Rumi's doctrine see Yasrebi, *Zabaneh-e Shams va zaaban-e Mawlawi*, pp. 105-111; Muhammad Taqi Jafari, *Mawlawi va Jahanbiniha* (Tehran: Institute for the collection and publication of Allameh Jafari's works, 1379), p. 3.

²⁹ An Arabic name.

³⁰ The well-known poem of Ibn Al-Arabi describes how different deeds, practices, and beliefs can reflect the same faith and soul: "My heart has become capable of every form: it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks, And a temple for idols and the pilgrim's Ka'ba and the tables of the Torah and the book of the Koran. I follow the religion of Love: whatever way love's camels take, that is my religion and my faith." Ibn Al-Arabi, *Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq* (Royal Asiatic Society, 1911), p. 67.

³¹ That the respectable and even the good deal with bad people, who have no regard for worldly reputation, has a clear basis in Sufism. This idea led to the creation of the *Malāmatiyya* or *Malamatis*, a Sufi group. Believing in the value of self-blame, that piety should be a private matter, and that being held in good esteem would lead to worldly attachment, they concealed their knowledge and made sure their faults would be known, to remind themselves of their imperfection. It is narrated that Rumi was

interested in a kind of *Malamatiyya* group (Sayed Yahya Yasrebi, *Falsafeh-ye Erfan* (The Philosophy of Mysticism), [Qum: Bustan-e Ketab, sixth edition, 1387/2008], pp. 156-159).

³² Ibn Al-Arabi, *Fusus Al-Hekam*, p. 80.

³³ It is said that Rumi cited about two thirds of the Quranic verses in his works, especially in the *Mathnawi*. This is the reason that the great Muslim sage, Mulla Hadi Sabzawari (1797–1873), described the *Mathnawi* as an interpretation of the *Quran* (Muhammad Taqi Jafari, *Mawlawi va Jahanbiniha* [Rumi and Worldviews], (Tehran: Institute for collection and publication of Allameh Jafari's works, 1379), pp. 32-33).

³⁴ A relatively clear and detailed explanation of Sufism view of the different levels of Islam may be found in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), pp. 59-65.

³⁵ It begins as follows: “This is the Book of the Mathnawi, which is the roots of the roots of the roots of the (Islamic) Religion in respect of (its) unveiling the mysteries of attainment (to the Truth) and of certainty; and which is the greatest science of God and the clearest (religious) way of God and the most manifest evidence of God” (Book 1: 4).

³⁶ Rumi wrote in the introduction to the fifth Book: “This is the Fifth Book of the Poem in rhymed couples and the spiritual Exposition, setting forth that the Religious law {Shariah} is like a candle showing the way. Unless you gain possession of the candle, there is no wayfaring; and when you have come on to the way, your wayfaring is the Path, and when you have reached the journey's end, that is the Truth. Hence it has been said “if the truths (realities) were manifest, the religious laws would be naught.”” (Book 2: 1310).

³⁷ According to Al-Sharia laws, or the science of jurisprudence.

³⁸ “The religion of old women” is synonymous with ignorance and superstition.

³⁹ Two forms of Islamic knowledge are: Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) and Scholastic theology (*Kalam*).

⁴⁰ This poem follows the previous saying concerning the prophet's intercessions (Al-Shafa'a) on judgment day for the disobedient who have committed capital sins (see Book 3:1781-1786), and the similarities between Shaykh (the spiritual director) and the prophets (see Book 3: 1770-1895).

⁴¹ i.e. “in remorse for having clung so tightly to the tree.”

