

# THE MESSAGE OF RUMI

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## Abstract

Rumi is not just the pride of Iranians but also Afghans, Tajiks and Turks. Rumi reminds us that Being is much greater than this transient and transitory world. The order and beauty in the world is the manifestations of the Devine Beauty. The universe has Soul and this World Soul must be known to us although it is invisible to our world-seing vision. Rumi also emphasizes that any observation is just like a reflection of the moon in a river. Further message from Rumi is that human being belongs to a realm of higher than this world and that is where he finally return. He also stresses that love is our wing in the ascent towards the Devine firmament from which we have fallen to the earth. Love is the panacea and cure for all our pains, and love is the fire which will not be appeased except with union with the Ultimate Reality. Love is not merely literal term, nor an image realised in one's mind. Men is unable to reach the shoreless ocean of Devine Reality unless he transcends the illusory matrices of this world and dissociates his head from its false glitter. Other Rumi's message is that genuine humanism is not possible without faith in God. The real and persisting enemy is our own self within.

**Key words:** Rumi, man and humanism, beauty and love, soul, observation

## 1. Introduction

It is a formidable task to speak about Rumi. He is like an ocean, vast and fathomless, and we remain like spectators standing on a shore, or perhaps, in the words of Hafiz, like 'voyagers lost on

the sea' who see no end to its shoreless expanse however far they may look. The waves, low and high, of this vast and fearsome ocean keep on approaching us, casting their spell on our eyes and hearts. At times we dip our hands into its clear water or even venture to wade and swim along a shallow shore. But the depths of the ocean of his thought and spirit remain far beyond our reach. That celestial soul, that ardent heart and powerful and dynamic mind defies description and so do his art and sensibility, his natural elegance and eloquence.

Even after eight centuries that have elapsed since his lifetime, his message retains its appeal and relevance. Although in some of his ghazals he chose the penname "Khamoosh", meaning "silent", for himself, his voice has never been silent for a moment throughout these eight hundred years. In fact our contemporary world needs to hear his voice and understand his message more than any other time and era.

## 2. Being

His standpoint addressed to us and the likes of us, which is the same as that of the prophets and the saints, is that Being is much greater than this transient and transitory of world we live in. This corporeal and sensible world has not been created in futility and without purpose and outcome and that it has a beginning and end. He tell us that all the order and beauty that you see in this world and all the liveliness and turmoil that is found in it, do not derive from its corporal body but are manifestations of the Divine Beauty, of Him who is 'the opener of all doors':

پس چرا گویی جمال  
فاتح الابواب کو  
باز گویی او کجا  
درگاه او را باب  
کو  
غیب گردی پس بگویی  
عالم اسباب کو

چون هزاران حسن  
دیدي کآن نبد از  
کالبد  
چون به وقت رنج  
و محنت زود  
می یابی درش  
باش تا موج  
وصالش در رباید  
مر تو را

“Since you have seen thousands of beauties that were not of body, why do you say, "where is the beauty of the Opener of Doors?"

When in time of pain and affliction you quickly find His door, you say once more. "Where is He?" "Where is the door of His palace?" Wait till the wave of union with Him snatches you away and you become unseen, then you may say, "Where is the world of causation?"<sup>1</sup>

### 3. World Soul

The message of Rumi is that the universe has soul and this World Soul must be known. A soul-seeing eye is needed to perceive this Soul, which is invisible to our world-seeing vision:

ديدن روي تو را                      وين كجا مرتبة  
ديده جان بين بايد                  چشم جهان بين من  
است

(حافظ)

“For beholding thy ruby, the soul-seeing eye is necessary: where this rank for the world-seeing eye of mine is.”

The World Soul is the inner and unseen aspect of the world. The realm of material causation should not preoccupy us to such an extent that we become oblivious of the world of the Unseen and the world’s Soul and Spirit, and come to believe that there is nothing beyond the world of appearances, like those who, in the words of the Qur’an,

«يعلمون ظاهراً من الحياة الدنيا وهم عن الآخرة هم الغافلون»

know just an outward aspect of the life of the world, but they are oblivious of the Hereafter. (*The Holy Quran, Surah Rum : 7*)

In the same way “thought is the totality of man, and he is not just fibre and bone<sup>2</sup>”:

اي برادر تو همان                      مابقي تو استخوان

و ریشه ای  
ور بود خاری تو  
هیمة گُلخنی

اندیشه ای  
گر گل است اندیشه  
تو گلشنی

“O brother, you are that same thought (of yours); as for the rest (of you), you are (only) bone and fibre.  
If your thought is a rose, you are a rose-garden; and if it is a thorn, you are fuel for the bath-stove.”

#### 4. Natural Phenomena

One should not deny the presence of the soul in one's body merely because it is not visible to the eye, the World Soul should not be negated in relation to the physical world. Rumi's message to the scientists in their pursuit of order and immutable truths behind natural phenomena, and to the artists in their ardour for beauty and majesty of creation is that what you see in this flowing and passing river is a reflection of the moon in the sky, The moon is not within the stream itself. The reflection of the visage seen in this mirror should not give rise to a 'callow yearning'<sup>3</sup> which makes you oblivious of the owner of the real face. He urges that:

مه به بالا دان  
نه اندر آب جو

اسم خواندی رو  
مسمی را بجو

“Thou hast pronounced the name: go, seek the thing named. Know that the moon is on high, not in the water of the stream. (*Mathnavi* 1:3457)

He advises the seeker to “turn his eyes towards the lamp, not towards the lamp stand.( Shams Ghazaliyat Gh. No. 299)

روي سوي چراغ کن سوي چراغدان مکن

He says:

اندر آن تابان  
صفات ذوالجلال  
ماه آن ماه است

خلق را چون آب  
دان صاف و زلال  
...قرنها بگذشت و

آب آن آب نیست  
 وین معانی بر  
 قرار و بر دوام  
 عکس ماه و عکس  
 اختر برقرار  
 بل که بر اقطار  
 عرض آسمان  
 دان که بر چرخ  
 معانی مُستویست  
 چون بمالی چشم  
 خود، خود جمله  
 اوست

این قرن نویست  
 ...قرن‌ها بر  
 قرن‌ها رفت ای  
 همام  
 آب مُبدل شد در  
 این جو چند بار  
 پس بنایش نیست بر  
 آب روان  
 این صفت‌ها چون  
 نجوم معنویست  
 ...جمله تصویرات  
 عکس آب جوست

“Know that (the word of) created beings is like pure and limpid water in which the attributes of the Almighty are shining.

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

Generations on generations have gone, O sir, 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 the stars remains unaltered.

Therefore its foundation is not in the running water; nay, but in the regions of the breadth (wide expanse) of Heaven.

These attributes are like Ideal stars: know that they are established in the sphere of the Ideas (Realities).

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.” ( *Mathnavi* 1 : 3172-3183)

## 5. Man

Rumi’s message to the contemporary man and men of all ages and generations is that the human being belongs to a realm higher than this world and to which he will finally return:

ما ز دریاییم و  
 دریا می‌رویم

ما ز بالاییم و بالا  
 می‌رویم

ما از اينجا و از  
آنجا نيستيم  
خوانده اي «اَنَا»  
اليه راجعون»  
ما ز بي جايم و  
بي جا ميرويم  
تا بداني كه  
كجاها ميرويم

[3 couplets, Shams Ghazaliyat, Gh. No. 273]

Man is a stranger in this “realm of water and clay.” He is the same “reed” that has been cut off from the reed bed and, having become estranged in this material world, seeks to return to its home and origin. Its “piping which makes all men and women cry” is its complaint of separation. The song of the reed is the fire of love. It is love which keeps alive and sustains the memory of that native homeland in our souls.

## 6. Love

The significance of love is so immense for Rumi that it would not be an exaggeration to call his Mathnawi “Rumi’s Epic of Love” in comparison to Ferdowsi’s Epic of Kings. Love is our wing in the ascent towards the Divine firmament, the same heaven from which we have fallen to the earth. Love is the panacea and cure for all our pains:

هر كه را جامه ز  
عشقي چاك شد  
شاد باش اي عشق  
خوش سوداي ما  
اي دواي نخوت و  
ناموس ما  
جسم خاك از عشق  
بر افلاك شد  
...جمله معشوق  
است و عاشق  
پرده اي  
چون نباشد عشق را  
پرواي او  
او ز حرص و جمله  
عيبي پاك شد  
اي طبيب جمله  
علتهاي ما  
اي تو افلاطون و  
جالينوس ما  
كوه در رقص آمد و  
چالاك شد  
زنده معشوق است و  
عاشق مرده اي  
او چو مرغي ماند  
بي پر، واي او

“He (alone) whose garment is rent by a (mighty) love is purged of covetousness and all defect.

Hail, O Love that bringest us good gain \_\_ thou that art the physician of all our ills,

The remedy of our pride and vainglory, our Plato and our Galen!

Through Love the earthly body soared to the skies: the mountain began to dance and became nimble.

The Beloved is all and the lover (but) a veil; the Beloved is living and the lover a dead thing

When Love hath no care for him, he is left as a bird without wings.

Alas for him then!” ( *Mathnavi* 1: 22)

Love is the fire which will not be appeased except with union with the Ultimate Reality. The human being, estranged as he is from the root and reality of wisdom and beauty, cannot cool the fire of love by any other means:

آب بر آتش تو  
ریختم و سود نکرد  
هیچ چیزش به جز از  
وصل تو خشنود  
نکرد  
وانچه در آتش کرد  
این دل من عود  
نکرد

بر سر آتش تو  
سوختم و دود نکرد  
آزمودم دل خود را  
به هزاران شیوه  
آنچه از عشق کشید  
این دل من گه  
نکشید

[3 couplets, Shams Ghazaliyat, Gh. No.135]

Rumi wants to tell the perplexed humanity of today which seeks remedies for its illness from the glittering drug stores of impostors and cheats,

«الا بذكر الله تطمئن القلوب»

Behold! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance! (*Al - Quran, Ayah 28, Sura Ra`d*)

This is where he says:

هیچ چیزش به جز از

آزمودم دل خود را

وصل تو خشنود  
نکرد

به هزاران شیوه

[1 couplet]

Until man transcends the illusory matrices of this world and dissociates his heart from its false glitter, he will be unable to reach the shoreless ocean of Divine Reality. Everyone who is scared of extinction should find the way to that immortal sea and dispel the fear of death which means merging with that ocean:

كاو ز بيم جان ز  
جانان مي‌رمد  
آب را از جوي كي  
باشد گريز  
محو گردد در وي  
و جو او شود  
زين سپس نه كم  
شود نه بدليا

اي فسرده عاشق  
ننگين‌نمَد  
جوي ديدي كوزه  
اندر جوي ريز  
آب كوزه چون در آب  
جو شود  
وصف او فاني شد و  
ذاتش بقا

“Oh, the cold lover, clad in the felt (garment) of shame, who from fear of (losing) his life is fleeing from the Beloved!

Thou hast seen the river: spill thy jug in the river: how should the water take flight from the river?

When the water in the jug goes into the river-water, it disappears in it, and it becomes the river.

His (the lover's) attributes have passed away, and his essence remains: after this, he does not dwindle or become ill-favoured. (*Mathnavi* 3: 3910)

## 7. Humanism and Humanity

Another message of Rumi to contemporary humanity is that genuine humanism is not possible without faith in God (Nasr : 375,1384). It is impossible to conceive man without God and then expect everyone to esteem human dignity. Man is a shell whose worth derives from the pearl within. That pearl is the human heart, which does not belong to the world of water and clay. Rather it is



the window opening towards “the green garden of love” and towards God. It is the window through which the light shines within the house of man’s being:

تن به فنا می‌رود	دل مثلِ روزن است
دل به بقا می‌رود	خانه بدو روشن
	است

[1 couplet, Shams Ghazaliyat, Gh. No.154]

Those who reduce man’s station and worth to water and clay and yet claim to be humanists, they, if not impostors, have no idea to what they are inviting others. The truth is that when man does not wish to worship God, he worships himself. Humanism without God is nothing but worship of the idol of the self.

The message of Rumi to the contemporary world and humanity is that no beneficial purpose is served by trying to sever man’s relation with God by depriving him of his God-seeking heart, the Godward window implanted within his being, by blocking it with mud. To deprive man of the worship of God is to engage him in idol worship. True and ultimate freedom is not achieved merely by defeating external enemies. The real and persisting enemy is our own self within:

مائد خصمی زو	ای شهان کُشتیم
بَتر در اندرون	ما خصم برون
شیرِ باطن سُخره	کُشتنِ این کارِ عقل
خرگوش نیست	و هوش نیست

“O kings, we have slain the outward enemy, (but) there remains within (us) a worse enemy than he.

To slay this (enemy) is not the work of reason and intelligence: the inward lion is not subdued by the hare.” ( *Mathnavi* 1: 1373-1374)

Those who do not approve of God’s guardianship, shall inevitably sink down into following the guardianship of their own lascivious and sensual selves. And, how could one, in a world

deprived of God`s guardianship and the guidance of God`s chosen prophets, invite human beings to prefer the good and ease of others to his own and to, on ethical grounds, forgo their own profits for the calm and comfort of others? That is why Mawlana Rumi, wishing to echo the call of God`s chosen prophets especially that of the Prophet of Islam, begs us to get off the high horse of egoism and arrogance and, with the help of the love within us, to move towards the Beloved and, on this path, to seek the assistance of “the perfect man”, “the absolute guardian” who is God`s caliph and mirrors the Almighty God: to accept this guardianship and to follow him lovingly and purely.

The outstanding point, in Mawlana`s insight, is that love is not merely a literal term, nor is it an image realized in one`s mind: he has lived with love, travelled across love and experienced love with his whole being and felt it with all his flesh and bone; this is best manifested in the amazing relation with Shams Tabrizi which he himself thus describes:

همچو چراغ مي جهد  
نور دل از دهان  
من  
دل شده است  
سربه سر آب و گل  
گران من  
گرچه که در  
یگانگی جان تو  
است جان من  
فضل توأم ندا زند  
کآن من است، آن  
من  
تا چه شود ز لطف  
تو صورت آن جهان  
من  
طرّة توست چون کمر  
بسته بر این میان  
من  
گفت تو را نه بس

تا تو حریف من  
شدي، اي مه  
دلستان من  
ذره به ذره چون  
گهر از تف آفتاب  
تو  
پيشتر آدمي، بنه  
آن بر و سينه بر  
برم  
در عجبی فتم که  
این سایه کیست بر  
سرم  
از تو جهان پُربلا  
همچو بهشت شد مرا  
تاج من است دست  
تو چون بنهیش بر  
سرم  
عشق بُرید کیسه ام،  
گفتم هي چه

بود نعمت بي کران  
 من؟!  
 گفت مترس کآمدي  
 در حرم امان من  
 تا همه شب نظر  
 کني پيش طربکنان  
 من  
 تا که يقين شود  
 تو را عشرت  
 جاودان من  
 روي چو گلستان  
 کند خمر چو  
 ارغوان من

مي کني؟  
 برگ نداشتم، دلم  
 مي لرزيد برگوش  
 در برت آنچنان  
 کشم کز بر و برگ  
 وارهي  
 بر تو زخم  
 يگانه اي، مست ابد  
 کنم تو را  
 سينه چو بوستان  
 کند دمدمه بهار  
 من

[11 couplets, Shams Ghazaliyat, Gh. No.300]

## 8. The Universality of Rumi

Today Mawlana`s fame is, in a world very far from his desired utopia, daily spreading, and his works are, not only in Iran and other Persian-speaking countries or in the Islamic lands, but also throughout the world, being bought and sold as sheets of proof gold; and his divan of poems has, since decades ago, turned into a most sought-after best-seller (Nasr : 9).

He has, in fact, transcended all temporal, political, cultural, religious, ethnic and lingual frontiers through his celestial thought and, with his fervor of love and artistic tongue that is saturated with similes, metaphors and allegories, addresses the nature of the people throughout the world to convey the message of monotheism, prophethood , the Hereafter and the divine guardianship in the most pleasing, soul-moving manner. We may even claim that he, single-handedly, is serving as the international “media” to spread the spiritual message of Islam.

Mawlana, as witnessed by his works and poetry in Persian does belong to the Islamic, Iranian culture, but the realm of this culture is far vaster than what, in today`s geography, goes under the word “Iran”. Peoples from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, central Asia,

Asia minor, the Indian sub-continent and many others have played important roles in the creation and expansion of this culture, and today they all share in its safeguarding and enhancement. Certainly we, as Iranians, take pride in being the immediate, unhindered recipients of his language, and its passionate guards; yet it is not only us who think that Rumi is ours, so do our Afghan brothers for Mawlana was born and bred in Balkh, and our Tajik brothers have the same feeling as that part of Balkh, where Mawlana rose from, happens to be in Tajikistan today, and last but not least, our Turkish brothers glorify Mawlana for he did reside in Koniah for some 43 years; thus as Hafiz says:

می دهد هر کسش                      که دل نازک او  
افسونی و معلوم                    مایل افسانه کیست  
نشد

(حافظ)

“For him, every one deviseth a great spell. Yet known it is not, his tender heart, inclined to the tale of whom is?”

The possessive pronoun “na” in Mawlana is being monopolized by all, yes, they all consider Jalal-al-Din as their own and rightly take pride in him; yet I like to say that there is a greater honor than that attribution, which is an honor that must be acquired: we should all try to possess such qualities that if, we questioned Mawlana: “Oh, you, the celestial spirit, which people do truly belong to you?”, he would, as we consider him ours, rate us among those that belong to him.

## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Shams Ghazaliyat, Gh. No. 358, through the effort of Dr. Sh. Kadkani, Tehran, 1352

<sup>2</sup> Ay baradar to haman andisheyi, Mabaghi khod ostekhano risheyi, Gar gol ast andisheye to, golshani, var bovad khari, to heymey Golkhani (*Mathnavi*, 2<sup>nd</sup> book, verses 277-278)

<sup>3</sup> Akse ruye to cho dar ayeneye jam oftad, Sufi az khandeye mey dar tama`e kham oftad (Hafiz)

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*The Holy Quran*