

RESEARCH TITLE

**A Review on the Development of Rumi's Moral Thought
and His Educational Methodology**

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Abstract

Rumi, a renowned Sufi poet and thinker of the 13th century, developed a moral thought grounded in mystical philosophy, integrating Islamic doctrine, universal love and the ideal of spiritual transcendence. Based on the Qur'an and the hadith, Rumi composed the Mathnawi, a collection of didactic and allegorical poems that systematically elucidates the principles of Sufism. With artistic devices such as poetry and parables, Rumi sought to lead his readers toward inner awakening through empathy and intuitive edification. This paper analyzes the evolution of Rumi's moral thought by examining his poetic and instructional writings, exploring the development of his moral thought from early adherence to Sharia to a later emphasis on divine love as the bridge between humanity and God, ultimately shaping a moral system centered on spiritual purification, the self-annihilation (fanā), and harmony with the universe. Proceeding from a consolidation of theoretical foundations of Rumi's thought, including the Sufi tradition in Islam and the spiritual practices of the Mevlevi Order, this article focuses on Rumi's Mathnawi as a philosophical exposition of moral principles, highlighting core Sufi concepts such as Ishq-e-haqiqi (the religion of love), the Ultimate Beloved, Wisal al-Haqq (union with the Divine) and Wahdat al-wujūd (unity of existence) on which his authority as a Sufi master is established. Finally, by examining Rumi's educational methodology, this article reveals how his teachings have transcended temporal and cultural boundaries, continuing to exert profound influence across generations and spiritual traditions.

Key Words: Rumi, Moral thought, Mathnawi, Sufism, Education.

I. Introduction

Jalaluddin Muhammad Rumi (1207–1273), commonly known as Rumi, was one of the most influential mystical poets and Sufi sages of the 13th-century Islamic world. He was born in Balkh, a major center of Persian culture (present-day Afghanistan), and during the upheaval caused by the Mongol invasions, his scholarly family migrated to Anatolia, eventually settling in Konya. The region of Anatolia, historically referred to as “Rum” during the Byzantine (Eastern Rome) era, gave rise to his epithet “Rumi.” As the son of an esteemed Islamic scholar, Rumi received a comprehensive education in both religious sciences and philosophy from an early age, laying a solid foundation for his future role as a Sufi master.

In 1244, Rumi's encounter with the itinerant ascetic Shams Tabrizi marked a pivotal transformation in his spiritual journey. This profound spiritual companionship radically altered the trajectory of Rumi's thought, transforming him from a conventional religious scholar into an ecstatic poet. Following the mysterious disappearance of Shams, Rumi channeled his overwhelming emotions into poetry, composing a vast corpus of works exploring divine love. His magnum opus, the *Mathnawi*, often revered as “the Qur'an in Persian,” employs allegorical tales and poetic narratives to expound upon the central Sufi doctrine of *Wisal al-Haqq*.

The Mevlevi Order, founded by Rumi, is globally renowned for its distinctive Sema (whirling ceremony), a practice of seeking spiritual transcendence through music and dance which is preserved in Konya, Türkiye until today, and has been inscribed by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity since 2008. For over 7 centuries, Rumi's thought has transcended temporal and geographical boundaries, celebrated as a cultural treasure in Islamic nations such as Türkiye, Iran, Afghanistan, etc. while inspiring the creation of spiritual literature worldwide through translation in modern times. Emphasizing universal love (*Ishq*) and inclusiveness, Rumi's writings offer spiritual guidance to people of various times and faiths. This wisdom, which transcends the morphology of religion, has rendered Rumi a spiritual legacy of mankind.

This paper explores Rumi's thought from three principal dimensions: firstly, by examining the foundational doctrines of Sufism; secondly, by analyzing how the *Mathnawi* employs allegory and narrative to guide spiritual discipline; and thirdly, by discussing the educational methodology that has evolved as a result.

II. The Origins and Development of Rumi's Thought: Sufism and the Mevlevi Order

Rumi stands as a pivotal figure in the Anatolian Sufi tradition. From an early age, he was educated by his father, the esteemed Islamic scholar Baha al-Din Walad, and significantly contributed to the dissemination of Sufism in the Anatolian region. To systematically elucidate Rumi's moral thought system, this section will examine the core doctrines of Sufism that underpin his philosophy, followed by an analysis of the Mevlevi Order tradition established by his son, Sultan Walad.

Sufism, known as Islamic mysticism, fundamentally embodies morality as the spiritual essence of Islam, as all Islamic principles are built on a moral foundation (Al-Taftazani 223). Its interpretation, however, diverges from conventional Islamic thought. Phillip Gowins posits that Sufism is neither a religion nor a supplementary school of religion; rather, it constitutes the core of all religions and spirituality. Sufism lacks a designated scope or explicitly defined objectives, such as prescribed dos and don'ts. It is distinctive from other schools of thought in its spiritual journey marked by piety, justice, patience, love and, above all, an exceptional yearning for God surpassing others (Gowins 16-17). Followers of Sufism, known as “Sufi”,

practice rigorous self-cultivation with austerity and meditation. Through "self-annihilation" (fanā), they aspire to attain the supreme spiritual state of Wisal al-Haqq. Fanā signifies the annihilation of the self in God where the individual ego no longer sees himself apart from God and is absorbed into God's divine presence. In the 8th century, scholar Muhammad Bin Wasi firstly characterized Sufism as embodying piety, asceticism and modesty. In the 9th century, renowned Sufi scholar Junayd of Baghdad asserted that the Sufi path involves contentment with minimal worldly possessions, complete reliance on God, obedience and reverence towards Him, patience in the face of worldly desires, renunciation of material wealth, and the pursuit of unification with the Divine (Öngören 2). It can be said that Sufism advises believers to distance themselves from indulgence in worldly life and material pleasures, emphasizing the afterlife as more significant than worldly existence. Consequently, Wisal al-Haqq has become the highest spiritual state in Sufism. To comprehend Sufism, one must first recognize that "spirituality" is its core concept. The first generation of Sufis distinguished human actions into the "outward" in a physical sense and the "innermost" in a spiritual sense. External actions such as performance of salah, sawm and appropriate attire constitute the outward form of Islam, while internal qualities like faith, empathy, self-sacrifice, compassion, patience, suffering and dignity constitute the spiritual aspect of Islam (Öngören 3). Abd al-Razzak al-Kashani explicitly stated that beyond the external form of religion, one must also practice internal spirituality to complete the Sufi path (Kashani 135-136). One cannot turn towards God without freeing himself completely from yearnings such as ambition for power and status or attachment to material gains.

One of the most prominent concepts in Sufism is the "Unity of Existence". Derived from the Arabic term "Wahdat al-wujūd", it signifies the absolute unity within existence, the unification of the Creator and the created (Tuncbilek 13). That is, God is the only absolute reality; all natural phenomena are manifestations and reflections of God's various attributes which originate from God and shall ultimately return to Him. Therefore, all natural entities are transient illusions; only God is the sole absolute reality. The eminent Sufi master Ibn Arabi was the first to delve deeply into the "Unity of Existence," developing a comprehensive theoretical framework. He defined "existence" of the "Unity of Existence" in terms of "Divine existence" and "worldly existence." "Divine existence" is eternal, formless, and limitless, while "worldly existence" is transient, form-bound, and constrained, contingent upon the will of God (Tuncbilek 13).

Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, the stepson of Ibn Arabi, together with Rumi, were the represent quintessential proponents of the doctrine of Unity of Existence in the Anatolian region (modern-day Türkiye). Despite their different cultural backgrounds, both Rumi and Arabi explored the same significance through distinct interpretative frameworks. Their interactivities were fundamentally grounded in the shared concept of Unity of Existence (Arpaguş 233–238). Ekrem Demirli affirms that "Unity of Existence" is the most privileged concept in the entire history of Sufism attributed to Ibn Arabi (Demirli 246). This assessment reflects a scholarly consensus that has persisted across generations. The Qur'anic verse, "Say: He is God, the One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none comparable unto Him" (Surah al-Ikhlās, 112:1–4), forms the theological foundation of Tawhid in Islam. Rumi affirmed the Tawhid and further proclaims: "Our Mathnawi is the shop for Unity: anything that you see (there) except the One God is (only) an idol." (Mathnawi 6:1528) He asserts that God is absolutely singular—beyond all ascension and descent, beyond all form and limitation. To Rumi, the appearances of the cosmos are but theophanies of Divine Essence, for creation is the manifestation of the Creator's Will and Mercy: "The effects and fruit of His mercy are manifest, but how should any one except Him know its quiddity?" (Mathnawi 3:3635) While the doctrine of Unity of

Existence significantly influenced Rumi's outlook, his theology of *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* occupies an even more central place in his spiritual system. The *Mathnawi* can be read as a commentary on Ibn Arabi's Unity of Existence, reformulated in a new poetic form. Rumi's father, Baha al-Din Walad, was a highly learned Sufi guide, who also trained Rumi and his disciples in the spiritual disciplines requisite for becoming *murids* (spiritual aspirants) on the Sufi path (Şahinoğlu 1). Under the spiritual tutelage of Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq, a disciple of his father, Rumi immersed himself completely in the disciplined path of Sufi training. During the course of his spiritual journey, Rumi traveled to Damascus for study, where his encounter with Shams Tabrizi dramatically altered the trajectory of his inner life (Chittick 710–711). Following his meeting with Shams, Rumi's poetic expression surged forth with astonishing intensity. His *Divan-i Kabir*, consisting of over 40,000 verses, is a lyrical tribute to Shams. These are not romantic verses in the mundane sense but allegorical expressions of Rumi's love for God—depicting the ecstasy of union and the anguish of separation from the Beloved. In essence, the *Divan-i Kabir* represents the spontaneous outpouring of Rumi's mystical doctrine of *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* and *Wahdat al-wujūd*. His poetry is saturated with the ethos of Sufism—reverence for God, limitless praise, and the advocacy of asceticism, endurance of worldly tribulations.

The Mevlevi Order founded by Rumi constituted a vital branch within the broader tradition of Sufism. After Rumi's passing, his son and disciple Sultan Walad assumed leadership of the order, overseeing its strong expansion. Under his direction, spiritual guides were dispatched across the Anatolia, and the Mevlevi Order developed distinct religious rituals, dress codes, and ethical regulations (Kayaoğlu 95). The principal ritual of the Mevlevi Order is the *Sema*, commonly referred to as the “Whirling Dance.” The term *Sema*, derived from Arabic, connotes “listening and dance” (Schimmel 198; Çelebi 127–128). During the ritual, dervishes clad in symbolic white garments perform whirling motions to the rhythm of sacred chants, with the aim of attaining a state of ecstatic trance in proximity to the Divine Presence. At the opening of the *Mathnawi*, Rumi offered a profound metaphor:

“Listen to this reed how it complains, telling a tale of separations—

Saying, “Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, man and woman have moaned in (unison with) my lament.

I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire.

Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it.” (*Mathnawi* 1:1-4)

Rumi regarded the spirit as the essential core of human being. In this lament of the reed-flute, he used the reed as a symbol of the soul—cut off from its origin, yearning for reunion. The human spirit inherently seeks to reunite with its Divine Source. Rumi's poetic trajectory is fundamentally a spiritual quest. He probed the full implications of *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* as the animating force of inner life. This orientation gave rise to the Mevlevi Order becoming a powerful current of thought, deeply shaping the Sufi practitioner's life on many dimensions. Though Rumi fully embraced the framework of Unity of Existence as expounded by Ibn Arabi, the enduring appeal of his poetry primarily stems from his impassioned articulation of *Ishq-e-Haqiqi*. Rumi's doctrine of *Ishq-e-Haqiqi* continues to captivate contemporary audiences. Beyond advocating perpetual reverence for God, he redefined the human-divine relationship through the paradigm of the Lover and the Beloved, thereby displacing fear with longing. This relational model has gained wide resonance.

III. Rumi's Representative Work: The Mathnawi

In composing the Mathnawi, Rumi frequently drew upon verses from the Qur'an and the sayings and actions (Sunnah) of the Prophet (PBUH), presenting them through narrative and allegorical forms. He explicitly affirmed the inextricable connection between the Qur'an and the Prophet (PBUH): "Though the Qur'an is (dictated) from the lips of the Prophet —if any one says God did not speak it, he is an infidel." (Mathnawi 4:2122). He further emphasized its theological authority: "This book is a great jurisprudence of Islam, a radiant and beautiful creed, a reliable and clear evidence of God... It is the remedy for the soul's illness, the consoler of sorrow, the revealer of mysteries, the expositor of truths and secrets of the Qur'an, the dispenser of spiritual sustenance, and the beautifier of every base character. This book has been written by the hands of the noble scribes and exalted beings." (Mathnawi 1: Preface). Just as the words and deeds of Muhammad (PBUH), as recorded in the "authentic" hadiths, further explain and complement the Qur'an, so too does the Mathnawi serve as an interpretive and doctrinal complement to the Hadith and the Qur'an as an important part of the teachings.

The eminent Sufi poets Sanai and Attar of Nishapur exerted considerable influence on the formation of the Mathnawi. Sanai's *The Walled Garden of Truth* and Attar's *The Conference of the Birds* have been regarded by subsequent generations as encapsulating the essence of Sufism. Inspired by these precedents, Rumi's disciple Husam al-Din Chalabi urged him to compose a similar spiritual masterpiece in their stylistic tradition (Yeniterzi 38). The Mathnawi was thus recorded by Husam al-Din, derived from Rumi's spontaneous recitations during sermons, assemblies with disciples and friends, and their discussions on Sufi doctrines. This six-volume narrative poem, written in rhyming couplets (Mathnawi form), comprises approximately 25,000 verses. It is a collection of narrative poems about the teachings of Islam and reveals the depths of Rumi's inner world and articulates Sufi principles with exceptional literary and philosophical sophistication. The verses in the Mathnawi unfold in the form of stories, rich with similes, metaphors, and symbols, interwoven with profound philosophical reflection. As a result, the work is a comprehensive exposition of religious philosophical thought and possesses immense literary merit.

Although the sacred journey described in the Mathnawi may elude full comprehension by the general populace, it was nonetheless written with accessibility and educational clarity in mind. As Turkish scholar Ali Nihad Tarlan aptly described: "The Mathnawi is the essence of the Qur'an. If the Qur'an is a rose garden, then the Mathnawi is its rose oil. It may lack external form and elegance, but it possesses the soul. In a few drops of rose oil, one perceives the entirety of the garden" (Olgun 3). The Mathnawi encapsulates the quintessence of diverse Sufi doctrines, documenting Rumi's luminous and emotionally charged spiritual journey. Rumi himself summarized the work's message thus: "If you have a heart, perform tawaf¹ around it! For in the spiritual sense, the true Ka'bah is the purified heart, not the earthly structure of stone and clay. God ordained the circumambulation of the physical Ka'bah² so that we may come to know the sanctified Ka'bah within our souls" (Topbaş 4). Although the narratives within the Mathnawi are intricately interwoven, Rumi's intent was to stimulate the reader's innate wisdom and rational faculties to extract moral and spiritual insights from these tales. He aspired for his audience to grasp the deeper truths and spirits veiled within the Mathnawi. To Rumi, poetry was merely a vessel for Divine meaning: "Without Thee, how should poesy and rhyme dare to come into sight at eve or morn?" (Mathnawi 3:1493–1494). Evidently, the poetry of the Mathnawi serves as an ode of love offered to God. This mode of

¹ Tawaf means Muslim parade to Mecca to pray around Ka'bah.

² Ka'bah is the shrine toward which Muslims of all around the world orient themselves during the five daily prayers (salah) and the destination of pilgrimage (Hajj).

sacred expression necessitates a contemplative appreciation of its profound spiritual substance. Rumi deemed poetry a worthy medium for conveying meaning and praised it accordingly: “In their eyes a poem (shi‘r) is better than a hundred bales of silk robes (sha‘r), especially (when it is composed by) a poet who fetches pearls from the depths.” (Mathnawi 4:1188). Rumi's focus on the deep inner meaning of the poem and the beauty of its outer form makes Mathnawi a classic of religious wisdom and a literary masterpiece.

The Sufi structure of the Mathnawi is fundamentally composed of 2 dimensions: form and spirit, with Rumi placing greater emphasis on the latter. As he stated, “Know that the outward form passes away, (but) the world of reality remains for ever.” (Mathnawi 2:1020) According to Rumi, meaning lies in the essence of God, and thus, only by transcending form can one grasp true meaning. The relationship between form and spirit parallels the ontological contrast between existence and non-existence: “This (phenomenal) world of non-existence has become like (real) existence, while that world of (real) existence has become very hidden.” (Mathnawi 2:1280) The so-called “world of non-existence” refers to the empirical material realm. Rumi's perspective aligns with the Sufi doctrine of Wahdat al-wujūd, wherein all created beings are manifestations of God's divine attributes, and God is the sole, absolute reality. Given the limitations of human intellect, Rumi asserted that the essence of God remains beyond complete rational comprehension. Therefore, Rumi utilized poetic narratives to explicate the Qur'an, revealing to the public the fundamental attributes of God. Through this medium, he enabled the believer to experience Divine grace and to comprehend the self-existence and creative singularity of God in the cosmos. By articulating the dialectic between form and spirit, Rumi reiterated the doctrine of Ishq-e-haqiqi, viewing the relationship between human and Divine as that of the lover and the Beloved: “The Beloved is all and the lover (but) a veil; the Beloved is living and the lover a dead thing.” (Mathnawi 1:30) Rumi further interpreted Wisal al-Haqq through the mystical meeting of the lover and the Beloved. To attain this ultimate spiritual union, he advocated for liberation from worldly attachments and material forms, and clarify the necessity of departure on the path: “O son! Burst thy chains and be free! How long wilt thou be a bondsman to silver and gold?” (Mathnawi 1:19) In summary, the Mathnawi stands as a profound literary exposition of Sufism. Within its pages, Rumi achieved a masterful synthesis of spiritual philosophy and poetic expression, rendering the work both a theological treasure and a literary masterpiece. It should be acknowledged that it is an exemplary contribution to Islamic literature and commands universal reverence.

IV. Rumi's Educational Methodology

Although Rumi is widely recognized as a Sufi poet and Islamic scholar—with most research focusing on his biography, literary corpus, and religious thought—his contributions to the field of education are equally significant. A close study of his magnum opus, the Mathnawi, reveals a wealth of educational insights that resonate with modern educational theory. These seemingly subtle yet pivotal educational approaches are precisely what have allowed Rumi thought to transcend time and space, and has been widely accepted by different social strata and passed on from generation to generation. His unique educational methodology has played an indispensable role in the wide dissemination and enduring legacy of the Mevlevi Order throughout the world. This section focuses on a textual analysis of selected couplets from the Mathnawi, exploring how these profound poetic expressions vividly embody Rumi's educational genius in transmitting Sufi teachings effectively and universally.

Throughout the Mathnawi, it becomes evident that Rumi employed a diverse array of educational methods to elucidate the teachings and practices of the path toward God. His

educational philosophy is grounded in an understanding of human needs and inherent dispositions. Rumi posited that if God had created human beings already in a state of spiritual perfection and endowed with ultimate potential, there would be no necessity for education (Usta 161). Using metaphor, Rumi equated an infant's weeping with need: "Lamentation and weeping are a mighty stock-in-trade (resource); the Universal Mercy is the mightiest nurse (to comfort and cherish). The nurse and mother seeks a pretext (for giving relief): (she waits to see) when her child will begin to weep. He (God) created the child, (namely) your wants, in order that it³ might moan and that milk might (then) be produced for it. He said, 'Call ye upon God!' Refrain not thou from lamentation, in order that the milk of His loving kindnesses may flow." (Mathnawi 2:1951–1954) Human beings mature spiritually and develop their innate capacities through shawq for God and guidance from spiritual teachers. Since individuals are born with varying capacities and temperaments, they naturally incline toward distinct domains of educational engagement in the teaching process. Accordingly, Rumi remarked: "How should hand and foot be set in motion without desire? How should sticks and straws go (from their place) without any water or wind?" (Mathnawi 3:1619) A key principle in Rumi's educational philosophy is individualized instruction. He asserted that educators must tailor their methods to the learner's personal attributes, including their educational needs, character traits, and intellectual aptitude. This notion is vividly illustrated in the Mathnawi, where Rumi presented an allegorical tale that exposes the dangers of misguided pedagogy. In the story, an old woman acquires an eagle but, acting on her own limited understanding, she trims the eagle's talons, beak, and feathers—claiming she is "doing good" for the eagle. Unaware that these very attributes are essential to the eagle's survival, she attempts to feed it liquid which the now-disabled eagle cannot consume. In a final act of frustration, the old woman pours hot liquid on the eagle's head, culminating in a tragic outcome. (Mathnawi 4:2628–2638) Through this vivid parable, Rumi articulated a comprehensive and profound educational philosophy. The eagle's tragic fate illustrates the perils of misdirected instruction and serves to clarify 4 interrelated dimensions of education's essential nature: Firstly, from an epistemological standpoint, Rumi underscored the necessity of honoring individual differences. Just as the eagle differs fundamentally from domestic fowl, so too does each learner possess unique talents and needs. Secondly, at the methodological level, Rumi illustrated the critical role of educational competence. Through the figure of the old woman, he exemplified how unqualified educators may, through misguided interventions, diminish the learner's native potential. Thirdly, this tale provokes reflection on the nature of education itself—cautioning that coercive attempts to alter a student's inherent disposition can only result in the suppression of their developmental potential. Finally, on the practice level, Rumi warned that erroneous educations not only fail to achieve their intended goals but may also inflict permanent damage upon the learner. According to Rumi, a true educator must possess three core competencies: keen discernment to recognize the learner's innate qualities and capacities; educational insight to design developmentally appropriate pathways; and disciplined restraint to avoid imposing standardized molds upon all disciples. All these principles converge toward a singular goal: to preserve and awaken the learner's internal drive—a concept that aligns closely with contemporary educational psychology's emphasis on intrinsic motivation. The progressive nature of Rumi's educational worldview lies in this systemic thinking. He perceived education not as rote transmission of knowledge nor as mechanical skills training, but rather as an organic and holistic process of awakening the internal latent potential in harmony with its natural disposition. This integrative view of education finds clear resonance in contemporary practices such as differentiated instruction, personalized learning, and multiple intelligences theory—all of which reflect key elements of

³ "It" refers to shawq, an intense longing or yearning for the presence of God.

Rumi's educational vision. The educational admonition conveyed by Rumi through allegory serves as a critical reminder that genuine educational reform must be founded upon deep respect for individual differences among learners; any educational practice that neglects this principle is doomed to repeat the metaphorical tragedy of "clipping the eagle's claws."

Rumi's educational philosophy encompasses a profound epistemological methodology. Through the dialectical relationship between form and spirit, he constructed a distinctive system of observational pedagogy. In the Mathnawi, Rumi stated explicitly: "Whenever thou art aware of a kindness from any one, 'tis possible thou mayst find the way to the source of the kindness. All these lovely things are from a deep Sea: leave the part and keep thine eye (fixed) upon the Whole." (Mathnawi 3:987-988) It reveals the core of Rumi's epistemology: concrete phenomena are but intermediaries for the apprehension of eternal Truth. The ultimate goal of education, therefore, is to guide the seeker beyond appearances to the essential reality—making spiritual perception indispensable. Rumi further elaborated: "Therefore in the mind of every one possessing knowledge this is certain, that with everything that moves there is a mover. If you do not see him visibly, apprehend him by means of the manifestation of the effect." (Mathnawi 4:153-154) This passage masterfully expresses Rumi's epistemological hierarchy: while the physical eyes are limited to perceiving external forms, it is the eye of the mind that penetrates to the inner spirit. This dual modality of observation forms the theoretical foundation of Rumi's observational pedagogy—an approach that values sensory cognition yet aims at cultivating rational insight. As he asserted: "Oh, blessed is the eye that is ruled by reason, (the eye) that discerns the end and is wise and cool. Get (learn) the distinction between evil and good from reason, not from the eye that tells (only) of black and white." (Mathnawi 6:2966-2967) Rumi's observational pedagogy thus constructs a layered, interlinked cognitive framework that progresses from surface to depth. This framework begins with concrete imagery, as in Mathnawi 5:2905— "How long wilt thou behold the revolution of the water-wheel? Put forth thy head and behold the rapid water (that turns it). " It directs the seeker first toward careful sensory observation of the phenomenal world. Such foundational cognitive training sharpens the learner's attentiveness and, more importantly, establishes an experiential base for subsequent intellectual engagement. Once this observational groundwork is laid, instruction naturally transitions to the second tier—rational reflection. At this stage, the seeker is called to move beyond the mere revolution of the waterwheel and investigate the its mechanical principles and driving mechanisms. The highest stage of Rumi's pedagogy lies in guiding the learner from concrete observation to spiritual realization. Just as the motion of the waterwheel depends on the flow of water, all cosmic movement points toward an ultimate Divine Reality. Sensory perception supplies the raw material for rational thought; rational inquiry serves as a bridge toward spiritual realization, which retroactively imbues both perception and reflection with profound meaning. Rumi emphasized that lingering solely at the level of sensory perception—seeing only the waterwheel while ignoring the water—leads inevitably to a one-sided perception. This integrative educational method—fusing sensory experience, rational analysis, and spiritual intuition—transcended the constraints of traditional instruction in Rumi's time, and offers enduring insight for today's interdisciplinary and holistic models of education.

Rumi stated in the Mathnawi that human beings are innately disposed to seek praise, for God Himself desires that people express gratitude and glorification toward Him. As he declared: "Inasmuch as the Creator desires thanksgiving and glorification, it is also the nature of man to desire praise." (Mathnawi 4:1195) This perspective is grounded in Sufi theology, wherein the Creator is believed to have fashioned humankind in accordance with His own attributes, infusing the human soul with divine qualities. Therefore, the quest for moral perfection becomes a path to proximity with God, and the very striving itself is worthy of

praise. In terms of educational practice, Rumi proposed a dialectical pairing of the concepts of “Qisas” and “Tolerance”. Qisas derived from Qur’anic juridical precepts and emphasizes that crimes should be punished accordingly: “For I punish thee in proportion to thy sin: this is the principle laid down for justice and retribution.” (Mathnawi 6:937) He noted that even minor transgressions merit consequence, saying: “When (thy) sin is less, thou wilt see half the sun eclipsed and half radiant.” (Mathnawi 6:936) Yet although Rumi spoke of punishment, he did not specify its form, for the punishment he refers to is not corporal or psychological coercion. Rather, he emphasized the moral law of causality—every human action bears consequence, and individuals must bear responsibility for their deeds. By contrast, Rumi placed profound importance on tolerance, since the human soul finds its source in God and thus deserves compassion and reverence. This is one of the main reasons for the global acceptance of his moral philosophy and ideas. If we examine scholarly discourse from the Rumi period to the present, along with his works' influence in religious, literary, and spiritual domains, we observe the accuracy and profundity of his doctrine of tolerance. Rumi’s principle of tolerance closely parallels Confucius’s ethical maxim: “Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.” He advised the disciples that if they seek God’s tolerance, they must likewise extend tolerance to others. “In order that God may pardon thy sins likewise and heap forgiveness on thy faults. Thou hast heedlessly broken many a jug and set thy heart on the hope of pardon. Pardon, that thou mayst win pardon in return: the (Divine) decree splits hairs (is exceedingly scrupulous) in (giving every one his) deserts.” (Mathnawi 5:3550-3552) This educational approach of reward and retribution is implemented through the parabolic narratives in the Mathnawi, where each story vividly illustrates the consequences of vice and the rewards of virtue, enabling the audience to internalize ethical truths through emotional resonance.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has sought to elucidate the core tenets of Sufism, to analyze how the Mathnawi employs allegories and metaphors to guide seekers along the path toward Divine Reality, and to explore the educational framework derived from these principles. This verse from the Mathnawi encapsulates the essence of Rumi’s thought: “In (all) its expressions my object is (to reveal) thy mystery; in composing it my object is (to hear) thy voice.” (Mathnawi 4:758) As a Sufi scholar and guide within the Islamic world, Rumi and his magnum opus, the Mathnawi, occupy an enduring place in the intellectual history of humanity. His thoughts have transcended the medieval Islamic milieu, profoundly shaping the evolution of Turkish, Arab, and Persian spiritual thought. Throughout the narratives of the Mathnawi, Rumi praised and venerated God, persistently elevating the Divine as the ultimate Beloved to be united with. As the “lover”, the seeker of Ishq-e-Haqiqi who cultivates an inner spiritual orientation is more likely to earn the affection and respect of fellow beings, and more importantly, the mercy and beneficence of God. In pursuit of love and the divine presence of God, he compressed his profound experiences of Ishq-e-Haqiqi into verses, offering them to the people. This is precisely why the Mathnawi, Rumi’s praise of God and masterpiece of divine love, have attained such widespread acclaim. These essences contained in his educational thoughts still have important implications for the study and development of modern education in the Islamic world, especially Sufism, and can provide basic theoretical support and value guidance for the development and construction of our educational ethics today.

In the process of instruction, Rumi rendered the esoteric principles of Sufism into lucid and accessible expressions. His Mathnawi interprets Qur’anic verses from multiple dimensions, thereby becoming the religious references among Muslims. The development of

Rumi's path lies fundamentally in his doctrine of Ishq-e-Haqiqi; his pursuit of love, interiority, and the doctrine of Wahdat al-wujūd are the leitmotifs of his moral vision. The emotive spirituality and profound introspection embedded in his worldview continue to draw modern seekers, who strive to uncover the deeper meanings of his verses. His strong storytelling and deeply meaningful poetry have raised his works to great prominence among many Sufi poets. His disciples and the later adherents of the Mevlevi Order came from all strata of society—wealthy merchants and impoverished students, erudite scholars and unlettered aspirants alike. Thus, Rumi's moral philosophy continues to enjoy enduring resonance. The radiance of his thought, sustained by the dedication of his followers, persistently illuminates the spiritual path of countless individuals around the world.

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