

Twenty First Century Needs Harmony and Peace: A Case Study of Rumi's Masnevi

Faiz Muhammad Brohi
Dr. Muhammad Khan Sangi

Abstract

The aim behind this research is to find out the solution for the issues of today's society that lacks harmony and peace. It helps in finding the parameters and the causes of destruction in the society. On the one hand, man has reached the moon; on the other hand, people are dying of poverty and hunger. The postmodern world of today lacks harmony and peace that lies in the service of humanity. This article highlights the spiritual revival that brought harmony and peace in the past, but if applied in our twenty first century with the same approach then, it is hoped, it can bring the same results again. The solution lies in investigating the parameters which are discussed in this paper with special reference to Rumi's Masnevi in order to show the path towards peace. In the article, the qualitative research is applied and the tool used in this research is textual analysis. This study may motivate towards newness and the revival of spiritual growth that leads us towards twenty first century that really demands progress in the outer and inner realm.

Keywords: Spiritual revival, harmony and peace, rise and fall of humanity, justice and injustice, mortal and immortal, Quran and Sunnah.

Introduction

Moulana Jalal-ud-din Rumi (1207-1273) has inspired millions of people. He was born in the era which was caught by political crises: before his birth crusades brought destruction in the age; the invasions of Mongols was another step to destroy Moslems and their territories; millions of the inhabitants of Baghdad are said to have been massacred. Sa'di's elegy on the age of Rumi reflects that heaven should rain tears of blood on earth (Afzal, 2004, p.29). Before the birth of Rumi, the age of Ghazali was the period of fraud, hypocrisy, hatred and bloodshed. On the other hand, the ages gave birth to the spirit of Islam, and the spiritual people like Ghazali, Bahauddin (Rumi's father), the famous sufi poet Farid-ud-din Attar in Nishapur (Rumi's contemporary) and Rumi too. These religious, spiritual people wanted to bring harmony and peace in their times and their spiritual growth inspired people a lot. Rumi's father was known as King of Scholars and Rumi was called the scholar of scholars (Afzal, 2005, pp.66-67). The age of Rumi is considered the seed of knowledge in the east and west, as Dante was a young boy at the time of Rumi's death; another great humanist of West, Petrarch, was born after a century of Rumi's death, and Erasmus came more than two centuries after Rumi's death. These writers inspired people of their times. Dante's Divine Comedy is the best example of spiritual allegory in the west, similarly, Rumi's Masnevi, is the popular spiritual allegory in both East and West. Rumi, the seeker of knowledge went to Konya at the age of twenty four when his father was alive. In Konya, Rumi translated the Quran in Pahlvi; from onward he preached it to the whole world. Persians regard the Quranic spirit in Masnevi because Quranic stories are elaborated with spiritual interpretation. Rumi's fame and reputation, his sermons and preaching inspired million of people, even the King and ministers came to listen to his sermons in Konya (Afzal, 2004, 46-47). His Masnevi is the spiritual book which compels us towards the real success and gives a way to follow the Quranic stories, refers the Sunnah of the Prophet. The people of his time were inspired and

motivated. Our twenty first century needs harmony and peace. Though our age lacks spiritual people, but we have book like Masnevi that can bring spiritual revival and the solution towards harmony and peace. His “Diwan and Masnevi are the equally immortal” (Afzal, 2004, pp.xviii-xx).

Research Methodology

The qualitative research is applied in literature that helps this study in order to read and interpret a piece of literature. The researcher on the given parameters follows the units to themes that he needs from the text. It will be helpful to the researcher in finding the text or the writer’s work in order to carry the research (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009, p.7). In this research article, the researcher would follow the parameters of the qualitative research in which the tool will be textual analysis in order to carry out the research. In the textual analysis, the units or components of the given topic would be analyzed from Rumi’s Masnevi which is translated by Nicholson and his two translated versions which would be observed in analysis.

Literature Review

In today’s world, people have drawn towards the growth of materialism which has given birth to double standards, jealousy, hypocrisy and hatred among people. Further this era moves toward different cultural identity and awareness of the ideological roots which is inclined towards progress, but have not brought harmony and peace in the world except hustle and bustle in life. Instead of serving humanity, people entered into the world of chaos and unrest. Evil becomes more and more dominant that leads towards hypocrisy, hatred, jealousy and seven deadly sins which kill the inner transformation that leads soul towards the spiritual growth. To this, modern observers have realized the solution towards harmony and peace is the spiritual growth and the reforms of revival of spiritual growth. Meanwhile, various Sufi teachers or spiritual teachers are busy in focusing the Islamic heritage that was the forgetfulness of God (Chittick, 2000, pp. 36-37).

The solution to bring harmony and peace motivates towards goodness that comes through the spiritual journey. In today’s world evil has become stronger because people have become materialist. We need to make an effort to crush evil from the society through goodness that is lacking within people. As the Quran says, “Good and Evil can never be equal so repel evil deeds with good ones” (41:34).

In today’s world, people are inclined towards progress but lacking the spiritual growth among themselves. In the competitive world, people have become jealous, hypocrite which is the root cause of evil. It is observed that Sufi literature and approach stresses the nearness, prescience and immanence of God rather than His distance and transcendence. Sufis regard that God is within and nearer. Therefore, their literature and approach bring people towards the spiritual growth. They quote the Quranic verse, as “And we are nearer to him than the jugular vein (50:16), at another place the Quran says, “And He is with you wherever you are” (57:4). If we keep the spiritual approach, we would bring harmony and peace in the society. One who fears from God, he never does injustice with people. This develops love among humans and harmony and peace would exist in today’s society (Chittick, 2000, p.41).

The Importance of Mysticism

The need of spiritual revival has been noticed in the every corner of the world. The writer traces the old history of mysticism with the views of different schools of thought on its development. He refers to the mystic philosopher, Heraclitus, who introduced central idea of “Logos”. Logos prefers the symbol for that free and living Spirit of Becoming that leads the

mystic to the Absolute truth. This idea does not only mingle in the Hellenic period, but also in a Christian system of thought. The same preferable thoughts were quoted by Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. In this regard, it was accepted that the knowledge that mystics is not perceived by the ordinary people. The act of gazing into the inner realism by mystics helps them purify their hearts. Their journey towards the Absolute is the journey of spirituality. The writer illustrates that the mystic system of reality is ignored by other people. The writer supports the view of Heraclitus who says every age needs the spiritual development in order to nourish people towards the Absolute Reality. He also says that everything is in a state of flux and in every age, the good and evil is found. Mystics pay heed on spiritual growth that is the way to save people from the evil and its consequences (Underhill, 2006, p.29).

The writer elaborates the doctrine of mysticism that the evil is mere appearance, an illusion produced by the division and oppositions of analytic intellect. Further, he adds that mystics never maintain cruelty, as it is maintained by other people. They deny cruelty, but adopt the good. They not only refrain from evil practices, but also motivate people to be and to do the good. The nature of mystics is found peaceful and their life motivates people towards spiritual life and leads them towards harmony and brotherhood. They belong to the lower world of phantoms from which we are to be liberated by the insight of vision. This attitude is a direct outcome of the nature of the mystical experience with its sense of unity associated with feeling infinite peace (Russell, 1923, p.11).

The Quranic Sufism

The writer describes the steps of spiritual journey towards God. The first step of the Sufi is journey on the path how to get released from the clutches of desire or lust. They teach how to emerge out of his own individual sphere of knowledge and enter into the knowledge of God. In this step Sufis' performance and actions seem as imparted by Shari 'at. The Sufis regard God alone as their Lord, Helper, Master, and separate him from worldly desires. The writer expresses that those who walk on the right path, God saves them. Sufis regard it as the self-sacrifice, and their journey towards the Eternal. The second step is to praise God through repeating a word/a phrase/a Quranic verse (and remain busy in this practice. The writer quotes the Quranic verse as, "Thee (alone) do we worship and Thee (alone) do we ask for help". Sufi regards himself the true worshiper and praises God. As the Quran says (35:15), "O mankind: ye are the supplicants in your relation to Allah! He is the All sufficient, the owner of Praise" (Waliuddin, 1993 p.8).

Miller (2009) illustrates spiritual revival and its ways. He brings the solution to achieve the blessings of God. It comes through the mentor who will lead his disciple towards God. He also refers to Al-Ghazali who narrates that man's relation with God comes through the guide. God has revealed the Holy Quran in order to find the ways of God. The disciple learns the good and the evil and follows the right path. If he does not get the guide, he will not find the path. Al-Ghazali has laid master (Shaikh) and disciple (murid) relationship as a facet of Sufism.

The story of the pearl and its significance

Once in the company of king Mehmood, a pearl was brought up. Many people were sitting there. Besides the king Vizier was sitting, the king gave the pearl and ordered the vizier to break the pearl. The vizier took the pearl into his hand and started kissing it and praised it highly. He regarded himself the intelligent man and replied to the king. This pearl is precious one I could not break it. Next to vizier, the chamberlain was sitting, the same pearl was given to him, he also praised it and imitated the vizier and said, "It is the most precious and valuable". He said, "I cannot break it". Beside the chamberlain, another courtier was sitting;

the same reply was given to the king. The same pearl went from one hand to another; the king got the same reply. When it reached to Ayaz, the king Mehmood commanded and said to Ayaz. "O Sultan, take the pearl and break it". He took the pearl and broke it. People were amazed and said to Ayaz what did you do with the pearl. He replied to people and said to me the more valuable is king than pearl. He said, "Is the king's command more valuable than the pearl?" The king ordered his guards to remove these fools in front of him. To them the more important thing is pearl not the king. The allegorical interpretation leads us to God and His commands. God has sent man the caliph or the Messiah on the earth in order to fulfill his commands in order to serve humanity and to crush evil from the society. Hypocrisy, hatred, jealousy and double standard have destroyed people from the eternal path that leads people towards the spiritual path. People have not followed the command of God, but have become worldly people who praise materialistic world like the pearl. To them worldly pleasure is important than God. When we serve the humans, God becomes happy. Here injustice and double standard kills inner realism (Chittick, 2005, pp.98-99).

Divine and human love:

The supreme path is human love that uplifts us towards the absolute reality means God. It is mentioned in the Holy Quran and Hadith, you can achieve God through the Sunnah or the path of the Prophet. To love humanity means loving God. Therefore, Sufis stress the quest of God in the language of love, the most intense and profound of the human experiences. The same context is found in the Quranic verses and Hadiths, the verse is quoted. "Say [O Mohammad!]: "If you love God, follow me, and then God will obey you" (3:31). The prime concern is the human love that is lacking in today's society. This love is found to possess a kind double standard which can never bring harmony and peace. The only way is to follow the path of God, then harmony and peace would exist (Chittick, 2000, p.45).

A Sufi's teaching is based on two terms: annihilation and subsistence. In the regard of annihilation, Sufis annihilate their lower-self for the will of God and remain for the pursuance of God. This leads people to the right direction in order to pursue God; people find the ways of God. Before reaching the target, one has to annihilate one's lower-self and desires for pursuance of God. If this is done in today's society, there would be harmony and peace would be found. The term annihilation on which Sufis focus is also mentioned in the Holy Quran, as "Everything upon the earth is undergoing annihilation, but there subsists the face of your Lord, Possessor, of Majesty and Generous Giving" (55:26-27). The Quranic verse ends with divine names like "Possessor of Majesty and Generous Giving". These two terms are observed in the view of spiritual journey. The same context of spiritual journey is noticed in the Sufis and in their literature. In the eyes of Sufi, God is Great, Distant, Wrathful, Vengeful, King and Transcendent. Therefore, Sufis' literature and approach is a lesson for people to bring harmony and peace in the world (Chittick, 2000, p.44).

The Analysis of Rumi's Masnevi

The Evil is in us

Rumi's Masnevi directly addresses man and points out him that evil exists in man. He quotes the story of lion and hare in Masnevi in order to show man and his image. The story of lion and hare shows that the lion daily used to get prey at his place. Once, the turn of hare came and he went late to lion and said I was late because of another lion came to your territory and ordered animals. Today onward I would take prey from you. The hare led the lion toward a well. Lion and hare went to well. There lion saw his image in the well. Both saw their image, but actually it was the image of the same lion that brought hare to the well. When the lion

approached to the well there his image was similar. The lion jumped into the well and hare was released. Here Rumi elucidates that O readers how many an evil would you find in others. Actually it is your evil that appears into others. Man is known by the company that he keeps. In others you find hypocrisy, iniquity, double standard and insolence. Actually these forms of evil are possessed in you. In others you can find evil, but it would be difficult to recognize one's fault. You hate others means you have the same nature. Rumi calls, O fool pay attention on your own image you would see the real reflection in yourself. Here evil represents lower-self (nafs) that is present in everyman. Evil always tempts man towards desire but we should overcome our desires. Then you would bring goodness in the society. If you are already the victim of evil, goodness never comes in the society, but ruins the society (Nicholson, 2003, p.76).

The mystery of evil

Rumi depicts the mystery of evil in Masnevi volume I and shows the evil nature of Pharaoh and spiritual nature of Moses. Both were the worshiper of truth. Pharaoh had pride that just stands for God and he proclaimed himself god in the public, but at the midnight he would begin to moan. While Moses used to cry in day time and used to preach God and His commandments. Pharaoh used to cry in the night and used to say God. On the same earth you made Moses to be illumined and on the same earth you made me to be darkened. Pharaoh said "I know you are our Lord", but I pray in the night but I can say God is one who is the God of Moses. In the public, I would rather say, "Pharaoh is your god". Suddenly, in the night time Pharaoh said in surprise, "Am I not praying all night long"? He used to pray in the night time, but his pride destroyed him from the eternal path. Rumi point out that evil nature remains evil. He further elucidates different colors of evil appear in the shape of pride which deviates us from the eternal blessings of God. Hypocrisy ruins nations and destroy man from the spiritual path. Jealousy is a disease like cancer; it would make man null and void in the shape of human. Hatred keeps distances in human beings. Therefore, Rumi brings humans at one platform that is the message of harmony and peace that lies on the path of Moses not on the path of Pharaoh. It is better to leave worldly tricks which ruin our everlasting path that leads towards the absolute reality. Once we act to follow spiritual path, there would we link a chain of harmony and peace in the world (Nicholson, 2003, p.145-46).

The love of Woman

Rumi highlights the status of woman in the Masnevi and says woman is ray of God: she is not the earthly beloved. She is creative; you might say she is not created. He endorsed the vision of woman and her beauty that is eternal. He also advocates that women are the sign of beauty to people. In Masnevi, Rumi quotes the Prophet who said regarding woman and the importance of woman: "woman prevails over the wise, while ignorant men prevail over her; for in them the fierceness of the animal is imminent". Rumi says that love and tenderness are regarded human attributes and lust and anger are regarded animal qualities. These four characteristics are found in people. Two of them like love and tenderness are positive and two like anger and lust are negative in men. He is the staunch preacher of goodness and tells the value of woman in our society. Further, he says if you rule your wife outwardly, yet inwardly you are ruled by her whom you desire. This shows that the sincerity of man lies within man. Today's society lacks mutual understanding, mutual love and brotherhood. Rumi's literature reflects light within and the path of the Prophet and the Sunnah of the Prophet would bring us on the right direction that we need in today's society. Living in an advance society of 21st century, still we do not find peaceful place for women; everywhere we find crime and injustice. It needs revival of spirituality.

Rumi's concept of seven deadly sins in Masnevi

Rumi's Masnevi gives the best solution for how to bring peace and harmony in the society and gives a way and a hope towards eternal path. He says that seven deadly sins are the cause of destruction in the society. Living in 21st century, the modern age where peace has lost its significance because of seven deadly sins; how peace would prevail in the society? On the one hand man has reached at the moon, on the other; the poverty increases day by day. This is because of seven deadly sins. Today's world demands justice and concept of humanity. Injustice becomes the hindrance on the path of justice. People demand their rights; evil prevails in the shape of lust and pride. It shows that one struggles for goodness, there he finds hindrance from another person who strives for pride and greed. It is observed that in every good task hindrances block the way of man from doing virtuous deeds. Likewise, seven deadly sins are the hindrances or blocking in the way of spirituality. One who controls or dominates over seven deadly sins he/ she would pursue the spiritual path. He indicates that Anger represents animal instinct. If it comes in a man then he remains no more the real man, and starts acting like an animal. This survey brings towards anger and lust. These two things bring a man's rage and carnal desires for wealth and sex. When one grows as greedy and selfish, he/she loses spiritual sight and love for God and His people: "Cut off the heads of these four lively birds and make your mortal being immortal. The duck is greed, the cock is lust, rank (reputation) is the peacock, and crow is the lover of self (of a materialistic man)" (Turkmen, 2005, p.126). Consequently, these sins compel man to live in the world of desires, happiness and luxury; but Rumi views that these will not bring us towards God. Further, a Sufi perceives that Anger and Lust make a man squint eyed and force the spirit to go astray from its right path. When self-interest comes (overcomes), virtue disappears and hundred veil rise from the heart to the eyes.

The concept of worldly man in Rumi's Masnevi

Rumi explains the view of worldly man and his vision like the story of the Indian king and the elephant. In the company of the king, there were many soldiers and ordered them to not eat young elephants. Soldiers went against the order of the king and roasted young elephants except one soldier who followed the order of the king. When mother of young elephants came and smelt the smell of young elephants, then crushed the soldiers. Rumi similarly points out that God is observer and knows your plans. He says that the smell of pride, greed, concupiscence will appear like the smell of onion. This shows that our society needs the real counselor like the king who ordered the soldiers. We listen but we do not act. Everyone talks about humanity, but where is the smell of pity and fear. Rumi shows evil is dominant in its different shapes like greed, pride, injustice, bribery, double standards. Only few are the follower of spiritual path. Today's society needs justice and the concept of brotherhood.

Further Rumi calls worldly man or materialistic man as an immature. An immature man remains same as he is, because he follows his carnal senses, and is following his worldly tricks and never finds a path towards the Absolute Reality. Further, Rumi in Masnawi refers to two kinds of ladders which are the sources of achievement. The worldly senses are the ladder for this world and the religious (spiritual) senses are the ladder for Heaven. Seek the health of carnal senses from a doctor, but seek the health of the celestial senses from the Beloved (God). The health of carnal senses depends on the flourishing of the physical body; while the health of the celestial senses depends on the destruction of the physical body. Moreover, he refers to two directions. One the spiritual that leads to God, this ladder is based on the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Holy Scriptures which state the various ways through that man achieves his goal and becomes religious man. The second is materialistic which leads to this world where path is not shown but worldly tricks rely on intellect or worldly tricks. He does not find the ladder that may lead him towards God.

Therefore, he is called immature (materialistic person). His ladder leads him in the worldly concerns (Nicholson, 2003, pp. 12-13).

The inner shape of human beings

"If all human beings were man in the shape, Abu Jehil and Ahmed (Muhammad) would be just the same," (Turkmen, 2005, p.83). These two clear examples prove that Abu Jehil (the father of the ignorance) whose worldly tricks were not useful in front of Ahmed the Prophet of God. It is clear message for all. If you strive for another world you will be awarded. If you strive for this world or worldly life, obviously, there will be no place for you in the paradise. God has created two rewards: Paradise and Hell. Paradise is for those who strive for the pursuance of God, and those who strive for the pursuance of this world, will be in Hell. The wealth of Abu Jehl was just reputation for this world, and his pride ruined him from the eternal path, his intellect did not destroy the right path of the Prophet, but made him the example of ignorant, he lost both worlds, in this world he is regarded ignorant person and in the next world, there is no hope for paradise. On the other hand, the Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) is the best example for all human beings. If we act on sayings or Sunnah of the Prophet in today's modern world, harmony and peace would exist. As Abu Jehl brought many hindrances on the path of the Prophet, but became useless. Because good is always upper hand. Rumi advocates the followers of the Prophet never go wrong, people like Abu Jehl may find at different places, but the true believer overcomes the worldly man.

A man is known by the company he keeps

In the previous discussion, I brought two aspects of choice: mortal and immortal. Good people always keep good company which is Divine Company to them. They always run on the spiritual path. Their concept of living is different from others. They live in good society and create a good society. They fight against injustice and bring goodness. They regard life to them is eternal gift and in return they purify their souls through doing good deeds. The second group of company is called bad company which brings into evil results. If a person who lives in the company of a thief, obviously, he will be affected by worldly tricks. Likewise, Divine Company comes by saints or spiritual people who preach the Divine light. If you add something with pure objects, obviously, there will be mixed up. It will mislead people from Divine Company.

Also, add the company of greedy people who are known by their sharing and giving. Those who are lost in greed for wealth cannot make friends with a holy man are shining like the sun. Further, I add the example of a cage. If we keep a nightingale and a crow in the cage, the crow will claim that melodious voice of the nightingales are hideous; and the crow will even try to kill them for "Birds of a feather flock together". The example of birds proves that good and bad cannot live together. Worldly man is caught by worldly reputation. While, spiritual man who goes way to keep him save from worldly reputation which is temporary and loses Divine Company that is achieved by religious people. In recent time, our world is known as global village, but has failed to bring harmony and peace. If we analyze which thing we lack in today's society, we would bring good result for the betterment of humanity. We have modern knowledge, we don't find spiritual people like Rumi, Imam Ghazali, but we have literature of spiritual people like Rumi, this may help us in bringing the revival spiritual knowledge.

Ego

As to him, we start doing good deeds but ego of man looses every charm of deeds, when he becomes selfish. Man loses the deeds of a year within the seconds when selfishness overcomes. It betrays man from the blessings of God. Rumi's Masnavi (1/378-380), "Each

time we collect wheat (corn) in this barn, we lose it. A mouse has made a whole to our barn, and by his tricks he is destroying our store. First of all, my friend, get rid of this mouse and set your heart on collecting corn," (Turkmen, 2005, p.80). Consequently, the concept of *Nafs* motivates man doing wrong things which kill man's spirituality. Therefore, Rumi calls *Nafs* the biggest enemy of man. One, who controls his *Nafs*, obviously comes in the Divine direction which leads him towards the Absolute Reality.

Conclusion

The revival of spiritual literature would be a step towards harmony and peace. It focuses on the man and his spiritual growth that leads him towards success that lies in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (P.B.U.H). In the spiritual revival, a Sufi's role focuses on the path of the Prophet and his Sunnah that is complete code of life to people. Rumi is known as scholar of scholars in the east and west. His Masnevi is the spiritual document that compels people towards harmony and peace. In the time of Rumi who used to deliver sermons, lectures on the harmony and peace, his age is regarded the best in harmony and peace. He loved humanity and the service of humanity lies in Masnevi. All people of his time loved Rumi, even non-Muslims, Jews, Christians, Communists, Atheists, Hindus, etc. on his death, people of all religions, sects, and even atheists came to attend the funeral ceremony. Muslims asked from Christians and other people Rumi being Muslim and you are non-Muslims, they replied Rumi stands not for Muslims only, but for all. This is the best example in today's society to work on the Rumi's Masnevi that would be best document towards peace and harmony. Rumi says to crush evil in the society; actually it lies within us. First, it is better to kill one's own evil, then evil can be diminished. He says our biggest enemy is our lower-self (*nafs*) that brings hindrance in the path of service of humanity. It is the pride that gives birth to evil and evil is based on seven deadly sins. Injustice and double standards give birth to mortal things which are concerned to this world, because people have limited approach that is for physical world. Genius people have genius approach; likewise, Rumi's approach connects all and brings whole humanity at one place. It compels towards service of humanity through that harmony and peace would exist. Our society needs the Messiah or the revival of spiritual literature like Rumi's Masnevi.

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