
**Love that Binds: An Ecospiritual Reading
of Rumi's Poetry**

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Abstract

Rumi is endorsed for being one of the most famous Persian Sufi poets. He is considered a poet of love for all creation. In his poetry, one finds a close admiration of natural world that comes from love and results in even a greater love for the creator of the natural forces. This study aims to analyze selected poems of Rumi to inspect his views on environment and nature knitted closely with love and spirituality. Ecospirituality, a rather new approach to inspect the relationship of the environment and literary works from a spiritual point of view was employed to comment on Rumi's dealing with creation and love for God in his poetry.

Key words: ecospirituality, environment, Rumi, sufi, criticism

Introduction: Of Spirituality and Environment

Lincoln in the paper, "A pattern that connects" defines ecospirituality as "a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment." (228). Ecospiritual worldview attempts to heal the wounds that humans have inflicted upon themselves and earth out of their greed. In other words, environmentalism with a focus on sacredness of living can be called ecospirituality (Cummings, 1991). For thousands of years mystics have written and spoken about the oneness of all life, the connection between all species. Theories and discussions based on ecospirituality are based on one fundamental truth: for humans to reflect upon themselves and all life with love and respect.

Ecospiritualists lament the destruction of the environment throughout the centuries and have sought ways to repair the relationship that man and environment has forged. If we are to believe what Whitman said that "the true emotional, moral, and aesthetic natures of humanity have not radically changed" (Whitman, 386), then we must believe that it is still not too late to draw on this inherent good, from past until now, and repair the damage. Jalal- Aldin Rumi, the ancient Persian poet, as a poet of love and wisdom is a good source for inspiration. So how does Rumi look to the world around him and what is the position of humans and other species on this planet to each other according to him?

Rumi's poetry in general is considered one of the most challenging sources of mysticism (Golkhosravi, 2019). Mysticism is

the opposite of materialism and greed. In Rumi's poetry, nature and environmental elements have been used for different reasons. Since the focus of this paper is on ecospirituality, we will discuss poems that awaken a sense of the bond among all creatures on this earth. Moreover, this research discusses how in Rumi's poetry this bond encourages all human to have the greatest love to give to the creations of God. In this paper, wherever a title has not been given, the first line of the poem represents the title.

In his poetry, elements such as trees, flowers, different species of animals, the wind and the star and many others have an active role and that makes his poetry universal. "There is a timelessness and universality to Rumi's teachings making them relevant in a modern world even after a passage of 900 years" (Kaynat, 13). Sometimes all speices are personalized and some other time, they, as they are animals or plants, are joined with him in an act of appreciation of the creation. All natural elements awaken the poet's feeling towards God. In addition, they bind the whole world together with love that surrounds people who search for it in different times and places.

Rumi and Natural Environment

Rumi believes that all creation is a representation of God and the origin of all is from God. According to Hasanzadeh and Raouf (2013) man is both spiritual and physical, and Rumi highlights the spiritual side of man to show that man does not have to attempt to control the environment. Looking from the spiritual side of creation will bring about respect and knowledge towards the nature and other creations.

Rumi advocates for transcending the bounds humans create around them for the purpose of going beyond any religion. For Rumi, loving the Creator and the creation and to be religious or faithful, one needs to look inside; "Real belief is apparent only on the inside of a person, which is not visible. Therefore... the religion of love involves loving the eternal and invisible source of existence" (Este'lami, 432).

Rumi's view on nature; wind, water, stars, moon, animals, colors and sounds is a passionate. For him, all of this is the manifestation of God and His presence. For all the temporality of existence on this planet, human being for Rumi is not a creature in prison; on the contrary, humans sit high in the garden of the Creator.

In the religious text of Quran, man is made of soil. The angels descended to the earth to bring a handful of soil for creation. The soil is the base of all creation in the universe. This proves that the source of the creation of humans, plants and animals is the same source so all creations are united in their origin. This also means that none of these creations is better than the other. Consider the following lines taken from Book 6- no title for the poem.

This mouth, indeed, has been an eater of earth;

but an earth that has been colored.
 This roast-meat and this wine and this sugar
 When you have eaten or drunk and they have become flesh and
 skin,

He gives them the color of flesh,
 but they are still the earth of (His) street.
 are (merely) colored and painted earth, O son.
 (Book 6 lines 4706-6, cited in masnavi.net)

Rumi begins by saying that man actually eats dust that has become colorful. He is referring to the food we consume and the fact that its natural source is the soil of the earth. By saying that it is this dust that strengthens the human and turns the child into a fully grown up man, the poet empathizes the fact that human beings depend on earth and other creation to survive and that strengthen the unity between all creation.

Nonetheless, as can be seen below, Rumi also emphasizes the fact that humans should not exploit the use of other creations. “Hence, ‘Eat ye’ is for the sake of the snare of appetite; After that comes ‘Do not exceed’: that is temperance.” (Book 5: line 582: cited in masnavi.net)

He agrees that when the Holy Quran talks about “eating,” it is also followed by “in moderation” and this is the essence of virtue so human beings should always be reminded that while they enjoy using the fruits of nature, they need to be mindful of preservation of its tree as well. In Rumi’s views, other creations show the face of God and in his poems through his verses he shows everything manifests God as in “our movement is really a continual profession of faith/ which bears witness to the Eternal Almighty One. (Book 5: line 3316-17; cited in masnavi.net)

Rumi’s worldview: love binds all together

Love in Rumi’s view is the corner stone that universe has been built on. For him, the reason of creation is love which has always accompanied creation and fuels its movement. In other words, it is “the divine nature of humankind” (Golkhosravi 3). This love is not limited to human beings as can be seen but includes all elements. It is the tie that binds all together to the creator. Since love is the reason and the cause of the creation, it is also the source of unity between creatures:

Had it not been for pure Love's sake,
 how should I have bestowed an existence on the heavens?
 I have raised up the lofty celestial sphere,
 that thou mayst apprehend the sublimity of Love.

(“Love makes the sea boil like a kettle”; Book5, lines -273- 276
 (cited in masnavi.net)

Because the source of love is God, it is not withheld from creatures. However, human man in his ignorance or malice or in his pursuit of benefit has severed this love from time to time and continues to do so; for example, consider the extinction of many species on the hands of humans or destruction of so many forests and woods. The destruction of the environment, in Rumi's opinion, leads to depression and the lack in the natural world. It has diverted the natural order or has broken the connection between creatures.

In the following lines, Rumi illustrates the mingling of the physical and spiritual aspect of creation; the physical side is symbolized through "earth" and spiritual through "love".

Friends,
look at love
how it tangles with the one fallen in love.
Look at spirit
how it fuses with earth giving it a new life.
(“Look at love” ; in Barks, 2010)

This is an invitation to see love as the catalyzer that blends spirit with earth to produce a “new life.” Afterwards, Rumi criticizes mankind by asking why human beings are preoccupied with materialistic values instead of thinking their own spirit and love that give new life to earth. So, he advises man to accept this unity because heaven and the earth, spirit and body have already merged for the sake of human kind:

Why are you so busy
with this or that, or good or bad?
Pay attention to how things blend.
You too must mingle, my friends,
since the earth and the sky
are mingled just for you and me.
(in Coleman, 2010)

Loving the “beloved” or God has a certain condition and that is the love between human kinds; if human beings start loving each other, they will see and feel God's presence everywhere:

Remember friends,
if you're seeking closeness to the Beloved,
then love one another.
Whether in their presence or absence,
see only their good. (in Coleman 2010)

Human beings ignore the light in their heart and that makes their life seem empty. One reason that may have caused this negligence is materialism and greed. For Rumi, it is incomprehensible to be preoccupied with business while love, the representation of goodness, beauty, and nature that blend together as a manifestation of God, is waiting to be responded to and accepted because responding to love also ensures that you have already begun your journey for self-discovery:

Friends,
How long can you beg and bargain
for material things of this world
while love is waiting?
How long before you can rise beyond
how I am or what I am? (in Coleman, 2010)

Thus, love is something different; it is related to the spirit of the universe and creation. Love is the source of life and there is a connection between love and all universal elements. It is related to internal reality of men; what we feel and what we want to discover. Maturity is promised for those who seek love:

The quest for love changes you.
There is no seeker of love
who has not matured on the way of love.
The moment you start looking for love,
you start to change within and without. (in Coleman, 2010)

Loving all creation, paying attention to other creatures, respect for all living beings, as can be seen in the lines above, do not go hand in hand with greed and materialism. As a matter of fact, what causes this huge damage and rupture in the world is greed. Rumi guides the mankind by saying, “the moment you start looking for love, you start to change within and without.”

Gibran Khalil Gibran (1883-1931), a great eco poet of our time, as if as a testament to Rumi’s beliefs, has said: “All things in this creation exist within you and all things in you exist in Creation.” (Cited in Suheil & Jenkins, 1998). Thus human beings can and should try to change and save the environment and help reduce the effects of climate change and global warming because there are justifying reasons to do so- for humans to become responsible toward environment.

Rumi's worldview: Creation as an object to admire and love

Rumi considers human beings as guests in this world; the soul is a prisoner in its body that is inclined to flee its cage and join its creator.

Last night that moon came along,
drunk, dropping clothes in the street.
"Get up," I told my heart, "Give the soul a glass of wine.
The moment has come to join the nightingale in the garden,
to taste sugar with the soul-parrot." ("A New Moon" In (A. J. Arberry, 1991)

Rumi has treated the moon, and the nightingale part of the world's spiritual awakening. He tells himself to "join" the nightingale in the watching the moonlight to savor this spirituality as if it is something sweet to savor. This invitation is intentional and necessary to make the connection to the environment around. Enjoying the scene is not enough; one has to become part of it. Becoming part of it, of course in Rumi's view does not mean to pluck out the beauty to make it your own but to be one with it.

The love that binds everything in Rumi's poetry as in his life is the divine force.

Again I am raging, I am in such a state by your soul that every bond you bind, I break, by your soul. I am like heaven, like the moon, like a candle by your glow; I am all reason, all love, all soul, by your soul. (in A. J. Arberry, 1991).

Addressing God, the poet binds himself, like heaven and sky, to the Creator through love. This bond is based on reason and logic; it is also a spiritual bonding. This love heals the soul of the poet. In the absence of this love, he becomes furious and promises to break the bondages that bind. In order to heal, to become a light, he needs to grow under the glow of the light of his beloved. As Rumi mentions in another poem, "I will tell what love is; it is to fall into a goldmine" (in A. J. Arberry, 1991). The connection or union with the nightingale in the garden and becoming like the glow of the candle is the ultimate goal for any human.

The poet beseeches the natural elements, human organs, and all creation; sky, moon, earth and time not to enter the garden of God. These lines demonstrate the unity of the poet, all humanity, and the creation. The thing that makes this world and other world "joyous" is love for all:

Sweetly parading you go my soul of soul, go not without me;
life of your friends, enter not the garden without me.
Sky, revolve not without me; moon, shine not without me;
earth travel not without me, and time, go not without me.

With you this world is joyous, and with you that world is joyous.
 (“Don’t go with ought me” in A. J. Arberry, 1991)

If nothing, Rumi’s poetry show an ancient interest in environmentalism. This environmentalism comes from a love and interest in the creator. But it does not stop there; love of the creator, extends and expands in all direction for all creation.

Conclusion

Ecospirituality is not only a message but a life style in pursuit of a more peaceful world. Life built on the beliefs advocated by ecospirituality means developing a relationship between spirit and body, and between all life forms on this planet. Rumi is the guide for building this relationship. He defends the spiritual sight inside human beings. Love can heal human soul from all materialism and physicality. The paper sums up Rumi’s views that suggest the love of God as a solution for human to start treating the natural environment with respect and love. No boundaries will stay between man and God after such a love that gathers them. This in turn will lead to unity between all life forms on earth and may awaken the human beings to treat their environment with care.

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الحب هو الذي يجمع : قراءة روحية

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المستخلص

لايختلف اثنان من كون الرومي ابرز شعراء الصوفية الذي يعد شاعرا للحب الشامل لكل الوجود. يتجسد ذلك من خلال ما يلمسه القارئ ويستشعره بكلماته وتناغمها ومدى الاواصر الحميمية التي يجمع بها الشاعر بين هذا الوجود وخالفه ، فالحب عنده الوسيلة لغاية سامية وهي تعلق الوجود بالواجد لهذا الوجود.. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل قصائد مختارة من جلال الرومي لتوضيح وجهات نظره حول البيئة والطبيعة المحبوكة بشكل وثيق مع الحب والروحانية. تم استخدام روح البيئة ، وهي مقارنة جديدة إلى حد ما لتحليل علاقة البيئة والأعمال الأدبية من وجهة نظر روحية للتعليق على تعامل الرومي مع الخلق وحب الله في شعره.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الروحانيات ، البيئة ، الرومي ، الصوفية ، النقد