

Mystical Love in Rumi: The Journey from Self to the Divine Love

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 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2026.v10i06.005> | Received: 23.04.2026 | Accepted: 16.06.2026 | Published: 22.06.2026

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Abstract

It is clear that when we love, we feel happy, and when we hate, we feel miserable. Many wise Sufi poets and thinkers believed that living a good life means being happy, and the best way to achieve this happiness is through love, faith, and kindness. They thought that the highest form of life is a life filled with love and spiritual devotion. Love, profoundly simple yet infinitely complex, has been a subject of contemplation for philosophers, poets, and mystics throughout the ages. In the philosophy of, love or *Ishq* transcends the mundane and attains a sublime, ethereal essence that permeates the universe. He believes that through love and faith, people are able to live together and accept each other in a system of co-existence. Relationships are formed and maintained through interpersonal interaction. The system of life develops when people interact with one another, form bonds of love, friendship, affection, faith, and concern for one another, and go about their everyday lives. This article delves into Rumi's profound insights on love, faith, interrelationships between man and God, Divine love, and transformative power. Rumi's poetry is replete with metaphors and allegories that convey the multifaceted nature of love. He portrays love as a journey, a longing, and a union, an ever-evolving dance between lover and beloved, self and other, human and Divine. Through his mystical imagery and lyrical expression, Rumi invites readers to transcend the limitations of the ego and experience the boundless expanses of the heart. His philosophy of love extends beyond the realm of human relationships to encompass love for all creation. He celebrates the beauty of nature, the harmony of the cosmos, and the inherent goodness of existence as manifestations of Divine love and faith. In doing so, Rumi invites us to cultivate a deep reverence for life and to recognize the sacred presence that permeates every aspect of reality.

Keywords: Faith, Love, God, Man, World, Divine, Heart.

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If you have lost heart in the path of Love,
 Flee to me without delay: I am a fortress
 invincible (Rumi, D-17925).

by loving and aiding Allah's other creations, including
 humans (Khosla, 1987, p. 9).

INTRODUCTION

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was born in Balkh, Persia, around 1207 AD. He was one of the most revered spiritual poets of the thirteenth century. His family tree began with Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, and continued through a long line of eminent jurists. He was a prominent Sufi poet who adhered to the principle of Tawhid, which means "believing in one God". This means that Allah sent Muhammad S.A.W. as his messenger. Love mediates all relationships between the Divine, Humans, and the Natural World, says Rumi. A person's life has always been profoundly impacted by love. There is no vocabulary or set of terms that can adequately capture the essence of love, making any attempt to do so futile. True satisfaction and contentment, according to Rumi, can only be achieved

A complex work covering six volumes with their own introductions, the *Mathnawi* was begun by Jalaluddin Rumi in his fifties at the insistence of his follower Chalabi. The *Mathnawi* is considered by some scholars, notably the famous Persian poet Jami, to be a "Persian Quran" because of the incisive commentary it provides on the Quran in Persian. In his explorations of pride, destiny, faith, and the sublime force of love all of which lead to a relationship with the Divine Rumi expertly combined aspects of mythology, history, folklore, and wisdom. Sufi teachings, passed down through enthralling stories and metaphors, became famous around the world as the 1900s wore on.

The Persian word for love, "*ishq*," forms the lively center of Rumi's literary tapestry, which is woven around the themes of love and religion. An examination of the word's origins reveals that it derives from the

Persian word “ashaqeh,” meaning ivy a plant that grows in tangled webs, sometimes even eating its own host plant for sustenance. Like the ivy’s dogged climb towards the sun, Rumi sees love as the powerful pull that returns all things to their Divine origin. Rumi says it beautifully: love is the force that draws everything into a closer relationship with its Maker and fortifies belief in God.

Never be without love, or you will be dead; Die with love and remain alive.

If you have not been a lover, count not your life as lived; On the Day of Reckoning, it (i.e. life without love) will not be counted (Yarshater, 1988, p. 66).

Sufism is a religion of direct love, direct inner experience, and unwavering faith. Some asked Rumi about the meaning of love and he replied:

Someone asked me, “What is love?” I replied, “Ask not about these meanings; When you became like me, then you will know. When HE calls you, you will recite its tales. Hail to thee, then, O love, sweet madness; Thou who healest all our infirmities, Thou who are the physician of our pride and self-conceit (Schimmel, 1993, p. 89).

Main Theme

There is no doubt that love and faith serve as the overarching themes throughout Rumi’s writings. In his poetry, Rumi continues the tradition of Persian mystic and Sufi poets by discussing the power of love (*ishq*) to strengthen belief in the Ultimate Reality and to imbue the world with profound spiritual imperatives. There are many endearing aspects to his idea of love that have a profound effect on delicate human minds. Referenced in (Chittick, 1983, p. 194) Rumi has made extensive use of allegories to elicit an emotional response from his audience when discussing love. Rumi declares:

“Someone asked “What is love?” I replied, “Ask not about these meanings. When you become like me, then you will know. When he calls you, you will recite its tale” (Rumi, 1368/2003, D29050-51).

Looking at the concept of love in Rumi’s works and how relevant it is now reveals that human civilization is grappling with enormous fundamental issues across the board. The world is filled with people who are down in the dumps, sad, anxious, worried, and lonely. Rumi draws us back to humanism, religion, and service to God’s creation in his definition of love, which is independent of any artificial factors. This love has the capacity to change us so that we can better endure trials, find our purpose in life, and remain steadfast in our belief in the One True Truth. Summarizing Rumi’s Sufi understanding of love, we are encouraged to confront the challenges of life and the world’s social and political issues with courage, dignity, and unfaltering belief. Living and letting live, finding inner peace and fulfilment

via loving and helping God’s fellow animals and humans, and ultimately satisfying God is all that love can do. According to Rumi, there are guiding principles that help shape one’s fate in this life; these include maturing into one’s full potential as a person and achieving personal freedom and immortality. The five most important virtues in this regard might be *ishq*, intellect, action, faith, and *faqr*.

The term “*ishq*” refers to a more elevated kind of love. But Rumi has given the word *ishq* a deeper meaning. While defining love in other places in his *Mathnawi*, Rumi exposes numerous deep connotations. “Love is a sea; the sky is foam in this sea”, “Love and faith is a mighty sorcerer” (Golkarian, 2019). It is not a love of the physical body to him. Rumi feels that consuming wheat causes a person to have a lesser level of emotional connection to either a male or female, and that this makes Rumi unworthy of the title *Ishq*. He says:

Those who loves which are for the sake of a colour (outward beauty) are not love: in the end they are a disgrace (*Mathnawi*, Vol. I, 205).

Rumi places great stress on this understanding of *ishq*, which is common among mystics.

Mystical literature’s profound and abiding commitment to the Absolute makes it applicable to mystics of various backgrounds and beliefs, bolstering their spiritual faith and devotion, and allowing it to transcend the dogmatic language in which it is expressed (Qaiser, 1989, pp. 65-66).

Further, Rumi says that this love is “a cosmic sensation, a sense of oneness with the Universe.” Rumi claims that love is the cure-all for human misery and the remedy for arrogance. True altruism can only develop in a person when they experience the crushing pain of love and the illuminating light of faith. Love, he argued, was the universe’s driving force. Love is the driving force that returns all things to their origin; it is love that imbues music with meaning and gives life its direction. All the elements of nature come together in love. Love, however, is inextricable from logic and cannot be explained. The best way to learn love is to live it, with faith. It jumps headfirst into battle, ready to face anything comes its way, in order to safeguard the Beloved.

The true lover of God does not question before making the ultimate sacrifice for the Beloved but enters the battlefield without concern for the outcome. Because love blurs the lines between good and evil, it alters our understanding of what it means to love. Love finds meaning and beauty in both happy and sad times, in difficult times and easy ones. It goes beyond polarities by seeing all that happens as stepping stones to the Beloved. Because of this, it causes a whole and unconditional change in behaviour and thinking. Rumi says:

Through love dregs taste like pure wine,
Through love pains are as healing balms.

Through love thorns become roses,
 And through love vinegar becomes sweet wine.
 Through love the stake becomes a throne,
 Through love reverse of fortune seems good
 fortune.
 Through love a prison seems a rose bower,
 Without love a grate full of ashes seems a
 garden.
 Through love burning fire is pleasing light,
 Through love the Devil becomes a Houri.
 Through love hard stones become soft as butter,
 Without love soft wax becomes hard iron.
 Through love grief is as joy,
 Through love Ghouls turn into angels.
 Through love stings are as honey,
 Through love lions are harmless as mice.
 Through love sickness is health,
 Through love wrath is as mercy
 Through love the dead rise to life
 Through love, the king becomes a slave (Rumi,
 1273/1898, p. 80).

According to adherents, love is fundamental to the religion's core values and principles. Because we think that everything is centred around God, the concept of God plays a very crucial part whenever we discuss the general ethos of religion. Everyone knows that God is man's ultimate destiny. Living is a pilgrimage to God, as Rumi put it:

Our destination is God (Qaiser, 1989, p. 223).

He is more than just an idea; he is alive and changing. A major tenet of religion is the awareness of God's link to humanity and the cosmos. Accordingly, God occupies the central stage (Qaiser, 1989, p. 223).

As the Prophet of Islam said, "None of you truly believes until God and His messengers are more beloved to Him than anything else" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari 15, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 44).

Among humanity, the universe, and the divine, love has always played a pivotal role. For all of God's creatures, including humans, it was and is a powerful motivator. Nizamuddin Auliya maintains that "love of God" is the pinnacle of human achievement and that this love entails a deep affection for all people. Thus, Rumi's worldview is heavily reliant on the interplay of humanity, the natural world, and the divine (Nabi, 1962, p. 86).

We are all aware that many Islamic thinkers have, from the beginning of time, emphasized the importance of love. The question that emerges, however, is what kind of love these thinkers are talking to. Love for God, on the other hand, is eternal, while love for this material world is transient, in their view. It follows that the majority of Sufis and Islamic thinkers, including Maulana Rumi, agree that there are essentially two types of love: Carnal love and Divine love. While their ways

may differ, their beliefs about the supremacy of love for God above desire of worldly possessions remain the same.

When a person is truly loved, their vanity and conceit, two of the most wicked human traits, are washed away. Mystics have different views on where love comes from. Different people have different ideas on who or what motivates a lover; some say the beloved is what makes the lover love, while others say the beloved is what makes the lover exist. That the beloved came before the lover is the most important thing. Love, whether it be bestowed by a lover or a beloved, will lead us to God, according to Rumi. Since the end goal is love, it makes little difference if the lover or beloved is the one experiencing attraction. I feel the same way about them. "Not only the thirsty seek the water, but the water seeks the thirsty as well" (Schimmel, 1993, p. 56), as stated in Rumi's *Mathnawi*, is cited by Annemarie Schimmel to illustrate this mutual attraction.

Just as all genuine loves lead to oneness with the Beloved, so too does God's love. Sincere devotees can achieve the holiness and perfection of heart in this life, which is necessary for reaching this spiritual union. Every person already has God dwelling within them; thus, the mystical understanding of the Divine is not far from where they live. But until the ego, ignorance, worldly attachments, and selfish wants are wiped from the mirror of the heart, this fundamental truth stays buried. By purifying oneself of these imperfections, one can see the Divine presence reflected inside themselves and feel the oneness of existence (Qaiser, 1989, p. 270). As William Chittick (2009) observes, the true value of a human being is determined by the condition of the heart. Therefore, man's essential task in this world is to purify and polish the heart until it becomes a perfect mirror capable of reflecting the Divine Reality (p. 39).

According to Rumi, this sentence summarizes his whole theory of love and desire. Since admitting one's love for someone is a declaration of the lover's importance, it is inferred that the beloved keeps her love a secret. The beloved's inner beauty remains unaffected by his status as the highest achiever and most in-demand individual. Despite appearances, there has been no breakup between the beloved and the beloved.

Let's briefly discuss the two essential forms of love. According to Rumi,

Rumi differentiates between a love for spirituality or the Divine and a love for earthly pleasures, or secular love. The kind of love that makes breaking up a relationship painful is known as "secular love," and it manifests itself physically in ways like clinging to one another's lips, hands, and gaze. This transitory love is rejected by mystics, who hold that true love, spiritual love, is a longing that is accompanied by a steady pulse. If the love diminishes after getting married, it's not love; it's want, and genuine love is unrelated to desire. The

Mathnawi commencement ceremony is graced with the telling of the story of “the King and Handmaiden,” a narrative that extols the virtues of true love. The king takes the handmaiden under his wing after falling head over heels for her on a hunting trip. As if dictated from on above, she falls ill.

He begs every doctor to cure her because his life would be worthless without her, but she’s also the cause of all his pain. However, doctors have been unable to find a cure for her. Devoting himself to holy contemplation, he fervently prays to God to heal his beloved. In his dream, he is told that the following day, a holy doctor will visit him. On his arrival, the king tells the doctor to see the handmaiden. Because “where there’s smoke, there’s fire,” the doctor examines her and finds out what’s wrong with her. Her grief teaches him that she is ill with love, a condition distinct from heart illness. According to the doctor, she had feelings for a jeweller in Samarkand before the king took her. A courier was dispatched by the monarch to return the goldsmith from

Samarkand. When he comes, the handmaiden’s mood instantly brightens. The spiritual doctor gives the goldsmith medicine, but he doesn’t get better; in fact, his condition gets worse, and the handmaiden’s passion for him fades until he dies. The goldsmith is head over heels for the handmaiden. This is because the goldsmith is primarily concerned with the tangible or secular aspects of life. By comparison, Zulaykha had a lengthy history of following the love of the Prophet Yusuf (Josef), but once they were married, she came to despise their intensity and abandoned him, making her way to the valley of Divine Love.

This path to unconditional love is found in Sufism. To get back to the Beloved, who is God, a Sufi becomes a traveller who explores the depths of one’s soul. Like the Sun, the Divine or Beloved warms the earth, causing snow to melt and fruits to ripen, yet too much proximity would cause the entire planet to catch fire. It is not safe to look directly at the Sun without protection. The Sun’s warmth or God’s love are two things Rumi hopes his readers can feel via the allegories, symbols, and images he uses in his stories (Schimmel, 1993, p. 88).

Thus, it follows that in order to come to know God, one must have both kinds of love. In spite of widespread intellectual agreement that carnal love is merely a transitional phase leading to Divine love, the vast majority of individuals still get mired down in worldly pursuits and mistakenly believe that this is where they will ultimately end up. But that is not how it works; rather, this material world is merely a stepping stone on the way to the ultimate goal of “Fanahfil-Shaikh” (lover of Master).

Therefore, love is loving God completely and without condition. Rumi is among the many Sufis who

hold the view that the only way to serve God is to have unwavering trust and love for him, and to devote one’s entire life to serving him.

CONCLUSION

Rumi, the renowned preacher-poet of Persia, emerged into a world embroiled in chaos and upheaval. The Mongol invasion of 1219 prompted Rumi’s family to forsake their homeland, seeking refuge in Anatolia, modern-day Turkey. Amidst the tumult, love captivated Rumi’s mind and soul, becoming the focal point of their poetic expression. Utilizing everyday language intertwined with fantastical imagery, Rumi illuminated the essence of love. Their ability to craft unexpected parallels demanded a keen intellect, a quality Rumi possessed in abundance. As a towering figure in both literature and religion, Rumi’s exploration of love transcended the physical and delved into the spiritual realm, drawing all beings towards a Divine union with God. For him, leaving life means experiencing love. In our time, the nature of love as understood by Rumi is highly relevant. In an increasingly divisive world, love can serve as a unifying force that brings people together regardless of their differences. Spiritual love can also help individuals connect with something greater than themselves and provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life. In fact, one could argue that the need for love and connection has become even more important in the modern world, where people often feel isolated and disconnected.

Overall, the concept of love and faith as espoused by Rumi remains highly relevant in our time and can serve as a source of guidance and inspiration for individuals seeking to live a more meaningful and fulfilling life. So, his entire ethos of love and faith gives us the fortitude and optimism we need to face the challenges of life and the evils of the world with spiritual fortitude and moral grandeur. They think that only love can show people how to live and give them a reason to live.

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