

MAWLĀNĀ JALĀL AL-DİN RŪMĪ: UNIVERSAL LOVE, TOLERANCE, AND THE SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF HUMANITY MEVLĀNĀ CELĀLEDDĪN-İ RŪMĪ: EVRENSEL SEVGİ, HOŞGÖRÜ VE İNSANLIĞIN MANEVİ REHBERİ

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Sorumlu Yazar

Öz

Büyük bir mütefekkir olmanın yanı sıra büyük bir şair de olan Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, yaşadığı çağdan günümüze evrensel fikirleriyle insanlığa rehber olmuştur. Mevlânâ, insanlarla ilişkilerinde toplumun tamamına karşı duyarlı olmuş, onları birlik beraberlik ve barış içinde yaşamaya davet etmiştir. Mevlânâ'nın bu engin sosyal vizyonu, yalnızca Doğu'dan Batı'ya uzanan medeniyetleri etkilemekle kalmamış, aynı zamanda onun mutasavvıf, filozof ve şair kimliğiyle geçmişte olduğu gibi bugün de insanlığa ışık tutmaya ve gelecekte de gönülleri aydınlatmaya devam edecektir. Çalışmamızda mistik edebiyatın en büyük hazinelerinden biri olan Mevlânâ hakkında kısa bir bilgi verilecektir. Ardından onun hedeflediği barış ve huzur ortamından hareketle etkin hoşgörüsü ve insandan Allah'a ulaşan engin aşkından yola çıkarak insanı, hayatı ve daha genel boyutuyla varlığı anlama ve anlamlandırma insana nefsini tanıtmayı ve aşkı fark ettirmesi, insanlar arasında sevgi ve barışa yönlendirmedeki eğitici rolünü irdelemeye çalışacağız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mevlânâ, insan, toplum, şiir, aşk

Abstract

In addition to his significance as a thinker, Mawlânâ Jalâl al-Dîn Rûmî stands as one of the foremost poets of mystical literature, whose universal ideas have continued to influence societies from his own era to the present. In his works, Rûmî exhibits a sensitivity toward diverse segments of society, calling for coexistence based on unity, harmony, and peace. His writings have shaped perspectives on human existence, spirituality, and ethics across cultures from East to West, and continue to inspire scholarship and thought today. This study provides a concise overview of Rûmî's contributions, focusing on his understanding of love, his perspective on the human self (nafs), and his educational approach aimed at guiding individuals toward inner transformation, ethical awareness, and spiritual peace. Drawing on selected texts, particularly the Masnavî and the Dîwân-i Kabîr, this analysis examines how Rûmî addresses human nature and metaphysical concepts and explores his role in encouraging individuals to attain self-awareness and cultivate a deeper understanding of love as a path to divine unity.

Key Words: *Mawlânâ*, human, society, poetry, love

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Introduction

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī was born in 6th Rabi' al-Awwal 604 AH (September 30th, 1207) in the city of Balkh in Khorasan. In the prologue to the *Masnāvī*, Mawlānā recorded his name as Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Balkhī. His honorific was Jalāl al-Dīn. The title *Mawlānā*, meaning “our master,” was used as an expression of reverence. The Persian title “Hudāvendigār”, meaning “Sultan”, was also given to him by his father (Öngören, 2004, 441–448). His father, Bahā' al-Dīn Walad—widely known by the epithet *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’* (“the sultan of scholars”)—belonged to a scholarly family established in Balkh. In 1213, due to the political unrest in the region, he was compelled to migrate with his family. At that time, historical sources suggest that Jalāl al-Dīn was around five years old; after a long journey, it is estimated that he entered Anatolia at approximately the age of ten. Spending his early youth in Laranda, Mawlānā and his family were eventually invited to settle in Konya. When his father passed away in Konya two years after beginning to teach there (629 AH / 1231 CE), Mawlānā was twenty-four years old (Eflākī, 1986, 12, 22, 25, 29, 32). According to Mawlānā's son, Sultan Walad, his grandfather Bahā' al-Dīn came from the Kaaba to the “land of Rum” to bring divine mercy to the people of Anatolia. He chose Konya as his home among all the cities in Anatolia. Soon, word spread throughout the city that a man had arrived who was considered a miracle of the age, unmatched in knowledge, and a bearer of the secrets of divine love.

Men and women, young and old, all turned to him, witnessed his spiritual wonders, and declared themselves his disciples (Sultan Walad, 2017, 252). Upon the request of both young and old disciples who regarded him as the spiritual heir to his father's grace, Mawlānā assumed his father's position.

Mawlānā was a spiritual guide with many disciples. As the sheikh of this community, which later became the Mevlevi Order, he began teaching like his father and created the sema ceremony from which many of his ghazals were created. Mawlānā was not a recluse who isolated himself from the world to dedicate himself to worship in a secluded and silent corner, avoiding its traps. On the contrary, he was a frequent visitor of palaces, maintaining close relationships with rulers who sought his advice and with members of the court (Lewis, 2010, 10).

He received his initial education in Balkh from his father, Bahā' al-Dīn, a great scholar and mystic. After his father's death in Konya, he became a student of his father's caliph, Sayyid Burhanuddin Muhakkiq Tirmidhi. Encouraged by Sayyid Burhanuddin, Mawlānā traveled to Aleppo where he studied hadīth, fiqh, tafsir, literature, and philosophy. After his studies in Aleppo, he went to Damascus where he continued his education for four years. In the mature period of his life, he met Shams-i Tabrizi and drew spiritual inspiration from him. Sayyid Burhanuddin and Shams-i Tabrizi had a significant influence on the formation of Mawlānā's mindset. He learned the Shariah sciences from Sayyid Burhanuddin, and the philosophy of Sufism along with its corresponding way of life from Shams-i Tabrizi. Beginning with Shams-i Tabrizi, Mawlānā's sufistic love made him a poet, and he thus became one of the greatest poets in the Islamic world (Özdemir, 2011, 3).

Mawlānā died on 5th Jumada al-Akhirah 672 AH (December 17th, 1273). Due to his request that there be no weeping or lamentation at his funeral and his description of the day of his death as a moment of reunion, the day of his passing came to be known as *Shab-i Arūs* (“the wedding night”), and his death anniversaries have since been commemorated under this name (Öngören, 2004, 441-448).

Methodology

Mawlānā’s works constitute foundational sources for understanding the intellectual, spiritual, and socio-cultural dimensions of the period in which he lived. His writings not only reflect the religious and philosophical concerns of 13th-century Anatolia but also address timeless themes such as divine love, the self, and the human quest for transcendence. In particular, his poetry offers a rich site for exploring how mystical and metaphysical ideas are articulated through literary expression.

This study aims to examine Mawlānā’s philosophical and spiritual perspectives as conveyed through selected poems from his major works, primarily the *Mathnawī* and the *Dīwān-e Kabīr*. The research follows a classical philological method, focusing on close reading of the original Persian texts alongside authoritative translations. This involves semantic, rhetorical, and symbolic analysis of key terms and motifs (e.g., love, annihilation of the self, union with the divine), tracing their usage and transformation across different poems. In addition to philological methods, the study incorporates a hermeneutic approach. The critical framework will also draw selectively from literary theory, particularly archetypal criticism and symbolic analysis, to explore recurring images (such as the lover, the reed, the flame, or the mirror) and how these function within the broader architecture of mystical experience. The goal is not only to analyze the formal structure and imagery of the poems, but also to interpret their spiritual and ontological significance. Textual analysis will be conducted in the following contexts: mystical experience and transformation, sociocultural context, intertextuality.

Mawlānā’s Understanding of Human Being

Rumi’s voluminous works present a kaleidoscopic image of God, humanity, the world, and the interrelation of these three realities. Yet, despite the often astonishing complexity of the picture he paints, all his explanations and depictions are so imbued with a common essence and so harmonious that we can easily agree with those who say they can all be reduced to a single sentence or expression (Chittick, 1983, 7).

Mawlānā, not only a Sufi but also a scholar, chose literature as his principal medium of expression in inviting his primary audience, the Seljuk Muslims, and more broadly all of humanity, to the horizons of a spiritual life grounded in Sufism or more generally the inner spiritual dimensions embedded within Islam. Rather than a strictly scholarly or literal mode of discourse, he deliberately employed a richly literary and metaphorical style, closely linked to his own intense mystical experiences. This choice is undoubtedly related to the Seljuk audience’s deep appreciation for literature, but it

can also be understood in light of the transformative power that literature and metaphors in particular hold in influencing human behavior (Atalay, 2008, 166).

Mawlānā had a deep, contradictory, and multi-layered personality that went beyond the saintly figure portrayed in legends or the recent one-dimensional depictions of him as “the Sufi Mawlānā” or “the poet Mawlānā,” just like any real human being. His poetry, especially his ghazals, is not merely the ecstatic outpouring of a mystic’s emotions; Mawlānā is far more complex and far more knowledgeable (Lewis, 2010, 10).

In this context, Mawlānā, as a wise figure embodying the convergence of knowledge, wisdom, and poetic sensibility, closely engaged with the daily life of society and provided convincing solutions to the problems of the human soul. His state of love and spiritual ecstasy did not distance him from his surroundings or everyday life (Karaismailoğlu, 2005, 27). This is because he interacted not only with scholars and statesmen but also with individuals of various religions, nations, and social strata. He formed close relationships with Muslims of various sects and even Christians among his friends (Lewis, 2010, 341).

Thus, Mawlānā viewed humanity as the only being among all creatures embodying all of God’s attributes. Referring to the hadith, “*Allah created Adam in His own image,*” he expressed that God temporarily endowed humans divine attributes, which contrast with the qualities of servitude. He proclaimed that every human being is a vast universe and that the essence of a person lies in their thoughts, while the rest is merely flesh and nerves (Anbarcıoğlu, 2007, 17).

Mawlānā, who placed immense value in humans, expresses these feelings in *Fîhî Mâ Fîh* as follows:

If a person does not engage with the people, complains about them, and makes no effort, then he is not truly human (Anbarcıoğlu, 2020, 75).

For this reason, he always behaved with humility, kindness, and tolerance toward all people. This can easily be understood from his following words:

During sema, addressing those who tried to stop disciples who accidentally bumped into him, Mawlānā said: “I have a principle: I do not want anyone to be hurt by me. While performing sema, some individuals bump into me. Some friends attempt to stop them, and this does not please me. Yet, I have told them perhaps a hundred times, ‘Do not speak badly to anyone because of me, do not upset anyone; I am consent with this.’” (Anbarcıoğlu, 2020, 108).

Among Mawlānā’s works, *Masnāvî* stands out as an elaborate interpretation of the Qur’an and the theological ideas developed by Muslim thinkers and mystics, though presented in a transformed form (Lewis, 2010, 341). In this context, Mawlānā continued to provide guidance to people, offering them counsel even in the final moments of his life. One such piece of advice mentioned in the sources is as follows:

“I advise you, both secretly and openly, to fear Allah, to eat less, sleep less, to speak less, to refrain from sins, to proceed to fast and pray, to avoid lust, to endure the hardships and cruelty of people, to avoid associating with the vulgar and the profligate, and to keep the company of kind and righteous individuals. For the best of

people is the one who helps others. The best of speech is that which is concise and meaningful. Praise belongs to Allah alone.” (Arpağuş, 2007, 97).

Similarly, in *İbtidânâme*, Sultan Walad expressed Mawlânâ’s teachings to the people as follows:

Mawlânâ preached from the pulpit with noble generosity and a passionate style that captivated hearts. He swept away ignorance from the world with knowledge. He spoke of mysteries, and his words always pierced through countless pearls. Through him, the lovers of Divine found their purpose. He gave life to the human soul (Sultan Walad, 2017, 255-259). He always said that through his relationships with the people he lived with, he would come to recognize his own traits and faults and find the opportunity to correct them. In this way, the mirror of the heart would shine even brighter. He emphasized that every word and thought creates an echo or reflection, but likewise, the thoughts and actions of those around him would also produce their own echoes (Schimmel, 2017, 135).

An important aspect of Mawlânâ’s teaching is human responsibility. It can be challenging to understand how he reconciled this emphasis on human responsibility with his firm belief in Allah’s all-encompassing power and as the sole creator of all actions: He creates without secondary causes. According to him, the human being is a camel upon which “free will” has been, and it is up to the individual to use this saddle correctly, that is, to burden it not with the straw and chaff of harmful and unnecessary deeds but with obedience and good actions. This is because an absolute belief in predestination leads to attributing one’s own sins to God. This point is illustrated quite clearly in a story:

A man entered a fruit orchard, climbed a tree, and ate the fruit. When the gardener noticed him, the man claimed that he was eating God’s fruit with God’s permission. The gardener brought him down, called the servants, and beat the man harshly with “God’s rod” until he confessed that he had stolen the fruit with his own free will and was not following Divine will (Schimmel, 2001, 98).

In this context, it can be said that readers may draw inspiration and gain insight into better understanding themselves through the stories in Mawlânâ’s works. Moreover, *Mawlânâ establishes principles aimed at fostering a harmonious community structure*. The symbolic meanings presented in *his stories* offer perspectives on the norms and ideas within the social dynamics of society, which suggests that Mawlânâ contributed to identifying key points in human development to become a beneficial self for the community around him (Al-Razim, M., 2025, 144).

Similarly, Mawlânâ’s poems, written with profound teachings and the wisdom of life, contain advice aimed at enhancing an individual’s inner journey, morality, virtue, and closeness to Allah. In Mawlânâ’s teachings, when spirituality or the human connection with Allah is concerned, love is the energy that strengthens this bond even further. The reason that the meaning of life arises in a person who serves Allah is not because they are compelled to worship or follow a path of devotion, but because love leads them to feel that their connection with Allah, or spirituality, is an inseparable part of human life (Al-Razim, 2025, 151).

Mawlānā's Understanding of Education and the Human Being

Mawlānā's works, especially the *Masnavī*, can be regarded primarily as sources aimed at supporting and guiding spiritually experimental development, independent of purely academic concerns. This suggests that the *Masnavī* was written foremost as an educational and transformative text (Kaya, 2016, 11-13). Therefore, this study aims to focus on spiritual sensitivity as well as love and spiritual development in general through selected couplets from both the *Masnavī* and the *Dīwān-i Kabīr*, addressing human nature and metaphysical concepts.

Building on this, in Mawlānā's system of thought, the human being is depicted as a creature inherently possessing a divine essence but estranged from this essence upon being sent into the world. This approach is particularly embodied in the *Masnavī* through the metaphor of the reed flute. In the opening lines of *Masnavī*, one of his most well-known works, Mawlānā describes the state of separation from the Truth by drawing a connection between the reed's being cut from the reed bed and the human being's detachment from the world. Here, the reed flute is used as a metaphor for the "Insan-ı Kāmil" (the Perfect Human) as described in the Sufi tradition. In a commentary on the *Masnavī*, it is noted that even the number of holes in the reed flute symbolizes the human body. A piece of reed is cut from the field and hollowed out, and the artisan's actions in shaping it are likened to the Perfect Human; conversely, one who fails to undergo this process is compared to the Imperfect Human (*Insan-ı Nakis*). Moreover, just as the reed flute is taken from the reed bed, the human suffers as a consequence of separation from paradise and the realm of souls (Kaya, 2016, 14). The fundamental human vocation in this earthly existence consists of purifying, refining, and ultimately transforming the heart (qalb) into an immaculate mirror capable of reflecting the Divine. This ontological transformation can only be accomplished through the guidance of the Heart's Sovereign (i.e., God as the ultimate reality and possessor of true consciousness) (Chittick, 1983, 39). This analogy is not Mawlānā's invention but is based on stories and legends passed down from ancient times through generations. The reed flute, lamenting its separation from the reed bed, cries out to all who have ears to hear the secrets of divine reunion and eternal bliss (Schimmel, 2001, 310). In this context, the reed flute metaphor strikingly reflects the human story. The reed story taken from Sanā'ī in Mawlānā's work represents the soul's separation from its eternal homeland, the divine presence, and its descent into the world (Kaya, 2016, 14). The lament here expresses the pain of distancing from the Truth. Mawlānā's *Masnavī* can be said to be summarized in these two couplets. The reed flute is the symbol of the 'longing for the Truth within every human being; its voice is the cry of this separation. Mawlānā urges us to "listen" and to hear beyond the apparent, to listen with the language of the heart:

بشنو از نی چون شکایت می‌کند

از جدایی‌ها حکایت می‌کند (*Mesnevî-i Manevî*, I/33)

Listen to the reed, how it tells a tale; it laments the separations.

Similarly, in the story of *the Grocer and the Parrot (Bekkâl ve Tûtî)* in the *Masnâvî*, Mawlânâ offers guidance to people on showing virtuous behavior through the following verses:

کار مردان روشنی و گرمیست
کار دونان حيله و بی‌شرمیست
(*Mesnevî-i Manevî*, I/52)

The deeds of virtuous people are characterized by light and warmth, while the deeds of vile people are tainted by deceit and shamelessness.

Virtue is the collective term for qualities praised by morality and required for ethical behavior, such as honesty, benevolence, courage, wisdom, humility, kindness, and moderation. A virtuous person is defined as one who is sincere, whose words and actions are consistent, who guides others, and who demonstrates exemplary behavior. In this couplet, Mawlânâ contrasts the character of truly virtuous individuals with that of immoral people. According to Mawlânâ, true virtue consists of spreading light around and acting compassionately. In contrast, selfish and immoral individuals are characterized by deceit and shamelessness. He emphasizes that such people act with dark intentions and lack moral boundaries. Among these two types of individuals, one illuminates society while the other poisons it. Mawlânâ calls for equipping oneself with wisdom and virtue and avoiding the path of base individuals.

In the following verses, Mawlânâ emphasizes that every individual must take on their own responsibilities:

تو مگو همه به جنگند و ز صلح من چه آید
تو یکی نه‌ای هزاری تو چراغ خود برافروز
(*Külliyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî*, I/439)

Do not say, 'Everyone is at war; what benefit can my peace bring?'
You are not one person but a thousand; ignite your own light.

One of the significant topics Mawlânâ addresses in his teachings is the matter of awareness of one's responsibilities. Because humans stand out both for their privileges and, simultaneously, for their responsibilities, this very privilege makes them accountable within the universe. These lines, emphasizing the individual's responsibility and inner strength, convey two fundamental messages. First, they criticize the passive attitude of those who say, "What can I do?" in the face of widespread conflict, violence, and evil, which symbolize war in society. In contrast, peace, representing harmony, love, and reconciliation, is a value that everyone must actively work to build. Here, Mawlânâ reminds us that the individual is not merely a single entity but composed of thousands of jewels such as wisdom, love, and power; by transforming oneself first, one can illuminate the surrounding environment. It is these "thousands" who confront problems, resist evil, and radiate light. This constitutes Mawlânâ's call to responsibility through both individual and societal transformation. He highlights that every individual must assume their responsibility and that this has a chain effect, emphasizing the profound importance of even the smallest act of goodness.

In the following verses, Mawlânâ emphasizes that every action a person takes will have consequences, explaining that everything we do will come back to us.

این جهان کوهست و فعل ما ندا

سوی ما آید نداها را صدا (Mesnevî-i Manevî, I/45)

This world is like a mountain, and our deeds are like shouts; Our shouts return to us as echoes.

Just as an echo returns exactly when a voice calls out to a mountain, the universe reflects back to us what we do. These lines, which invite humans to take responsibility, remind us that those who do good will receive good in return, while those who commit evil will face evil. The phrase “what we do” encompasses not only physical actions but also words and hidden thoughts. Every action we take is essentially an echo that returns to us. This teaching serves as a guiding principle for peace, justice, and conscious living on both individual and societal levels. Moreover, these verses resonate with the concept of “the recompense of deeds” in Islamic Sufism. A person reaps what they sow. However, in Mawlānā’s thought, this law can be transformed by love, as love is a higher consciousness that converts the echo of negative actions into positive ones. Mawlānā advises that through living virtuously and seeking truth, one embarks on a profound spiritual journey toward closeness to Allah. In this context, the means by which a person reaches Allah and truth is love.

In the above couplets, Mawlānā advises that by living a virtuous life and seeking the truth, one can embark on a profound spiritual journey, ultimately drawing closer to Allah.

In addition to his teaching activities, Mawlānā also continued his role as a spiritual guide for the people. Between 1241 and 1245, following the methods of his father and teachers, he began teaching fiqh and religious sciences, and invited people to Allah’s religion. Many disciples gathered around him. Mawlānā carried out his role as an educator in three ways: teaching students as a professor (müderris) in madrasas (formal religious education), guiding his disciples spiritually through dhikr circles (spiritual mentorship), and delivering sermons to the public from the mosque pulpit (Özdemir, 2011, 4). In his works, he emphasized the importance of education and knowledge in human life. The following verses reflect Mawlānā’s thoughts on education and the importance of education in knowing oneself.

In *Masnavî*, while pointing out the importance of knowledge, Mawlānā believes that its true value lies not in being a mental burden but in illuminating the heart and soul. He highlights that if knowledge finds meaning in the heart, it becomes an elevating friend for a person:

علم چون بر دل زند یاری شود

علم چون بر تن زند باری شود (Mesnevî-i Manevî, I/242)

When knowledge touches the heart, it becomes a friend; when it weighs on the body, it becomes a burden.

The ultimate center of human consciousness, its innermost reality—the ‘meaning’ known by God—is called the ‘heart’ (*dil*, *qalb*). As for the lump of flesh in the chest, it is but the shadow or outermost shell of the heart. Between this heart and that heart lie infinite levels of consciousness and self-realization (Chittick, 1983, 37). In this couplet, Mawlānā emphasizes the two opposing effects of knowledge and points to

the essence of true learning. In this context, the phrase “knowledge that touches the heart becomes a friend” highlights the heart¹ as the center of truth and love, which in Sufism is also considered the source of knowledge. However, the heart is not opposed to reason; rather, it is intertwined with intellect to a certain extent. Reasoning is a function of the heart, and the source of the intellect that produces thought is the heart. Sufis, who state that the heart surpasses the intellect in metaphysical matters, have based their understanding of such topics on the intuition of the heart. As was the case with the opposition between Love and intellect, here also intellect is only negated because its continued affirmation prevents the lover from gaining access to the Universal Intellect and what lies beyond. (Chittick, 1983, 318). Mystics believe that through a process called heart purification or *nafs*² *tazkiyah*, the cleansed heart can know religious and divine truths directly and without intermediaries (Uludağ, 2001, 229–232). Knowledge that penetrates the heart purifies a person from pride and instills humility and compassion. According to Sufis, knowledge within the heart connects a person to God. In contrast, the phrase “knowledge that touches the body becomes a burden” symbolizes the body as the seat of material desires and the ego. Knowledge that remains only at the bodily level can become a source of arrogance, becomes meaningless if not accompanied by action, and is exhausting. As the noble Hadith warns, “I seek refuge in Allah from knowledge that does not benefit” (Tirmizî, 1996, 385), such knowledge burdens its bearer. In other words, knowledge that reaches the heart makes one an *ārif* (knower of the truth), while knowledge confined to the body produces *hamākāt* (ignorant superficiality).

Building on this, while emphasizing the importance of knowledge in the *Masnavî*, it is stressed that knowledge is not merely a mental burden but primarily intended to enlighten the heart and soul. If knowledge finds meaning in the heart, it becomes a noble friend that elevates the person; otherwise, it remains a burdensome load akin to manual labor. This perspective is deeply connected to the essence of existence, for the true source of meaning is the heart, which is the center of sincerity and authentic being. The heart acts as a touchstone that filters knowledge and transforms it into action and truth. What truly matters is not the quantity of knowledge but the purity and sincerity of the heart that carries it. The purity of the heart arises from a genuine experience of the soul, a quality that cannot be expressed in words but is deeply felt. This is the essence of the *Masnavî*: knowledge becomes a guide leading one to truth only when united with the heart.

From time to time, Mawlānā advises that in education and teaching, rather than adhering strictly to rules, what truly matters is attaining inner knowledge:

¹ The heart holds great importance in Sufism. In Turkish Sufi literature, alongside the terms *heart* (*kalp*) and *tongue* (*dil*), the Turkish word *gönül* has also been used, and certain Sufi concepts have been expressed through this term. Generally, *gönül* refers to “Sufism,” and *gönül ehli* refers to “Sufis.” To attain the state of *gönül* means to be in a state of *rābiṭa* (spiritual connection) and *murāqaba* (meditative self-supervision) (for further information, see: Uludağ, 2001).

² *Nafs*, *spirit*, and *true essence* are terms used to describe the inner world of the human being. In Sufism, *nafs* refers to the servant’s negative traits, blameworthy characteristics, and undesirable actions. (For further information, see: Uludağ, 2006).

هیچ آدابی و ترتیبی مجر

هرچه می‌خواهد دل تنگت بگو (Mesnevî-i Manevî, II/382)

Seek neither restraint nor order; speak as it comes from your burdened heart.

These verses also emphasize the importance of sincerity and authenticity. Mawlānā rejects rigid adherence to strict rules that cause the soul to lose its freedom. Customs and traditions can sometimes act as veils that obscure the truth. What truly matters is the intention that comes from within. In the line “Speak as it comes from your burdened heart,” Mawlānā uses the word “burdened” to express inner distress, suggesting that speaking honestly and spontaneously is a path toward relief and purification. This verse calls for acting according to the voice of one’s heart rather than being overwhelmed by rules and losing one’s essence.

Mawlānā points out that the essence of a person only consists of thought, and education should nurture the kind of thought that elevates and develops a person. This statement presents a metaphysical argument emphasizing that the essence of a human being is a non-material consciousness. The body is temporary, whereas thought or the soul is fundamental. The primary feature that distinguishes the human soul from that of animals is the capacity for conscious thought and self-awareness.

ای برادر تو همان اندیشه‌ای

ما بقی تو استخوان و ریشه‌ای (Mesnevî-i Manevî, II/295)

My brother, you are nothing but thought; the rest is merely bones and hair.

In this couplet, Mawlānā emphasizes that the true essence of the human being lies not in the body, but in consciousness and thought. What makes a person truly human is not the physical form, but the intentions and beliefs that shape them. The body is merely a temporary shell. In this context, Mawlānā criticizes the tendency to focus on outward appearance while overlooking the inner essence, reminding us that the body comes from the earth and will return to it. It is through thought that the human being draws closer to Allah, whereas the body is transient.

In the following couplet, Mawlānā emphasizes that people are often concerned only with superficial knowledge and fail to seek deeper truth. However, anyone who wishes for the presence of the Friend to be revealed and illuminated must turn inward and pierce through their own shell (Topçu, 2013, 138).

هر کسی از ظن خود شد یار من

از درون من نجست اسرار من (Mesnevî-i Manevî, I/33)

Everyone befriended me according to their own assumptions; yet no one sought the secrets within me.

Here, “assumptions” refers to the tendency of people to perceive one another not as they truly are, but through their own mental constructs. This reduces reality to mere appearances and neglects the inner world of the individual. Since assumption is shaped by the perspective of the observer, it belongs to a realm of subjective and shifting images. In this couplet, Mawlānā points out that people interpret him according to their own expectations and viewpoints. However, a person’s inner world, grounded in imagination, cannot truly reflect their authentic self. Thus, the theme

“unaware of the secrets within me” conveys the idea that one’s profound inner truth and connection with Allah lie beyond such superficial understanding. Because no one can fully comprehend the inner world of a seeker of truth, they often try to confine that person within their narrow frameworks. Yet in this unseen inner realm, what truly matters is that the individual knows their own truth.

These couplets indicate that Mawlānā viewed education as a process and that the achievements gained through education would gain even deeper meaning over time.

Love in His Poems

In order to know Mawlānā and to understand him even to a small extent, it is essential to examine his understanding of love. This love is not ordinary but an eternal and everlasting one. It settles in the heart and creates a vast space for itself. The heart, from the perspective of the Qur’an and the traditions of great Islamic mystics, is the essence of the human being. Without the heart, a person is lifeless and amounts to nothing. A person’s worth lies in tending to their heart and mastering it. To master the heart requires distancing oneself from worldly distractions and striving to direct it toward the right path. In this context, the heart holds a significant place in the intellectual and spiritual practices of great mystics, with many mystical concepts revolving around it. This point marks where the movement within the circle of existence comes into being and reaches perfection through its distance, where the beginning of eternity meets its end, where the start of seeing reaches the end of vision, and where beauty begins. At the same time, the heart is a divine and majestic entity with a certain attachment and connection to the physical heart, as if it were the inner essence of a person standing before the appearance of an object. There resides love, and love is the essence of Sufism. Without love, Sufism holds no meaning. Its true essence is the pure love entrusted by Allah to the mystic’s heart. By holding onto this love, the mystic opens the path to reaching their ultimate goal.

Mawlānā also states that the human ego acts as a thick veil over a person’s essence, and the individual’s task is to remove this veil and reach that essence. He further draws attention to the essence within humans and the inherent beauty of their creation. Since this essence exists in all of humanity, he stresses the importance of discovering it and helping others feel this truth (İspir, 2007, 183). For, this essence will lead one to true love. For Mawlānā, true love is the love directed toward absolute beauty, that is, the Creator. Since all created beings are transient, the love directed toward them is also fleeting. To attain eternity, one must love the Eternal. It is this love that leads to human maturity (İspir, 2007, 184). Anything else is not true love. “If love depends on color and scent, that is, if it is superficial, then it is not love; it is a source of shame.” According to Mawlānā, a seeker on the path of mystical intuition and discovery realizes that the root of all suffering lies within the human soul; this awareness of the soul’s nature leads the seeker to completely surrender themselves to Allah.

In his poetry, Mawlānā emphasizes that love transforms the individual, dissolving the self and uniting them with Allah. In search of divine love, Mawlānā symbolizes profound devotion to Allah and the longing to reach Him with the word “love.” According to him, as a person progresses on this path, they discipline their ego, purify

themselves of their self, and ascend toward Allah. This love distances the individual from their ego and brings them closer to the Truth.

In some of his verses, Mawlānā describes love as a transformative force that purifies the self and fills one's being with the presence of Allah. The soul reunites with Allah before death; the drop merges into the ocean. The self no longer says "I," but always "He." It no longer knows the self; it lives with Him, in Him. Everything becomes Him; it sees all things through Him. It recognizes no other existence apart from Him (Topçu, 2013, 138).

In the following verses, he depicts love as a force that purifies a person from their self and fills their being with Allah:

عشق آمد و شد چو خونم اندر رگ و پوست

تا کرد مرا تهی و پر کرد از دوست

اجزای وجود من همه دوست گرفت

نامیست ز من بر من و، باقی همه اوست (Külliyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî, II/1337)

When love came and began to flow in my blood and veins,

It emptied me but filled me with the Beloved.

Every particle of my being became the Beloved,

All that remains of me is a name; the rest is Him.

In the verses above, Mawlānā emphasizes the transformative power of love and the annihilation of the self in the Divine Being. In Sufism, this state—referred to as *fanā' fi'llāh*, is the annihilation of the *sālik's*³ self (*nafs*), allowing one to remain through the permanence of the Truth. In other words, it is the state of being adorned with the attributes of Allah (Mıcık, 2022, 184–195). On this path, the seeker suppresses the self through spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*) and, through ascetic discipline (*riyāda*), detaches the heart from the love of wealth, possessions, and status. As the heart becomes purified from love for all that is other than Allah (*māsiwā*)⁴, love begins to emerge. In other words, the purer the heart becomes, the more fully love reveals itself. The lover whose heart is emptied of all but the Truth and filled solely with Allah reaches the station of the soul—*fanā' fi'llāh*, the final union (*wuṣla*) with the Beloved (Çoban, 2014, 155).

Mawlānā frequently points to the eternal nature of love, expressing that love is the essence of human existence. According to him, a life without love is meaningless, and those who lack divine love miss out on true existence. At this point, Mawlānā regards love as a state of being through which the relationship between the individual and Allah can be established (Taşdelen, 2017, 212).

³ Sālik: A person who has entered the path of *sayr wa sulūk* (spiritual journey), striving through ascetic discipline (*riyādah*), spiritual struggle (*mujāhada*), and ethical practice (*mu'āmala*) to purify the *nafs* and elevate the soul in order to attain spiritual insight. (For further information, see: Uludağ, 2010).

⁴ Māsiwā: Everything that leads the human being away from Allah. (For further information, see: Uludağ, 2003).

عشق از ازلست و تا ابد خواهد بود

جوینده عشق بی عدد خواهد بود

فردا که قیامت آشکارا گردد

هر دل که نه عاشق است رد خواهد بود (Külliyyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî, II/1388)

Love will exist from eternity to eternity,

And those who seek love will be countless.

When the Day of Judgment comes tomorrow,

Every heart without love will be rejected.

As in many of his verses, in these lines as well, Mawlânâ points to love as the reason for the creation of the universe, asserting that the universe came to life through love. From the belief that love is eternal, he emphasizes that love becomes a guide accompanying humanity from pre-eternity (*azal*) in the journey toward the Absolute. He speaks of the countless seekers of love and reminds us that everything one seeks in the material world is destined to perish. Therefore, those who perceive the *jamâl-i muṭlaq* (the Absolute Beauty) in all things must turn away from the material and orient themselves solely toward Allah. In the continuation of the verse, Mawlânâ states that in the life after death, true value will be measured by love, that the fire of love will reflect one's devotion to truth, and that love alone will be of worth in the sight of Allah. Those without love will be regarded as deprived of the truth, and thus, every heart lacking love will be rejected.

In the following couplets from his ghazal, Mawlânâ emphasizes the theme of the "journey of love," which holds a significant place in Sufism. He believes that a person burning with divine love must renounce their sense of self and "dissolve into" Allah. In this process, one transcends their self and unites with Allah's presence. Here, Mawlânâ, with his profound reflections on love, suffering, and the spiritual journey, highlights for lovers of the Truth that burning with divine love is a path that elevates the soul toward the Truth:

ای عاشقان ای عاشقان امروز ماییم و شما

افتاده در غرقابه‌ای تا خود که داند آشنا

گر سیل عالم پر شود، هر موج چون اشتر شود

مرغان آبی را چه غم، تا غم خورد مرغ هوا (Külliyyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî, I/8)

O lovers, O lovers, today there is us, and there is you.

We have fallen into a suffocating waters, now let us see, who knows how to swim?

Even if the world were flooded, and each wave as large as a camel, What harm can come to the birds that swim in the water?

Would a bird soaring in the sky even stop to think of this?

Mawlânâ, through the expression "We have fallen into suffocating waters," likens the quest for truth to a perilous yet transformative journey. Here, he refers to the inner turmoil of the *nafs* and the hardships encountered on the path to truth. He notes that the state of lovers may seem incomprehensible to ordinary people, as they live on a different plane of existence. One is attached to the eternal, the other to the transient. Like all Sufis, Mawlânâ dedicates much of his spiritual discipline to the struggle

against the *nafs*, which encourages base and immoral actions. The *nafs* leads a person to become entangled in the realm of emotions. Thus, a “greater jihad” must be waged against the *nafs* that commands evil (*nafs al-ammārah*) (Schimmel, 2017, 138).

Attachment to the material world and distance from the Truth are seen as the underlying causes of human misery. This is a central teaching in nearly all of Sufism. Similarly, in Mawlānā’s thought, clinging to the mortal and illusory world is the root of selfishness, narcissism, and other qualities that can darken the human soul. This perspective stems directly from his belief that nothing is eternal or absolute except Allah. Becoming attached to and dependent on what is false can only produce a false and superficial sense of happiness (Al-Razim, M., 2025, 148–149).

Similarly, in this ghazal, Mawlānā openly praises love. This love is directed toward Allah. On this journey of love, a person comprehends that all of creation is one and that Allah exists within everything. In this context, Mawlānā also considers beauty and goodness among the attributes of love, expressing that there are no traps or chains in love, and that everything unfolds according to the will of the Beloved:

زهی عشق زهی عشق که ما راست خدایا

چه نغزست و چه خوبست و چه زیباست خدایا

چه گرمیم چه گرمیم از این عشق چو خورشید

چه پنهان و چه پنهان و چه پیداست خدایا (*Külliyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî*, I/39)

This love within us, what love is it, what love, my God?

How unique, how pure, how beautiful this love is, my God.

How fervent we are with this love, how fervent—like the sun itself.

How hidden, how hidden, yet how apparent this love is, my God.

According to Mawlānā, all forms of love are but reflections of the love for Allah. The source of true love is divine. Through his repeated use of phrases such as “how... how” Mawlānā emphasizes the ineffability of love—its nature defies expression and escapes the limits of language. The invocation “my God!” reveals that this overwhelming emotion is, in fact, a direct plea and outpouring addressed to the Truth. The frequently used image of the “sun” in the *Masnavî* symbolizes divine love, which—like the sun—is both burning and life-giving.

Mawlānā’s Awakening: Shams

Mawlānā was not a member of any formal Sufi order. His relationship with Shams was distinct from the typical master-disciple dynamic. In a sense, Shams was his *sohbet sheikh* (spiritual companion), while Mawlānā himself was both a *murshid* (guide) and teacher. Rather than a vertical hierarchy, their relationship was horizontal; they “transcended ranks such as sheikhship, discipleship, and succession to become mirrors for each other.” In this context, it has been suggested that the prominent Sufi author Ibn al-’Arabî and Mawlānā represent two different facets of Sufism in the history of Islamic thought and mysticism. Both stood at the pinnacle of their respective styles and have since left profound influences on Sufism. Although they held different

approaches on certain matters, they shared many commonalities, especially regarding the concept of love. Ibn al-'Arabī was the greatest Sufi theorist, while Mawlānā was the greatest spiritual poet. Moreover, it is emphasized that the views of Ibn al-'Arabī and Mawlānā complement each other within the accumulated tradition of Sufism from their era. In this sense, Mawlānā's teachings, expressed through poetry and stories, bear significant parallels with the views of Ibn al-'Arabī (Kaya, 2016, 14).

Within this context, in Mawlānā's understanding of love, Shams-i Tabrizi holds a unique place. His encounter with Shams led to an awakening in Mawlānā's soul, deepening his knowledge and experience of love. This meeting brought a profound transformation in his life and worldview. Shams became both a guide on Mawlānā's divine journey and a spiritual mirror that opened new horizons in the depths of his soul. Therefore, in the ghazals he wrote in honor of Shams, Mawlānā presents the spiritual bond between them as one of the highest expressions of divine love. The first stage of this divine love is the particular beauty in the world, which serves as the gateway to divine love. As Mawlānā expresses through the voice of Majnūn, it is nothing more than a cup carrying the wine of love:

...It is not Leylā's form that I love; Leylā is not merely a form. In my hand, Leylā is like a goblet. I drink wine with that goblet. Therefore, what I am in love with is the wine I constantly drink (absolute beauty). You see the goblet, but you know nothing of the wine." (Ayvazoğlu, 1993, 68) The following verses beautifully exemplify this love:

روز اگر مکسب و سوداگریست

ذوق دگر دارد سودای شب

مفخر تبریز توی شمس دین

حسرت روزی و تمنای شب (Külliyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî, I/120-121)

Day is the time for gain, the hour of profit, but the night holds a delight of love unlike any other.

Shams al-Dīn, the pride of Tabriz, you are the one whom the day longs for, and the night desires and yearns for.

In these verses, Shams is the one who reminds Mawlānā of the meaning he lost in the rush of the day. Therefore, their meetings are described as the secret of the nights. Sufis who aim to live according to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad have also strived to sanctify the night as Shams did. It is narrated that some Sufis refrained from sleeping at night out of reverence for Allah. Mawlānā likewise stated that what truly matters for the dervish is to make full use of the nighttime, free from worldly distractions (Akbak, 2025, 216–217).

Mawlānā's love for Shams is also a symbol of reaching divine love. In his poems, Shams is exalted as a means of drawing closer to Allah and finding the truth. The following excerpt from a ghazal is of great importance, as it points to Mawlānā's state before meeting Shams and the transformation he experienced after their encounter:

من آن ماهم که اندر لامکانم
 مجو بیرون مرا در عین جانم
 تو را هر کس به سوی خویش خواند
 تو را من جز به سوی تو نخوانم
 مرا هم تو به هر رنگی که خوانی
 اگر رنگین اگر ننگین ندانم (Külliyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî, I/550-551)

I am the Moon, dwelling in the realm of no-place; do not seek me outside; I am the very essence of soul.

Everyone calls you to their side, but I call you not away from yourself, nor away from your essence.

Call me with whatever color you wish. Be it vibrant, be it flawed, I do not know.

In the opening verse, Mawlânâ defines himself in terms of “impossibility” and “essence.” Before meeting Shams, he was a respected scholar and teacher in Konya; however, Shams teaches him the concept of “being called to oneself.” He frees Mawlânâ from his physical identity and leads him to his essence, that is, to discover the “divine light” within. Moreover, Shams reveals to Mawlânâ the secret of Allah within himself. Subsequently, Mawlânâ becomes neither colored nor colorless, for in love, all dualities are annihilated. The consciousness of *waḥdat* (Unity) emerges. Therefore, every “I” in the verses essentially becomes “You” (the Truth).

In Mawlânâ’s ghazals, the love he expresses for Shams transcends physical love and manifests as a spiritual love. He conveys this profound love with sincerity and intensity in his ghazals. In the following verses, he describes his state after meeting Shams in a vivid and impactful way:

شیر خدا بند گسستن گرفت
 ساقی جان شیشه شکستن گرفت
 دزد دلم گشت گرفتار یار
 دزد مرا دست ببستن گرفت
 دوش چه شب بود که در نیم شب
 برق ز رخسار تو جستن گرفت
 عشق تو آورد شراب و کباب
 عقل به یک گوشه نشستن گرفت (Külliyât-i Şems-i Tebrîzî, I/188-189)

The lion of God broke free from its chains; The soul’s cupbearer shattered the bottle.

My thieving heart fell captive to the Beloved; the Beloved began to bind the hands of my thief.

What a night it was last night, that at midnight, lightning began to strike from His cheek.

Love poured wine and offered kebabs, and reason sat in a corner, left behind.

The title “Lion of God,” given to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, is here used to associate Shams with ‘Alī’s legacy of courage and knowledge. The phrase “breaking chains” symbolizes how Shams liberates Mawlânâ by severing his worldly attachments.

Similarly, Shams opens Mawlānā's "spiritual eye," enabling him to drink from divine love. In Sufi terminology, "drinking" (*shurb*) and "wine" (*sharāb*) are metaphors for divine love, while the cup (*kāseh*) and goblet (*kādeh*) represent the spiritual state that draws the seeker (*sālik*) into mystical ecstasy (Uludağ, 2010, 269–270). When the "bottle is broken," love spreads throughout existence. The "thief" here refers to the *nafs* (ego/self), which constantly preoccupies the person with material concerns; yet the "Beloved" (*Yār*), that is Shams, binds him with spiritual ties. The lightning on his cheek symbolizes the divine light on Shams's face, illuminating Mawlānā's darkness. Upon meeting Shams, Mawlānā plunges into the ocean of love. On this journey, reason is merely a spectator. According to Mawlānā, truth is grasped not by reason but through love.

In Mawlānā's poems, love is viewed as a force that matures the soul and leads it toward Allah. In such poems, divine love always takes precedence. Although his teachings can probably never be totally encompassed by any systematic exposition, certainly all of them express a single reality, the overriding reality of Rūmī's existence and of Islam itself: "There is no god but God." (Chittick, 1983, 7). For Rūmī poetical imagery, whose primary function is to stir up Love in the listener, has to be fitted and shaped to men's understanding. But there can be nothing haphazard, personal, or artificial about the way this is done. As far as he is concerned, his poetry was given to him by God. In other words, he does not manufacture or devise his imagery, but he receives it from the World of Imagination, within which the Beloved manifests Himself to lovers in "imaginal" forms (Chittick, 1983, 278).

Conclusion

It is undoubtedly impossible to examine all the works of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in a single article. In this study, a text-based analysis was presented through selected poems of Mawlānā within the framework of the topics addressed. Mawlānā's works are among the significant literary and philosophical examples of the Sufi thought that developed in the Islamic world during the 13th century. These texts reflect the cultural, religious, and intellectual fabric of their time. They particularly emphasize themes such as the creation of humanity, the relationship with divine truth, methods of acquiring knowledge, moral perfection, and love. Within this context, human beings are considered as entities possessing both material and spiritual dimensions. The relationship between the soul and the body in worldly life is conveyed through numerous stories and symbols, especially in the *Masnavī*. This approach supports the idea that humans possess an inner potential which can only be actualized through spiritual discipline and contemplation. Mawlānā's understanding aligns closely with the concept of the unity of existence (*Waḥdat al-wujūd*), merging it with the notion of reaching divine truth through intuition and love. His perspective partially diverges from the reason-centered approaches of classical Islamic philosophy. According to him, knowledge cannot be attained solely by reason and logic; it is also possible to reach the truth through the path of love. Mawlānā believes that through an inner journey, the individual can orient toward truth and reunite with their essential self.

Mawlānā's ideas have left a lasting impact not only on the Islamic world but also on Western thought, becoming a subject of discussion in various academic disciplines. His poetry, in particular, has been examined by literary scholars, philosophers, and psychologists in relation to themes such as mystical experience, personal transformation, and the metaphysics of love. Using a literary language, he addresses philosophical issues like knowledge, love, existence, and truth.

Through the themes and examples in his works, he seeks to clarify the relationship between humans and Allah, as well as the connection between all creation and the divine. His ultimate aim is to guide individuals toward peace in both this world and the hereafter, leading them to eternal serenity. In sum, Mawlānā stands out as a distinctive and influential figure whose universal ideas continue to illuminate not only his own era but also the modern world.

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