

A spiritual study on the concept of life and death in the poetry of mawlana jalaluddin rumi

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ABSTRACT:

One of the universal occurrences, death seems to have inspired great poets and writers in Iranian and international literature. This study examined how Rumi's poems address one of the most important life facts, which is death. He regarded death as similar to life or subsequent birth, which is unpleasant and bitter, however, it is also something that poets are eager to embrace and relish for its scrumptiousness. The qualitative content analysis method was used to analyze the concept of life and death in Rumi's poetry. Several poems on life and death were chosen randomly from Rumi's masterpiece Mathnavi to be analyzed in this study. Moreover, this study attempted to express the ideas of life and death through some of his famous poems selected from Rumi's world-famous pieces of writing. The analysis showed that Rumi's concept of death is bent toward Sufism. He considers death as a rebirth and reunion. For Rumi, death is a reality that people do not have to worry about because it is a reunion with God but rather being happy and having a firm belief in God.

KEYWORDS: Maulana Rumi, spiritual study, life, death, Mathnavi.

1. Introduction

Rumi's writings and teachings have received recognition on a global scale and are now considered to be a part of the global intellectual heritage. The fact that 2007 has been designated as the "Year of Rumi" by UNESCO attests to his popularity and acceptance (Lewis, 2018). Rumi was not the first Sufi who became intoxicated with the Beloved; several other well-known Sufis went before him in their immersion in the divine substance. He regularly referred to ancient Sufis in his poetry, like Junaid, Shibli, Attar, Mansur, and Shamsuddin, to demonstrate how they had the same view of Sufism, which is the achievement of soul or death (fana) (Rumi, 2005). This study attempts to shed light on the concept of spirituality in the poetry of Mallawna Jalal al-Din Rumi. The researchers have chosen a structured qualitative analysis to analyze the concept of life and death in the poetry of Maulana Rumi. Through interpreting and understanding the themes, and the presence of words and concepts in Rumi's poems, the researchers attempt to find the experience of life and death through his poetry. Therefore, the researchers have chosen two of his masterpieces *Divan-i-Shams and Mathnavi*. Vahedpak, Alizamani, and Abbasi (2020) conducted a study to examine Rumi's views on death, including how it affects and relates to the first life. Rumi is, therefore, concerned with describing the disconnection from the source, getting lost in the borrowing world, and leading a unique existence under the shadows of death

consciousness. Rumi considers the distinction between original and unoriginal people to be the knowledge of death awareness and holds that the popular understanding of the phenomena of death needs to be changed because only the original conception of death can retrieve life's essence from the body and serve as the guiding principle for return to the original.

Akbarzadeh, Dehbashi, and Shanazari (2014) conducted a study to analyze the concept of death and its relation to the meaning of life in Maulana Rumi's writings. The results of the study indicated that Rumi viewed God's love and movement toward him as the primary component of life's significance and described death as a natural aspect of life that enables the evolution of the soul. According to Rumi, dying is the birth and beginning of "everlasting life," not the "end of existence." Rumi asserts that "the encounter of death with man" and "the man encounters with mortality" are both "commensurate with one's way of life." Rumi's views on death fall within the meta-naturalist theories because he considered God's love and growing closer to him to be the driving forces behind life's significance and saw death as a necessary aspect of existence and a component of spiritual development.

Sangchi and Rezae (2021) conducted a study to analyze the impact of love on the concept of life and death. The study used a comparative analysis and the results showed that, for Rumi, death is a dual idea that may be either portrayed as a terrible thing or as something lovely and sweet. According to him, the soul is man's true nature, which is temporarily imprisoned in the body. One who

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rejects this reality and believes that their physical body represents their actual self is dead. Men who get connected to this universe are therefore like the dead, who perceive the grave's dim and enclosed environment as bright and expansive. Hence, death and life are ambivalent notions, and the degree to which they are experienced depends on how close or far away from God. Therefore, one who has greater knowledge is more alive and connected to God. However, according to Rumi, death has a different meaning, and mystics strive to accomplish this. He calls this particular type of death the mysterious union and the lifting of the curtain.

Similarly, Shabanlu (2021) carried out a study to explore the mythical foundation of the conceptual metaphor of death in Rumi's Mathnavi. Among the mystics who drew the concept of death using legendary concepts was Rumi. To determine the relationship between Rumi's notions about death and legendary concepts as well as the function of mythical beliefs in determining the path of mystical conduct, the current study examined the death metaphor in Rumi's Masnavi utilizing the conceptual metaphor methodology and theory. The results of the study designated that Rumi, like the majority of mystics, recognized and dealt with death (particularly the death of immortality) within the sense of a "journey back and up to the Principle/God/Truth" and, through this, opened the journey of mystical conduct and presented death as a process of the fact acknowledgment and spirituality attainment showing its crucial role in the process of having received divine revelation. The concept of the duality of the spirit and body in ancient Iranian belief in dualism, which expanded throughout the region of Asia, North Africa, and Europe till it arose from Plato's "The Theories of Forms," serves as the foundation for this metaphor.

1.2 Methodology

The present study intends to analyze the concept of life and death in the poetry of Maulana Rumi. Several poems on life and death have been chosen from Rumi's two masterpieces Divan-i-Shams and Mathnavi. The researchers have used a structured qualitative analysis such as the content analysis method to analyze the concept of life and death in the poetry of Maulana Rumi. Qualitative content analysis is based on interpreting and understanding the themes, and the presence of words and concepts from the texts. Content analysis is not a single method, but it demonstrates three unique approaches: conventional, guided, or summative. This means that content analysis is more descriptive than explanatory. Content analysis is the study of documents and communication artifacts, which might be texts of various formats, pictures, audio, or video. (Stemler, 2016). For Rumi, death has been an eternal life that was a way to be with the beliefs. Death, however, has a different meaning but it is certain. Everyone has to die one day but defining the meaning has a different effect on different individuals. The subject of death has received significant emphasis in all religions; followers of the heavenly religions have embraced mortality as the divine law and heavenly destiny through their religion's teachings. In this situation, life and death are viewed as integral parts of existence.

2. Phenomenon of Death

The phenomenon of death can be understood from a variety of angles. In terms of medicine, it is the cessation of breathing and blood circulation. It is, from a religious perspective, the separation of the body from the soul (Fahrurrozi, 2010). To the soul, death is regarded as life. In Gellagers' essay, Socrates expressed the same perspective on dying; in his view, after death, the soul travels to the next realm. Socrates asserts in Plato's Apology that death does not exist and that, "since there is no consciousness, only a dreamless slumber, death must be a great gain." There is no escaping death. Each person has a unique perspective on death. To understand life, it is important to grasp death (Shihab, 2013). The word "poetry" comes from the Greek verb "poiein," which means "to make." Ideals, fantasies, and notions are all present in poetry. Due to its deep meanings and extensive information, poetry is a genre that researchers often employ as a subject of examination. One of the universal occurrences, death seems to have inspired great poets and writers in Iranian and international literature (Fetahu, 2022).

3. Concept of Spirituality

Sufi Society frequently discusses spirituality and recognizes it as a component of religion. Since spirituality is regarded as an important part of human life that has a large role to play and significant power over the course of life, each individual incorporates this aspect to achieve a better life. This concept has many different interpretations. Rumi is a representative of Sufism in Islamic culture (tasawwuf). Religious scholars, philosophers, and jurists are on the other extreme of the spectrum. Rumi emphasized truthfulness, much like other Sufis did. "Everything beautiful reflects the splendor of God," according to Rumi (Arberry, 2013). Contrary to doctrinaire approaches, Sufism gives an intuitive understanding of Islam. Sufis focus on the spiritual experience rather than external behavior, which is what *Shariah* governs. Sufism helps to temper too ardent Islamic manifestations in this way. Rumi believes that true spirituality goes beyond doing rituals. The mystic never stops looking for a greater awareness even after reaching a certain level of enlightenment. The Sufi has a reason to keep traveling since he wants to please God. A great influence on Rumi was his teacher Shams al-Din Tabrizi who was a flamboyant, itinerant dervish and had an impact on Rumi. To illustrate the concept, he introduces, Rumi uses the five essential natural elements of earth, water, air, fire, and space in his writings (Soleha & Retnaningdyah, 2019).

3.1 Meaning of Life and Death in Rumi's Work

Rumi's concept of life and death is more towards Sufism. Death is viewed as a reality that at the absolute least must be accepted; there are several ideas on life after death. The afterlife is a phenomenon that is one of the fundamental beliefs of Islam and other theistic religions. Rumi might be the only person to connect the idea of joy and happiness with death (Nasr, 2008). Rumi accepted death as a part of life (Manzoor & Manzoor, 2019). Rumi is a seeker of death, just like every other Sufi:

*I died as a mineral and became a plant,
I died as a plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was a man. Why should I fear?
When was I less by dying? Yet, once more I shall die as a
man, to soar with angelhood
I must pass on: all except God doth perish* (Rumi, 2005, p.89).

Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi expressed his belief in the afterlife notion in his poem "When I Die." Death may seem to be the ultimate end of existence, but it is just the beginning, much like how dawn spreads a new light throughout the night sky before daybreak. The speaker goes on to state that after the body is buried, the soul is released. This claim contradicts itself. It implies that when a person dies, their soul is liberated to leave their body and ascend to paradise. According to Rumi, there is no limit to eternity. As soon as the soul is freed from the body, it becomes eternal. The fear of dying then vanishes. Therefore, in a way, the poet assured the audience that death is simply another beginning and not the absolute finish.

*when I die
when my coffin
is being taken out
you must never think
I am missing this world
don't shed any tears
don't lament or
feel sorry
i'm not falling*

into a monster's abyss (Rumi, 2005, p.145).

This poem is centered on the concept of "everlasting life after death," which poets believe is founded on the reality that death is inevitable for all living things. Since it leads to endless life and limitless existence, we are unable to avoid it. He claims that after he passes away and his coffin is taken away, his admirers and loved ones should not assume that he regrets his time on earth. He makes it apparent to the audience that he is never afraid of death; rather, he is completely ready for it. The poet's optimistic attitude is evident throughout the entire poem as he opens his arms wide to meet death. It follows that he won't miss this world when he passes away. Rumi considered death as the rebirth of the soul in another world which is the real world. Rumi has a strong mind and a spirit that is completely devoted to eternal love. His advice to his readers not to cry or feel guilty suggests that this is the case (Hozhabrossadat, 2020).

He claims that even after death, he will not experience any agony. Therefore, when he passes away, no one needs to weep or mourn. His poetry reveals that he is an ardent follower of God, and as a result, he is aware that death is only the culmination of his physical agony. Hell is referred to as the "monster's abyss," although his soul never can enter it. However, the poet admits that after he passes away, he will never long for this temporal realm. There will be no reason for any type of sorrow or mourning when he leaves this planet. We are all transient beings who will shortly enter eternal existence; this world, its pleasures, and earthly amusements are nothing more than a delusion occupying our brains as mentioned by Hozhabrossadat.

When you see

*my corpse is being carried
don't cry about my leaving
i'm not leaving
i'm arriving at eternal love
when you leave me
in the grave
don't say goodbye
remember a grave is
only a curtain*

for the paradise behind (Balkkhi, 2004, p. 45).

Rumi is glad to leave the passing world as he did not join the dominion of the devil and urges his loved ones not to weep over his passing. However, his burial is a path to eternal life and the glorious Lord. His spiritual integrity is the source of the speaker's grounded faith and fearless attitude toward death. Death puts him the nearest to God because of his close relationship with Him. Because of this, he says, "don't grieve for my going" and he goes on to claim that instead of leaving, he is joining the realm of eternal love (Arberry, 2013). His remarks reflect his passion. In addition, he has no fear of death since he yearns to know God's, unending love.

Rumi continues by advising people not to say goodbye when they leave his body in the cemetery because the burial is but a "curtain." He utilizes the images of a tomb and a curtain to represent his ideas about dying; the curtain depicts the next door that leads to paradise. Anyone who enters by the first door, which is life, has the opportunity to enter paradise by way of the second door, which is death. Therefore, Rumi's ability to depict death in a favorable light is through the symbolism he used in his poems. Rumi also employs a metaphor to indicate that one cannot declare death to be the end. There is always dark when the sun goes down and daybreak after the moon rises. There is no end to the soul because as the moon sets, the sun rises in its place. The soul ascends to heaven after the death of the body (Sen, 2021).

I died to the inorganic state and became endowed with growth, and (then) I died to (vegetable) growth and attained to animal.

I died from animality and became Adam: Why, then, should I fear? When have I become less by dying?

At the next remove I shall die to man, that I may soar and lift up my head amongst the angels;

And I must escape even from (the state of) the angel: everything is perishing except His Face.

Once more I shall be sacrificed and die to the angel: I shall become that which enters not into the imagination (Rumi, 2005, p.106).

"Then I shall become non-existence: non-existence saith to me, (in tones loud) as an organ, Verily, unto Him shall we return". (Nicholson, 2011, Mathnavi III: 3901-06). Death is the end of all in materialistic literature since the physical body would decay and disintegrate after passing away. Rumi describes a seed dropping to the ground and emerging as a new plant as the same as death and life. He makes a metaphor comparing a seed to life. The body decomposes into the earth of death like a seed, while the soul sprouts into a new existence like a shoot. The soul does not expire. The soul is liberated when the body dies. In this way, the poem conveys the idea of rebirth and regeneration. Allah Almighty has given us a clear explanation of this process of rebirth. He explains how

clouds are created, how they are filled with water, how wind currents carry them to specific locations, and how rain falls to change barren regions into lush green ones. We are informed that we will have similarly risen again after death (Vahedpak, Alizamani, & Abbasi, 2020, p.34).

In the cultures of the world's nations, where it is seen as the end of a living thing's natural life and is given precedence over birth, death is among the most enigmatic concepts. The man has fought for survival and faced death every day since the day of his birth. But the only thing that could have ended his natural life was death. World literature is full of tales of individuals searching for perfect places to live without dying. All methods of treating pain that appears to have no therapeutic value have been tried. Rumi explains how clouds are created, how they are filled with water, how wind currents carry them to specific locations, and how rain falls to change barren regions into lush green ones. The topic of death has received consideration in all major world religions, and adherents of the holy religions have come to embrace death as a rebirth to a new world (Moneeree, 2022, p.67).

Similarly, Rumi's death anniversary is observed annually and is known as Sheb-i-Arus (wedding night), after one of his quotations. Contrary to popular thinking, which sees death as the birth into another realm, he believed that this life on earth was a type of death in actuality and that the death that frightens us is life itself (Chulieva, 2021). Rumi describes life and death as follows:

1. Death is not real. Life and death are the same. Death is only a kind of transformation from one form to another, much like how a seed placed in the ground must pass through death in one form before emerging as a tree.

2. Death is the merging of the soul with God, which is eternal. Death is therefore unity, and it brings us happiness. So, for lovers, death is a wedding.

3. With our physical bodies, we are merely visitors to this world; after that, we will go back to our actual homes. So, be glad and reflect on this spiritual and enjoyable voyage.

4. Everything, whether animate or inanimate, bears witness to Him. All animals may thus hear, understand, and enjoy themselves because everything comes from Him and bears His attributes.

5. Death creates an eternal union rather than a separation. After passing away, a person will enter the eternal life. Every circumstance will continue in eternal existence. Death is not as terrifying as most people believe. Rumi argued mystical death is sweet. Mystical death is not only painful but also sweet and lovely. In this death, the body and the soul are separated and the soul achieves the Divine Union. Rumi said: "All this dying is not the death of the (physical) form: this body is (only) like an instrument for the spirit" (Nicholson, 2011 ; Mathnavi V: 3821). The false (discursive) reason sees the opposite of the truth; it perceives life as death, O man of feeble judgment. So, rather than being a cause of destruction, Rumi saw death as a way to complete the creation of heaven, earth, and humans (Sangchi & Rezae, 2021). In the parable of the baby in the fire who spoke to his mother, he has introduced the phrase in its most elegant form:

She was about to bow down before the idol (when) the child cried, "Verily, I am not dead.

Come in, O mother: I am happy here, although in appearance I am amidst the fire.

The fire is a spell that binds the eye for the sake of screening (the truth); this is (in reality) Divine mercy that has raised its head from the collar (has been manifested from the

Unseen).

Come in, mother, and see the evidence of God, that thou mayst behold the delight of God's elect.

Come in, and see water that has the semblance of fire; (come away) from a world which is (really) fire and (only) has the semblance of water.

Come in, and see the mysteries of Abraham, who in the fire found cypress and jessamine.

I was seeing death at the time of birth from thee: sore was my dread of falling from thee;

(But) when I was born, I escaped from the narrow prison (of the womb) into a world of pleasant air and beautiful color (Balkkhi, 2004, p.89).

"Now that I have witnessed such relaxation in this fire, I think of the (earthly) universe as being like the womb: I have witnessed a world in which every atom is imbued with Jesus' (life-giving) breath in this fire" (Nicholson, 2011 ; Mathnavi I: 785–794). Rumi analogized that the child is transferred from the small, dark, and uncomfortable womb to the great, open world to represent the transition from the material world to the spiritual one, suggesting that death will not destroy man but rather allow him to enter a far larger realm (Moneeree, 2022). Hence, according to Rumi's poetry, a mystic death results in the soul's release from the body's cage so that it can reach eternal life. This death also marks the beginning of the person's rebirth. The human body returns to its primary mother (earth), and throughout the circle of life affects the lives of other organisms. This means that immortality is not just confined to the spirit (Lendave, 2020). Therefore, death is a natural component of human beings' physical and spiritual lives. According to Rumi, death appears as a component and a part of life's cycle. Since death signifies a change from one condition to another, he thought that everyone should seek death rather than be afraid of it. He stressed the soul and body's immortality after death (Afroogh, Khajegir, & Fahim, 2020).

4. Conclusion

In this study, a deep analysis of Mawlana Jala al-Din Rumi's selected poems has been examined to show the concept of Death and Life in his views. The researchers come up with the conclusion that death is viewed as a fact that at the absolute least should be accepted; there are several ideas on the life after death which is an accepted phenomenon and one of the fundamental pillars of belief held by Islam and other theistic religions. Rumi might be the only person to connect the notion of happiness and joy with death. Rumi coexisted peacefully with death. In Islam, a clear explanation of the process of rebirth is narrated. Rumi always waited for death as he saw it as a rebirth and reunion with his Beloved one; God, and he perceives mystic death as sweet. Moreover, he explained that death is just like a curtain and it is the joy, not sadness that true believers should be waiting for a life after death, not this world because this world has to end today or tomorrow but the life after death is eternal.

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دراسة روحية لمفهوم الحياة والموت في شعر مولانا جلال الدين الرومي

المخلص:

أحد المواضيع والحقائق الواقعية العالمية هو الموت والذي ألهم كبار الشعراء والكتاب في الأدب الإيراني والعالمي. تحدثت هذه الدراسة عن كيفية تناول قصائد الرومي، أحد أهم الموضوعات في الحياة الفكرية وهو الموت. لقد أعتبر الموت مشابها للحياة أو الولادة اللاحقة، وهو ليس فقط مؤلم ومرير، ولكنه أيضا شيء يتوق الشعراء إلى احتضانه والاستمتاع به بسبب شغفه. تم استخدام طريقة تحليل المحتوى النوعي الهيكلي لتحليل مفهوم الحياة والموت في شعر الرومي. تم اختيار العديد من القصائد عن الحياة والموت بشكل عشوائي من ديوان الشعر "المتنوي" المشهور للرومي ليتم تحليلها في هذه الدراسة. بذلت هذه الدراسة جهدا للتعبير عن أفكارها من خلال بعض أشعارها الشهيرة المختارة من كتابات الرومي المعروفة عالميا. يظهر التحليل أن مفهوم الرومي للموت يميل نحو الصوفية. اعتبر الموت ولادة جديدة ولم الشمل. بالنسبة له، الموت ليس حزنا أو قلقا، بل هو السعادة والإيمان الراسخ بالله.

الكلمات الدالة: مولانا الرومي، دراسة روحية، حياة، موت، متنوي.

فهلينهكا روهي بو تيگهه ژيان و مرن د هوزانتي مهولانا جهلال نهلدين نهلرومي

كورتى:

تيك ژ سهراتيئين سهرتاسهريبت ژيانى مرنه بو ههلبهستقان و نقيسهريين ب ناف ودهنگ د نهديهياتين نيروانى و جيهانى دا. نهفنى فهكولينى لئكولين كويه لسهر كا چاوا ههلبهستين رومي بهس ل تيك ژ گرننگرين بابيهين ژيانا هزرى دكهت كو نهوژى مرنه. نهوى مرن مينا ژيان يان ژدايك بونهفه دزاني، كو تهغنى نهخوش و زمحميت نينه، بهلكى تشنهكه كو پهروشنيت ههميزكرن و خوشيى پى بيهن ژبهه چنژا وئ. شيوازى شروفهكرنا نافهروكا چوانيا پيكهاتهى بو شروفهكرنا تيگهه ژيان و مرن د هوزاننن رومي دا هاتيه بكارينان. چهندين ههلبهست لسهر ژيان و مرنى ب شيومهكى هههمهكى ژ شاكارا مهتافى يا رومي هاتنه ههلبزارتن بو هندنن بهينه شروفهكرن د فى فهكولينى دا. نهف فهكولينه ههولا شروفهكرنا هزرا مرنى و ژيانى د هندهك زههلبهستنن ب ناف و دمنگنن رومي دا دكهت. شروفهكرن ديار دكهتن كو تيگهه رومي لسهر مرنى بهرف سوفياتينى دجيت. مرنى دانيت دوباره ژدايك بونه و ليك گههشتنه. د ديتنا وى دا مرن رامانا دلتهنگيى بان خهنا نادهت، بهلكو دلخوشى به و باوهريهكا موكومه ب خودى.

پهيفيت سهرهكى: مهولانا رومي، خويندنا روهي، ژيان، مرن، مسنهوى.