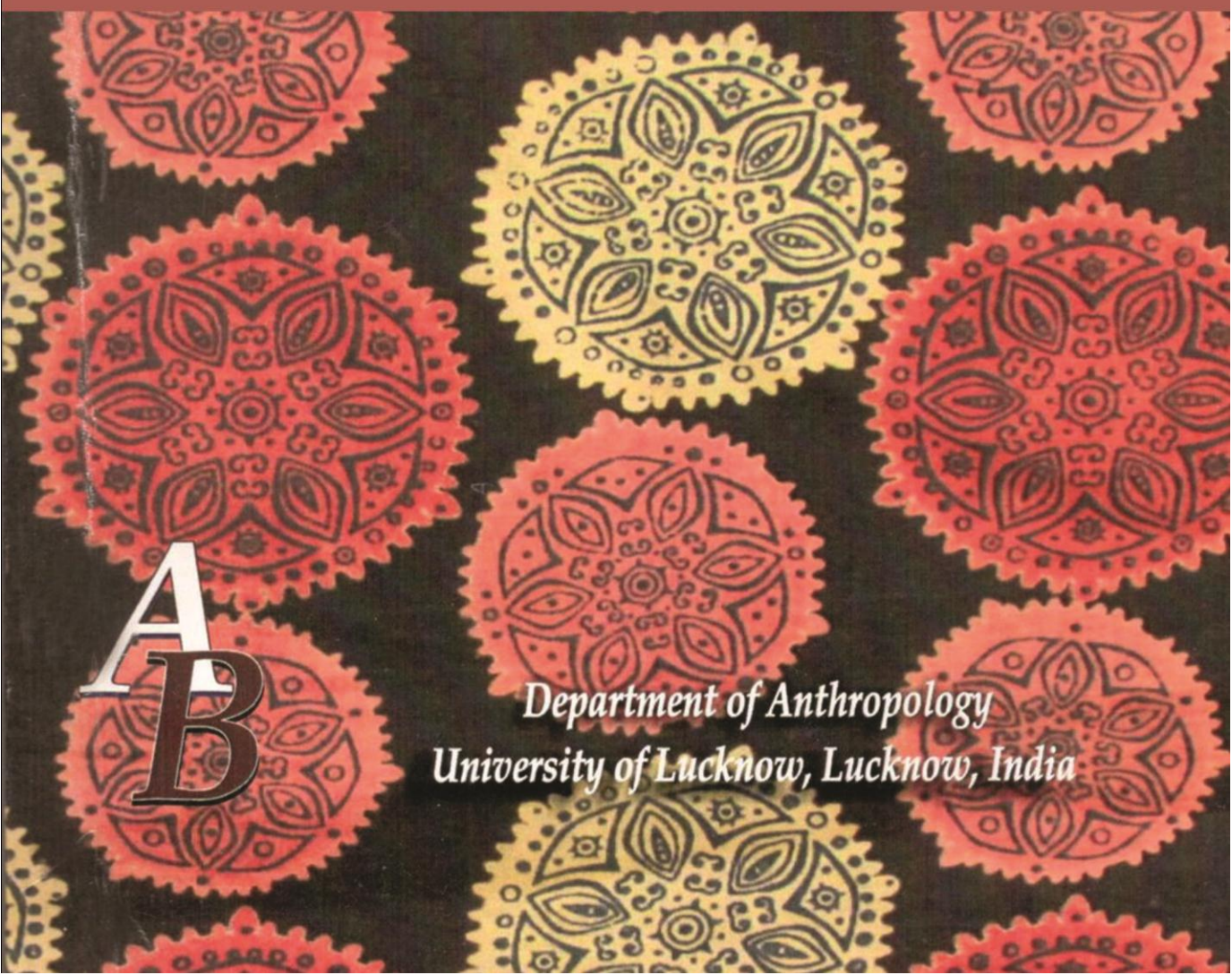


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## Melodies and Melancholies: Hope, Optimism and Resilience in Rumi's Works

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### ABSTRACT

*What mystery this conviction holds that a thirteenth century philosopher has emerged as the most popular writer of metaphysics in the world at present? Rumi's life and afterlife have greatly influenced litterateurs, philosophers and psychologists alike. Rumi impacts the life's perspectives in his own peculiar ways which redefines several truths. He has regarded death as a subsequent life, which is unpleasant but eternal. Randomly chosen poems of Rumi from his classic Mathnawi were analyzed for the present research study. Data was collected through a total of 40 research papers which were consulted across the major research databases including Google Scholar, CrossRef and OpenAccess. Prominent books enshrining Rumi's Mathnawi were also consulted and have been annexed as reference in the study. The study has emphasized upon seeing through the subliminally therapeutic effects of poetry with special reference to Rumi's works. Socio-psychological constructs such as hope, optimism and resilience were examined across the data thus collected. The qualitative content analysis method was used to analyze the concept of happiness and sadness in Rumi's writings.*

**Keywords:** Rumi, Sufi, Hope, Optimism, Resilience

### Overture

People generally get intrigued upon knowing that Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, a Persian poet and Sufi mystic from the thirteenth century, is one of the most well-known and best-selling poets in the United States. The mystic Sufi order that came to existence after Rumi initiated the tradition has been named after him as the Mevlevi order, predominantly existent in the Constantinople of older times and the Turkiye of today.

Rumi was a practicing Sufi, a school of Islamic asceticism that began in modern-day Iran in the seventh century. However, his spiritual devotion dispelled all-too-common misconceptions about Islam as a rigid, monotheistic religion and instead fostered a stronger sense of unity among all living things. Rumi is seen as a liberal Muslim who had considerable deviations from the major practices of Muslims. Often he is portrayed as someone who was on contrary with the traditional Islam, who challenged the clergy and questioned their knowledge of the almighty. With his poetry Rumi initiated therapeutic

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elements in his writings, presenting almighty as the ultimate savior of humanity. He has presented challenges of life as tests from the creator for the creations, which are there to prepare them for bigger challenges and become resilient in life.

### **Mystique and Melancholies**

Every language has a unique connection to suffering and grief frequently takes the form of poetry when it becomes too intense to communicate verbally. Rumi has been romancing with grief and sorrow across his works, talking of separation and annihilation from and with the beloved. To him, ultimate happiness is resting in the end of worldly life, inspired by his personal belief system. He has portrayed death as the most pleasurable meeting with the supreme lord and the ultimate chance of an entity to become one with the maker of everything existent. The central figure in Rumi's writings is the beloved; his beloved is the supreme lord, the creator of everything. He sees life as something that keeps an individual at distance from his creator, while death as the climax of a trying and testing tenure in the physical world which would diminish sooner or later. The fundamental theme of Rumi's poetry is the yearning and quest for oneness with the divine. His innermost thoughts were reflected in his poetry. Paradoxically, Rumi claimed that there were no words that could fully capture the feeling of spiritual and divine connection. However, his poetry comes through as a compelling inspiration and a reminder of each person's limitless divine potential.

Rumi's style of writing is mystic and mysterious both at the same time. Considering the following poem, one could get an idea about how expressive he has been with his ideas.

*"Who looks out with my eyes?  
What is the soul?  
I cannot stop asking.  
If I could taste one sip of an answer,  
I could break out of this prison for drunks.  
I didn't come here of my own accord,  
and I can't leave that way.  
Whoever brought me here will have to take me home."*

### **Hope and Hymns**

People who experience hardships need to keep in mind that a shadow cannot exist in the absence of light. Overcoming the hardships aids in one's development and strength. As nature goes through transitions, life events also undergo metamorphosis. No difficulty comes to stay, with time passing by, things change on a natural course. Human beings are just stuck between time, space and existence; therefore they tend to make sense of things as per their acquired knowledge and insights about all that is physically evident and existent.

Realizing there is light in the midst of darkness is what gives one hope. As the saying goes, 'light in the end of tunnel', it conveys a message that hope remains even if you are all caught up in the dark and cannot find yourself a way through it. By consistently practicing both giving and receiving empathy, people cultivate a life skill that facilitates the transition through loss. If one searches for it, there is a lot of compassion and understanding along this tunnel. Joy is the gift or light at the end of the journey. At this point, it could be well believed that love has always been there and has provided the willpower to keep going.

The shadow is only diminished by a full, overhead sun. However, that shadow also functions as a sun dial for the individual, helping to determine the time so that things can be scheduled in case a person is stranded somewhere without a clock. With pains arrive blessings of sort, darkness often becomes the torch itself, and the quest to know ascertains one's wisdom and enlightenment. Individuals acquire the life skills of mourning, which are the abilities of attentive listening, introspection, and waking to the divine meaning of these age-old feelings, for which the perfectly calibrated muscles and nerves are wired.

### **Odes and Optimisms**

Humans must accept every circumstance with happiness and satisfaction. A person lacking optimism cannot thrive in this world. An optimist finds the bright side of things rather than giving up hope, even when horrible things happen. To be optimistic is to think, anticipate, or want for a positive outcome. Because of this, problems and anxieties abound in our lives, and a pessimistic person finds it impossible to get past them. According to Rumi, true contentment arises from keeping things simple. A person filled with optimism may learn to enjoy every moment of life when he would have the capability to learn how to value the little things, like taking a stroll in the sunshine or feeling the breeze on the skin.

Positive thinking allows one to make positive changes in their life, especially in the face of overwhelming odds. Man lives in hope all the time and his existence becomes meaningless if he gives up hope. Nobody appreciates a life devoid of color and significance. Man is a tireless worker. He searches for bright paths as he looks to the future. People can only smile beautifully, face challenges, and persevere through sufferings when they have hope. If by any means they devoid themselves of optimism their lives begin to make no sense, at least to themselves.

### **Rumi and Resilience**

At present, when the world is at the fingertips and people have access to the internet, events like a fatal accident, an unexpected heart attack, suicide, or a mass shooting can quickly enter the consciousness. One of the many advantages of going through a deep personal grieving process is that it can help us become more compassionate and empathetic toward others, something individuals never realize until they are in a difficult situation. If one fine morning when a person wakes up and they are hit by a wave of unexpected loss, his emotions would get impacted by its aftermaths.

Ali (2017) has pointed out in her article, 'The Erasure of Islam from the Poetry of Rumi', that the lead singer of Coldplay, Chris Martin was in middle of a divorce from Gwyneth Paltrow and was very depressed during those days. He was presented with a book to lift the spirits up, the book was a collection of Rumi's poems, translated by Coleman Barks. Martin later said in an interview that the book had changed his life. A song from Coldplay's one of the albums features Barks reciting one of the poems: "This being human is a guest house / Every morning a new arrival / A joy, a depression, a meanness, / some momentary awareness comes / as an unexpected visitor".

Rumi has written extensively about resilience and coping with reference to traumatizing events of life. He has mentioned that people go through a lot of misery and find themselves in a state of shock, numbness, bewilderment, or even paralysis when faced with someone's abrupt death.

### **Methodology**

The current study has aimed to see through the subliminally therapeutic effects of poetry with reference to Rumi's works. For the purpose of data, a total of 40 research papers were consulted and relevant references have been incorporated in the study. Databases consulted include Google Scholar, CrossRef, OpenAccess and Road. Prominent books enshrining Rumi's Mathnawi were also consulted and have been annexed as reference in the study. The study also made use of online articles in addition to a few blog articles.

### **Conclusion/Major Research Findings**

While his masterpiece Mathnawi has long been held in high regard within the Muslim community, it has only lately captured the attention of modern American readers from many religious backgrounds. The Christian Science Monitor in its issue of year 1997, had stated that Rumi was the nation's best-selling poet (Marks, 1997). Rumi has written about a world far different from our own, yet his lyrical poetry is unexpected because they are challenging,

approachable, and current. Rumi, a man who experienced sorrow, conflict, and exile firsthand, presents us with a vision of humanity that appears limitless in its vibrancy and compassion, even in comparison to our modern ideas of multiculturalism.

Coulehan & Clary (2005) have reported that there have been significant effects of Rumi's poetry on the caregivers who worked as the therapists of the mentally affected people. It was noticed that those healers and therapists who had been exposed to Rumi's poetry displayed resilient characteristics all across the therapeutic procedures. Hebboudji & Filali (2018) have reported that poetry could be well attributed to spiritual healing, in case the selection of words have lasting relaxing effect on the individual engaged in its recitation. Soleha & Retnaningdyah (2019) have emphasized on the role of poetry in harnessing spirituality through poetic recitations, additionally chants from sacred texts and their commentaries could instill an enduring positivity amongst individuals. Mannani (2010) has noted that Rumi's poetry invokes a deep sense of hope in a person as it builds up optimism through the web of words. Mirdal (2012) has mentioned the role of religious and sacred poetry in the rehabilitation process of individuals who have suffered traumatic events in life.

Kaya (2016) has investigated the psychological effects of Rumi's poetry and found out that episodic recitations and reading of Rumi's poetry could initiate resilience in the individuals. There could be innumerable reasons to celebrate the life of Rumi, but the compassion and resilience he has woven with his words stand unchallenged to this day. He has provided with the insights to relinquish grief, sorrow and suffering. It could be ascertained with all which has been written by him, that poetry becomes a therapy when one invokes Rumi.

### Epilogue

Rumi invites everyone to join his caravan and embark upon the journey, not big or small, but distant for sure, which could resurrect the basic human in everyone, that which, he believes, the supreme lord desires for an individual to become. He says:

"Come, Come,  
Whoever you are  
Wanderer, idolater, worshipper of fire  
Come even though you have broken  
your vows a thousand times  
Come, and come yet again  
Ours is not a caravan of despair."

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