

REREADING JALĀL AL-DĪN AL-RŪMĪ'S WISDOM APPROACH TO JUSTICE AND INJUSTICE

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Abstract: This paper discusses the wisdom approach to justice and injustice of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, one of the greatest Sufi sages of all times. This famous Sufi master, in his background, was an eminent social thinker, intellectual, and especially a law scholar. Thus, it is not surprising that he dealt with these terms, which were critical concepts in past political thought in the West and the East, extensively in his works. Firstly, as a method, the study traces these two concepts in al-Rūmī's works and mainly Masnavi. Then it connects them with their contemporary use. It is understood from al-Rūmī's definitions of them, metaphors and stories accompanied by messages to judges and politicians, that he uses the concept of justice, especially in the sense of today's rule of law and protection of human rights, and injustice in the sense of human rights violations and totalitarian policies. When we reread and rethink Rumi's mentioned concepts in this way, his political wisdom can inspire and guide both today's Islamic world and humanity to overcome their challenges in these crucial areas.

Keywords: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, justice, injustice, the rule of law, human rights.

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Introduction

Mawlana Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, better known in the West as Rumi, is one of the most influential Sufi saints, universal thinkers, spiritual masters, and mystic poets of all times.¹ Over the centuries, he has inspired many thinkers, poets, and mystics.² He has a universal language that is communicable to people of all ages across time. Indeed now, 800 years later, people from all over the world and from various backgrounds are reading Rumi more than ever. The period he lived in (1207-1273) corresponds to the 13th century. This century was one of the most tumultuous Middle East and Central Asia histories. His life was directly affected by the military and political development of the time.³ He born in Balkh, Afghanistan; he immigrated because of the Mongol invasions at an early age to Konya in Turkey, where he produced all of his works. Rumi worked as a scholar and a legal adviser.⁴ He stopped teaching as a scholar after meeting his spiritual master and finally his mirror, Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, in 1244; however, he continued to find solutions to people's legal problems until the end of his life.⁵

Rumi is, without doubt, one of those universal personalities whose biographies, works,⁶ and the world of thought are deeply analyzed. However, it is inevitable that there are still many other issues waiting to be discovered, understood and drawn upon from the scope of the universal wisdom of this great Sufi sage. In fact, Rumi is an

¹ See Franklin Lewis, "Rumi's *Masnavi*, part 1: World Figure or New Age fad?" <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/nov/30/rumi-masnavi-muslim-poetry>. Accessed, 8 August 2021. The name Jalaluddin means "Glory of the Faith" and Rumi means from Anatolia. He acquired Rumi's name because he spent much of his life in the Seljuk Sultanate in Anatolia (the Asian side of present-day Turkey) at that time called as *Rūm* (Roman). Mawlana means our master.

² Ehsan Yarshater, "Foreward", in Annemarie Schimmel, *The Triumphal Sun: A Study of the Works of Jalaloddin Rumi*, Persian Studies Series; No. 8 (New York: State University of New York Press Publication, 1993), 4.

³ Jawid Mojaddedi, "Introduction", in Jalal al-Din Rumi, *The Masnavi, Book One*, trans. Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xiii.

⁴ Rumi gave *fatwā*, which would make him a legal adviser in our age.

⁵ Ergin Ergül, *Rumi: a Guide for Universal Justice and Peace* (Ankara: Justice Academy of Turkey Publications, 2017), 12.

⁶ His works are *Masnavi*, *Discourses of Rumi (Fihi Mā Fihi)*, *Quatrains (Rubāi'iyāt)*, *Odes (Dīvān-i Kabīr)*, *Seven Sessions (Majālis-i Saba)*, *Letters of Rumi (Maktubāt)*.

excellent example of the tradition of social thinker poet-saints in Islamic civilization. As D'Souza emphasize:

Historically, in Asia and the Middle East, the poet-saint (also known as philosopher-poet) traditions produced scholars who were also social activists as we understand them today. Poet-saints were social thinkers and philosophers who were critical of the dominant scholarship, power structures, social inequalities, and injustice. They were the critics and conscience of society who promoted emancipatory social change.⁷

Rumi is famous today as a great Sufi and one of the greatest poets of all time with his poems on divine love. However, in his background, he is a social thinker, intellectual, law scholar, and a defender of peoples' rights against public authorities, which is the mission of an Ombudsman in the modern world. Because his period was one of political upheaval, economic devastation, and moral and social disintegration.⁸ Thus, it is not surprising to see this social, political, and legal background in his works. An attentive reader of Rumi will be impressed by his remarks on justice and injustice, which are the two most critical and moral political concepts. Moreover, since Rumi is one of the greatest Sufis thinkers, looking at these issues from his point of view will help us benefit from the political wisdom of Sufism that the world needs.⁹

However, sadly, we do not observe enough research being done on Rumi's views in this field. Indeed, justice and injustice are the fundamental concepts of his monumental work, *the Masnavi* (or the *Mathnawi*), which is also called "Spiritual *Masnavi*" in the East and "Novel of the Soul" in the West. In *Masnavi*, he has touched upon justice more than 50 times and even in the most essential stories of *Masnavi*, which are the focal point of this spiritual book, he has not

⁷ Radha D'Souza, "What Can Activist Scholars Learn from Rumi?", *Philosophy East and West* 64, no. 1 (January 2014), 2.

⁸ Afzal Ikbal, *Reflections on Rumi* (Lohore: Sang-E-Meel Publications, 2012), 65.

⁹ Wisdom is essential to process the knowledge we have acquired in the way most beneficial to humanity. Indeed, British philosopher who was awarded the Nobel Bertrand Russell said that "The world needs wisdom as it has never needed it before; and if knowledge continues to increase, the world will need wisdom in the future even more than it does now". Bertrand Russell and Andrew G. Bone, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, Volume 26: Cold War Fears and Hopes, 1950–52* (London: Routledge, 2020), Appendix, II.

passed this key issue in silence.¹⁰ In this work, he explains justice as an essential and universal value for society and humanity. Conversely, he describes injustice as a source of calamity for society and humanity. What he calls 'justice' in his works is called 'the rule of law' or 'the state of law'; when it comes to injustice, it is referred to as 'violation of human rights' in modern political taught. In this respect, Rumi is not only the poet of divine love, the source of the universe but also the poet of justice, the foundation of the society, state, and civilization.

Sources of Justice and Injustice

According to Rumi's thought, the source of justice is divine, not earthly. Justice in the world is the reflection of divine justice, which indicates an ideal. Therefore, justice depends on a transcendent source. This view is also the view of the school, which is described as natural law by philosophers in the field of political taught. He says: "The Throne is the origin of justice and fairness (equity)."¹¹ And he calls God: "You are free from injustice and oppression."¹²

¹⁰ Hadi Javadi Hesar and Reza Ashrafzadeh, "An Exact Study of the Word Justice from Rumi's Viewpoint in *Masnavi*", *Dilemas Contemporáneos: Educación, Política y Valore* 6 (2019), 6.

¹¹ Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi*, ed. Muhammed Nur Gültekin, Vol. 1 (Ankara: Öteki Publishing, 2008), 1628, 636. We refer to this English translation as, I/1628, 636. (I) refer to the volume, (1628) couplet number and (636) page of the *Masnavi*, respectively. In the quotations, we have sometimes taken into account the following French and Turkish translations, as well as the English translation: *Djalāl-od-Dīn Rūmī, Mathnawī, La quête de l'absolu*, trans. Eva De Vitray-Meyerovitch et Djamchid Mortazavi (Paris: édition du Rocher, 2004), Mevlana, *Mesnevi-i Ma'nevī*, trans. Derya Örs, Hicabi Kırılancı (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Başkanlığı, 2017). The view that the source of justice is divine is explicitly put forward at the beginning of Poland Constitution dated 1989 as follows: "We, the nation of Poland, all the citizens of Republic, those who believe in God who is the source of truth, justice, goodness and beauty and those who do not share this faith and obtain the same universal values from different sources," Constitution of the Republic of Poland: April 2, 1997, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/law-reference/constitution-republic-poland>.

¹² Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *The Mathnawi of Mawlana Jalaladdin Rumi*, ed. Muhammed Nur Gültekin, Vol. 1 (Ankara: Öteki Publishing, 2008), V/1842, 806. Natural law theory' is a label that has been applied to theories of ethics, theories of politics, theories of civil law, and theories of religious morality. Mark Murphy, "The Natural Law Tradition in Ethics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/natural-law-ethics/>.

It is important that Rumi uses justice and fairness together. This shows that he saw a crucial relationship between these two concepts centuries ago. Fairness means “the quality of treating people equally or in a way that is right or reasonable” in the Cambridge English Dictionary.¹³ The concept of justice is abstract in nature, whereas equity is specific and concrete. Thus, it could be said that equity makes the administration of justice more equitable. In the terminology of jurists, this is concrete justice applied to legal facts. Indeed, a contemporary philosopher John Rawls (1921-2002), did a theory of justice based on fairness. Rumi said in a legal story during the prophet David: “the epoch of David whose justice was divinely inspired.” According to Rumi, justice constitutes an idea guiding and inspiring lawmakers and politicians as a universal, unchanging and ageless value:

Generations have passed away, and this is a new generation:
the moon is the same moon; the water is not the same water.
The justice is the same justice, and the learning is the same
learning too;

but those generations and peoples have been changed
(supplanted by others).

Generations on generations have gone, O sire,
but these Ideas are permanent and everlasting.¹⁴

He emphasizes the same idea elsewhere:

In the Unseen World, the action is given a form:
is not a gallows erected for the act of robbery?

How should the gallows resemble robbery?

But that is the form given by God who knows things unseen,
Since God inspired the prefect's heart
to make such a form for justice sake.

So long as you are wise and just,
how should Destiny deal justice and give retribution not in
accordance?

Since a judge does this in the case of a virtuous man,
how will the most Just of these judges give judgment?

When it comes to the origin of injustice, it comes from the darkness and devil. He says: “When the light dawned, the darkness

¹³ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/fairness>

¹⁴ Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 6/3175-3077, 852.

vanished: darkness is the origin and support of injustice.¹⁵ The origin of the injustice of the oppressors was from the devil."¹⁶

Definition of Justice and Injustice

Before Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī's definition of justice and injustice, two following definitions from modern authors seem to be relevant to observe. Manuel Velasquez, *et. al.* define justice as: "... giving each person what he or she deserves or, in more traditional terms, giving each person his or her due."¹⁷ Tekin Akıllıoğlu states that: "Justice means distributing the rights and duties as required and giving everybody what she or he deserves."¹⁸

The definition of justice Rumi gave in *Masnawi* also is parallel to these definitions. He defines injustice based on the definition of justice and as its opposite:

What is justice but putting each in his place?

What is injustice but putting each in what is not his place?¹⁹

What is injustice? To put each out of its proper place: beware, do not let it be lost out of its place.²⁰ The Day is justice, and justice consists in giving what is proper: the shoe belongs to the foot, and the cap belongs to the head. In order that every seeker may attain to the object of his search, and that everything destined to set may go to its point of setting.²¹

On another occasion, he explains justice and injustice with tree and thorn metaphors as follows:

What is justice? Giving water to trees. What is injustice? To give water to thorns.²² Justice is (consists in) bestowing a bounty in its proper place, not on every root that will absorb water. What is injustice? To bestow (it) in an improper place that can only be a source of calamity.²³

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. 3/4636, 434.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Manuel Velasquez, Claire Andre, Thomas Shanks, S.J., and Michael J. Meyer, "Justice and Fairness", <https://www.scu.edu/ethics/ethics-resources/ethical-decision-making/justice-and-fairness/>

¹⁸ Tekin Akıllıoğlu, "Adalet Kavramı ve İnsan Hakları", *Adalet Kavramı*, ed. Adnan Güriz (Ankara: Türkiye Felsefe Kurumu, 1994), 37.

¹⁹ Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 6/2596, 831.

²⁰ Ibid., 795.

²¹ Ibid., 807.

²² Ibid., Vol. 5/1090-1093, 616.

²³ Ibid., Vol. 6/1888, 807.

It is extremely important that Rumi deals with the concepts of justice and injustice together. Because justice is abstract, injustices are concrete and many. In this sense, justice is the prevention and punishment of all kinds of injustice. In the modern sense, it is prevention of human rights violations and compensating for the material and moral damages of those whose rights are violated.

Concept of Justice as the Equivalent of Rule of Law and Protection of Human Rights

The feelings of peace and trust do not exist in societies where there is no place for justice and human rights. All legal, administrative, political, financial and ethical relations are affected and deteriorated accordingly. The deterioration of these relations also harms social peace and serenity. For this reason, the concept of justice that Rumi most often brings forward is one of the fundamental concepts in *Masnavi*. In fact, the principle called justice when used for individuals and the relations between them has named the rule of law when used for the relationship between the state and the individual and the problems stemming from this relationship. Therefore, while examining *Masnavi*, if it is taken into consideration that Rumi usually refers to politicians while using the concepts of justice and injustice, it can be understood that these concepts respectively correspond to the rule of law and the violation of human rights in our age.

The rule of law has a long history in the aspirations of oppressed peoples everywhere. Developing societies seek to establish the rule of law, well-regulated societies seek to preserve it, and most governments claim to maintain it, whatever the nature of their actual practices. This makes the rule of law a nearly universal value, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, for example, which has repeatedly identified 'human rights, the rule of law and democracy' as 'universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations.'²⁴

Rumi highlights in the following lines, by conveying the words of the prophet Moses to Pharaoh that, a political power that does not depend on the rule of law cannot survive:

The power that is stolen (usurped) is without heart and without soul and without eye. The power which the vulgar has given to

²⁴ Mortimer Sellers, "An Introduction to the Rule of Law in Comparative Perspective", in Mortimer Sellers And Tadeusz Tomaszewski (eds.), *The Rule of Law in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Springer, 2010), 1.

you, they will take back from you as a debt. Give up to God the power held on loan, that He may bestow on you the power to which all consent.²⁵

Giving up to God the power means to carry out the function of fulfilling the justice that God made the rulers responsible for.

As seen in the lines above, Rumi associates the source of political legitimacy with the consent of society, in parallel with the understanding of today. Where the rule of law does not exist, the intelligentsia who are adversely affected by and unable to prevent the injustice and unlawfulness prefer to leave that country instead of passively sitting by and experiencing the devastating results of these events. They know that otherwise, they will experience the bitter taste of the cruelty that they approve of or remain silent about. Therefore, Baha al-Din Walad, the father of Rumi, renowned as the Sultan of the Scholars, left his homeland because of the power of the Khwarazmian Empire, which turned into a police state over time and set foot on Anatolia, Sultan Ala al-Din Kay Qobad's country of freedom, justice, and welfare (this great Sultan was magnificent Solomon of the Seljuk Turkey).²⁶

If justice is not sustained in a society that is supposed to have the rule of law, it means that only the form, not the substance, of law exists in that state. The core of the law is justice and law without justice is not improper law but rather the absence of any kind of law.²⁷ Among other things, Rumi emphasizes the reason for the existence of the state and political power. According to him, states and political powers exist for the society and nation and their peace and welfare. He wants the statesmen to ensure a fair administration in which those who are governed do not have to beg for anything. He underlines that the duty of the state is to abstain from any injustice or abuse of right that may hurt the feelings of the people besides sustaining the physical welfare and security of them.

²⁵ Eva De Vitray-Meyerovitch et Djamchid Mortazavi, *Djalāl-od-Dīn Rūmī, Mathnawī, La quête de l'absolu*, Vol. 4/2775 (Paris: Édition du Rocher, 2004), 1009.

²⁶ Ergin Ergül, "İnsan Haklarını Bilgece Düşünmek: Mevlana, Sadi Şirazi ve İbn Haldun Düşüncesinde İnsan ve İnsan Hakları", *I. Uluslararası İnsan Hakları Sempozyumu İnsan Haklarını yeniden Düşünmek Bildiriler Kitabı* (Ankara: TİHEK, 2018), 32.

²⁷ Ergin Ergül, *Bir Hukuk ve Siyaset Bilgesi Olarak Mevlana* (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2019), 132.

Giving up to God the power means to carry out the function of fulfilling the justice that God made the rulers responsible for. As seen in the lines above, Rumi associates the source of political legitimacy with the consent of society, in parallel with the understanding of today. King-Prophet Solomon, the symbol of justice and father of lawyers and statesmen, in the mosquito's case against the wind²⁸, that is, in the case of a weak party against a strong party, says the following lines in *Masnawi*:

When we were born, on that day, injustice died: who, then,
has committed in our time an act of injustice?

When the light dawned, the darkness vanished: darkness is
the origin and support of injustice.

Look, some of the devils are doing work and service; the
others are bound in shackles and bonds.

The origin of the injustice of the oppressors was from the
devil: the devil is in bondage: how did violence appear?

(The Divine Will uttered in) 'Be, and it was' has bestowed
the kingdom on Us, that the people may not cry out in
lament to Heaven;

That burning sighs may not soar upward; that the sky and
the stars may not be shaken;

That the empyrean may not tremble at the orphan's wail;
that no (living) soul may be marred by violence.

We established a law (of justice) throughout the kingdoms
(of the earth), to the end that no (cry of) 'O Lord!' should go
up to the skies.

O oppressed one, do not look to Heaven, for you have a
heavenly king in the temporal world.

The mosquito said, "My appeal is against the hand (might) of
the Wind, for he opened the two hands of oppression
against us."²⁹

There is a lovely story in *Fihî Mâ-Fihî* explaining the importance
of respect for the law, in this respect:

A boy shook down apricots from a tree and ate them. The
owner of the orchard caught him and said, "Aren't you
afraid of God's punishment?" The boy said, "Why should I
be afraid? The tree belongs to God, and I am God's
servant. God's servant ate God's fruit!" The owner said,
"Wait and see what answer I shall give you." He told his

²⁸ See this story (How, in the presence of Solomon, on whom peace, the gnat
appealed for justice against the wind) *The Mathnawi*, II/4624-4645.

²⁹ Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 3/4625-4645, 433.

servants to fetch a rope, tie him to this tree, and beat him until the answer is made clear. The boy said, "Aren't you afraid of God's punishment?" The owner answered, "Why should I be afraid? You are God's servant, and this is God's stick. I am beating God's servant with God's stick!"³⁰

The owner of the garden beats the thief until he is content that the thief understands it is not the order of God to disregard the rules.³¹

Rumi's universal language of justice contains a strong human right message too. Rumi suggests that the beauty of nature may provide us with the universal grammar of justice and human rights when commingled with the love of nature.³² Rumi's holistic human rights approach is based on two foundations: A holistic approach to the people and unity in multiplicity. First of all, from his point of view, a person is not just a simple, ordinary creature created from water and soil and solely consisting of flesh, bone and blood. A human is the heart of the universe. He sees human as well as an index for the whole universe. This understanding is at the center of Rumi's worldview.³³

Rumi not only regards a person as an earthly creature but also sees him/her as a spiritual being that has a special role within the social system. He does not see people as if they are formed by separate parts such as mind, soul, body, and brain. Instead, he regards them as a whole and as a system like a universe with all their components, whether they are visible or not.

There is another soul in your soul, seek out for it.

There is a treasury in the Mount Body, seek out for that treasury.

O mystic who goes on! If you are really capable, then seek.

Not outside, but seek what you are seeking for in yourself.³⁴

Rumi, in his works, repeatedly emphasized man's superiority: "The aim of the creation of universe is man."³⁵

³⁰ A.J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi* (London: John Murray, 1961), 272.

³¹ Eva De Vitray-Meyerovitch, *Le livre du dedans* (Paris: Babel, 2010), 129.

³² Dinesh Sharma and C. Elizabeth Leach, "Optimistic Universalism: Social Justice and Human Rights in Rumi, Wordsworth, and Mazrui", *African and Asian Studies* 16, no. 1-2 (2017), 58. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692108-12341370>.

³³ Ergül, *Rumi: a Guide*, 35

³⁴ Nevit O. Ergin and Will Johnson, *The Rubais of Rumi: Insane with Love* (New York: Inner Traditions, 2006), Rubais, 22.

³⁵ Abdülbâki Gölpınarlı, *Mecâlis-i Seba* (İstanbul: İnkılap, 2010), 98.

Secondly, according to Rumi, the whole universe and all the people are like a single body.³⁶ He believed all people, no matter what their religion, have a soul from the same Source.³⁷

Differences and contradictions observed in humanity by looking at each individual turn into harmonization, cooperation, and solidarity toward the same aim when viewed as a whole, in other words, as a body by the expression of Rumi. From this, the intellectual basis of third-generation human rights such as the right to environment, development, and peace that are expressed as the rights of solidarity can be derived.

While the human rights theory of today ensures social and political equality between people, Rumi's equality approach describes humans as beams radiating from one light source and drops of the same ocean. This approach regards humans as branches of the same tree.³⁸ Therefore, it foresees exact and integrated equality in both cosmic and physical terms. Every person has the same honor in front of God regardless of their physical characteristics, environmental, social, and economic conditions. Efforts should be made for this understanding to be widely accepted between people in both social and political fields. Moreover, the necessary administrative, institutional and legal mechanisms should be created with this aim.

He cares about people as individuals regardless of any labels acquired after coming to this world. Moreover, he objects to behaviors causing people to be despised, be subject to discriminatory treatment, and be treated as 'others' because of different nationalities and religious beliefs.³⁹ In this respect, he says:

O you who is searching for faults in everything.

Do not look down on anyone.

God has a part of him in everyone regardless of their nationalities and religions.

The people are the mirrors of God.⁴⁰

He thinks speaking different languages do not constitute a barrier or a reason for disintegration between people. On every occasion, he emphasizes that the discrepancies between people are just on the surface and the essence is human dignity:

³⁶ Şefik Can, *Dîvan-ı Kebîr, Seçmeler*, Vol. 1 (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2009), 121.

³⁷ Yahya Emerick, *Rumi Meditations* (Indiana: Alpha Books, 2008), 36.

³⁸ Ergül, *Rumi: a Guide*, 38.

³⁹ Ergül, *Bir bûkuk ve Sîyaset Bilgesi*, 63.

⁴⁰ Can, *Divan-ı Kebîr*, Vol. 1, 9.

As we, all people, come from pre-eternity, the common feelings of aspiration and desire for those times bring us together and make us a whole. However, we all call out to the Friend in different languages when the words start. All of us have the same feelings but different languages.⁴¹

Not the ones speaking the same language, but the ones sharing the same feeling understand each other.

Have mercy on those on earth so that the one in Heaven (God) has mercy on you.⁴²

These recommendation letters fall into two basic categories that can be summarized as follows Letters of advice that were most often addressed to government officials to exhort them to remain righteous and to do good deeds in the conduct of their duties and letters of recommendation to help people get jobs or receive grants from the government. He would always remind his audience of the Koranic word contained in Sura 5/32 at the end of his letters: 'And who quickens one person, it is as if he had quickened all people'. He says:

I hope you support him and revive the law. Whoever revives a person s/he is deemed to revive all humanity. Have mercy on those on earth so that the one in heaven (God) has mercy on you.⁴³

In a letter he wrote to a judge, he says: "Do not deny your blessed benevolence so that the house that this aggrieved, unfortunate man inherited is bestowed on him, reviving him. The one who revives a person is deemed as if he revived all humanity."⁴⁴

Therefore, Rumi thinks: "granting a person his/her right means granting the whole humanity the right it deserves." Therefore, it is possible to find the fundamentals of 'National Human Rights Institutions' and 'individual application to Constitutional Courts' in these statements of Rumi.

Rumi's holistic and human-oriented approach to problems, his positive and solution-oriented understanding and the language of heart and love that he adopted are standing in front of us as an invaluable source of inspiration for new models and strategies aimed at finding solutions for the structural problems that our world and people are facing currently. Today, Islamic countries and societies

⁴¹ Ibid., Vol. 3, 140.

⁴² Ikbal, *Reflections on Rumi*, 151.

⁴³ Abdalbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlana Celaleddin Mektupları* (İstanbul: İnkilap Yayınevi, 1999), 40.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.

need to understand Rumi's view of humanity the most, understand the concept of holistic human rights, and develop strategies by acting from there to overcome their own problems and practice universal human rights in a real sense for humanity. For this, Muslim countries' intellectuals, academicians, statesmen, politicians, and lawyers are primarily in charge.

Justice as a Guarantee of Peace and Security

Rumi mentions the dilemma of the rule of law and the security that is frequently discussed today. He explores the rule of law and security together, which according to him do not contradict but complement each other. He says that two angels looked at the earth and said: "We will deal with justice and perform worship and every night we will fly up again to Heaven, that we may become the wonder of the world, that we may establish justice and security on the earth."⁴⁵

The crisis of confidence and security problems have become some of the most critical problems of modern civilization in our age. Societies too lost confidence in each other just like people did. The fundamental reason for losing confidence is ignoring basic merits such as justice, equality, freedom, and honesty.

There is no doubt that the rule of law all over the country and in the world will minimize the probability of injustice, cruelty, unfairness, and the violation of human rights that pave the way for any security problem, including extremism and terrorism. Rumi told about the life of one of the early Sufi saints, Ibrāhīm bin Adham while he was Sultan of Balkh's State, as follow:

To obtain, like him, the kingdom of eternity.
At night that king would sleep on his throne,
With his guards of the State surrounding his palace,
Though he needed no guards for the purpose
Of warding off robbers and vagabonds;
For he who is a just king knows everything,
And is safe from harm, and his mind is at peace.
Justice is the guardian of his steps.⁴⁶

As we see, Rumi sees justice as the guardian of the rulers and the political leaders. It means a political power based on justice will have a long life and secure stability. Today, the same is said for states based on

⁴⁵ Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 1/3423-3424, 118.

⁴⁶ Edward Henry Whinfield, *The Spiritual Couplets of Maulana Jalalu-'D-Din Muhammad Rumi* (London: Routledge, 2001), 181.

the rule of law and human rights. Therefore, we should interpret the expression of Rumi: "the real guardian is the justice of a person, not the guards that go around at the roofs!"⁴⁷ as 'the State is an administration system which is respectful of human rights and the principles of the rule of law that enable a state to continue to exist. It is not a crowded security and intelligence structure which is well-organized against crimes and offenders, which also traces everyone and spreads fear'. Because an unfair regime will not have confidence in itself, it will perceive the peaceful use of fundamental rights and freedoms as a threat and intervene in events and problems with a security-oriented approach that will only cause the regime and the administrators to lose the support of people in the long term.

Rumi relates in his book *Mejālis-i Seb'a*:

During the reign of Prophet Solomon, all creatures were under his order. One day the wind did not obey his rule and poured down the flour of an old woman by blowing away her bag. The woman came to the presence of Prophet Solomon and said, "the wind under your order poured down my flour by blowing away my bag. Get my share of the flour back from the wind or discipline the wind so that it does not harass any widow again." Solomon said, "I will both discipline the wind and compensate for your loss. Go and bring the price for the old woman's flour from the money I earned by wattling and put the wind in the dungeon."⁴⁸

Justice for Solomon means that even if all creatures on the earth are under your supervision you still need to distribute the resources and responsibilities among them in a way that there will be no deficiency in your country.⁴⁹ When this story is scrutinized with the eyes of a political scientist, it can be seen that Prophet Solomon creates an environment and probably a written framework that enables everyone to exercise the right to legal remedies in his country. Hence, even older women can easily come into the presence of the highest authority as complainer and plaintiff without hesitation. Accountability has been introduced for anyone under the order and service of Prophet Solomon in terms of the acts contrary to the law. No one has jurisdictional immunity. The older woman wants the wind to be sentenced (criminal case) or demands compensation for the damage (civil case). Prophet Solomon

⁴⁷ Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 4/730, 47

⁴⁸ Gölpınarlı, *Mecālis-i Seb'a*, 57.

⁴⁹ Hesar and Ashrafzadeh, "An Exact Study of the Word Justice", 7.

admits both cases. The wind is sentenced and put in prison and the damage is also compensated. Interestingly and surpasses the rule of law, he finds himself responsible as the head of execution and compensates for the damage from his own personal assets instead of using the state treasury. The plaintiff is an old and poor widow. The fact that her right has been bestowed upon her speedily and fairly reminds us of the current concepts such as the rights of victims and women, protection of weak and vulnerable groups and the rights of the old which have started to be put onto the agenda recently. Rumi warns the politicians of that time and the future in the interpretation he makes regarding this story:

You should be aware that the justice which orders whose ruling shall prevail in the Quran today will not leave the tyrants devastating the hearts of the old and the young alone while the wind which is not responsible or under the order of anyone is also jailed for the right of an old woman.⁵⁰

An Arabic poem is included in *Seven Sermons* book of Rumi:

If the rulers and their secretaries become treacherous.

And if the judges give wrong decisions deliberately.

Then God who is the highest and the owner of the final judgment,

Will give them such painful calamities; what a pity for them, what a pity for them!⁵¹

These expressions show that a regime based on the rule of law will be secure. On the contrary, the regime and administrators of a country where pressure and arbitrariness rule will not be secure because they may lose their power at any time.

Justice as a Source of Mercy

Rumi mentions the dilemma of the rule of law and the security that is frequently discussed today. He explores the rule of law and security together, which according to him, do not contradict but complement each other. He says: "Within justice a thousand mercies are enclosed."⁵²

While Rumi describes justice as the source of mercy and as divine compassion, this is a compassion that extends through all

⁵⁰ Gölpinarlı, *Mecalis-i Seb'a*, 57.

⁵¹ Hicabi Kırılancı, *Merlana Celaleddin Rumi Yedi Meclis (Mecalis-i Seb'a)* (İstanbul: Kurtuba Kitap, 2010), 95.

⁵² Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 5/2109, 653.

creatures.⁵³ He also describes the judge who will put it into practice in social life as mercy. He says:

The Judge is a mercy (bestowed to God) and the means of removing strife: he is a drop from the ocean of the justice of the Resurrection.

Though the drop is small and short of the foot, yet by it the purity of the ocean's water is made manifest.

If you keep the outer veil (coat of the inward eye) free from dust, you will see the Tigris in a single drop of water.⁵⁴

The judge who ensures order and peace in the life of the community with her just decisions is the scales of God:

The Judge is God's scales and measure, and he is the means of deliverance from the deceit and cunning of the Devil.

He is the scissors for cutting off enmities and wranglings, he is the decider of the quarrels and disputes of the two litigants.

His spells put the Devil in the bottle, his legal ruling makes dissensions cease.

When the covetous adversary sees the scales of justice, he abandons rebelliousness and becomes submissive;

But if there are no scales, even though you give him more than his fair share his shrewdness will never be satisfied with the portion allotted to him.⁵⁵

Elsewhere Rumi describes the judge as the deputy of God and the shadow of divine justice:

He is God's deputy and the shadow of divine justice,

the mirror of every plaintiff and defendant;

For he inflicts correction for the sake of one who has been wronged,

not for the sake of his honor or his anger or his income.

Since it is for the sake of God and the Day hereafter, if a mistake is made

the blood-wit falls upon the kinsmen on the father's side.

He who strikes for his own sake is responsible,

while he who strikes for God's sake is secure.⁵⁶

The descriptions Rumi makes above for the judges, and the duties and responsibilities he imposes on them, certainly put forward the requirement for the independence of the judiciary. By

⁵³ Hesar and Ashrafzadeh, "An Exact Study of the Word Justice", 12.

⁵⁴ Nicholson, *The Mathnawi*, Vol. 6/495-1498, 793.

⁵⁵ The Mathnawi, VI/1490-1495, 793.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1511-1515, 793.

‘independence’ is meant independence of the executive and also all of the parties.⁵⁷ Rumi’s approach in this respect is in line with the independence of the judiciary in our age. Could a judiciary dependent on execution, power groups, or the parties be defined as the scales of God and the shadow of absolute/divine justice?

On the other hand, for Rumi, the judge’s impartiality is also an essential principle of justice. Impartiality means a lack of prejudice or bias.⁵⁸ Rumi explains the principle of judicial impartiality in conformity with the approaches and standards of today through a story: How a judge complained of the calamity of (holding) the office of judge, and how his deputy answered him:

They installed a judge (and meanwhile) he wept. The deputy said,
‘O judge, what are you weeping for?

This is not the time for you to weep and lament: it is the time for you to rejoice and receive felicitations.’

‘Ah,’ said he, ‘how a man without insight shall pronounce judgment - an ignorant man decide between two who know?

Those two adversaries are acquainted with their own case: what should the poor *cadi* know of those two tangles?

He is ignorant and unaware of their (real) state: how should he proceed (to give judgment) concerning their lives and property?’

He (the deputy) said, ‘The litigants know (the truth of their case) and (nevertheless) are unsound (prejudiced); you are ignorant (of the facts), but you are the luminary of the whole body (of Moslems),

Because you have no prejudice to interfere (with your discernment), and that freedom (from prejudice) is light to the eyes;

While those two who know are blinded by their self-interest: prejudice has put their knowledge into the grave.

Unprejudicedness makes ignorance wise; prejudice makes knowledge perverse and iniquitous.

⁵⁷ David Harris, Michael O’Boyle, Ed Bates, Carla Buckley, *Harris, O’Boyle, and Warbrick, Law of the European Convention on Human Rights*, Fourth Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 448. According to European Court of Human Rights; Article 6 § 1 of the European Convention on Human rights requires independence from the other branches of power – that is, the executive and the legislature – and also from the parties (Ninn-Hansen v. Denmark (dec.)). European Court of Human Rights, Guide on Article 6 of European Court of Human Rights, Accessed August 7, 2021, https://www.echr.coe.int/b guide_art European Court of Human Rights_6_criminal_eng,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 451.

So long as you accept no bribe, you are seeing; when you act covetously, you are blind and enslaved.⁵⁹

As is seen, Rumi regards the lack of prejudice and impartiality on equal terms. Today, the European Court of Human Rights also explains the impartiality of judges as 'absence of prejudice' to affect the course of the case, just as Rumi did in the 13th century.⁶⁰

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī's Metaphors on Justice

Rumi has used so many metaphors on justice as sun, mountain, sea, ocean, etc. For example, he compares justice to the sun many times in *Masnawi*. It says:

In this caravanserai one and all, from fear of the snow,
have closed their eyes to the hope of returning.
The various snows are the congealing of every inanimate thing
in the winter of farness from that Sun of justice.
When the heat of the angry Sun flames,
the mountain becomes now sand and now wool.
The gross inanimate things dissolve,
like the dissolution of the body at the hour of the spirit's
departure.⁶¹

I am not a straw, I am a mountain of forbearance and patience
and justice:
how should the fierce wind carry off the mountain?"⁶²
This is a sun which if shines without reservation and enlightens
humanity. If political power is founded upon oppression,
nothing will be achieved but destruction.⁶³

On the other hand, the reference of justice to the sun is the natural result of everyone benefiting from its requirements and functions equally. Therefore, this expression brings to mind the principles of today's constitutions, such as equal citizenship, equality before the law, and prohibition of discrimination.

⁵⁹ The Mathnawi, II/ 2744-2752, 235.

⁶⁰ According to the European Court of Human Rights, Article 6 § 1 of the Convention requires a tribunal falling within its scope to be "impartial". Impartiality normally denotes the absence of prejudice or bias and its existence or otherwise can be tested in various ways (Kyprianou v. Cyprus [GC], § 118; Micallef v. Malta [GC], § 93). "European Court of Human Rights," Guide on Article 6 of European Court of Human Rights, Accessed August 7, 2021, https://www.echr.coe.int › guide_art European Court of Human Rights_6_criminal_eng.

⁶¹ Mathnawi, VI/ 2391-2395, 825.

⁶² Mathnawi, I/3794, 130.

⁶³ Hesar and Ashrafzadeh, "An Exact Study of the Word Justice", 7.

Rumi describes justice as the business of the head of state. “I am the king: My business is justice and bounty.”⁶⁴ While mentioning a head of state, he says: “He had raised high the banner of justice and largesse, he had removed poverty and want from the world.”

With these words, he puts forward the importance of justice for a country’s economic development and welfare and the relationship between the principle of the rule of law and development in our age.

On another occasion, R, he says justice resembles a mountain: I am not a straw, I am a mountain of forbearance and patience and justice: how should the fierce wind carry off the mountain?⁶⁵

Injustice as the Equivalent of Human Rights Violation and Totalitarian Policies

The most criticized action that Rumi tells the rulers to abstain from in *Masnawi* is ‘injustice’. While He links injustice to serious acts using expressions like ‘justice and oppression’, ‘cruelty and injustice’ etc. He describes injustice as darkness and a deep well. His examples are on politicians and public officials abusing their powers and public mandates. He reminds after death to unjust and cruel people:

The righteous departed, and their ways remained,
and from the vile there remained injustice and execrations.⁶⁶

The unjust died, and those acts of injustice remained:
alas for the soul that practices deceit and fraud!⁶⁷

He objects to arbitrariness, injustice, and human rights violations on every occasion. He believes that those walking away from justice, being unfair or cruel, will find justice sooner or later. The justice will eventually call them to account for injustice. Rumi turns to justice is in the story of lion and the beasts.⁶⁸ The result of totalitarianism and extremism is being drowned in the well of divine justice; if we approach this story from a mystical perspective, the clear oppression of the lion is the main cause of its destruction. When we tear the curtain of justice with excessive oppression and seek carnal desires and pleasures, even the slightest setback can destroy the whole body of a

⁶⁴ Mathnawi, VI/3969, 880.

⁶⁵ The Mathnawi, I/3794,130.

⁶⁶ The Mathnawi, I/744, 32.

⁶⁷ The Mathnawi, IV/1202, 485

⁶⁸ See this story: (Setting forth how the beasts of chase told the lion to trust in God and cease from exerting himself), The Mathnawi, 900, etc., 37, etc.

government. According to him: "The iniquity of evil-doers became for them a dark well: so have said all the wise."⁶⁹

Indeed, if people depart from justice and the supremacy of law, violate human rights and make the guilty innocent and the innocent guilty by relying on their temporary power, authority or impact, no matter what their political, judicial, administrative, etc., they will undoubtedly be cooking their own goose. According to Rumi, they will be digging their own dark wells into which they will fall in the future. Therefore, even though everything seems all right at present, it means that they continue to dig the wells they will fall into as soon as they are completed. Because in parallel with the principle of universal justice, the heavier and bigger their injustice is, the deeper will be the well they are digging:

The more iniquitous one is, the more frightful is his well: Justice has ordained worse punishment for worse sin.

O you who from iniquity are digging a well for others, you are making a snare for yourself.

Do not weave (a cocoon) round yourself, like the silkworm. You are digging a well for yourself (to fall in): dig with moderation (not too deep).⁷⁰

Following these assertions, Rumi reminds the cruel of divine justice and warns the dictator saying:

Deem not the weak to be without a champion: recite from the Qur'ān (the words), When the help of God shall come. If you are an elephant and your foe fled from you, lo, the retribution came upon you, birds in flocks.⁷¹ If any poor man on the earth begs for mercy, a loud tumult falls on arises among the Host of Heaven. If you bite him with your teeth and make him bleed, toothache will attack you—how will you do then?⁷²

Rumi makes interesting remarks and gives striking pieces of advice in his couplets related to Haman, the minister of Pharaoh—the ancestor of all dictators—who directed Pharaoh to wrong policies with his words and views.⁷³

He warns the oppressive and totalitarian statesmen saying:

Do not, then, bite the innocent with your teeth:

⁶⁹ The Mathnawi, I/1309-1310, 50.

⁷⁰ The Mathnawi, I/1311, 50.

⁷¹ The Mathnawi, I/1313, 50.

⁷² The Mathnawi, I/1315, 50.

⁷³ See Erkan Türkmen, *The Essence of Rumi's Masnevi Including His Life and Works* (Konya: Rumi Yayınları, 2007), 132.

Be think you of the stroke that is not to be guarded against.⁷⁴
Time cuts short all sounds and quarrels.
The wolf of death cuts to pieces all who flock together.
Everyone has some kind of pride within themselves,
Yet, the blow of death strikes everyone down.⁷⁵

Rumi stands against any kind of dictatorship. With an observation that still holds true more than 700 years after Rumi's death, he puts forward how the oppressive dictatorial regimes are created with following words: "When weapons and ignorance come together, pharaohs arise to devastate the world with their cruelty."⁷⁶

He reminds those with a desire of dictatorship of unchanging truth in one of his *Rubais*:

We are toys before the power of God Almighty,
Riches belong to Him, we are all poor
Then what is the explanation of seeking pride?
In the end, we are all servants the same Palace.⁷⁷

Rumi, who lived in one of the most tumultuous periods of world history and when arbitrariness and pressure were dominant, prefers suffering to being cruel and oppressed to oppressing others.

O poor man, thank god for your deficiency (of means), for (thereby) you are delivered from being a pharaoh and ungrateful (for divine blessings). shank god that you are the oppressed, not the oppressor: you are secure from acting like pharaoh and from every temptation.⁷⁸

Concluding Remarks

The dynamic, vivid and deep wisdom lying behind the poetry of Rumi awaits to be reread, rethinking and analyzed more deeply from different perspectives. In this study, we could only touch on the field of justice and injustice and a limited aspect of Rumi's Sufi wisdom about it. Nevertheless, Rumi's thoughts on justice and injustice are still valid and reveal the unchanging nature of these phenomena. Messages of this timeless sage on justice and injustice are universals and his call is for all humanity. Today humanity's most crucial universal quest is the need for and aspiration to justice which, in this

⁷⁴ The Mathnawi, IV/2815, 540.

⁷⁵ Emerick, *Rumi Meditations*, 45.

⁷⁶ Talat S. Halman, *A Millennium of Turkish Literature: A Concise History* (Syracuz: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 15.

⁷⁷ Eva de Vitray Meyerovitch, *Rubā'iyāt* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1993), 79.

⁷⁸ The Mathnawi, VI/4725, 907.

respect, resembles the turbulent and quite unstable period during which Rumi lived.

In conclusion, Rumi's views on justice and injustice contain several current and vital messages for today. *Firstly*, justice is a multidimensional social value that includes a wide variety of humanity's most basic needs and expectations. Injustice is the root cause of humanity's social, political, economic, and moral problems. *Secondly*, with its political, legal, economic, and ethical dimensions, justice should be the basis of human and social relations and international order. The source of the problems and disasters facing the world and the international community is injustice. *Third*, the principles of Sufism, which is unity in diversity and that all humanity is one body, should be the basis of today's humanity's understanding of justice. This approach means that justice for an individual is justice for all humanity, and injustice against an individual is injustice for all humanity. *Fourth*, justice and fairness (equity) should be aimed together in all dimensions of social life. Human rights violations are concrete manifestations of the phenomenon of injustice. *Fifth*, justice and security are not conflicting but complementary social values. Injustice is the root cause of social and global problems, from violence to corruption and poverty to migration. *Sixth*, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, the prevention of discrimination, social peace, sustainable development and international stability can only be achieved through justice for all, everywhere. Finally, the fight against injustice at the national and international level depends on adopting a wise and holistic understanding of justice and injustice.

So, Rumi's views and remarks on justice and injustice contain much wisdom to guide and inspire lawyers, politicians, and decision-makers worldwide. Islamic world could acquire the dynamic universal soul that it had lost, thanks to the rediscovery of the rule of law and human rights values as Rumi described them. This will bring peace and prosperity to it and will end wars, conflicts, and disputes inside it. When the western world comprehends Rumi's wisdom approach to justice and injustice, the road will be paved for an alliance of civilizations instead of a clash of civilizations. Furthermore, the number and diversity of people will not be a reason for conflict; instead, they will be a tool to bring people together and find common values throughout the world. These developments will significantly

contribute to the common well-being of the people and our world and the ideal of universal justice and peace.

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