

FETHULLAH GULEN: A MODERN DAY RUMI

BY

Dr.Gholam Sarwar

The world, at present, is passing through one of the most crucial phases of its history. Socially, politically, economically and ecologically, we are facing serious crises all the world over. On the one hand, the technologically advanced nations are piling up weapons of mass destruction and on the other, the frustrated youths are being exploited in the name of religion and war of liberation to jump into terrorist activities causing great hardship and horror for the common man living in that particular region of turmoil. In the backdrop of this scenario, the beloved earth of ours has become more prone to holocaust more severe and devastating in nature than the world has ever witnessed.

It is really a matter of great concern that in spite of wonderful scientific and technological advancement, the human race is languishing under the threat of heinous attacks devastating the whole universe at any moment, clouds of distrust and hatred, terror and alarm, panic and apprehension have become a veil of our vision debarring us from realizing the truth. No doubt, we have made this world well connected through electronic gadgets but the wires of our hearts, unfortunately, remain disjointed. We are still groping in darkness and ideals nursing malignant feeling against one another.

Under such circumstances, we will have to brood over what sort of civilization our next generation is going to inherit from us in the days to come. In order to save the humanity and our glorious cultural heritage we are to fine out appropriate ways and means earnestly. We will have to assemble on one platform with the banner of peace on the solid foundation of love and Tolerance. And without question, such a platform can be erected under the canopy of the teaching of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, who has given the message of live and universal brotherhood through his magnum opus Mathnavi from the city of konya about 800 years back

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi, a poet, a thinker, a mystic and a scholar of outstanding merit and distinction, who flourished in the 13th century under the threat of Mongol's horro, considers the whole mankind as one because they belong to one creator, who has been called by different names in different climes or regions. Mutual respect and tolerance are the key words of his message. Different of caste and creed, clime or region, language and custom, according to him, are no bar in the religion of love. A man's heart has more value than his dogmatic chantings and prayers, perfect Man is he who is righteous and true to his faith. These are the ideals, which make Rumi so great and popular among the scholars and poets of the world.

Rumi knows no religions but the religions of love, which transcenda all barriers of caste and creed, colour and clime. He says:

Mazhabe ishq az har millat judast
Ashiqan ra mazhab o millat khudast

The religion of love is different from all the faiths,
For lovers, God is their religion.

To Rumi throbbing of the heart is a great factor to unite different people because unity of heart is better than of the languages.

Ai basa hindu or turke humzabant
Ai basa di turk chun bigangan
Pas zabane mahrami khud digar ast
Hamdili az ham zabani behtar ast

So many Hindus and Turks have the same language but two Turks stranger to each other. The language of the unity of heart is different; the unity of heart is better than unity of language.

Rumi's teaching cannot be restricted to one particular era nor can they be confined to geographical boundaries. His teachings, without question, have engulfed the whole world and left an indelible mark on mystical philosophy of Islam all over the globe. Even the west derived great benefits out of the Divine knowledge preached by him. Since Rumi(d.1207)was the product of a period freight with trials and tribulations couple with horrors and frustrations, his teaching have a deep and long-lasting appeal for the entire human society even today. Though born at Balkh, he permanently settled at konya, a town of Turkey; his teaching entered into the very ethos of Turkish people, who legitimately takes pride In him. We have a long list of scholars and thinkers who and Turkey, in particular, where poets and scholars like Yunus Emre, Mawlana Khalid, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and Fethullah Gulen have flourished and conveyed their messages of love and tolerance to the humanity

In the 20th century, Turkey should be proud of producing a scholar like Fethullah Gulen, Who appears to be a living legend with many attributes of Rumi. For his simple and austere life and dynamic contribution to the socio-cultural life of the people, he is affectionately called Hodja Efendi. He is a scholar of extraordinary significance in modern Turkey—nay all over the world. His unrivalled zeal for interfaith dialogue; a cause, which he keep endeared to his heart, made him one of the most well-known personalities among the peace loving people of the world. Born in 1938 at Erzurum in eastern Turkey in the years 1941, he graduated from a private madrasah of his native town and took up teaching as a profession in 1958. At the outset, he gave his sermons at Izmir and won the heart of like-minded scholars and students of the town. He shout into fame as one of most reouted and respected public figures in Turkey during the 1960s for his social and educational reforms in the masses. It is to be noted here that his forerunner and spiritual guide, Bediuzzamn said Nursi breathed his last in the year 1960 only as if it seems that the mantle of leadership fell on his shoulder by virtue of Divine will.

As we believe, that God sends his seers, messengers, reformers and leaders as per the need of the time. The twentieth century needed men like Rumi to lead the teeming millions. So there appeared a great soul in the garb of Fethullah Gulen, who delved deep into modern as well as Islamic science. He diagnosed the causes of the overall banmkrupthey of the Muslim Ummah on the one hand and ventured to build bridges of understanding and goodwill among the different communities of the world for the cause humanity as a whole.

Fethullah Gulen has so many things common with Rumi that he can be designated as a modern day Rumi: His ideals of live and tolerance, equality of mankind, dissemination of education, respect for other religions, initiative for interfaith dialogue and above all the spiritual advancement are very common with the ideals of Rumi Gulen echoes the great teacher Rumi in telling us not to ignores the doctrine of cause, not to sit around heedlessly waiting for God's favor, but rather to exert ourselves endlessly in order to transform this broken world into the world of peace and justices, Again, like Rumi, he points out that our true freedom lies in our willing submission to the will of God.

Fethullah Gulen enumerates Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi among those significant personalities who with the help of their voice and breath, their love and excitement, and their promise for humanity always remain fresh and alive over the course of centuries.

Following the teaching of Rumi Fethullah Gulen emphasizes strongly on the attributes of Love. In Gulen's thinking there is no greater religious concept than love, there is no greater religious action than love . He writes, "Love is the most essential element of every being, and it is the most radiant light, and it is the greatest power, able to resist and overcome all else." Like Rumi, he makes the love for humanity interlinked with the love for God. He says, "Loving and respecting humanity merely because they are human is an expression of respect for the Almighty." Love according to him, opens the doors of forgiveness, tolerance and dialogue and leads to the path of better understanding between man and man across the globe.

Hodja Efendi does not belong to nay particular sufi order but derives his intuitions from the Holy Quran Hadith, the Naqshbandi sufi traditions and the teachings of Bediuzzaman said Nursi. "Most of the scholars are of the opinion that Gulen continues a long sufi tradition of seeking to address the spiritual needs of people, to educate the masses and to provide some stability in time of turmoil." He advocates for mystical values based on Quran and sunnah and stresses upon good deeds and service to humanity (hizmet) more than spiritual exercise. Fethullah Gulen, however, frequently refers to said Nursi as his Master in his writings as well as speeches. Thomas Michel has rightly remarked.

"Probably the most important formative influence on the development of Gulen's thought, including the approach to Sufism, was Said Nursi"

Despite his staunch belief in the teaching of Sufis and their institutions, he appears to be a forward-looking leader with a farsighted vision. He is universal in his approach and thinks for the good of the humanity. In the opinion of Hodja Efendi, the real enemies of mankind, are three-----ignorance, poverty and disunity. To eradicate development programmes and to check disunity, he ventured an extensive network of dialogue platforms. Almost all his activities paid rich dividend in Turkey--- nay all over the globe. In a very short span of time, like-minded people thronged around him and emerged successful in mobilizing the resources for opening schools not only in Turkey but also in other parts of the world with a mission to disseminate education among the masses irrespective of caste and creed.

In the realm of education, Fethullah Gulen floats his own ideas, which bridges the past with the present and unfolds the future based on the present. He discards the modern philosophy of education advocated by the west as well as the concept of traditional madrasas offered by the traditional scholars of Islam. In his opinion, the blind imitation of the west in the realm of education will make the youngsters as functionaries of globalized market system but cut off from traditional values of life such as profundity of ideas, clarity of thought, depth of feeling, cultural appreciation or interest in spirituality.

Though simple in outward appearance, he is original in thought and action. He embraces all humanity His belief and feeling are profound, and his ideas and approach to problems are both wise and rational. A living model of Rumi epitomizing love, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding, he is extraordinarily balanced in his thoughts and treatment of matter. That is why he is being acknowledged as one of the most serious and important thinkers and writers of twentieth-century Turkey or even of the Muslim world.

Fundamentalism, extremism, fanaticism and terrorism have no room in Gulen's approach to religion. He stands for the principle of tolerance, respect, justice and understanding, which can be strengthened through inter-religious and intercultural dialogue, which he thinks, will bring peace and tranquility on this earth.

Furthermore, he considers atheism and fundamentalism on the same footing for both of them reject rationality of thought. To Gulen, atheism and religious fundamentalism, understood as fanaticism, are created by ignorance; atheism by the lack of religious education and fanaticism by the lack of scientific education.

'I' o quote his historic message in the wake of terrorist attack of September, 11, will not be out of place here. In clear terms, he denounced such a heinous crime in the following words.

“I would like to make it very clear that any terrorist activity, no matter by whom it is carried out or for what purpose, is the greatest blow to peace, democracy and humanity for this reason, no one--- and achieve independence or salvation. It takes the live of innocent people.”

To him “jihad is an elements which is primarily defined as the inner struggle of a believer, against all that stands between the believer and God.” 10

Gulen adheres to the Qur’anic injunction that the different tribes and nations, which were all made by God, Should learn from each other and hence does not reject all the technical, political and cultural aspects of western modernity such as democracy, parliamentarianism and scientific education. His liberal attitude makes him conspicuous among the Islamic scholars who out rightly rejects western education and ideals like democracy and parliamentarianism.

In the opinion of Gulen, the goals of inter-religious dialogue are two-fold with respect to education and removing ignorance. Interfaith dialogue helps us to experience how we can learn about the religious beliefs and spiritual identity of the others while at the same time we learn more about the religious beliefs and spiritual identity of ourselves. with this point in view, he has made marvelous contribution to inter—religious dialogue setting aside the theory of “clash of civilization” floated by Huntington. Gulen invites non-Muslims to move