

Mysticism and Spiritual Experience in The Essential Rumi

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Rumi

Rumi's work is a perfect model for the best poetry in Persian studies and literature as a whole. Many writers and poets have done commendable work in the interpretation and translation of Rumi, and their conclusions defined Rumi as the greatest-ever mystic poet. Gifted poets who do not read Persian, such as Coleman Barks, have attempted to translate and create their own version of Rumi, which has played a bigger role in popularizing the thoughts and teachings among the audience who are English speaking. The essential Rumi verbalizes the extremely personal and generally confusing world encompassed with personal or spiritual mysticism and growth in a direct and straightforward manner. The interpretations of the Rumi include every member of the society without discrimination based on geographical location. Therefore, this is an analysis of how Coleman Barks expressed his mystical experience in the essential Rumi.

The essential Rumi is an interpretation of the Rumi originally written by Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī. Rumi's upbringing and religious perspective played a significant role in the composition of the poems in the Rumi. He grew up in a period of great upheaval in Iran, and his family was unstable because of the constant movement caused by the upheaval. At one time, they fled from Balkh in Afghanistan to Baghdad and finally settled in Turkey. Therefore, the political upheaval paved the way for the Renaissance of Persian literature as Rumi based his poems on the upheavals in Iran. The original audiences of the Rumi were the Muslims living in Balkh, including the Persian free-thinkers. Today, Rumi is popular globally, most especially in the West, because of the translations of his mysticism as well as his religious beliefs, also known as Sufism.

Rumi's Islamic beliefs and ideology were the basis of the essential Rumi. He was raised up in an Islamic background and later became an Islamic jurist whose main work was conducting the madrasah. However, he was a religious person who never believed that the outward observance of religion was appropriate. His poems were inclined to religious themes, but he wanted to be deeper in his understanding and perception of religion. Mostly, the poems indicated his burning desire to connect to the divine being and have a personal experience or relationship rather than the observation and obedience to the rules and regulations of religion. He expressed his belief that humans, regardless of their religion or race, are united by love and God.

And I am a flame dancing in love's fire,
That flickering light in the depths of desire.
Wouldst thou know the pain that severance breeds,

Listen then to the strain of the reed (38).

Generally, Rumi believes that humans' love for God exceeds some religions and national boundaries, and they desire to go back to Him. He asserts that God had not only revealed himself to Muslims alone but to all people worldwide. His poetry presents his desire for people to shun immature ideologies which have little or no regard for poetry and music. He further asserts that people should avoid politics and have a desire to discover their inner selves through having a personal relationship with God. He argues that travel is a sign of wisdom, unlike the belief that a beard and moustache bring wisdom.

Rumi believed that music and poetry facilitate the ecstatic and the express experience of God. It is in this regard that he used poems as the elements to highlight his Sufi ideologies. He uses short stories or descriptions and poems to discuss what humans go through on a daily basis by describing his life. Thus, each of these poems expresses his personal life, religious beliefs, his perspective on love and other issues affecting a common human being. Generally, these poems gave a chance to the European population to experience mysticism through equal chances for personal and spiritual growth to all people. The world, according to the essential Rumi, is neither exclusive of a Sufi, Hindu, Jew or Christian. The world is the utmost state of a complete human being who is not limited to cultural boundaries.

The essential Rumi is a great model for Persian and literature studies as it highlights the importance of growing beyond the geographical, language and, most especially, religious boundaries. Coleman's interpretation of Rumi carried the same strength as the mystic poems of Rumi in terms of ideologies and beliefs. This translated version verbalizes the exceedingly personal and generally confusing world or perspectives covered with personal or spiritual mysticism and growth in a direct and straightforward manner. Poems are the major elements used to explain vividly the important personal and spiritual aspects of life. The major influences for writing these poems were the political upheavals in Iran and the religious background of Rumi. The Muslims were the original audience, but with the availability of the translations, the audience spread to Western countries and the whole world.

Works Cited

Rumi, J. *The Essential Rumi*. In Coleman Barks and John Moyne. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995.