Chapter – V

Cultural Impact of Rumi on Indo-Turkish society and Mindsets
The striking features of Rumi’s philosophy are humanity, love, compassion, tolerance, empathy respect and acceptance of the other as they are openness to the other and dialogue. He abhors ‘ignorance’ – the mother of all evils – and underlines that education and dialogue are only remedies. These elements can be discerned from the following discourses:

“A westerner lives in the West. An oriental comes to visit. The westerner is a stranger to the oriental, but who is the real stranger? Is not the oriental a stranger to the entire western world?” ¹

The world was a global village even in his time and he powerfully emphasizes this reality:

“Still, this whole world is but a house, no more. Whether we go from this room to that room or from this corner to that corner, are we still not in the same house?” ²

A kind of deep spiritual message radiates out from Rumi’s writing that has attracted spiritual seekers from almost every religion in the world. Rumi’s doctrine advocates looking at Muslims, Jews and Christians with the same eye and view them as one and same:

Come, come, whoever you are...
Come and come yet again...
Come even if you have broken your vows a thousand times Wanderer, idolater, worshipper of fire...
Ours is not a caravan of despair,
This is the date of hope,
Come, come yet again, come (Rumi).

Even during his lifetime Rumi his day, Rumi was the most after person by merchants and kings, devout worshippers and rebellious seekers, intellectuals and the peasantry etc. On his death in 1273, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Arabs,

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² Ibid.
Persians, Turks and Romans attended his funeral. The groundswell of people in this bier showed his immense popularity cutting across religious, regional and ethnic lines. According to Professor Majid M. Naini, “Rumi's life and transformation provide true testimony and proof that people of all religions and backgrounds can live together in peace and harmony. Rumi's visions, words, and life teach us how to reach inner peace and happiness so we can finally stop the continual stream of hostility and hatred and achieve true global peace and harmony.”

Why does Rumi's influence still exist today? Why does it teach even today? The answers to these questions lie in beautiful teachings of Islam that emphasise universal brotherhood, tolerance and respect for other religions. Rumi's mysticism is deeply enriched with beauty His Mystic approach captures the hearts of spiritual seekers around the world because of its depth and, because it comprehends and sketches out the whole panorama of life, human thoughts, emotions, perceptions and aspirations, and God's plans, will, wisdom and commands, and one's personal nearness and closeness to his or her Creator. He stresses: to recognize that very crucial 'component' that renders an act right or wrong, good or bad; look beneath our cultural ideas of right and wrong to see the true cause: God's will, placing relative truth not above Absolute Truth. Rumi's attaches a great degree of importance to The Islamic Way. In his discoursed on Islam makes a deliberate attempt to avoid the preconceived notions about Islam today rather he seems to be more concerned about the spirituality aspect – the hidden treasure of Islam. Surely, this is the reason why every year on 17 December (the day he left this material world for the heavenly abode), thousands of people flock his shrine in Konya. This camouflage of Buddhist monks from the Tibetan mountains to the truth seekers of Peru, from Japanese to Brazilians, from Jewish rabbis to Sudanese

dervishes, reveals the kind of respect and admiration Rumi boasts even after the passing of eight century since he died.

**IMPACT OF MYSTIC SAINTS ON INDIAN SOCIETY AND CULTURE:**

Professor Khaliq Ahmad Nizami who himself is a mystic scholar of eminence has dealt with the subject of mysticism in great details, which is spread over a number of his literary ventures. Professor Nizami seems extremely impressed by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi who has a tremendous impact on the Indian mystics as well. He has also tried to ascertain the extent of the Rumi’s contribution to Indian mysticism. He explains the mystic principle of ‘Basic Oneness of Human Society’ thus:

> Bringing solace to human heart is like *Hajj-i-Akbar*.
> One heart is better than a thousand *Kaabas*.

And same line of Sa’adi found as follows; ⁴

> All human being are like limbs of a body,
> For in their origin they are from the same substance.

After throwing open the realm of spirit to all without any distinction of religion and race, the Sufi saints emphasized the basic unity and oneness of human society. This was the corner-stone of their social thought. Deriving their inspiration from a Tradition of the Prophet which runs:

> All God's creatures are His family; and he is the most Beloved of God who does well to His creatures. ⁵

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⁵ *Al- Fath ul Rabbani* (tr. Maulana ‘Ashiq Ilahi), Delhi, A.H. 13339, p. 19.
They treated all human being as 'children of God on earth' and strove to bring their hearts closer and inspired them with a deep and abiding feeling of human love and sympathy. Even denominational categories which separated one community from another were not acceptable to them. Shaikh Abdul-Quddus of Gangoh (ob. 1537) once said: 6

Why this meaningless talk about the believer, the Kafir, the obedient, the sinner, the rightly guided, the Misdirected, the Muslim, the pious, the infidel, the Fire worshipper. All are like beads in a rosary.

There was no such thing as dar al-harb or dar al-Islam for a mystic. All was God's earth and they believed that

No man of God feels himself a stranger in East or West. Wherever he goes all is the land of God. 7

Sufi Culture of Tolerance and Harmony

With regards to the true spirit of toleration:

A mind which failed to see any wisdom or truth in any way of life or thought except its own was the greatest obstacle to the growth of social amity, and the Sufis or mediaeval India fought against this exclusivism and prejudice. But their toleration was not born of any timely purpose, expediency or weakness. It had its roots in the spiritual and moral strength of their convictions. In fact, the spirit of toleration can arise from very different attitudes of the mind of man. As Gibbon says, there is the toleration of the philosopher to whom all religions are equally false and of the politician to whom religions are equally useful. There is the toleration of the man who tolerates other modes of thought and behavior because he has himself grown absolutely indifferent to all modes of thought and behavior. There is the toleration of the weak man who, on account of sheer weakness, must pocket all kinds of insults heaped on things

6 Maktubat-e Quddusi, Delhi, p. 205.
7 Sarul al- Sudur, p. 70.
or persons whom he holds dear. Iqbal has correctly observed that this type of
tolerance has no ethical value.\(^8\) It unmistakably reveals the spiritual
impoverishment of the man who practices it. True toleration is of that
spiritually powerful man who, while guarding the frontiers of his own faith,
can appreciate all forms of faith other than his own. Khusrau's verse:

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\text{O you who sneer at the idolatry of the Hindu,}
\]
\[
\text{Learn also from him how worship is done.}
\]

is an expression of this toleration of a spiritually powerful man. When Shaikh
Nizamuddin Auliya remarked on seeing the Hindu worshipping the idols.\(^9\)

\[
\text{Every people have got their path, their religion and}
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\[
\text{their hose of worship he not only gave to his}
\]
\[
\text{followers a lesson in religious toleration but}
\]
\[
\text{illustrated for all time an ideal of religious co­}
\]
\[
\text{existence and amity that Indian society had to}
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\[
\text{cherish and strive for".}
\]

Rumi’s Impact on Indian Religious Attitude and Bhakti Saints

While discussing the reasons behind the rise of \textit{Bhakti} movement in India
refers to Al-Biruni’s and suggests:

It appears from Al-Biruni’s account of India that at
that time caste taboos had eaten into the very vitals
of society. Religion, in every form, theoretical and
institutional-education, scriptures, salvation and
houses of worship-was denied to non-caste people.
Spiritual communion with God was not possible
for them. The Sufis zealously struggled against
this situation. Hardly two centuries had passed in
their efforts in this direction when the Indian
milieu underwent a change and religious
leadership sprang up from those sections of society
which were denied access to even the religious
literature. the saints of the \textit{Bhakti} school, like

\(^8\) Islam and Ahmadism, Lahore, 1936. pp. 6-7.
Kabir, Nanak, Dadu, Dhanna, Pipa, Sain, Chaitanya and others, filled the atmosphere with ideas of religious and social equality. Many of these Bhakti saints had spent some time with the Sufis in the khanqahs. It was under their influence that the Bhakti saints (a) rejected caste and proclaimed egalitarian principles, (b) opened religious knowledge for all, and (c) declared that God was one and was approachable by all human beings.

Apart from its tremendous spiritual significance, monotheism acts as a great integrating force in human society. When the saints of the Bhakti school propounded their monotheistic concepts, they in fact too the first significant step towards the integration of various religious and social components of Indian society. The Bhakti saints were averse to the idea of caste and treated all human beings as made of the 'self-same clay.' They gave to their followers, who were mostly men belonging to the lower strata of society, the message that direct communion with God was possible for them. The opening of the door of divine communion for all people was full of tremendous possibilities of spiritual self-confidence. In fact, many of the saints of the Bhakti school belonged to the lower strata of society and came from the class of weavers, cobblers, tanners, carders, etc. Why of all others sections of society this class should raise its standard of revolt against discrimination in society and ecclesiastical formalism, and embark upon spreading a message of love and harmony among all culture-groups, is inexplicable except with reference to the role of Sufis in bringing about a quiet revolution in the social thought of India. They taught that the 'Divine disclosed itself in the human race as a whole' and that it is possible for all human beings-irrespective of their caste, colour or creed-to have direct communion with Him. God speaks in Kabir's verses:

10 Kabir was a weaver, Sa' in was a barber, Ra'idas was a worker in leather, Dadu was a cotton cleaner.
If thou art a true seeker I shall meet thee immediately in a moment's search.\textsuperscript{11}

Linguistic analysis of the works of the \textit{Bhakti} saints reveals deep impact of Persian mystic literature, language and ideas. It is well known that the mystic terminology as evolved by the Muslim saints is not only capable of expressing the most subtle spiritual experiences but is thoroughly original and illuminating. The \textit{Bhakti} saints adopted it as the most effective and useful vehicle for the expression of their spiritual states, both \textit{haal} (condition) and \textit{maqam} (station). Kabir uses a language which is so saturated with Sufi ideas that it is difficult to deny the influence of Muslim mystic tradition on his mind. Nearly two hundred Arabic and Persian words have been found in his work, and these words are from Sufi lore and convey Kabir's spiritual message in terms which had come to assume definite connotation. No one ignorant of Sufi tradition could have used this terminology with such confidence and clarity. The \textit{gulistan} and \textit{Bustan} of Sadi, the \textit{Pandnana} of Khwaja Fariduddin Attar and the \textit{Mathnawi} of Jalaluddin Rumi, supplied to Kabir the warp and woof of his mystic thought. The \textit{Guru Granth} has scores of Persain and Arabic words which show that Guru Nanak had come to acquire personal and intimate knowledge about the delicate concepts of Islamic mysticism. He absorbed and assimilated the teachings of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar\textsuperscript{12} which were floating in the atmosphere and preserved them for posterity. 'His free use of \textit{Qura'anic} terminology to express some of his theological views in his later writings', writes Dr. Trilochan Singh, 'shows that it is during this early period that he studied the Quran and other Islamic scriptures available to him'.\textsuperscript{13} W. G. Orr observes about Dadu:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} The Qur'an says: (i) 'And Lord says: call upon Me, I will answer you,'(xxiv:60).Kabir echoes Quranic idea in many of his verses.
\item \textsuperscript{12} The Guru Granth contains 112 shlokas of Baba Farid.pp. 9-15.
\item \textsuperscript{13} Guru Nanak, Founder of Sikhism, Delhi, 1969, p. 13.
\end{itemize}
His fierce intolerance of caste and idolatry, his vivid consciousness of God as Creator, Ruler and Judge, and his emphasis on moral freedom and responsibility, are part of his Muslim Inheritance.\(^\text{14}\)

Dr. Tarachand opines, “Dadu was the disciple of Kamal he had greater knowledge of Mysticism than his predecessors”.\(^\text{15}\) In the light of the arguments put forward above it can safely be concluded that “Bhakti movement in northern Indian during this period was largely inspired by the mystic saints who had established their hospices in every part of this country.”\(^\text{16}\)

### Three Levels of Mystic Effort

Professor Nizami has identified three levels – social, linguistic and emotional – at which the Indian mystics have worked “to realise their objective of amity and harmony in human society”. He elaborated on each of these levels thus:

(a) Social

If the social milieu of the times is kept in view, it would appear that the Sufi khanqahs were the only place in medieval India where people professing different religions, enjoying different social status and belonging to different backgrounds met and rubbed shoulders. Their free distribution of food (langar) to all; community living in the Jamaat khanas where al lived and slept on the ground; their nonchalant attitude towards the kings; their practice of distributing among the needy and poor whatever came to them as gifts (fituh); instruction to sweep and clean the stores every day so that nothing of wordily goods remained to distract their attention and, above all, their readiness to listen sympathetically to the problem of every visitor, made them centers of love and affection for the


\(^{15}\) Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, p. 185.

\(^{16}\) According to Al- Qalqashandi ( An arab account of India in the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, p. 29), Delhi alone had two thousand Khanqahs.
Indian people. To the Chishti khanqahs, for instance, came the Hindus and the Muslims, the Jogis and the qalandars, old and young villagers and townsfolk, men and women.\textsuperscript{17} In the khanqah of Shaikh Farid of Ajodhan,\textsuperscript{18} Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga,\textsuperscript{19} Shaikh Ahmad Khattu of Ahmedabad, Rishi Nuruddin of Kashmir and others, views were exchanged between the Sufis and the Yogis in an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding.

No social contract could be of any avail if there was no identification with the milieu. When the people found that the mystics had identified themselves with their life-conditions, the impact of their teachings became stronger and deeper. Shaikh Hamiduddin Sufi settled at Nagaur during the early years of the thirteenth century and adopted the life of a Rajasthani peasant. Clad in a loin cloth, thoroughly vegetarian in food habits and speaking the Hindivi language, he cultivated a bigha of land and refused to accept grant of villages from the Sultan of Delhi. His wife milked the cow like a Rajasthani woman and spun the cloth. His poverty and humanism attracted the people to his fold and he became the cynosure of their eyes.\textsuperscript{20} Sayyid Mohammad Ghauth Shattari (ob, 1563), whom the famous singer Tansen looked upon as his spiritual mentor, was fond of bulls and cows which he kept, as his hobby, in large numbers. His genial and generous treatment of every Hindu visitor made his Khanqah at Gwalior a haven of refuge for Hindus and Muslims alike.\textsuperscript{21} The rishi saints of Kashmir likewise, adopted the local customs, developed vegetarian habits and pulled down the barriers between different communities and culture groups. They are upalhak which grows in Kashmir, as Baba Farid of Ajodhan lived on pelu and dela which grows in the Punjab.

\textsuperscript{17} Burmi, (tarikh-i firoz Shahi, p. 343).
\textsuperscript{18} Fawa’id ul-Fu’ad, pp. 84-85 & 245.
\textsuperscript{19} Jawami ul-Kalim, pp. 118-119.
\textsuperscript{20} Nizami, Religion and politics, pp. 186-187.
\textsuperscript{21} Badauni, Muntakhab’ut-Tawarikh, vol. iii, pp. 5-6.
(b) Linguistic

The attitude of the Sufi saints towards languages was free from all prejudices. Sana'i had said:

What matters is whether the words thou utter in prayer are Hebrew or Syrian,
Or whether the place in which thou seekest God is Jabalqa or Jabalsa.

Amir Khusrau, who was himself a great linguist, used to say that every language has a flavour of its own and so there should be no prejudice against any language. The contribution of the Sufi saints in the sphere of languages was that (a) they discouraged linguistic chauvinism, (b) developed the languages of different regions, and (c) evolved a common medium for the communication of ideas, known as Hidnivi. Wherever the mystics settled, they strove to build linguistic bridges to establish contact with the local population. Their role in the evolution of vernacular languages in different regions of the country cannot be over-emphasized. They helped in the development of the Hindivi, the Punjabi, the Bengali, the Dakhani, the Gujarati and other regional languages. Significantly enough, in the early history of these languages it is the khanqah which stands out prominently as the main nursery where the languages of the elite and the language of the common man came together and paved the way for the emergence of new languages intelligible to both. In the family of Shaikh Hamiduddin Sufi, who lived in a small village of Nagaur, conversation was carried on in Hindivi. In the Jamaat khana of Shaikh Fariduddin Ganj-i Shakar, the earliest Hindivi sentences were uttered. The saint is reported to have prescribed spiritual litanies in the Punjabi dialect.

The writings of the Sufi saints in Dakhani and Bengali languages opened new and effective channels of communication with the people around them. Rising

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22 Siyar ul-auliya, p. 183.
above all linguistic prejudices, the Sufis considered it a social obligation to convey their basic ideas in the language of the masses. When Shah Waliullah thought of translating the Quran into Persian, he, in fact, acted upon a long established mystic tradition of bringing people closer to the main sources of religion. In his preface to *Fath al-Rahman*, he clearly states that in every age the demand of the time should be met and so he deemed it necessary to undertake this translation of the Quran for the welfare of all people, khass and 'amm.\(^{23}\) Under changed circumstances Shah Waliullah's sons, Shah 'Abdul Qadir and Shah Rafiuddin, translated the *Qura'an* into *Hindivi*, Shah Kalimullah directed his *khalifas* to instruct their disciples in their own mother tongue. Shah Fakhruddin of Delhi suggested that Friday sermon (*khutba*) be delivered in *Hindvi* so that it is understood by the common people.\(^{24}\) Shah Abdul-Aziz of Delhi (ob.1823) told his disciples that the terms Allah and Parmeshvar were the same.\(^{25}\) The mystic conviction was that real religious spirit could not be articulated in the people unless they were brought to the source of religious sciences. In the context of the Indian situation it was possible only when a common lingua franca was evolved. The Sufis were thus the real precursors of the Urdu language which they evolved and developed as a social necessity. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi,\(^{26}\) Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga and Khwaja Karak of Kara, to name only a few, enjoyed hearing verses in Hindi. One day a visitor asked Sayyid Mohammad Gesu Daraz:

What is the reason that the Sufis have greater interest in *Hindivi*?\(^{27}\)

The saint replied that the language was more clear and bright and certain ideas could be better and more effectively expressed in it. Shaikh Ahmad Khattu, the

\(^{23}\) For Mother.

\(^{24}\) Fakhr ut-Talibin, p. 46.

\(^{25}\) Malfuzat-e Shah Abdul Aziz, p. 44.

\(^{26}\) Siyar ul-auliya, p. 512.

\(^{27}\) Jawami ul-Kalim, pp.172-73.
renowned saint of Ahmedabad, recited verses in Gujarati. We find in the Sufi houses, *Hindivi* forms of address like bhai,\(^{28}\) ma'i\(^{29}\) bhabi,\(^{30}\) beta \(^{31}\). Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya in the typical Badauni dialect addressed boys as *lala*.\(^{32}\) Shaikh Hamiduddin Nagauri, Rizqullah Mushtaqi and other saints composed verses in *Hindivi*. By adopting the language of the people around them, the Sufi saints accelerated the place of social and emotional integration.

(c) Emotional and Ideological

While social contact paved the way for communication of ideas, and the development of a common vehicle of expression brought the people closer, the Sufis turned their attention towards ideological and emotional integration. Ideological integration was a long-drawn and slow process and remained confined to a segment of society comprising the higher intellectual class. But emotional integration which could be brought about through mystic songs (*qawwali*), community living in the *jamaat khanas* (bit hall in a hospice where all lived and slept on the ground), and spiritual practices common to Sufis, Jogis and Rishis (concentration, control of breath, meditation, etc.) was easier and more fruitful.

The most important ideological support to the Muslim mystic movement came from the concept of *Wahdat al Wujud* (Unity of Being or Pantheism). The Upanishads contain the earliest exposition of pantheistic ideas. Among Muslim mystics, Shaikh Muhyuddin Ibne Arabi (ob. 1240) was the greatest exponent of this philosophy. Most of the Sufi saints drew their ideological and spiritual strength from the pantheistic doctrines and constructed on its basis ideological bridges between Islam and Hinduism. Rumi was also a great follower of Arabic Islam. One of the greatest

\(^{28}\) For brother.
\(^{29}\) For mother
\(^{30}\) wife of brother.
\(^{31}\) For son
\(^{32}\) Jawami ul-Kalim, p. 59.
exponents of Rumi and Ibne Arabi's ideas in India was Shah Muhibullah of Allahabad (ob.1648). Dara Shikoh came into contract with him during the days of his governorship of Allahabad and was deeply influenced by his broad and cosmopolitan views. Once Dara asked him if religion permitted any discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. The saint wrote back in reply.\(^\text{33}\)

Justice requires that the thought of the welfare of men should be uppermost in the minds of the rulers so that people might be protected from the tyranny of the officials. It does not matter if one is a Believer or a non-Believer. All human beings are the creatures of God. If one has such a feeling, one will not differentiate between a Believer and a non-Believer, and will show sympathy and consideration towards both. The Quran says and the (Futuhat-i Makkiya of Ibne Arabi) has elucidated that the Prophet was sent as a mercy into all mankind.

At the intellectual level the process of integration was encouraged by men like Sayyid Mohammad Ghauth. Miyan Mir, Abdul-Rahman Chishti and Mirza Mazhar, to mention only one name each from the Shattari, Qadiri, Chishti, and Naqshbandi order. Mirza Mazhar (ob.1781), a distinguished Naqshbandi saint of Delhi, looked upon the Vedas as a revealed book and explained some Hindu customs and practices in such a way that all orthodox criticism became irrelevant. He declared in firm tones:

> You should not consider it easy to call anybody kafir without clear and firm reason.\(^\text{34}\)

It is said that it was at the request of Shaikh Ibrahim, a sajjadahnashin of the khanqah of Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar, that Guru Nanak composed his famous Asa-ki-var which is sung by the Sikhs early in the morning.\(^\text{35}\)

\(^{33}\) Shah Mohibullah Allahabadi, Maktubat. Pp. 133-34

\(^{34}\) Kalimat-e Tayyibat, pp. 37-40

\(^{35}\) Trilochan Singh, Guru Nanak, p. 111.
Similarly Kabir's teachings brought Hindus and Muslims closer. The Rishi movement of Kashmir illustrates the extent to which Islamic mystic tradition and Hindu mystic lore could be integrated and developed. Shaikh Nuruddin, the founder of the Rishi movement, presented Hindu ascetic traditions in Islamic garb. The renowned Soviet mystic woman of Kashmir, Laila, influenced his thought. According to Abu Fazl, the Rishis of Kashmir did not denounce men belonging to a different faith.\textsuperscript{36} They believed in service to mankind and planted trees so that all men could benefit.\textsuperscript{37} The control of breath (pranayama) as practiced by the Nath Yogis, was practised by them also. The famous Shattari saint Sayyid Mohammad Ghaus, sought to bring about an intellectual harmony between Hindu and Muslim religious thoughts through his Bahr al-Hayat. All these saints were inspired by the ideal:

When all these aspects of mystic thought and activity are kept in view, one cannot help concurring with the opinion of Sir Hamilton Gibb that, 'From the thirteenth century Sufism increasingly attracted the creative social and intellectual energies within the community, to become the bearer or instrument of a social and cultural revolution.'\textsuperscript{38}

Maulna Rumi’s contribution to Indian Mysticism to promote the Role of Murshid (Preceptor)

Rumi has laid a great emphasis on the concept of Murshid (Preceptor). He believes that this is the only way of gaining spiritual salvation. However, this notion of Murshid (Preceptor) was institutionalised by Rumi’s son Sultan Valad. Here I present a quotation that throws light on the importance of Murshid (Preceptor) in mysticism.

How ever the M.G Gupta described in his short article as follows:

\textsuperscript{36} A’in-i Akbari, vol.ii, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{37} Tuzk-i Jahangiri, p. 302.
According to the Sufi spiritual tradition, no human being can attain spiritual (maqams) places without a living, human preceptor, who lives in society as a part of it. The ancient Indians had rejected the concept of a guru sitting on the mountain, in cave or a hut in the forest outside the pale of human habitation, because such a saint or guru is of no use to human beings. He cannot serve as the medium for man's deliverance. Only the saint who lives as an ordinary householder can be the instrument of man's deliverance, the true murshid or guru. One should not take initiation from a murshid without gauging the extent of his knowledge and intelligence. The disciple of murid is indeed, like a murdah or dead man at the hands of the murshid and has to be revived. The disciple bows to the murshid who opens with the collyrium-stick of knowledge the eye blinded by the darkness of ignorance. The preceptor is a past-master in sadhana or penance. It is impertinent and foolish to test the spiritual knowledge of the murshid.

The doctrine that a homosapien can never be a man's guru is rejected by the Sufi tradition. The theory that a murshid is God, Nature or a Mantra, is squarely rejected by the Sufi spiritual tradition. For the uninitiated, a guru, in whom there is divine power (sadhana) is necessary. Such powers exist in conscious beings only, and not in the unconscious things. Lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride, envy can be subjugated with the help or the guru. The Sufis decree that if the preceptor gives a command which is even contrary to the scriptures, that command must be considered approved by all the scriptures of the world. Only the saint who lives as an ordinary householder can explain the subtle divine mysteries in the language which the ordinary mortals can understand.

'Guruship' is never hereditary. The Sufi spiritual tradition warns against 'gurudom'. It is against this background that we briefly refer to Maulana Rumi's contribution to Indian Sufism and the impact of his mathnawi on such Indian mystic saints as Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti, Kabir, Nanak, Sarmad and
the preceptors of the Radhaswami faith of Agra. *Mathnawi* carries the message that nobody can attain God without the guidance of the perfect, living preceptor or guru. Man can find such a guru if he has the quest. Once you have met the guru, surrender yourself to him and never quarrel with him or question his orders. He is the best swimmer, who can take you across the ocean of this world; the best physician, who can cure all your chronic and acute ailments. Only a living and speaking guru can be your salvation. The living guru guides you in the difficult spiritual journey full of perils and pitfalls. Don't fall into the trap of the pretenders. The real gurus are warriors; the false are cowardly. Only a genuine seeker with an open mind will be able to recognize a true guru. It is only God's light as reflected in the guru that can extinguish the fire of lust. The guru is light, wisdom, knowledge, love and beauty. 39

**Rumi’s Cultural Impact on Turkish Society and Mindset:**

Maulaviyah – the name derived from Maulana, a title given to Jalaluddin Rumi – is a famous mystic Order founded by Rumi’s illustrious son Sultan Walad is a famous Mystic order in Turkish history. The members of this Order perform mystic rituals in *sama khana*. These include gathering of Derwishes, performing their *ayin* of religious ceremonies and public worship. One of the important parts of the *sama khana* is the kitchen. The kitchen – the first stage – constitutes one of the most important training part of a Maulavi Derwish – where a disciple is instructed in his duties by the chief of the kitchen.

The Maulavi ceremony is composed of six of exercises: The *Nat-i-Payghambari, Taqsim-i-Nay, Dawr-i-Sultan Walad, Salaam*, recitation from the Holy Quran and the *Dua* or prayer. *Sama* is yet another ritual performed by the Maulavis. *Sama* signifies ‘Divine Love’, ecstasy and a union with God. A Mutrib along with Derwishes numbering between fifteen to thirty take part in the *ayin*. They enter the *sama khana* bare-footed and perch on the carpet.

39 M.G.Gupta.
The Shaikh, wearing a green turban advances to a red sheep-sin rug, opposite the Mutrib and the service begins with the Fatiha. Then, some verses from the Mathnawi are recited and a prayer to the Pir asking for intercession of Allah and His Prophet (P.B.U.H.). When this part is over, the Nat-i-Payghambari is chanted which is followed by the Nay performance. The ayin is symbolic rituals that is produced as a result of uniting the mental and oral worship. The first symbol is the Nay or reed-flute which symbolizes man. The second symbolic exercise is qudum, an allusion to the Prophet Ismail. Dawr-i-Sultan Walad is the symbol of three kingdoms of nature, i.e. animal, vegetable and mineral and an indication of the resurrection of the dead and of the eternal life through the guidance of the Shaikh. The four Salaams are the symbol of four universes. The post is the greatest moral position. Its colour is red which is the colour of union and manifestation.

Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi was one of those deliverers who completely devoted his life to the peace and security of human beings and, thus, penetrated deep into human life. His Mathnawi guides man towards a more balanced, controlled, measured system of faith and offers wisdom and truth. It is one of the most subtle and sincere interventions in the name of social justice, freedom of conscience and social order that can ever be thought of. In reality, the Mathnawi is intended for such a person who is more accustomed, at one time, and at another to seek the truth in his doubts, uncertainties, faltering and confusion. It is an eternal guide stretching from the past to the future.⁴⁰

Rumi lays a very robust emphasis on the fact humans – even if they are dervishes – should never lose sight of the ‘Doctrine of Causes’, and, hence not to sit around heedlessly waiting for Allah's favour, but rather constantly strive achieve the goal of establishing peace and justice in this world full of discrepancies and disorder:

⁴⁰ Contemporary Relevance of Sufism, p. 286.
I am looking all over the world for students of action so that I can teach action. I am looking all over the world for anyone who knows action, but I find no student of action-only of word.\textsuperscript{41}

His activism is different from stereotypical Mystic as it denounces social exclusiveness rather it advocates social inclusiveness. The Amir, surprised by an unexpected visit from Rumi, exclaimed:

Master, how gracious of you to honour me in this way. I never expected this. It never even entered my mind that I could be worthy of such an honor. By rights, I should be standing night and day in the ranks and company of your servants and attendants. I am not even worthy of that. How gracious this is!" Rumi replied, "It is all because of your lofty spiritual aspirations. The higher and greater your rank and the more you become occupied with important, exalted worldly affairs, the more you consider yourself to have fallen short of your spiritual purpose. You are not satisfied with what you have achieved, thinking that you have too many obligations. Since none of these attainments can blind you from that divine attainment, my heart is moved to serving you. And yet for all that, still, I wanted to pay you formal honour as well.\textsuperscript{42}

From the above quote, it is obvious that in Rumi’s views ‘living in the world but not of the world’ – that forms the fundamental strategy of the individual’s whole social action and human existence in this world – is important.

The invading Mongols' adopted the principle of ‘decentralisation’, and found support from liberal local mystic groups who were and more receptive to the non-Muslim population than the Madrasa-based Seljuk orthodoxy had been. Consequently, in due course of time, the mystic monasteries turned into populist civic spaces. However, Rumi tried his level best to bridge the gap

\textsuperscript{41} A.J. Arberry, Discourses of Rumi, \textit{Fihi Ma Fihi}, Discourse 16, p. 133-34.

\textsuperscript{42} A.J. Arberry, Discourses of Rumi, \textit{Fihi Ma Fihi}, Discourse 5, p. 34.
between ‘Ulema Islam’ and folk Islam by conveying multi-leveller, multi-meaning ideas. “He communicated through the power of literature what he learned from the madrasah to the hearts of the people around him, as well as the religious and political elite. Rumi’s Mathnawi is for both well educated people and people with little education. 43

Rumi emerged at a very turbulent phase of the world and the Asian continent was plagued by many social, political, and military problems. This disorder and lack of social peace created a wave of apostasy as a result of the marginal Babai movement. The Mongol ruler Genghis Khan (d. 1227) declared an all-out war against Islam and his continuous military campaigns considerably weakened the administration of the Seljuq State and it was heading towards its decline. As the luck would have it, the neighbouring other powerful states, the Khwarzamshahs, who once fought against the Genghis Khan's armies in defence of Islam, saw an opportunity in the ever-weakening Seljuq Dynasty, and attacked them. This anarchy and complete disorder also incited the non-Muslim to exploit the situation in Anatolia.

These tribulation and chaos helped groom Rumi’s character, made him a great scholar and human and divine lover. Not only does he preach but also creates, through his poetry, spiritualism and mysticism, conducive atmosphere for dialogue and tolerance. Through tolerance, he was conveying his message, which clarifies the relation of man to his/her Creator, and one's relation to the others and fellow beings.

Rumi’s activism included his spiritual guidance to the rulers, including the invading Mongols. Rumi gained much love and respect from the sultans, viziers, and kings. These men of high positions were very eager to see him. However, Rumi seldom accepted their invitations. He spent most of his time

with the poor and needy. He had disciples who were sultans and viziers but also a lot of disciples from amongst the poor and common folk.  

Rumi belonged to the urban elite of the cosmopolitan capital city of Konya and actively participated in, one way or the other, in the political struggles of his time. He was in touch with the rulers as well. On this, he mentions:

Mohammed (P.B.U.H.), the great Prophet, once said, "The worst of scholars are those who visit princes, and the best of princes are those who visit scholars. Wise is the prince who stands at the door of the poor, and wretched are the poor who stand at the door of the prince." Now, taking the outward sense of these words, people think that scholars should never visit princes or they will become the worst of scholars. That is not the true meaning. Rather, the worst of scholars are those who depend upon princes, and who revolve their life and purpose around the attention and favor of princes. Such scholars take up learning in hopes that princes will give those presents, hold them in esteem, and promote them to office. Therefore, such scholars improve themselves and pursue knowledge on account of princes. They become scholars from their fear of princes. They subject themselves to the princes' control. They conform themselves to the plans that princes or a prince visits them, still in every case they're the visitors, and it is the prince who is visited. However, when scholars do not study to please princes, but instead pursue learning from first to last for the sake of truth-when their actions and words spring from? - the truth they have learned and put to use because this is their nature and they cannot live otherwise-just as fish can only thrive in water-such scholars subject themselves to the control and direction of God. They become blessed with the guidance of the prophets. Everyone living in their time is touched by them and derives inspiration from their example, whether they are aware of the fact or not. Should such scholars visit a prince, they are still

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44 Can, p. 92.
the ones visited and the prince is the visitor, because in every case it is the prince who takes from these scholars and receives help from them. Such scholars are independent of the prince. They are like the light-giving sun, whose whole function is giving to all, universally, converting stones into rubies and carnelians, changing mountains into mines of copper, gold, silver and iron. Making the earth fresh and green, bringing fruit to the trees, and warmth to the breeze. Their trade is giving, they do not receive. 45

His book "Letters" – published by Feridun Nafiz DzIuk in Istanbul in 1937 – contains one hundred and forty seven letters dictated in Persian and addressed to the authorities shows Rumi's fostered personal relations with several of the high profile officials of his time. These letters were translated into Turkish by Abdulbaki Golpmarh. 46 some of the discourses are addressed to the Seljuk vizier Moinuddin Pervane (d. 1277).

His Fihi Ma Fihi is full of examples of his contact with and guidance to the rulers: "My purpose in speaking this way to the Amir (the Ruler, IY) was so that he could see the matter correctly, and accept the will of God humbly. He has fallen out of an exceedingly high state into a low state, yet in this way he may grow. Life can show the most wonderful things, but behind all of them lays a trap should we forget the source of this wonder. God has devised this plan so that we will learn not to claim, out of arrogance and vanity, these ideas and plans as our own". 47

45 Discourses (Fihi Ma Fihi), Discourse 1, p. 3-5.
46 Can, p. 36.
47 Discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi, p. 11. See for more: Discourse 3: "The Amir said: "Night and day my heart and Soul are intent upon serving God, but because of my responsibilities with Mongol affairs I have no time for such service." Rumi answered: Those works too are work done for God, since they are the means of providing peace and security for your country. You sacrifice yourself, your possessions, your time, so the hearts of a few will be lifted to peacefully obeying God's will. So this too is a good work. God has inclined you towards such good work, and your great love for what you do is proof of God's blessing. However, if your love of work were to weaken, this would be a sign of grace denied, for God leads only those who are worthy into those right attitudes that will earn spiritual rewards." Discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi, p. 19; "After the Amir left, someone said: "When the Amir
However, there are some scholars, more recently Professor Mikail Bayram who claim that Rumi was an "agent" of Mongols. Their basic premise is that in a period of such a great turmoil it is just impossible to maintain a moderate stance. Avni Ozgurel vehemently refutes these claims:

We know that Prof. Mikail Bayram is against Rumi's philosophy and Islamic understanding. He previously claimed at a TV programme that "Rumi was raising individuals who were inclined to be submissive to imperialism and was a representative of Iranian Mysticism; that is why the West gives importance to him but at the final analysis Rumi's ideas would only help colonisation of Anatolia, thus were harmful"... In Rumi's time, the Sultan was Ghayasuddin Keykhusrow who to be a Sultan himself poisoned his father Alauddin Keyqubad who unified Anatolia under Seljuk rule. And, in Keykhusrow's time, the state was deteriorated and Anatolia was in bloodshed.

I mean the infamous Babai rebellion While Rumi was warning Keykhusrow in Konya to rule properly so that the state would not be destabilised, some other religious leaders were staging the


49 Rumi was not a fan of Mongols: "Someone said: 'The Mongols also believe in the resurrection and say that there will be a judgment.' Rumi said: They lie, desiring to be accepted by Muslims. If they really believe in the resurrection, where is the evidence to prove it?", Rumi, Discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi, p. 121.
biggest rebellion in Anatolian history... After all these turmoil and Mongolian occupation, it is true that Rumi inclined towards to Mongols. Mikail Bayram said that Rumi sided with the Mongols and criticised who opposed this, he would be deemed right. The main reason of Rumi's this attitude was that if Mongols were opposed, Anatolia's unification would deteriorate further impossible to be revived again but (if left alone) the cruel Mongolian power would be dissolved in Anatolia's spiritual environment. He was right. Although Mongols came to Anatolia with an uproar; they disappeared and history never recorded a 'Mongol retreat'.  

While dealing with Rumi, in any manner whatsoever, it must always borne in mind that Rumi was not a politician but a spiritual guide who was fully aware of the mundane realities that essential for make up an ideal spiritual guide. Even though he did not deal with daily politics, he faced and is still facing political accusations, such as seeking political power or being a traitor.

Rumi's Spirit in Modern Turkey and Its Cultural Impact Today

After Saljuqs came the Ottomans who valued diversity, even during conflicts, with non-Muslim foreign powers. Thus, many ethnic and religious identities had been preserved in Ottoman times, helping to maintain social harmony and peaceful co-existence despite all sorts of internal and external difficulties and challenges. This is one of the reasons why Ottoman State was a soft power and in the words of Prince Hassan of Jordan, the grandson of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the Emir of Mecca who led the Arab revolt against Ottoman rule in 1916, “It was a commonwealth not an Empire.”

50 Avni Ozgurel, Was Maulana an Agent of Mongols?, Radical, 4 December 2005.

Despite the fact that Muslims all across the world are facing stiff challenges from modernity, nationalism, western imperialism, colonialism, ignorance, poverty and dissension there are many Muslim scholars like Mevlana Khalid-i Bagdadi, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi, Mohammad Lutfi Fethullah Gulen still believe that respect for diversity as exemplified by Rumi, the Saljuqs and the Ottomans is a religious obligation. Mystic and scholar Fethullah Gulen (1941-) – the most prominent voice of Islamic mysticism in the West – has frequently been compared to Rumi. He is carrying forward the Rumi mystic tradition in the West. Numerous non-Muslim academics and scholars point out to the influence of Rumi’s doctrine of mystical love on Gulen's ideas about interfaith dialogue, which he deems "a must" in this era of increased globalization.  

Gulen has even been called a "modern-day Rumi" for his emphasis on tolerance and love (Eustis 2006). Vatican representative to Istanbul, Monsenyer Marovitch agrees:

Looking around, I see people here from every social segment. I ask: What has brought us here? What has brought our Christian, Muslim, and Jewish brothers together? Just as in Konya, where Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi has attracted hundreds of millions, there is a man here who speaks with love and attracts us, namely Fethullah Gulen. This esteemed man speaks to us about love. It is love that has brought us here today. For this reason, I am praying for him. He needs all our prayers. This man is a great example for the world. Some ask what's behind this man. He has only one weapon: love of God.

At a symposium on Rumi in Strasbourg, France his humanism and contribution to interfaith dialogue were discussed. The meeting, which

52 F. Gulen, Mevlana of the XXI century, Dr. V. I. Sheremeto Prof Klaus Otte is of the same view, see http://tr.fgulen.com/content/view/133 3 3/75/

53 Georges Marovitch (Vatican Istanbul Representative), (quoted from A. Unal, A. Williams, Ibid., 239.)
included academics from France and Turkey, highlighted that Rumi's philosophy cannot be understood properly in isolation with Islam and the Hadith. Professor Cihan from Istanbul's Fatih University talked about traces of Rumi's philosophy in modern Turkey, pointing to Fethullah Gulen's efforts at encouraging intercultural dialogue as an example. Okuyuncu noted, "Gulen's activities aimed at promoting tolerance and dialogue are actually inspired by the philosophy of Rumi." In the words of Thomas Michel:

A modern Muslim who has appropriated Rumi's attitudes and integrated them into his own understanding of Islamic faith and practice is the Turkish scholar and religious leader, M. Fethullah Gulen. The correspondence of Maulana to Gulen is that of kindred spirits who, across the centuries, share an interpretation of the Qur'anic message as well as a commitment to communicate that message effectively to people of their respective ages... It is not an exaggeration to say that Gulen is a modern Muslim scholar whose life work of promoting an Islamic appreciation of love, tolerance, and universal peace is in fact a renewed interpretation for our times of the central insights of Maulana.

Gulen's Message and Acceptance of the Other

The following quote shows how Rumi's spirit of love, compassion, tolerance, acceptance of the other, socio-cultural activism and education as the most important method of social innovation to tackle ignorance and improve dialogue has so remarkably influenced the thought of Gulen:

... If we exclude certain periods and individuals, the Turks' interpretation of what Islam allows to be interpreted is correct and positive. If we can spread globally the Islamic understanding of such heroes

54 http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/2321122/

55 Thomas Michel, 2007, Fethullah Gulen: Following in the Footsteps of Rumi. 33
of love as Niyazi Misri, Yunus Emre, and Rumi, if we can extend their messages of love, dialogue, and tolerance to those thirsty for this message, everyone will run toward the embrace of love, peace, and tolerance that we represent.  

Those who perceive religion as being contradictory to science and reason are the afflicted; they are unaware of the spirit of both religion and reason. Moreover, it is absolutely fraudulent to hold religion responsible for clashes between different sections of society. Conflicts between peoples and groups of people arise from ignorance, from ambition for personal advantage and profit, or from the vested interests of particular groups, parties, or classes. Religion neither approves nor condones such qualities and ambitions. In a world becoming more and more globalized, we are trying to get to know those who will be our future neighbors. One of the most important factors here is to eliminate factors that separate people...such as discrimination based on color, race, belief, and ethnicity. Education can uproot these evils. ... We are trying our best to do this.

As a matter of fact, a deeper analysis of Gulen's life personality would reveal a profound impact of mysticism on his spirituality and scholarship. Gulen was a student of mystic saint Alvarli Efe Mohammad Lutfi who provoked him to study to Arabic, Islamic Jurisprudence, and exegesis. Mohammad Lutfi taught Gulen the fundamental principles of piety, devotion, ascetic lifestyle, selflessness and altruism. Gulen's extraordinary attachment with Rumi can also be attributed to Mohammad Lutfi as well. With regards to Rumi's influence on Gulen Michel points out:

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56 Gulen, Love and Essence of Human Being, p. 29.
57 http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/1958/12/
One could go on at length to multiply instances of how Fethullah Gulen employs the teaching of Jalaluddin Rumi to teach the practical virtues needed for a rich spirituality. In his work, Key Concepts in the Practice of Mysticism, Gulen refers to Rumi more often than to any other spiritual author. He cites the advice of Maulana to illustrate his teaching on poverty (p. 171), on the need for austerity and periods of retreat (p. 17) and the value of temporary seclusion (p. 18), on the importance of self-supervision (p. 58), patience (p. 103), truthfulness (p. 86), and reliance on God (p. 70). Rumi offers the criteria for judging the value of work (p. 126) and for appreciating a proper attitude toward worldly possessions (p. 43).  

The hallmark of Gulen’s philosophy are: humanity, love, compassion, tolerance, respect and acceptance of the other as they are, openness to the other, and importance of dialogue and vitality of education. Gulen sees humans as God's special and very important creatures:

Humans, the greatest mirror of the names, attributes and deeds of God, are a shining mirror, a marvelous fruit of life, a source for the whole universe, a sea that appears to be a tiny drop, a sun formed as a humble seed, a great melody in spite of their insignificant physical positions, and the source for existence all contained within a small body. Humans carry a holy secret that makes them equal to the entire universe with all their wealth of character; a wealth that can be developed to excellence.  

He highlights:

Compassion is the beginning of being; without it everything is chaos. Everything has come into existence through compassion and by compassion it continues to exist in harmony. . . . Every thing


speaks of compassion and promises compassion. Because of this, the universe can be considered a symphony of compassion. All kinds of voices proclaim compassion so that it is impossible not to be aware of it, and impossible not to feel the wide mercy encircling everything. How unfortunate are the souls who don't perceive this. Man has a responsibility to show compassion to all living beings, as a requirement of being human. The more he displays compassion, the more exalted he becomes, while the more he resorts to wrongdoing, oppression and cruelty, the more he is disgraced and humiliated, becoming a shame to humanity. 62

Gulen sees diversity and pluralism as a natural fact. He wants those differences to be admitted and to be explicitly professed. Accepting everyone as they are, which is broader and deeper than tolerance, is his normal practice. 63

The Prophet says that all people are as equal as the teeth of a comb. Islam does not discriminate based on race, colour, age, nationality, or physical traits. The Prophet declared "You are all from Adam, and Adam is from earth and servants of God, be brothers (and sisters)." 41 Those who close the road of tolerance are beasts who have lost their humanity... forgiveness and tolerance will heal most of our wounds, but only if this divine instrument is in the hands of those who understand its language. Otherwise, the incorrect treatment we have used until now will create many complications and continue to confuse us. 64

He believes that "interfaith dialogue is a must today, and that the first step in establishing it is forgetting the past, ignoring polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points, which far outnumber polemical ones." 65 In his

63 See in detail, Unal and Williams, the Advocate of Dialogue, op. cit., pp. 256-258.
64 Gulen 2001a: 134.
65 Ibid.
opinion, a believer does not hesitate to communicate with any kind of thoughts and systems; while one foot should remain at the centre the other could be with other 'seventy-two nations' (Rumi's famous metaphor); Islam does not reject interaction with diverse-cultures and change as long as what is to be appropriated does not contradict with the main pillars of Islam.

... Different beliefs, races, customs and traditions will continue to cohabit in this village. Each individual is like a unique realm unto themselves; therefore the desire for all humanity to be similar to one another is nothing more than wishing for the impossible. For this reason, the peace of this (global) village lies in respecting all these differences, considering these differences to be part of our nature and in ensuring that people appreciate these differences. Otherwise, it is unavoidable that the world will devour itself in a web of conflicts, disputes, fights, and the bloodiest of wars, thus preparing the way for its own end. If one were to seek the true face of Islam in its own sources, history, and true representatives, then one would discover that it contains no harshness, cruelty, or fanaticism. It is a religion of forgiveness, pardon, and tolerance as such saints and princes of love and tolerance as Rumi, Yunus Emre, Ahmed Yesevi, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi and many others have so beautifully expressed. 66

Gulen prophesies a twenty-first century wherein, "We shall witness the birth of a spiritual dynamics that will revitalise long-dormant moral values; an age of tolerance, understanding, and international cooperation that will ultimately lead, through inter-cultural dialog and a sharing of values, to greater understanding and peace." According to him, "The road to justice for all is dependent on the provision of an adequate and appropriate universal

education. Only then, will there be sufficient understanding and tolerance to secure respect for the rights of others.”

**Socio-Cultural Activities of Gulen**

Gulen’s doctrine of mysticism is more concerned with the “socio-cultural and even political action”. Gulen, following the Rumi’s tradition spelt out more than seven centuries ago, held firm the belief, “Action is an inseparable aspect of mysticism and Muslims should be actively involved in the community, share their experience with others, strive to help others and bring peace to the global village. 

Gulen echoes Rumi also in telling us not to ignore the doctrine of causes, not to sit around heedlessly waiting for Allah’s favour, but rather to exert ourselves endlessly in order to transform this broken world into the world of peace and justice.

Those who always feel themselves in the presence of God do not need to seclude themselves from the people. Such people, in the words of Rumi are like those who, “Keep one foot in the sphere of Divine commandments and turn the other, like a compass needle, throughout the world. They experience ascension and descent at every moment. This is the seclusion recognized and preferred by the Prophets and saints.  

Toguslu (2007) explains, “Although Gulen is against hedonism, he regards altruism as (an essential) criteria of life according to the ideal man which require the effort of follower as developing the detachment from the pleasure and seductive needs, the intellectual and aesthetic dimension is accepted and - even more- encouraged by Gulen”. Even though, in Gulen's views, “The pleasure in this world is considered ephemeral”, therefore, neither he nor his

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68 Cetin, Peaceful Heroes, Dallas.
followers ever practice hedonism because they believe that “they are sent to this world to enhance devotion and to seek God’s contentment. Gulen's and his cult of mystics do not lead a reclusive life rather they are very much active in the social life, seek the pleasure and enjoy entertainment like going to the cinema or theatre, listening to the music etc., yet they strive to live a more meaningfully and aesthetic Muslim life. Paradoxically, those ascetic bodies and souls, which participate actively in daily life are considered better than the ascetics who are absent from worldly life. Putting it differently, “Gulen’s endeavour is to redefine the Muslim personality at the most subjective level that is analogous to Mystic subjectivity, but also different from stereotypical Mystic remoteness to socially active units and personalities.  For Gulen, “Living in the world but not of the world, allowing no inner attachment to it is the basic blueprint of the individual's whole social action. Gulen reiterates Rumi’s metaphor compasses: "Our right foot is fixed upon the center of the truth while our left foot is rotating in and around the seventy two nations".

Gulen’s fundamental aim is to “creating an Islamic ethic as a manner or conduct of individuals”. Rather than advancing political ambitions, Gulen's objective is to foster an ethic that comes very similar to that of Max Weber's 'worldly asceticism,' an activist pietism with a tendency toward the rationalisation of social relationships.

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70 Toguslu 2007.


Agai also observes, “The man of Hizmet (service to humanity), the one who performs the holy duty, can be described in the terms of Weber as the man of inner-worldly asceticism, seeing his occupation as given from God”. For Gulen, “Doing the work in the best way, devoting it to God, becomes a religious duty”. Making monetary gains is not prohibited, however, spending it for luxuries is frowned upon at. Life is too short to spend it for amusement, as there are always more important things man can do that are religiously worthwhile. Gulen calls this ideal man, “Man of action”. Such a person does his/her best until this world is turned into paradise; and also struggles for a better world, to be stopped by nothing except death itself. 74

As the proverb says "human beings die away, but their work remains", a believer has to work incessantly so as to leave pieces of work [eserler] to the descendent generations. For Gulen the ideal that "This life has to be lived to its utmost limits" can be achieved through work.75

Gulen continues a long tradition of seeking to address the spiritual needs of people, to educate the masses, and to provide some stability in times of turmoil. Like many previous figures, including Rumi, he is wrongly suspected of seeking political power.76 Yet, Gulen views, “Religion is primarily a private or a communal matter, not a political or state matter, therefore, Islam as a religion should not be reduced to being a political party identity”. He is very critical of the 'instrumentalization' of religion in politics:

When those who have adopted Islam as a political ideology rather than a religion in its true sense and function, review their activities and attitudes they claim to be based on Islam, especially political ones, will discover that they are usually moved by personal or national anger, hostility, and other

76 Aras and Caha, 'Turkish Islam's', op. cit; see in detail Altinoglu, Fethullah Gulen, op. cit.
similar motives... A Muslim's beginning point must have an Islamic basis. In the present situation, Muslims cannot act out of ideological or political partisanship and then dress this partisanship in Islamic garb, or represent mere desires in the form of ideas. If we can overcome this tendency, Islam's true image will become known. 77

As has been demonstrated above Gulen's never sought or aspired for political power. His ideas "worldly asceticism" are much in conformity with that of Max Weber's. Gulen always championed the cause of activism controlled by pietism. The "activist pietism" (or Weber's "in-worldly asceticism") lends a new dimension to the Turkish religious life that is 'rationalisation of social relationships', which is based on a critical "rejection of the world" but not the "flight from this world" that is a characteristic for escapist mysticism. This rationalisation of social relationships is not based on 'contemplation', which is "inactivity," rather and, thus, forms an ethical system that finds the 'certification of salvation by deeds performed in this world'. It is paradoxical in nature as it calls for "a critical rejection of the world while simultaneously calling for involvement in the world in rationally structured activities", ultimately leading to the establishment of "a more rationally organized society". The programmes of pietistic activism include: building of schools instead of mosques, investing in secular education instead of religious instruction, encouraging economic enterprises and requiring them to invest in education, encouraging educational and economic enterprises to support each other, promoting individual and collective self-criticism, and supporting critically minded planning for future projects. Gulen's stance also tries to a "delicate balance between militant rejection of this world on the one hand, and a desire to rebuild a new social order by peaceful, constructive means, on the

77 http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/1336/13/
other”. However, this goal can never be achieved “without the deeply religious sense of duty on which it builds, there most likely would have been less constructive, rational accomplishments”. These basic tenets have lent Gulen’s a truly global acceptance. If one were to really appreciate Gulen’s mission, then a clear distinction has to be established between political ambition and religious activism.\(^78\)

Despite theses clarifications the bureaucratic oligarchy in Turkey continues to regard Gulen and his movement as a potential threat to the State.