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A Parallel Examination of the Aphorisms of Love by Shakespeare and Rumi

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***Abstract:** This article examines how two significant characters from both Eastern and occidental literature conceptualize love. One of the most famous figures in Sufi literature, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, devoted his life to love and harbored a profound affection for Allah. He was a poet, philosopher, and mystic whose poems encapsulated every facet of his existence. According to Mevlana, the enduring themes of life are still death and love, which go hand in hand. According to Mevlana, "Şeb-i Arûs" refers to the night he will be reunited with his beloved, the night he longs to pass on and be with her once more. This essay explores the ideas of love and death held by two important figures in both Eastern and Western literature.*

***Key words:** Sufi philosophy, aphorisms, Rumi, Shakespeare, love.*

Introduction. It looks at how it tries to find love and exalt it in its innately metaphysical sense. Shakespeare uses language akin to Mevlana's depiction of the moment when he does not crave this world but finds his true sweetheart in order to discuss the unifying rather than the dividing aspect of death as he explores the meaning of life between love and existential issues. Shakespeare writes about the majesty of love that surrounds all life in his poems and laments how humans can be apathetic to this love, which is the essence of the cosmos, even though he does not write with the divine purpose inherent in Mevlana's philosophy. Thus, the purpose of this study is to elucidate the ways in which Mevlana and Shakespeare—two well-known writers of both Eastern and Western literature—explore the ideas of aphorisms on love, which grasp the essence of existence.

One of the major ideas of both Renaissance and Sufi thought is love. The basis of Sufis' existence and their ultimate goal is love. In Sufism, death is actually viewed as a sign of love; it is never the end but rather a transient moment that heralds the beginning of eternal life. They gave their life to love because they believed that all human issues were opportunities for heavenly love. Throughout their stay here, they were able to grow spiritually since they gave up on worldly pleasures in the hopes of finding true

love and pursued the goal of “dying before death.” According to the Sufi faith, only then may one enter the literary realm through death and completely understand true love. To receive God's love, a lover must renounce all earthly pleasures and desires; beyond that, nothing matters because the lover sees nothing but his beloved. A lover will go to any lengths to win his affection. With his international teachings centuries ago, Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî, who blazed the light of love and faith upon humanity, transcends the ages. He “invited all people to love, brotherhood, tolerance, eternal peace, eternal happiness, and divine mercy.”¹ As Ruhattin Yazođlu puts it, Mevlana: “As well as being a great guide, an example of goodness and virtue, a sultan of hearts, a great mystic who is a friend of God, he is one of the greatest poets not only of the Turkish and Islamic world but also of world literature. He is a fantastic sage and a personable personality”. Mevlana, one of the greatest writers in Sufi literature, is recognized for having made important statements regarding love and death in his *Mesnevi-i Ma'nevi*, which is said to have been written between 1258 and 1271. His couplets encapsulate his life philosophy in their expression of heavenly love for the one with infinite power and universe dominance.

In Western literature, the goal of human existence, love, and death were explored from both a worldly and metaphysical perspective, particularly during a period when Renaissance humanism was a major influence. Among the world's most well-known writers, William Shakespeare is the one who concentrates on the themes of love and death, giving these themes a metaphysical context and creating representations that, despite their different starting points, are most similar to the mystical counterparts of these ideas in Sufi literature. Shakespeare explored the profound connotations of love in an abstract setting and discussed how love may have both positive and negative repercussions, ultimately leading to death. Death, however, does not represent an end in the sense that is often understood; rather, it represents a spiritual reunion—which is defined as the moment of a lover's reunion—and a metaphysical marriage. Shakespeare's examples in this regard come from the immortalized love of two people, but Mevlana's beliefs are consistent with his rejection of death as a conclusion. Shakespeare portrayed the moment of Mevlana's experience with divine love as the meeting of worldly lovers. This is why the analysis of Sufi philosophy on love and death and Western literature in this study are both similar and dissimilar.

This article focuses on aphorisms about love from Shakespeare and Mevlane. The main concepts in the aphorisms that serve as the foundation for the life philosophies of two significant authors in both Eastern and Western literature are examined in this comparative study. It also contrasts and compares the two writers' views to a wide range of topics. The work first explores Mevlana's concept of love in great detail and then builds a theoretical foundation for how Sufism interprets these issues. We then draw comparisons between Rumi and Shakespeare's presentation of the aphorisms of love. This central theme, which is prominently featured in the works of these two names, distinguished representatives of Eastern and Western literary works, has become an important element that influences all of world literature in terms of literary advancements, personal preferences, and sociocultural conventions. By comparing and contrasting the love aphorisms in Rumi and Shakespeare's works, this study draws attention to the key differences and parallels between the approaches taken by Eastern and Western writers to the subject matter underneath consideration.

The founder of Sufi philosophy and literature, Mevlana, describes discovering the kind of love that is exclusive to God in another person as symbolic love and provides the following explanation: “It is a

¹ Yazođlu, R. & İmamođlu, T. (2007). Mevlânâ Düşüncesinde Bir Ölümsüzlük Tecrübesi Olarak İradî ve Doğal Ölüm. A. Ü Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi 34, 9-19.

gold-plated beauty; There is light outside and smoke inside. “When the light disappears and smoke appears, metaphorical love immediately freezes”. The most important thing is to use metaphorical love to guide you into divine love. According to Sevda Aktulga Gürbüz, “humans keep searching for this scent, especially in minor things,” even though heavenly love is the fragrance of truth. Like a moth that vanishes in the flames of love and becomes one with it, this search transforms one's love into love itself rather than the reunion. From this angle, worldly love is not a route to sensual desire, but rather a means of achieving spiritual elevation. Mevlana recognizes that all things are a part of the most absolute Creator and views all forms of love as a whole, with tiny particles attaining the ultimate goal. Because of this, he does not associate love with any particular faith; rather, he discusses how uncommon love is: “The religion of love is different from all religions. The religious sect of lovers is Allah.”² Mevlana considers love to be salvation because he is a Sufi who is in love. Mevlana's conception of love transcends temporal, spatial, and physical limitations. Love, on the other hand, serves as a metaphysical bond that binds us to the Creator on a level outside of our experience. Mevlana's theory of love can be summed up as follows: “Whether love is for material beings or others, know that it will lead you to Him”³. Mevlana's conception of love and life philosophy were greatly influenced by the moniker Shems-i Tebrizî. His artworks reflect his deep admiration, affection, and respect for him. Mevlânâ did not stay in Shems-i Tebrizî after seeing the Divine Light manifest there, though. After Shems-i Tebrizî passed away, Mevlana was deeply saddened and withdrew to seclusion in order to focus on his devotion to Allah's love. Heavenly love expressed itself in the form of a discourse between two wandering scientists. Along the similar lines, what the most well-known couples in history witnessed in the initial phase is like to a sliver of the ultimate Beloved. A spark of heavenly love is precisely what underlies the magnificent love displayed by Aslı and Kerem, Ferhat and İrin, and Leyla and Mecnun. Only these fortunate individuals are able to gather the light that God scatters, according to Mevlana, who also asserts that the light of Allah shines in them just as much as it does in stars in the sky: “Whoever does not have the skirt of love, he is left without his share of the hair of light. / The faces of the parts are towards the whole; “The love of nightingales is for the face of the rose”⁴. Mevlana states that only those who are in love like him can understand the state of his beloved and Pointing to the Surah Maide in the Holy Koran, it says: “Love is love without measure. In this regard, it has been said that minstrelsy is actually the attribute of God and its attribution to the servant is a metaphor. “He loves them” okay, but “They love him”, you know?⁵.

Shakespeare, one of the biggest names in Western literature, uses terminology that is similar to that of Mevlana, despite the fact that he interprets love and death differently. This is evident from the reflections in his works, which are based on the essence of Mevlana's Sufi philosophy. While Mevlana's conception of love is based on divine love, while Shakespeare wrote his works on human elegance, both names concur that love is a situation that is hard to understand in an abstract context and almost impossible to express. Shakespeare and Rumi both say that only a living person can fully understand this occurrence. Mevlana asserts that love has an enigmatic, limitless quality that is impossible to pin down. “What can a dull man say; How can a person who is only a speck of the sun

² Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî. (2015). *Mesnevî-i Ma'nevî*. (Çev. D. Örs & H. Kırlangıç). Bilnet Matbaacılık. (Original 1806)

³ Uludağ, S. (2009). *Sûfî Gözüyle Kadın*. İnsan Yayınları.

⁴ Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî. (2015). *Mesnevî-i Ma'nevî*. (Çev. D. Örs & H. Kırlangıç). Bilnet Matbaacılık. (Original 1806)

⁵ Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî. (2015). *Mesnevî-i Ma'nevî*. (Çev. D. Örs & H. Kırlangıç). Bilnet Matbaacılık. (Original 1806)

and a speck of the endless sea describe this endless (love) adventure? While Shakespeare⁶ defines love in his 116th Sonnet, he uses the expressions “Love is not the fool of time”, which is the union of “righteous souls”, which can never have a fixed position, whose value cannot be fully known, which cannot be measured by the transience of earthly properties, and which does not change with temporal descriptions. He emphasizes that it is a concept that makes sense. In Shakespeare’s words: “Love is not love / That changes when it finds change”. Shakespeare continues his sonnet by emphasizing how right he is in his claim, and if he is wrong in his observation and proven otherwise, he says: “I have never written, nor has any man ever loved”. While describing love, Mevlana also mentions its sublimity and eternity: “Love cannot be expressed in words; Love is a sea whose bottom is invisible. It is difficult to count the drops of the sea; in comparison to the sea of love, the seven seas are insignificant.” Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet* employs similar aphorisms to depict the sublime and endless nature of love. In the play, Juliet indicates that her overflowing love is as deep and unlimited as the seas, saying, “The more I give you, / The more it becomes mine, both are infinite.”

Since it permeates everything, love is actually quite hard to define. Mevlana also attempted to explain this by using the analogy of a nursing infant. Although the infant is unable to provide the formula for milk, he has a strong attachment and depends on it for survival. Shakespeare, like Rumi, defines love as the one light that permeates all existence, but in his plays and sonnets, he exalts the earthly love that two people have for one another, as opposed to Rumi's interpretation of divine love. Cleopatra describes her lover in the play *Antony and Cleopatra* as follows: “His face was like the sky; There I was stuck / A sun and moon keeping their course, and / Little One enlightened the world”⁷. Cleopatra, who questions the limits of her love and wants to determine how far being loved can go, receives the following answer from Mark Antony: “Then you must find the new heaven, the new world”. Similarly, in the play *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo uses a metaphor of the sun that eclipses the light of the moon for his lover and makes him jealous: “What light is filtering through that window over there? / That is the east and Juliet is the sun. / Rise, fair sun, and slay the envious moon / Which is already sick and pale with grief / Thou art more beautiful than she”⁸. Shakespeare compares his love to the sun, the brightest entity, and claims that the moon's faint color results from his jealousy of the sun's brightness. Shakespeare frequently compares his love to an endless summer day in his sonnets, using the sun's brilliance as a source of warmth and light. In his well-known 18th sonnet, he makes this comparison, asking, “What would it take to compare you to a summer day? / You are much more beautiful, much more friendly.”⁹ It makes us think of a love that endures forever for the person you care about, a warmth that never goes out of style. Mevlana also described divine love using analogies of the sun, moon, and light source:

Love is the daytime sun for love. The sun is like a veil for that face.

He who cannot distinguish between the veil and the face of his beloved is worshipping the sun, so stay away from him.

That is the day, that is the sustenance of the lover. That is the heart, that is the fire in the lover’s heart.¹⁰

⁶ Shakespeare, W. (2006). *Sonnets and Poems*. (Ed. B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine). Simon & Schuster. (Original 1609).

⁷ Shakespeare, W. (2020a). *Antony and Cleopatra*. (Ed. B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine). Simon & Schuster. (Original 1623).

⁸ Shakespeare, W. (2003). *Romeo and Juliet*. (Ed. C. Crowther). Spark Publishing. (Original 1597).

⁹ Shakespeare, W. (2006). *Sonnets and Poems*. (Ed. B. A. Mowat & P. Werstine). Simon & Schuster. (Original 1609).

¹⁰ Mevlânâ Celâleddîn-i Rûmî. (2015). *Mesnevî-i Ma'nevî*. (Çev. D. Örs & H. Kırlangıç). Bilnet Matbaacılık. (Original 1806).

According to Mevlana, divine love is like the sun; symbolic love is merely a veil that lets the light rays that are reflected from the almighty source shine on the individual. Mevlana taught that heavenly love is the owner of the fire in the heart. Its creator becomes nothing and becomes fully one with its beloved, meaning that they merge in a spiritual plane, and its existence vanishes while it searches for it. Then and only then can man realize the meaning of creation and the love that permeates the universe.

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