



THE CONCEPT OF GENEROSITY IN RUMI'S  
*MATHNAWI*: AN ANALYSIS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

This work examines generosity in the *Mathnawi* of Maulana Rumi. The thesis identifies fifteen stories not related directly to generosity in the *Mathnawi*. These were categorized into three groups: acts which are devoid of any generosity, sincere generosity, insincere generosity. These are mainly stories involving companions, saints and sometimes fables. The stories pertaining to the Prophet were used differently by Rumi. In some instances, he changed the gender of the person from that in the hadith and embellishes the stories with his own story. There are instances in which he takes two separate hadiths and make them one. In all cases, Rumi changes the scenario to make his own. The extensive change to the original does not allow us to call them hadith anymore. This dissertation shows that Rumi has spared no opportunity to show that generosity is extremely important in all its form and without being generous, one cannot reach the highest station in life. This is because the thesis shows that in Islam it does not only involve giving, but giving the best we have.

## ملخص البحث

يقدم هذا البحث دراسة لموضوع الكرم في مثنوي مولانا جلال الدين الرومي. البحث يتناول خمسة عشر قصة من المثنوي لا ترتبط بالكرم بشكل مباشر. تم تقسيم هذه القصص في ثلاث مجموعات: الأفعال التي تخلو من الكرم، والكرم بإخلاص والكرم بغير إخلاص. هذه القصص مرتبطة بشكل أساسي بالصحابة، والأولياء، وأحياناً الأساطير. أما بالنسبة للقصص المتعلقة بالنبي عليه السلام فقد استخدمها جلال الدين الرومي بشكل مختلف، ففي بعض الأحيان قام بتغيير جنس الشخص الوارد في الحديث وفي أخرى قام بتزيينها بقصصه الخاصة، وهناك أيضاً حالات فيها قام بدمج اثنين من الأحاديث المنفصلة ليجعلها واحدة. في جميع الحالات، نجد أن جلال الدين الرومي يغير المشهد حتى يغدو خاصاً به، حتى أن التغيير الكبير للأصل في بعض المواضع لا يسمح لنا أن نعتبرها أحاديث بعد ذلك. تظهر هذه الرسالة أن جلال الدين الرومي لم يدخر فرصة إلا وأظهر فيها أهمية الكرم في جميع أشكاله مبيناً أنه دون أن يكون الإنسان كريماً، لا يمكن أن يصل إلى أعلى مراتب الحياة. وبذلك تبين الدراسة أن الكرم في الإسلام لا يقتصر على العطاء فقط، ولكن على بذل أفضل ما لدينا.

## **APPROVAL PAGE**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Suzana Suhailawaty Md. Sidek

Signature .....

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As a person who can discern the ability of a human being, Prof. Ajmal could see my potential as a Ph.D student at the very beginning. He taught me how to begin my research by using both online and off-line sources. I collected my research material in 6 months: it took 2 months to find materials through library databases and 4 months in the library itself. I gathered all the materials for my subject before I started writing my dissertation. It was a great experience to learn how to do proper research. Prof. Ajmal taught all this in his class, Research Methodology too, so other students know this also.

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## TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

CONSONANTS			
Arabic	English	Arabic	English
ء	'	ض	Ḍ
ب	B	ط	Ṭ
ت	T	ظ	Ẓ
ث	Th	ع	‘
ج	J	غ	Gh
ح	Ḥ	ف	F
خ	Kh	ق	Q
د	D	ك	K
ذ	Dh	ل	L
ر	R	م	M
ز	Z	ن	N
س	S	و	W
ش	Sh	ه	H
ص	Ṣ	ي	Y

Vowels			
Short Vowels		Long Vowels	
أ	A	آ	Ā
إ	I	إي	Ī
أ	U	أو	Ū

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The study of history is the study of the past, and knowledge from the past provides us with perspective of society. The study of history is also the study of transformation. From the beginning of human history<sup>1</sup>, studies have shown that human beings always had certain standard characteristics<sup>2</sup>. These characteristics helped humans survive. In fact, we know the earliest human beings<sup>3</sup> used these characteristics to decide on the best place to live, how to protect themselves from the elements like heavy rain, strong winds, thunder and lightning, floods, earthquakes, typhoons, cyclones and hurricanes. They discovered very early on that in order to protect themselves from these elements, they had to locate good shelter. Some made their dwellings near mountains and in caves. Those who lived in the jungles realized that they had to find higher elevations so that they could escape from wild beasts and flash floods. Some even lived on trees in the beginning in order to survive.

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<sup>1</sup> “Archeological studies and other scientific methods have provided us with a view of human development that begins millions of years ago. Most of the 2 million-plus years of our existence as a species have been described as the Paleolithic, or Old Stone, Age. This lengthy phase, during which both *Homo erectus* and the *Homo sapiens* made their appearances, ran until about 14,000 years ago. *Homo erectus* appeared as early 500,000-750,000 years ago. They stood upright and learned simple tool use, mainly through employing suitably shaped rocks and sticks for hunting and gathering. Several species of *Homo erectus* developed and spread in Africa and to Asia and Europe, reaching a population of perhaps 1.5 million – 100,000 years ago. *Homo erectus* disappeared about 40,000 years ago. Our immediate ancestors were *Homo sapiens*. All current races are descended from this subspecies. Early varieties of *Homo sapiens* lived as small bands of hunter-gatherers. These groups developed language, rituals and more sophisticated tools.” Refer Peter N. Stearns, Stuart B. Schwartz, Michael Adas and Marc Jason Gilbert, *World Civilization: The Global Experience*, <[www.ablongman.com](http://www.ablongman.com)>, AP\* Edition Companion Website, accessed on March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> *Oxford Dictionary* defines the word *characteristic* as “a feature or quality belonging typically to a person, place, or thing and serving to identify them.” See Angus Stevenson (ed.), *Oxford Dictionary of English*, (England: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> “Sometime earlier, between 70 000 to 40 000 years ago, a new species had appeared in Europe. This was *Homo sapiens*, to which today’s humans belong. However, the oldest fossilised remains of *Homo sapiens* were found in sub-Saharan Africa and date from as early as 200 000 to 150 000 years. Recent genomic studies indicate that *Homo sapiens* and *Homo neanderthalensis* share a more recent common ancestor, about 700 000 years old, and that their ancestral populations split around 370 000 years ago.” See Noonan, J.P., et al, *Science* 314, 2006, 1113-1118.

This instinct was not only in human beings, but also in animals. Hence, for the sake of self-preservation and to protect themselves, from other predators, heavy rain, typhoons and other natural elements, they found places where they could be safe.

One of the most important characteristics of human beings is that they have a strong will to live, and they are resourceful. When they lived by the river, they built mud houses or adobes<sup>4</sup>. They were even willing to live in the Arctic and deserts. In the former they built igloos, in the latter they built tents. Human beings lived near oases to obtain water and food, harvest dates, olives, figs, and rear camels, sheep and goats<sup>5</sup>. Human beings had the ability to reason in a complex manner in order to preserve themselves. They realized the horse was not an animal that could survive long in the desert, so they domesticated camels, on which they could depend for milk, and they knew that the “ship of the desert” could go for three days without water<sup>6</sup>.

By doing this, the art of domesticating animals began. In different parts of the world, depending on the need, different animals were kept: dogs, cats, chickens, ducks, pigs, goats, cows, camels, horses, and elephants are amongst a few. There are records of domestication of species close to wolf at least as early as 14,000 years ago, probably for food, fur, hunting and protection of the social group. Later, about 8,000

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<sup>4</sup> For more explanation on adobes see more in Nicholas Barnard, *Living with Folk Art, Ethnic Styles from around the World*, (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd, 1991); Michael Freeman, *In the Oriental Style, A Sourcebook of Decoration and Design*, (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1990); Paul Oliver (ed.), *Shelter, Sign and Symbol, An Exploratory Work on Vernacular Architecture*, (New York: The Overlook Press, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Donald B. Redfort, *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel in Ancient Times*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Robert Drews, *The End of the Bronze Age*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Randall W. Yonker, “Bronze Age Camel Petroglyphs in the Wadi Nasib, Sinai,” *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin*, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> S. Vannithone and; A. Davidson, “Camel” *The Oxford Companion to Food*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); R. T. Wilson, *The camel*, (New York: Longman, 1984); R.W. Bulliet, *The Camel and the Wheel* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1975); Schmidt-Nielsen, K. *Desert Animals. Adaptation and Environment*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

years ago, goats, sheep, oxen and pigs became part of human communities in the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> *The Cambridge Ancient History* states:

“...goats, sheep, and short-horn cattle were kept, all apparently of African varieties, and attempts were still being made in early dynastic time to domesticate ibex, gazelle, antelope, deer and from the fens, and from early paintings it would seem that the ostrich was familiar, if not kept in captivity like the gazelle. The dog was known, and in the early dynastic times there were special breeds for sport and other purposes. The only beast of burden was an African variety of ass.” (Bury: 1928).

After domesticating animals, then humans moved towards farming and using tools. They became aware that they could use the land to plant and benefit from the metals in the earth. They started digging metals from the ground learning about them and using them. Stone tools were substituted with metallic tools. Leakey has this to say about ancient tools,

The earliest tools were small flakes, made by striking one stone – usually a lava cobble – with another. The flakes measured about an inch long and were surprisingly sharp.” This has been analysed by Lawrence Keeley from the University of Illinois that they found many different types of flakes to indicate that some had been used to cut meat, some to cut wood and other to cut soft plants like grass.<sup>8</sup>

Before they became farmers, Harlan states:

Hunter–gatherer bands lived by foraging wild edible plants, scavenging, and hunting, at the edge of subsistence, in great insecurity and with the permanent risk of dying from hunger. The development of agriculture, which allowed for regular production of food products and their storage in the less productive seasons and years, is one of the most remarkable advances in the history of humanity. It took place around 10 000 years ago, in the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene epochs. There are many conjectures about the origin and the way that humans started to domesticate plants and animals.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Filipe Duarte Santos, *Humans on Earth: from Origins to Possible Future*, (Portugal: Universidade de Lisboa, 2012), 87.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Leakey, *The Origin of Humankind: Unearthing Our Family Tree*, (London: Phoenix, 1994), 48.

<sup>9</sup> J. R. Harlan, *The Living Fields: Our Agricultural Heritage*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 56.

All these were done because one of the most important characteristics of humans is to survive. As for farming, humans continued to find edible plants they could grow as food and medicine for themselves and their families to make life easier for all. Soon they conquered the rivers and the seas in order to obtain food from them. What all these examples show is that they found ways to organize and do things better. In all kinds of environment and all kinds of places, human beings fought different types of weather and different animals and different circumstances to continue to better themselves. Even with all these changes in their lives, they depended on strength and courage as their main characteristics to control their lives and that of others. However, as time went on, human beings who were fighting with each other decided that they had to work together to live a better life. They realized that they had to organize themselves in a better way to make their lives better. Early human beings concentrated on changing systems rather than themselves to improve their conditions of living until much later. Soon they decided to change their own characteristics to create a better society. They realized, as we see above, traits<sup>10</sup> like courage, bravery and strength were not enough to survive. They learned that those who were “weak” physically, too, could contribute to building a society. The strong in society realized that the weak could also play a major role of building society. They, too, had skills that the strong did not have.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, Darwin’s<sup>12</sup> “Theory of Evolution” or “the survival of the fittest”<sup>13</sup> concept, was not the philosophy they used. Before this, only people who had courage

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<sup>10</sup> “The Free Dictionary: Dictionary, Encyclopedia and Thesaurus” defines the word character, “A distinguishing feature, as of a person’s character.” <<http://www.thefreedictionary.com>> (accessed on 21 September 2014).

<sup>11</sup> This idea was suggested by my supervisor in a discussion with him.

<sup>12</sup> “About the theory of evolution, Darwin mentions that every species is fertile enough that if all offspring survived to reproduce the population would grow. Also individuals less suited to the environment are less likely to survive and less likely to reproduce; individuals more suited to the environment are more likely to survive and more likely to reproduce and leave their inheritable traits to

and strength could feed themselves and their “possessions,” that is, the members of their family. The principle that they had lived by used the idea of “fight or flight.”<sup>14</sup>. Human beings in a second would decide whether they should wait and fight an enemy or run away from them. They would decide if they could win a fight against another human being or an animal. Most of these early fighting were done alone, before they learned to organize themselves, that is, before that the characteristic of strength or courage was not enough. However, all this changed because the “strong” amongst the people knew cooperation was better.<sup>15</sup> They realized that they did not have to use their strength to kill and conquer, but they could use it to also organize other people. This was the beginning of communities and societies. Societies soon emerged and each individual in society had a role to play. Some had traits that could make the life of others in a society comfortable. People began to specialize. When different problems or needs came up in society, people discovered their own traits. They learned that they had either physical or manual skills or the mental skills to solve the problem. For instance, a man may become a carpenter or a blacksmith or a goldsmith because he has physical skills. A man may be able to solve the problem of building a good bridge because he understood mathematics. However, the superior character traits of women in some areas were not seen until much later on most societies. They,

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future generations, which produces the process of natural selection.” Detail in Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, (London: John Murray, 1859).

<sup>13</sup> “The persons that survive are not always the strongest, fastest, or smartest. Therefore, “survival of the fittest” may not be the finest way to describe what usual selection really is as it applies to evolution. Darwin did not mean it in these terms when he used it in his book after Herbert first published the phrase. Darwin meant “fittest” to mean the one best suited for the immediate environment. This is the basis of the idea of natural selection.” Heather Scoville, “Survival of the Fittest?” <[www.psychology.about.com](http://www.psychology.about.com)>, (accessed on 12 October, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> “The fight-or-flight response, also known as the acute stress response, refers to a physiological reaction that occurs in the presence of something that is terrifying, either mentally or physically. The fight-or-flight response was first described in the 1920s by American physiologist, Walter Cannon. Cannon realized that a chain of rapidly occurring reactions inside the body help mobilize the body’s resources to deal with threatening circumstances.” Kendry Cherry, “What is the Fight-or-Flight Response? <[www.psychology.about.com](http://www.psychology.about.com)>, accessed on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> This idea was suggested by my supervisor in a discussion.

who were considered weak, were given a place, especially if they looked good, beautiful, be able to cook and take care of the family. Those who were chosen to be partners of the strongest men were the most beautiful. This is how early societies worked.

However, the early societies had no laws or any system that guaranteed justice. Those who had strong traits still bullied the weak. When societies were initially set up, they were primitive, violent and cruel. The strongest members of societies still “cooperated” with weaker members of societies, but they took what they wanted and when they wanted something.

As human beings improved their standards of living, they understood in certain situations that for them to survive, it was not enough to understand the element and to focus in on where they should live. It was not enough for them to find ways to cultivate their land to bring food and to domesticate animals. They kept inventing their lives through a number of ways, and they became conscious that they had to come together by distributing labour as discussed above. This labour was distributed according to the natural traits of people. These traits showed their strengths on the kinds of things they were good at. These specializations in society provided different means, trades, and inventions in order to help everyone’s lives become better.

Early humans went through system after system, they kept searching for a better system to organize themselves. As we know from our discussion above, people were initially stealing food to satisfy their hunger; they were killing each other to survive and all these were related to the idea of the fittest. However, in the “new” world, the weakest also needed to find their own ways to live along with the strongest. People soon realized that in order for them to completely survive, they had to work together. Initially they did things for them to survive. This was motivated by a selfish



trait. This philosophy made people look only at themselves and not others. In fact, they did not even care much for their families. A lost family member could be substituted by another person. People could find a new wife or a new husband. Everything could be replaced like a thing. Tasks were not done for making a person better. He was not motivated by a higher moral value. There was no morality.

When societies grew, they saw and understood different views, from different societies or groups, which were coming up in different parts of the world. They knew they had to work together to form a society that would help them learn to not only develop the land, but a system or law to protect them. So people had to come about with ways to live with one another, and they could not continue fighting among themselves. They had to come up with a moral system to live in harmony with one another. They knew that they had to develop more positive traits to be more organized.<sup>16</sup>

When people decided to develop a group of societies consisting of different people, hence, civilization, it was because they learned the importance of cooperation. It was just not enough to have a system. People had to show that they were willing to cooperate reasonably in many ways. They had to trade, compromise and be tolerant in society. Therefore, they had to come up with a system that would allow people to have minimal problems with one another. The compromise that they had to make was difficult. They had to develop positive characteristics to help them live with one another. At first, they had to be tolerant of one another. They had to learn to share. They had to divide their profit according to a fair system. As time went on, the systems became more complex. These first characteristics were to help societies function. Through interactions civilization developed. According to Boayo,

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<sup>16</sup> Discussion with my supervisor through phone conversation.

The word ‘civilization’ also bears the significance that it is a set of common characteristics through which certain societies feel culturally superior to others. Yet the term civilization claims to distinguish certain cultures from one another, and to establish a more powerful and conducive hierarchy between different cultures than merely the spiritual and moral qualities. Therefore, civilization cannot manifest itself except when the cultural progress of a certain group of people grows sufficiently and becomes evident and established.”<sup>17</sup>

In this case, civilization is defined as something that looks at the common traits in societies that bind people together. However, these common character traits were compared by different civilizations that looked at the same things and evaluated or decided that theirs were better or the same or less. So a group of people who saw those around them as a part of them would accept them more easily. Civilization according to Toynbee,

...is always ‘ultimate’. It is usually treated as a state of being which societies attain in the course of growth out of primitivism, a phase in an inevitable pattern, procured by the natural inflation of the human mind, or by technological accretion; or else social evolution is the motor force, determined in turn by economics and the means of production, or by demographics and the demands of consumption.<sup>18</sup>

Here, we see that Toynbee, too, agrees that societies and civilization grew out of the primitive ways after the human being saw and realized that advantage of developing societies. This happened because of changes in societies that were caused by needs. He also points out that this happened because of population increase and economics.

Civilizations<sup>19</sup> started with the interaction of societies. As more and more people of different races came together, the more complex became their system.

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<sup>17</sup> Sulaiman Hussein Boayo, “The Role of Morality (*Akhlaq*) in the Rise and Decline of Civilizations: Aspects of the Muslim Interpretation of Roman Civilization’s Decline,” (Ph. D. Dissertation, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2007), 56.

<sup>18</sup> Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature*, (London: The Free Press, 2001), 27.

<sup>19</sup> “The word ‘civilization’ comes from the Latin term for ‘city’. Formal states, writing, cities and monuments all characterise civilizations. Civilizations also exhibit elaborate trading patterns and extensive political territories. While many of the ingredients of civilization had existed by 6000 B.C.E.,

Different people had different character traits. A system was needed to control behaviour. Man-made systems caused problems; each society and culture had its own way of looking at things. When religion was revealed at different times in different parts of the world, especially Western Asia, people from different societies could unite under a belief system. Indeed, the development of civilizations is related to humans.<sup>20</sup>

The phenomenon of religion is universal. According to Steam,

“In the course of human civilization, religion has underpinned the development of values of human respect, tolerance, peace, and the culture of peace.”<sup>21</sup>

Hence, religion did help develop strong traits in people of different races to come together and work together. Since all religions preach to its followers to develop good traits, there was a common bond that people shared with people of the same religions. It did not matter if the people were from different parts of the world. The same religious beliefs brought them together. There was mutual respect between them. We will discuss some aspects of this belief in people of different religions in Chapter Two. Even though in the beginning, people of different religions fought against one another all the time, a problem which still happens today in some parts of

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the origins of civilization only about 3500 B.C.E. The first civilizations were the river-valley civilizations because they all developed alongside major rivers to secure an adequate water supply for agriculture production. The earliest river-valley civilizations began in the Middle East and flourished for many centuries. They created a basic set of tools, intellectual concepts such as writing, mathematics and political forms that would persist and spread to other parts of Europe, Asia and Africa. Most of the river-valley civilizations were in decline by 1000 B.C.E.” See Peter N. Stearns, Stuart B. Schwartz, Michael Ades and Marc Johnson Gilbert, *World Civilization*.

<sup>20</sup> “The important elements in order to develop civilization, there are architecture: various types of artwork and buildings that express the talents, beliefs, and values of people in a society, culture: a way of life, religion: a social institution involving beliefs and practices based on recognizing the sacred, technology: tools and skills people use to make life easier, trade/transportation: an organized network of roads, railways, and ports for moving people and goods from place to place, Government: the power or authority that rules a country, writing/language: the system of communication involving symbols that stand for sounds and ideas to record information and economy: the way people use resources to meet their needs.” Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization*, (Cengage Learning, 2014), 78.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmad Jalali, *Jalaluddin Rumi's Religion Understanding: a Prelude to Dialogue in the Realm of Religion Thought*, (London, Thousand Oaks, California, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2003), 127-134.

the world<sup>22</sup>, they made efforts to live peacefully by making agreements and signing treaties with one another.<sup>23</sup> There has been a great effort to also look at the common and positive traits people of different religions today through Inter-faith and Inter-civilizational programs to better understand one another.<sup>24</sup> All religions emphasize on developing good conduct, kindness, patience, contentment, truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty, humility, modesty, shyness,<sup>25</sup> decency, bravery, thankfulness, love, gratefulness, hospitality, generosity, forgiveness, friendliness, and other good traits. However, each religion or different sects of religions may place different emphasis on different things.<sup>26</sup>

Religions such as Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam are different in their doctrinal teachings, but when it comes to humanity or human beings, all agree that religions should protect people from evil and give guidance to them. The common traits among religions helped make human beings better people, and in places where this is practiced with understanding and respect is shown between people of different religions, there is peace.<sup>27</sup> It does not matter how old these religions are, they all have most of these traits that teach moral values in common.

Religion is one of the strongest forces that have a system to control the different characters of human beings. Since human beings have different

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<sup>22</sup> The constant wars in the Western Asia, especially in Israel and Palestine, now in Iraq and Syria and in Pakistan and India remind us of this all the time.

<sup>23</sup> The early agreement between Islam and the King Negus is an important example. Others took place between Muslims and Christians throughout the centuries.

<sup>24</sup> We are talking about the development of good traits or characteristics in individuals.

<sup>25</sup> Shy – to be shy is considered a good trait in most religions.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth A. Clark. *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); Hermann Oldenberg, *Buddha: His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*, (New York: Cosimo Classic, 2007); Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Moulana Muhammad ibn Moulana Haroon Abasoomar (Trans.), *Islamic Manners - A Brief Collection of Fundamental Etiquette In Islam*. (Madrassah In'aamiyyah Camperdown, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Malaysia is fighting hard to keep this understanding and tolerance between people by making sure there are no problems that are not discussed. They also try to control the kinds of things that are discussed openly that are sensitive and hurt the feelings of people of different religions. This has caused people to debate about the freedom of expression and freedom of the press in this country.

characteristics or traits, this has put people and nations in conflict at times. However, religion, as mentioned above, has also become a uniting factor. Wherever conflicts have taken place, religion has also sometimes played an important role in uniting factor people of the same religion.<sup>28</sup> Religions always talk of higher ideals. In all of the messages of religion, especially in Islam, it is to become better human beings. Hence, it was in Islam that this concept was developed to the highest level in the teachings of the Qur'an and the hadith. This aspect of the religion will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three of this dissertation. Scholars of Islam, throughout the centuries, from many different parts of the world, wrote about the characteristics that Islam required Muslims to develop. These have been discussed in serious works, both in legal texts, *fiqh* works, fables and other literary genres. Amongst the different schools of thought in the world, which taught people how to organize their daily lives, like praying, fasting, giving alms, and every aspect of their lives, all of which they tried to follow the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, the Sufis concentrated on these more than others. In the works of Imam al-Ghazali,<sup>29</sup> Ibnu Arabi,<sup>30</sup> Fariduddin Attar,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, for example, are between people of different sects in Islam.

<sup>29</sup> William Henry Temple (Trans.) Al-Ghazzali, *Mishkât Al-Anwar* (The Niche For Lights) Vol. XIX (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1924). *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*, among his last works. "Imam al-Ghazali's *Encyclopedia of Shari'a Source Methodology*, his fourth book on the subject, and his last word, was al-Mustasfa, which has been printed several times in Egypt and elsewhere. Indeed, this is the work he wrote after coming out of his period of meditation and seclusion." *al-Imla' 'ala Mushkil al-Ihya'*, in which he replied to some of the insinuations made against the *Ihya'* in his lifetime. This book is also called *al-Ajwiba al-Muskita 'an al-As'ila al-Mubhita*. Other books also *are Tafsiir al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, now lost; *Jawahir al-Qur'an.*; *al-Arba'un fi al-Tawhi*; *al-Ma'akhidh*, *On the Divergences of Jurisprudents.*; *Tahsin al-Ma'akhidh.*; *Kimya' al-Sa'ada* (The Alchemy of Happiness), originally written in Persian.; *al-Lubab al-Muntakhal.*; *al-Iqtisad fi al-I'tiqad*.

<sup>30</sup> R. W. Austin (ed.), *Ibn Arabi, The Bezels of Wisdom, (Fusus al-Hikam)* (Boston: Paulist Press, 1980); Ibn 'Arabī. *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya, Vols. 1–4.* (Beirut: n.p.); Ibn 'Arabī, Ibrāhīm Madkūr, and 'Uthmān Yahyá. *Al-Futūhāt al-Makkiyya, Vols. 1–14,* al-Qāhirah: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1972. This is the critical edition by Osman Yahya.

<sup>31</sup> Diane de Selliers (ed.), *Farid-ud-Din Attar, The Canticle of the Birds: Illustrated Through Persian and Eastern Islamic Art Hardcover,* (Editions Diane de Selliers, 2014); Farid-ud-Din Attar, *The Conference of the Birds, Samuel Weiser* (1971); Kafil al-Rahman Nishat Usmani (Trans.) *Farid-ud-Din Attar, Pand Nama Maktaba Rahmania,* (Urdu Bazar, Lahore, 2011).

Jami',<sup>32</sup> Sana'i,<sup>33</sup> Moinuddin Chisti,<sup>34</sup> and many great Sufis, the improving of character traits has been emphasized. Character-building, through the practices of Islam, has been the emphasis throughout the centuries. We are not saying that only the Sufis talk or concentrate on character development. We know that the four schools of thought, which is referred to as the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamaah*,<sup>35</sup> also concentrated on the importance of moral and values. However, the Sufis developed exercises and ways to help people achieve their goals. They did this by making students recite the *dhikr*, fast, read the Quran, remain in seclusion (*khulwa*<sup>36</sup>), pray

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<sup>32</sup> *Tuhfat-ul-Ahrar* by Maulana Abdul Rahman Jami in Persian. Scanned from a 1887 edition of the book with Sharah by Muhammad Raza.

<sup>33</sup> "Sanā'ī, pseudonym of Abū al-Majd Majdūd ibn Ādam, also spelled Abū'l-Majd Majdūd ibn Ādam (died 1131), Persian poet, author of the first great mystical poem in the Persian language, whose verse had great influence on Persian and Muslim literature. Little is known of Sanā'ī's early life. He was a resident of Ghazna and served for a time as poet at the court of the Ghaznavid sultans, composing panegyrics in praise of his patrons. At some point he underwent a spiritual conversion and, abandoning the court, went to Mery (near modern Mary, Turkmenistan), where he pursued a life of spiritual perfection. He returned to Ghazna years later but lived in retirement, resisting the blandishments of his Ghaznavid patron Bahrām Shāh. Sanā'ī's best-known work is the *Hadīqat al-ḥaqīqah wa sharī'at aṭ-ṭariqah* ("The Garden of Truth and the Law of the Path"). Dedicated to Bahrām Shāh, this great work, expressing the poet's ideas on God, love, philosophy, and reason, is composed of 10,000 couplets in 10 separate sections. The first section was translated in English as *The Enclosed Garden of Truth* (1910). Sanā'ī's work is of major importance in Persian-Islāmic literature, for he was the first to use such verse forms as the *qaṣīdah* (ode), the *ghazal* (lyric), and the *maṣnavī* (rhymed couplet) to express the philosophical, mystical, and ethical ideas of Ṣūfism (Islāmic mysticism). His *Divan*, or collected poetry, contains some 30,000 verses." <www.britannica.com> accessed on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> "Hazrat Sheikh Khwaja Syed Moinuddin Hasan Chisti (ra) (also spelled Moinudeen, Moin-ud-din, Muinuddin) also known as Gharib Nawaz (Benefactor of the poor) was one of the most outstanding saints of the Indian subcontinent, and indeed an international spiritual inspiration who lived during the 6th Century AH (12th Century AD). He introduced and established the Chisti order in South Asia and significantly contributed to the spreading of Islam there. Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti (ra) was a great mystic poet and has left a collection of poems in Persian. Among his other books, all written in Persian traced so far, are: *Anis-ul-Arwah*, *Hadis-ul-Ma'arif*, *Risala Maujudia*, *Kanj-ul-Israr*, *Kashf-ul-Israr*, *Afaq-o-Anfas*."

<sup>35</sup> "(ASWAJA) is one of the existing religious theologies in Islam. Its initiator was Abu Al-Hasan Al-Ash'ari and Imam Abu Mansur Al-Maturidi. This term has been predicted in the hadith Thabarani which means "The Jews will split into 71 groups, the Christians will split into 72 groups, while my ummah (Islam) will split into 73 groups. The survivor was only one, while the rest perish." The companions asked, "Who are the survivors?" The Prophet Muhammad said "Ahlussunnah WalJamaah." The companions then, asked again, "Who are called *Ahlussunnah WalJamaah*?" The Prophet replied, "Who are doing what I and my best friends do (UNISMA, 2012)." UNISMA, *The Spirit of ASWAJA an-Nahdhiyah Value Within the Attitudes of the Staff*. (Malang, Indonesia: Islamic University of Malang Foundation, 2012). 4.

<sup>36</sup> "In Sufi practice, the term *khalwa* in the meaning of "retirement, seclusion, retreat" (from the verb *khalā* "to be alone") occupies a prominent place. More specifically, it denotes "isolation in a solitary place or cell," which was often accompanied by intense meditation, self-imposed strictures, vows of silence, and spiritual exercises." Alexander Knysh, *Islamic Mysticism: A Short History*, (Boston: Brill, 2000), 314.

*tahajjud*<sup>37</sup> according to the order of their Sheikh. The relationship between the Sheikh and *murid*<sup>38</sup> is then developed accordingly. Amongst the many works that have been produced on the subject of improving character traits and getting close to the Creator, which has been taken from the Qur'an, hadith and examples of the lives of saints and scholars in Islam, is the work by Maulana Jalaluddin Al-Balkhi Al-Rumi<sup>39</sup> called the *Mathnawi*.

Jalaluddin Rumi is one of the greatest Sufis of all time. His *Mathnawi* is considered the “greatest spiritual work ever written.”<sup>40</sup> The lessons that can be received from this great work are so great because all aspects of character-

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<sup>37</sup> “*Tahajjud* (after-midnight prayers) is derived from *hajada* meaning, He was wakeful in the night. It is also known as *qiyam al-layl*, an expression derived from the Qur'an. In the silent, dark and tranquil hours of the night, neither the “exterior” noise is audible, such as that of telephone, TV, or radio etc., nor the “interior” clamour of tangled emotions nor do conflicting thoughts about material objects trouble us. All these disturbances remain absent during this hour, which is the time to offer our *tahajjud* prayers with calm and serenity. It is the time for quiet reflection during some golden serene moments, when we seek liberation from the burdens of daily hectic life. We will need the intimacy, the closeness to Allah, to express our innermost thoughts, feelings, desires and fear, indeed of our whole life, before Him. Ebrahim Faatehah, *Scientific Commentary of Suratul Faatehah*, (New Delhi: Pharos Media & Publishing, 2010), 187.

<sup>38</sup> “Literally “he who seeks”, in Sūfī mystical parlance, the novice or postulant or seeker after spiritual enlightenment by means of traversing (*sulūk*) the Sūfī path in obedience to a spiritual director (*murshid*, *pīr*, *shaykh* [q.vv.]). The equivalent Persian term is *shāgird*, literally “pupil, apprentice”. The stages of the novice’s spiritual initiation are detailed in numerous Sūfī manuals and works touching on Sūfism, such as al-Ghazālī’s *Ihyā’*, and the term *murīd* figures in numerous titles of such works. One of the earliest manuals was the *Ādāb al-murīdīn* ...” see in “Murīd.” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/muri-d-SIM\\_5542](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/muri-d-SIM_5542)> accessed on October 12th, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> For more details on biography of Maulana Rumi see these works: Afzal Iqbal, *The Impact of Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi on Islamic Culture*. (Pakistan: RCD Cultural Institute, 1974); Afzal Iqbal, *The Life and Work of Jalaluddin Rumi*, Pakistan: Pakistan National Council of the Arts, 1991); Afzal Iqbal, *Reflections on Rumi*, (1st edn.) (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 2012); P. W. Avery, “Jalal ud-din Rumi and Shams-i-Tabrizi” *The Muslim World*, Hartford Seminary Foundation, Vol. 46, no. 3, July, 1956, 237-252; A. Banani, “Rumi the Poet”. In A. Banani, R. Houannisian and G. Sabagh, eds., *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: the Heritage of Rumi*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); K. Birge, “Jelal ud-din Rumi: A Moslem Saint with a Christian Heart,” *The Moslem World*. vol. 12, April, no. 2, 1992, 161-169; Erkan Türkmen, *Rumi as a True Lover of God*. (Istanbul: Baltac Tourism 1988) Reprinted 1990; Feridun Nafiz Uzluk, *Mevlana Celaleddin* (Istanbul: Millî Eğitim, 1990); Khalifa Abdul Hakim, *The Metaphysics of Rumi: a Critical and Historical Sketch (2nd edn.)* (Lahore: The Institute of Islamic Culture, 1959).

<sup>40</sup> *The Masnavi: The Spiritual Couplets of Maulana Jalalud-din Muhammad Rumi* by Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi (Author), E. H. Whinfield (Translator) Cosimo Classics; abridged edition edition (December 1, 2010); *The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi: English Translation v.6: English Translation Vol 6 (Persian) Hardcover* – 31 Dec 1982 by Jelaluddin Rumi (Author), Reynold A. Nicholson (Editor) Gibb Memorial Trust; 2Rev Ed edition (31 Dec 1982); Jawid Mojaddedi (Trans.), *Jalal al-Din Rumi, The Masnavi, Book One*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)

improvement stories are covered in it. The references and lessons from the Qur'an is everywhere so much so that the famous Persian poet, Jami, of the 15<sup>th</sup> century praised Rumi and considered his *Mathnawi* "the Qur'an in the Persian language."<sup>41</sup> The reason for this statement is that the volumes, written mainly in Persian, consist mainly of verses from the Qur'an and elaborations of hadiths and stories of great people who tried to make the Quran their character and guide to their lives.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What does generosity mean in the *Mathnawi*?
- ii. Why generosity is the most difficult trait to achieve compared to others?
- iii. What do the stories mean in the *Mathnawi*?
- iv. How can generosity be categorized?
- v. How do human beings develop the traits in the beginning?
- vi. What are the stories in the *Mathnawi* related to generosity?

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Research Objectives of this dissertation are as follows:

- i. To show the importance of generosity in Islam.
- ii. To show how Maulana Rumi uses stories about animals, ordinary people, saints, prophets and the Prophet Muhammad in the *Mathnawi*.
- iii. To identify all stories in the *Mathnawi* about generosity.
- iv. To separate the stories relating to the Prophet from those which are not.
- v. To examine these stories and categorize them.
- vi. To show the importance of generosity in Islam to perfect character.

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<sup>41</sup> Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West: the Teachings and Poetry of Jalal ad-Din Rumi* (Oxford: One World Publications, 2000), 469.