



Introduction

SOCIAL INNOVATION FOR PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE: INTERCULTURAL ACTIVISM FROM RUMI TO GÜLEN

IHSAN YILMAZ¹

1. Introduction

Even though some Muslims all over the world have been radicalised as a result of being challenged and influenced by the juggernauts of modernity, nationalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism in addition to being harshly subject to ignorance, poverty and dissension, overwhelming majority of Muslims still believe that respect for diversity as exemplified in the discourses and practices of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi and many others is a religious obligation. When we came to the modern times, such an understanding and tradition are being represented in the Turkish context by Sufis and scholars like Mevlana Khalid-i Bağdadi, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Muhammed Lutfi and recently Fethullah Gülen.

Gülen who has achieved his message to be heard not only nationally but also globally has frequently been compared with Rumi, the most resonant voice of Islamic mysticism in the West. It will not be wrong to argue that Gülen is today's most prominent representative of apolitical Turkish Islam or Anatolian Muslimness based on socially activist but tolerant Sufism (*tasawwuf*) once represented by activist scholars like Rumi. These Muslim scholars are social innovators –to use the modern terminology- who endeavour to address the pressing spiritual, social and cultural needs of the masses in the tune with their respective Zeitgeists without radically departing from the tradition and authentic religious sources thereby by continuing to credibly influence the masses.

In this introduction, I opted to compare Gülen's social-cultural activism and his understanding of peaceful coexistence to that of Rumi because of exemplary role of both in establishing dialogue and building peace between Muslims and non-Muslims. As known, the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO) marks 2007 as 'Mawlana Year'. This celebration is to honour the 800th anniversary of the birth of the great spiritual leader of Islam, Mawlana. Although Rumi lived about 800 years before Gülen, they both lived in cosmopolitan environments and thus both made intercultural dialogue their main tool of social innovation and conflict resolution for social inclusion, coherence and peaceful coexistence. They inspired the lives and practices of their students, sympathisers, followers, scholars, and the larger community to contribute to solutions that better the world. Put differently, they both served to re-read and renew (*tajdid*) religion, faith and society. They

¹ BA in politics and international relations from Bogazici University, Istanbul. PhD in law in 1999 from SOAS, University of London. 1999–2001: Research Fellow at the University of Oxford where he undertook two separate research projects: the Turkish diaspora in London, and the faith-based movement of Fethullah Gülen, its neo-ijtihad and renewal of Islam. Since 2001 he has been teaching comparative law, legal sociology, Islamic law and Turkish politics at the University of London. Research interests: Turkish diaspora, Turkish politics, Islamic movements, Muslim minorities, Muslim legal pluralism, neo-ijtihad and the Gülen movement. He has published his work in scholarly journals such as British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, The Middle East Journal, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, Muslim World, International Journal of Turkish Studies, Journal for Islamic Studies and Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs. He recently convened another conference on the Gülen Movement: Muslim World in Transition: Contributions of the Gülen Movement, 25-27 October 2007, House of Lords, SOAS and LSE, London, UK.



also endeavoured to strike the delicate balance between serving the community, solving pressing real problems, challenging threats to coherence of society and staying away from politics & instrumentalist use of religion in daily politics.

I will briefly endeavour to show in this introduction that both Rumi and Gülen have the same main message vis-à-vis acceptance of the other and peaceful coexistence and that they both employed similar instruments such as socio-cultural activism, education and intercultural dialogue. As noted by several academics, both Rumi and Gülen, if unintentionally, maximised their social impact with their altruism, devotion, piety, dedication and knowledge helping them to inspire similar initiatives in their surrounding communities.

It goes without saying that both are of the same tradition despite the differences in contexts, shapes, formats, appearances and minute tempo-spatial details. For instance, as I will try to show, Gülen is socially very active -in contrast to the stereotypical Sufi or *mutasawwif* images- to have his discourse implemented and practiced within the wider society, just like Rumi. Likewise, both men have been accused of seeking political power although when analysed in detail it will be seen that their discourses and practices have little to do with daily politics.

I will compare and contrast concisely main messages of the two men first, then will proceed to analyse their socio-cultural and political activism for peaceful coexistence. Then, before concluding by giving an account of today's renewed peaceful coexistence message of Rumi and focusing on Gülen's initiatives in line with this renewed message, I will briefly look at the two men's almost similar social innovations for peaceful coexistence and their discontents.

2. Rumi and Gülen's Main Message and Acceptance of the Other

Social and political conjuncture was very turbulent when Rumi emerged. It was a period in which so many conflicts and disorders were being experienced one after the other. There was first a great deal of dissidence and anarchy as a result of the marginal Babai movement. People were also fed up with the continuous assaults, pillage and invasions of the Mongols and Crusaders. As to the administration, the Seljuks state was significantly weakened and getting deteriorated, fastened by the inability to cope with internal conflicts, divisions and mismanagements. The other powerful state, the Kharzamshahs, which once fought against the Genghis Khan's armies and stopped them and defended the Muslims, then turned against and were fighting the Anatolian Seljuks and organizing territorial incursions and invasions. Benefiting from the chaotic atmosphere and lack of authority in the region neighbouring communities were exploiting the circumstances for their own material and political interests.

During this period Rumi emerged as a powerful activist character and scholar. Not only he talked about but also actively produced an atmosphere of dialogue and tolerance through his lyrics, poetry and of course, followers. Through tolerance and compassion, 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.

Humanity, love, compassion, tolerance, respect for, openness to and acceptance of the other in their otherness and dialogue are fundamentals of Rumi's thought and practice. The world was a global village even in Rumi's time and he was fully aware of 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

Empathy which is essential for peaceful coexistence in the global village is another essential cornerstone of his practice as beautifully emphasized in one of his 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?*³

He also drew his listeners' attention to the mother of all evils –ignorance- and underlined that education and dialogue are only remedies. He communicated something through his writing that has attracted spiritual seekers from almost every religion in the world, for hundreds of years. Rumi's discourse is composed of tolerance, positive reasoning, goodness, charity and awareness through love, looking with the same eye on Muslims, Jews, Christians and others alike:

*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.*

Even in his day, Rumi was sought out by many, from famous scholars to ordinary villagers. When he passed away in 1273, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Arabs, Persians, Turks and Romans honoured him at his funeral, and men of five faiths followed his bier. The flood of people in the funeral was the sign of that he was understood well even in his lifetime and that he was a sound foundation for the communities. Rumi's discourse and practice 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.⁴

Below quote shows how Rumi's main message is continued by Fethullah Gülen:

... 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 of love as Niyazi-i 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.⁵ 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

² Rumi, Discourses of Rumi, Fihî Ma Fihî ,Tr. By A. J. Arberry, Discourse 12, p. 99.

³ Ibid.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jalal_ad-Din_Muhammad_Rumi

⁵ Gülen, Love and Essence of Human Being, p. 29.



qualities and ambitions.⁶ 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.⁷

As Thomas Michel concludes in his paper entitled “Fethullah Gülen: Following in the Footsteps of Rumi” in this book, “(i)t is not an exaggeration to say that Gülen is a modern Muslim thinker and activist 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 Mevlana.”

Sufism (*tasawwuf*) has played a major role in Gülen’s life and spiritual intellectual scholarly upbringing. A new chronological and intellectual biography of Gülen gives details about Gülen’s spiritual, scholarly, and intellectual background: Gülen was a student of Alvarli Efe Muhammed Lutfi, a great Sufi-master of his time. Under Alvarli’s instruction, Gülen studied Arabic, Islamic jurisprudence, and exegesis. Muhammed Lutfi was also Gülen’s first teacher in Sufism. On his own account, Gülen was much affected by his teacher Muhammed Lutfi, especially from his piety, devotion, and ascetic lifestyle. It is from Muhammed Lutfi that he first learnt the importance of devotion to others, selflessness and altruism. Again, his respect for the great Sufi masters, including Rumi, is attributable to Alvarli.⁸

Gülen 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 marvellous 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.*⁹

He underlines that:

⁶ <http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/1958/12/>

⁷ Ünal and Williams 2000: 329–331.

⁸ See in detail Dialogue Society (forthcoming) A Short Chronological & Intellectual Biography of Fethullah Gülen. London, UK: Dialogue Society. It should be underlined that Gülen’s Sufi understanding refers the pre-institutionalized period, mostly to the first and second century of Islam. Gülen does not have *tariqah* (Sufi order) and he is not a Sufi as the term understood especially in the west. As Dogan Koc (2005) explains in Gülen’s understanding, Sufism was characterized by spiritual people seeking to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet, and his companions by imitating their lives. Sufis eventually established orders under different scholars, and institutionalized it by establishing regulations and rules in each *tariqah*.. That is why Saritoprak (2001) calls Gülen “a Sufi in his own way”: “(e)arly Sufis had neither orders nor even Sufi organizations. Rabia, Junayd, Muhasibi, Bishr, Ghazali, Farid al-din Attar, and even Rumi did not belong to a tariqah. However, they were Sufis” (Saritoprak 2001: 6). As Gökçek (2005) puts Gülen does not establish a *tariqah*, but he lays down basic principles for a Sufi life in the modern world. According to Gülen, Sufism’s practical dimension is more important than its historical or terminological definitions or institutional structures (Koc 2005). In his own words, “(s)ufism is the path followed by an individual who, having been able to free himself or herself from human vices and weakness in order to acquire angelic qualities and conduct pleasing to God, lives in accordance with the requirements of God’s knowledge and love, and in the resulting spiritual delight that ensues (Gülen, 1999: p.xiv).

⁹ Fethullah Gülen, “Human Beings and Their Nature” Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance, Ed. M. Enes Ergene (New Jersey: The Light Publishing, 2004), 112.



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. . . . Everything 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.¹⁰

A man of compassion does not hesitate to be open to all and to enter into dialogue with all. As Celik and Valkenberg (2007) explain, Gülen proposes dialogue as a method to be used in building and establishing a culture of peace among co-religionists, people of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds. He sees dialogue as a framework of mutual acceptance and respect of each other's identity. They describe this as the first stage of Gülen's dialogue concept: accepting the others in their own position. The second stage involves respecting the position of the other(s), and the third stage is the concept of sharing values in the context of the other(s). Gülen's conviction is that humanity ultimately will be led to peace and unity by recognizing and accepting social, cultural, and religious diversity, an exchange of mutual values and union in collaboration.

Gülen sees diversity and pluralism as a natural fact. He wants those differences to be admitted and to be explicitly professed. Accepting everyone in their otherness, which is broader and deeper than tolerance, is his normal practice.¹¹

The Prophet says that all people are as equal as the teeth of a comb. Islam does not discriminate based on race, color, age, nationality, or physical traits. The Prophet declared "You are all from Adam, and Adam is from earth. O servants of God, be brothers (and sisters)".¹² 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.¹³ Islam recognizes all religions previous to it. It accepts all the prophets and books sent to different epochs of history. Not only does it accept them, but also regards belief in them as an essential principle of being Muslim. By doing so, it acknowledges the basic unity of all religions. A Muslim is at the same time a true follower of Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and of all other Hebrew prophets. This belief explains why both Christians and Jews enjoyed their religious rights under the rule of Islamic governments throughout history (Gülen 2001a: 137).

He believes that dialogue is a must today, and that the first step in establishing it is recognising but transcending the past, disregarding polemical arguments, and giving precedence to common points,

¹⁰ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Towards the Lost Paradise*, (London: Truestar, 1996), 40–2.

¹¹ See in detail, Unal and Williams, *The Advocate of Dialogue*, op. cit., pp. 256–258.

¹² Gülen 2001a: 134.

¹³ M. Fethullah Gülen, "Forgiveness," *The Fountain* 3 (April–June 2000), 4–5.



which far outnumber polemical ones.¹⁴ In his opinion, a believer does not hesitate to communicate with any kind of thought and system; 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.¹⁵ 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, Bediüzzaman and many others have so beautifully expressed.¹⁶

Gülen firmly believes that the road to justice for all is dependent on the provision of an adequate education. He envisions a twenty-first century in which we shall witness the birth of a spiritual dynamic that will revitalise long-dormant moral values; an age of tolerance, understanding, and intercommunal & international cooperation that will ultimately lead, through inter-cultural dialog and a sharing of values, to greater understanding and peaceful coexistence. He believes that "the Islamic social system seeks to form a virtuous society and thereby gain God's approval. It recognizes right, not force, as the foundation of social life. Hostility is unacceptable. Relationships must be based on belief, love, mutual respect, assistance, and understanding instead of conflict and realization of personal interest" (Gülen 2001a, 137).

3. Socio-Cultural and Political Activism for Peaceful Coexistence

Rumi strongly underlines that humans –even if they are dervishes- should not ignore the laws of this universe and doctrine of causes, not to sit around heedlessly waiting for Allah's favour, but rather to exert themselves endlessly in order to transform this broken world into the world of peace and justice:

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 words¹⁷

His activism is different from stereotypical Sufi remoteness to socially active units and personalities:

Those who always feel themselves in the presence of God do not need to seclude themselves from 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.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Gülen 2004a: 249-250.

¹⁶ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, Light: Somerset, N.J., 2004, pp. 58-59.

¹⁷ A. J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi, Fihi Ma Fihi*, Discourse 16, p. 133-134.



They experience ascension and descent at every moment. This is the seclusion recognized and preferred by the Prophets and saints.¹⁸

It is obvious that living in the world but not of the world was his main action plan and road map:

The Amir (the ruler), surprised by an unexpected visit from Rumi, said: “Master, how gracious of you to honor 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’m not even worthy of that. How gracious this is!” Rumi said: 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 honor as well.¹⁹

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.²⁰

In Rumi’s time, invading Mongols’ basic policy was decentralization, and this included support for local Sufi groups that were less doctrinaire and more open to the non-Muslim population than the *madrasah*-based Seljuk orthodoxy had been. In effect, Sufi lodges became populist civic spaces. In response to this, Rumi tried to reduce the gap between ‘*ulama* Islam’ and folk Islam.

Rumi communicates many things, multiple meanings, at many levels, simultaneously; he provides explanations and keys to unlock the meaning of reality; all the words, all the stories and explanations he conveyed say nothing more than reality, which has been expressed so far by all the great masters of the *tasawwuf* tradition in Islam. 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.²¹ Rumi’s *Mesnevi* is for both well-educated people and people with little education.²²

He was part of the urban elite in the cosmopolitan capital city of Konya. He was also involved in the political struggles of his time in one way or another. He was in contact with the rulers. On this, he states that:

Mohammed, 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

¹⁸ M. Fethullah Gülen, *Key Concepts in the Practice of Sufism*, Fairfax, Va.: The Fountain, 1999, p. 19.

¹⁹ A. J. Arberry, *Discourses of Rumi, Fihi Ma Fihi*, Discourse 5, p. 34.

²⁰ Can, p. 92.

²¹ Ugur 2004, p. 332.

²² Can, p. 26.



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 them 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 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.²³

His book “Letters” composed of 147 letters written to the political authorities shows Rumi’s personal relationships with various authorities of his violent era, using extant letters to suggest his skill at combining diplomacy with pastoral counseling. Like all of his other books, Rumi did not write these letters himself. He dictated them.²⁴ Some of the discourses are addressed to the Seljuk vizier Muin al-Din 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) 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 lies a trap should we forget the source of this wonder. God has devised this plan so

²³ Discourses (Fihi Ma Fihi), Discourse 1, p. 3-5.

²⁴ Can, p. 36.



*that we will learn not to claim, out of arrogance and vanity, these ideas and plans as our own.*²⁵

In short, Rumi was not a politician but a spiritual guide who was perfectly aware of the realities of the mundane world, essential to be an influential 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 spy.

A significant renewal of Gülen vis-à-vis *tasawwuf* is his emphasis on socio-cultural and even political action which is as vital as belief can only be sustainable if it is supported with these actions. For Gülen, just like Rumi, 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.²⁶ Gülen also reiterates Rumi's compass metaphor: "Our right foot is fixed upon the center of the truth while our left foot is rotating in and around the seventy-two nations".²⁷ In Gülen's view -as strongly emphasized by Rumi more than 7 centuries ago- action is an inseparable aspect of *tasawwuf*, 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.²⁸

Toguslu (2007) explains that although Gülen is against hedonism and he regards altruism as the criteria of life according to the ideal man which require the effort of follower as developing the detachment from the pleasure and seductive needs, a socially active intellectual and aesthetic dimension is accepted and -even more- encouraged by Gülen. Even though in Gülen's view the pleasure in this world is considered ephemeral and he and his sympathizers do not pursue the hedonism because they believe that they are sent to this world to enhance devotion and to seek God's contentment, Gülen's sympathizers do not abstain from the social life, the pleasure and entertainment like going to the cinema or theatre, listening to the music...²⁹ But they like to live meaningfully an aesthetic Muslim life. Paradoxically, these ascetic body and soul which participate actively in daily life

²⁵ 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 comes, the Master utters mighty words. The words never stop, because he is a master of words. Words flow from him without interruption." Rumi said: If in winter time the trees do not put forth leaves and fruit, people should not think they are not working. They are continually at work. Winter is the season of gathering; summer is the season of spending", Discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi, p. 95; After the Amir arrived, Rumi said: I've been longing to call on you. But, knowing you were busy with the interests of the people, I spared you the trouble", Discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi, Discourse 12, p. 98; "The Amir of Rum said: "The unbelievers used to worship and bow down to idols. Now we are doing the selfsame thing. We go and bow down and wait upon the Mongols, and yet we consider ourselves Muslims. We have many other idols in our heart too, such as greed, passion, temper, envy, and we are obedient to all of them. So we act in the very same way as the unbelievers, both outwardly and inwardly, and we consider ourselves Muslims!" Rumi answered: But here is something different; it enters your thoughts that this conduct is evil and utterly detestable. The eye of your heart has seen something incomparably greater that shows up this behavior as vile and hideous. Brackish water shows its brackishness to one who has tasted sweet water, and things are made clear by their opposites", ", Discourses, Fihi Ma Fihi, Discourse 17, p. 138

²⁶ Komecoglu, p. 39.

²⁷ Zaman, 3 July 1996. Camci and Unal, pp. 140-141.

²⁸ Gokcek, 2006, p. 173-174.

²⁹ Toguslu 2007.



are considered better than the ascetic who is absent from worldly life.³⁰ In other words, Gülen endeavours to redefine the Muslim personality at the most subjective level that is analogous to Sufi subjectivity, but also different from stereotypical Sufi remoteness to socially active units and personalities.³¹

Gülen echoes Rumi also in telling us not to ignore the laws of the universe, not to sit around aimlessly, but rather to exert all our energies to change this world into a world of peaceful coexistence and justice.³² Gülen' ideal man, man of action, does their best until this world is turned into paradise; and also struggle for a better world, to be stopped by nothing except death itself.³³

Gülen continues a long tradition of seeking to address the spiritual needs of people and to provide some stability in times of turmoil. Like many previous figures, including Rumi, he is wrongly suspected of seeking political power.³⁴ Like Rumi, rather than advancing political ambitions, creating an Islamic ethic as a manner or conduct of individuals' life is the main objective of Gülen. Gülen's objective is also to foster an ethic that is similar to Max Weber's 'worldly asceticism,' an activist pietism -composed of sincerity, worship, moderation, modesty, following the prophet's example and encouraging the good and discouraging the bad- with a tendency toward the rationalization of social relationships.³⁵

For Gülen, religion is primarily a private or a communal matter, not a political or state matter. He reiterates that Islam as a religion should not be reduced to being a political party identity. He is very critical of political Islamism and 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 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.³⁶

As concisely analysed by Ozdalga, the perspective taught by Gülen is based on activism, stirred up, as well as controlled, by pietism. This "activist pietism" describes a new feature in Turkish religious life. In conformity with Weber's concept, Gülen's "pietistic activism" is based on a critical "rejection of the world" but not the "flight from this world" that is characteristic for escapist mysticism. It is based on activism. It is an ethic that finds the certification of salvation by deeds performed in this world and is based on a paradox as it includes a critical rejection of the world while simultaneously calling for

³⁰ Toguslu 2007.

³¹ Ugur Komecoglu, A sociologically interpretative approach to the Fethullah Gülen community movement, Istanbul: Bogazici University, 1997 (Unpublished MA thesis), p. 17; see also see also Ugur Komecoglu, 'Kutsal ile kamusal: Fethullah Gülen cemaat hareketi'. Nilufer Gole (ed) *Islamin yeni kamusal yuzleri* (New public faces of Islam), Istanbul: Metis, 2000.

³² Cetin, *Peaceful Heroes*, Dallas.

³³ Agai, Gülen's Islamic Ethics of Education, 2002, pp.39-40.

³⁴ Aras and Caha, 'Turkish Islam's', op. cit; see in detail Altinoglu, Fethullah Gülen, op. cit.

³⁵ Elisabeth Ozdalga, 'Worldly Asceticism in Islamic Casting: Fethullah Gülen's Inspired Piety and Activism,'

Critique, 17 (2000): 84-104.

³⁶ <http://en.fgulen.com/content/view/1336/13/>



involvement in the world in rationally structured social activities. These activities include the building of schools instead of mosques, investing in secular education instead of religious instruction, encouraging economic enterprises and requesting sympathisers 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. Gülen's activist pietism, therefore, builds on a delicate balance between rejection of this world on the one hand, and a desire to rebuild a new social order by peaceful, constructive means, on the other. Without the religious sense of duty on which it builds, there most likely would have been less constructive accomplishments.³⁷

The distinction between political ambition and religious activism is crucial for a correct understanding of Gülen's mission.³⁸ For instance Gülen does not see the world in political terms and does not draw imaginary boundaries. As skilfully expressed by Klas Grinell in this book, Gülen is a "border transgressor". By employing *ijtihad*, he bases this border transgressing understanding on – and also extends to– the Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). He does not divide the world by employing mutually exclusive concepts of *dar al-harb* (abode of war) and *dar-al Islam* (abode of Islam, peace) but sees it as an almost coherent place, as it were, that needs to be served continually by utilising the concept *dar al-hizmet* (abode of service to humans, thereby God):

If one's intention is to serve Islam by presenting a good example, then one can stay wherever one desires, says Abdullah Aymaz, former editor in chief of the daily Zaman and Gülen's close friend and colleague for more than thirty years. Gülen stresses that wherever a Muslim is, even outside a Muslim polity, he or she has to obey the lex loci, to respect others' rights and to be just, and has to disregard discussions of dar al-harb and dar al-Islam. In Gülen's understanding, umma is more of a transnational sociocultural entity, not a politicolegal one. He hopes that this sociocultural entity will be instrumental in bringing general universal peace.³⁹

4. Social Innovation for Peaceful Coexistence and Its Discontents

Rumi's respect for all religious traditions was not always popular in his day, and often provoked criticism from the more dogmatic.⁴⁰ While some criticized his openness to the other, some other claimed that he was a traitor, a spy and not even a Muslim.

Siraj al-Din of Konya was a man of grudge and to hurt Rumi and to discredit him in the eyes of the public, he sent one of his disciples to pressurize Rumi in public whether or not he actually said that he was with seventy-two sects and creeds. Siraj al-Din advised his disciple to insult, curse, and swear at Rumi if he admitted to saying those words. That man came and asked Rumi: "It has been claimed that you said: 'I am with seventy-two sects and creeds.' Is that true?" Rumi did not deny what he had said.

³⁷ Elisabeth Ozdalga, 'Worldly Asceticism in Islamic Casting: Fethullah Gülen's Inspired Piety and Activism,' Critique, 17 (2000): 84–104.

³⁸ Elisabeth Ozdalga, 'Worldly Asceticism in Islamic Casting: Fethullah Gülen's Inspired Piety and Activism,' Critique, 17 (2000): 84–104.

³⁹ Author's interview with Abdullah Aymaz, 3 Sept. 2000, Istanbul.

⁴⁰ A. J. Arberry, Discourses of Rumi, Fihi Ma Fihi, vii.



He replied: "Yes, that is what I said." That man immediately started to swear and curse at Rumi. Rumi only smiled at him and said: "In spite of all that you are saying, I am also with you."⁴¹

Even today some westerners see him unorthodox or even outside the banner of Islam.⁴² The idea that Rumi cared little for orthodox Islam has been put forward by translations of poems attributed to Rumi which were actually not composed by him and which express ideas that are not characteristic of him.⁴³ Some writers have even claimed or suggested that Rumi really was not a Muslim, because they believed that the line, "*na tarsâ na yahûd-am man na gâbr-am na musalmân-am*" ("I am not a Christian, a Jew, a Zoroastrian, or a Muslim") expressed Rumi's true attitude toward Islam. But this poem is not in the earliest manuscripts and so probably is not a genuine Rumi poem.⁴⁴ Rumi's actual approach to Islam is clarified by the following quatrain composed by him:

I am the servant of the Qur'an as long as I have life.

I am the dust on the path of Muhammad, the Chosen one.

If anyone quotes anything except this from my sayings,

I am quit of him and outraged by these words.

In an article written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr entitled "Rumi and the Sufi Tradition," he states that "(o)ne of the greatest living authorities on Rûmî in Persia today, Hâdî Hâ'irî, has shown in an unpublished work that some 6,000 verses of the Dîwân and the Mathnawî are practically direct translations of Qur'ânic verses into Persian poetry."⁴⁵

At a recent event in Strasbourg on Rumi, Professor Eric Geoffrey asserted that due to today's judgmental stance towards Muslims, Rumi's Islamic roots were being ignored by many.⁴⁶ Geoffrey explained that although the work and thinking of Rumi had gained prominence in the West over recent years, most Western sources took Rumi out of the context of his Islamic roots. He also noted that in both the US and the EU, Sufism was being stripped of its links with Islam and being presented as a sort of "new age religion." Geoffrey referred to these efforts as a form of "religious racism" and noted that it was the Prophet Mohammed and the Qur'ân which had provided the sources for Rumi's humanist understanding, one which is so universal as to still be fitting in today's world.⁴⁷

Rumi was also accused of being too soft against the Mongols. Some – a recent example being Professor Mikail Bayram – claim that he was a spy of Mongols,⁴⁸ showing that in times of turmoil it is very difficult to maintain a moderate stance.⁴⁹ Avni Ozgurel, as many others, refutes these claims:

⁴¹ Can, p. 89.

⁴² See also El-Zein A. (2000) "Spiritual Consumption in the United States: the Rumi phenomenon", Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Volume 11, Number 1, 1 March 2000, pp. 71-85. This study shows how Rumi's work is taken nowadays out of the Muslim Sufi tradition into an elusive spiritual movement which the author terms the 'New Sufism'.

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jalal_ad-Din_Muhammad_Rumi

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ <http://en.fGülen.com/content/view/2321/22/>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ http://www.kuranislami.com/save/mikail_bayram_mevlana_mogollarla_iliski.rtf



We know that Prof. Mikail Bayram is against Rumi's philosophy and his 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 Sufism; 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 Giyaseddin Keyhusrev who to be a Sultan himself poisoned his father Alaaddin Keykubat who unified Anatolia under Seljuk rule. And, in Keyhusrev's time, the state was deteriorated and Anatolia was in bloodshed. I mean the infamous Babai rebellion.... While Rumi was warning Keyhusrev in Konya to rule properly so that the state would not be destabilised, some other religious leaders were staging the biggest rebellion in Anatolian history... After all these turmoil and Mongolian occupation, it is true that Rumi inclined towards to Mongols. If Prof 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'.⁵⁰

Mikail Bayram also claimed at an ultra-nationalist TV programme that Rumi's friend Shams was also a spy of Mongols. When asked of the proof of this allegation, Bayram replied that Shams, in his book *Makalat*, fiercely criticize the ones who oppose Mongols. The presenter asks him again "Is this the proof?" and Bayram's reply is "Yes".⁵¹ Bayram also alleges that Rumi had Nasreddin Hodja, his own son and Ahi Evran killed.⁵²

Like Rumi, Gülen also is a social innovator for peaceful coexistence and like Rumi, his social innovation is not without its discontents. As noted above, Rumi's tradition of intercultural dialogue as the most important method of social innovation to tackle enmity stemming from prejudice and ignorance is also Gülen's tradition. Thus, intercultural dialogue all over the world is the main agenda of the Gülen movement as the papers in this book by Richard Khuri, Sevket Yavuz, Davut Ayduz, Terry Mathis, Efrat Aviv, Ian Fry, Kate Kirk, Gurkan Celik, Thomas Michel, Richard Penaskovic, Klas Grinell, Paul Weller, Karina Korostelina and Jonathan Lacey elaborate on in detail.

In the countries where Gülen's followers and sympathisers reside they establish intercultural dialogue organizations, associations and societies, utilizing the concept of *dar al-hizmet* (country of service to humanity). They all believe that interfaith and intercultural dialogue is a must to reach a lasting universal peace (*sulh-u umumi*).⁵³

Gülen pioneered in the establishment of the Journalists and Writers Foundation in 1994, well before mushrooming of dialogue activities in the post-9/11 world, the activities of which to promote dialogue

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.

⁵⁰ Avni Ozgurel, Was Mevlana an Agent of Mongols?, Radikal, 4 December 2005.

⁵¹ See for a transcript of the programme, <http://www.biroybil.com/showthread.php?t=3525> visited on 4 November 2007.

⁵² http://www.haber7.com/haber.php?haber_id=123747, <http://www.biroybil.com/showthread.php?t=3525> visited on 4 November 2007, visited on 4 November 2007.

⁵³ See in detail Yilmaz 2003.



and tolerance among all strata of the society receive warm welcome from almost all walks of life. The Foundation also works as a think-tank in related issues. The movement tries to bring all scholars and intellectuals regardless of their ethnic, ideological, religious and cultural backgrounds (The Abant Platform). This platform is the first of its kind in Turkish history where intellectuals could agree to disagree on sensitive issues such as laicism, secularism, peaceful co-existence, and faith & reason relations. For instance, in 2007, the Abant Convention's theme was Alevism in Turkey.⁵⁴

Gülen's dialogue and peaceful coexistence discourse has also led to the establishment of new institutions like the Dialogue Society established in 1999 in London or the Rumi Forum, the Rumi-inspired foundation established in 2000 in Washington DC. Such enterprises underscore the ambition to consolidate and make manifest the trend toward a general but a renewed Rumi form of humanism.⁵⁵ There are now hundreds of dialogue associations and charities all over the world founded by the movement's Muslim and non-Muslim volunteers motivated by Gülen's teachings.

Through these charities, these volunteers initiate and engage in interfaith and intercultural dialog with people of different faiths, backgrounds, and cultures. They have been organising events to commemorate Rumi and hosting whirling-dervish events. Only in the United Kingdom, as Fatih Tedik explains in his paper in this book, the Dialogue Society organizes several whirling dervishes programmes each year in several cities of the country, including but not limited to the famous Wembley Arena, Oxford University's Ashmolean Theatre and Hackney Empire.⁵⁶

Similar to Rumi, Gülen's message of openness and dialogue is not without its discontents. Staunch enemies of the Gülen movement come from three segments: a. Marxist/Maoist left, b. anti-religious artificial-nationalists⁵⁷ and c. religio-nationalists. These are distinguished from the critiques in that their allegations and accusations are not supported by evidence, refuted by legal verdicts and are otherwise inconsistent.⁵⁸

These antagonists reiterate that "the Papacy has 'bought' some community (movement) in Turkey to produce an adulterated and reformed Islam without *shari'a*, *fiqh*, *sunnah* and laws".⁵⁹ They negatively react to the Gülen's visit to the Vatican City to meet with the Pope as they consider it a humiliation.⁶⁰ They allege that some groups are the secret agents of the Papacy in Turkey. They also repeatedly claim that some secret agreements between 'a group' and the Papacy and also the Orthodox Church has been reached that Halki Seminary will be re-opened and when the conditions are right, some Greeks (Rum) will immigrate to Turkey.⁶¹ They also strongly state that the Muslims who advocate dialogue with Christians and Europeans are either naïve, or ignorant or, for worse, *traitors*. They even imply that Gülen is not a Muslim at all but a secret cardinal of the Catholic church.⁶² An extreme leftist daily

⁵⁴ See, www.gyv.org.tr

⁵⁵ Ozdalga, 2003, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁶ See in detail, www.dialoguesociety.org

⁵⁷ Aslandogan, Defamation as Smokescreen, Oklahoma, 2006.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Mehmet Sevkett Eygi 'Turkic world', Milli Gazete, 5 May 2000. Daily Milli Gazete belongs to political Islamist Necmettin Erbakan's National Outlook (Milli Gorus) movement.

⁶⁰ Saritoprak and Griffiths, People of the Book, Muslim World, 2005, p. 336.

⁶¹ Eygi, 'Secret agreement with papacy', Milli Gazete, 26 May 2000.

⁶² See, several issues of religio-nationalist Haydar Bas Group's daily Yeni Mesaj, www.yenimesaj.com.tr. It is probable to read such a 'comment' in any issue of the daily.



regularly claims that Gülen is a man of the Korean originated Moon Church.⁶³ An ultra-nationalist argues that “the CIA agents such as Graham Fuller and Paul Henze are pupils (*murid*) of Gülen”.⁶⁴ These groups together with artificial nationalists (*ulusalcılar*) claim that Anatolia will be Christianized and some people in Turkey are helping the Christians in this mission.⁶⁵ The support of the Turkish old elite or bureaucratic oligarchy to these groups is a publicly known reality and the allegations against the Gülen movement are regularly extended to the ruling AK Party in the old elite’s fight against the emergence of the new elite, democratisation, transparency and accountability of Turkey and its official institutions.

In the words of Ozdalga (2003: 61), no other religious personality gives rise to such intense contempt and rejection among strongly committed laicists, bureaucratic oligarchy and old elite as he does.

*This view is the more difficult to understand given that Gülen’s adherents, without exception, are characterized by unobtrusiveness and humbleness. However, it is exactly this withdrawal that is raised to support arguments about the dangers of the movement. His antagonists look upon Gülen as being almost omnipotent, possessing, according to them, secret powers to challenge any political authority. A single word from him—so it is thought—would be enough to rally a sufficient number of political parties to attempt to topple the government. To be sure, this phantasmagoria is nourished by dread, bordering on panic, of religious reactionaries (*irtica*), combined with ignorance about what the Gülen community really does.*⁶⁶

Gülen is not suggesting any radically different or heterodox interpretation of Islam, but re-reads a conventional Hanafi/Sunni understanding.⁶⁷ When looked closely there are -naturally- many similarities between the discourses of Gülen and Rumi and many other Muslim scholars of the past. Thus, Ozdalga concludes that:

So it does not seem to be the content of the religious interpretation as such, but the very existence of a new relatively strong group, filled with religious fervour and claiming a place in the public arena that annoys the establishment. This new element is perceived as being an anomic force, a force that challenges the norms and values, the order of the established hegemonic elite community. Thus, it is not religion per se that is at the root of the conflict. On the contrary, religion has been used as a “false ideology” to displace the real threat. From the Established-

⁶³ Cumhuriyet, 3 December 2000.

⁶⁴ Necip Hablemitoğlu, Yeni Hayat, N. 52.

⁶⁵ For an analysis of pro-globalization and anti-globalisation Islamic movements in Turkey, see, Ahmet Kuru (2005) “Globalisation and diversification of Islamic movements: Three Turkish cases”, in Political Science Quarterly, V. 120, N. 2, pp. 253-274. Kuru analyses Gülen, Haydar Bas and Erbakan’s National Outlook (Milli Görüş) movements and concludes that “(t)he Gülen movement and the younger generation of the late Milli Görüş, movement developed positive attitudes toward globalization because they benefited from international opportunities and they had tolerant normative frameworks... The Haydar Bas, movement, the early Milli Görüş, movement, and the elders of the late Milli Görüş, movement developed antiglobalization views because they did not benefit from international opportunities and had intolerant normative frameworks (religio-nationalism in the first case and political Islamism in the second and third cases)”, Kuru 2005, p. 273.

⁶⁶ Ozdalga (2003: 61).

⁶⁷ Ozdalga (2003: 61).



Outsider perspective, the key to the problem seems to lie in the threat posed to the existing power balance and established status hierarchy.⁶⁸

5. Concluding Remarks: Renewed Peaceful Coexistence Message of Rumi Today and Gülen's Initiatives

Rumi's discourse and practice vis-à-vis peaceful coexistence and his tradition of intercultural activism as the most important method of social innovation to tackle ignorance and to improve cooperation for a more cohesive society live in the thought and practice of Gülen. It is, thus, not a coincidence that their antagonists' accusations are also of similar nature and content.

Millions inspired by Gülen put his discourse into practice all over the world. The greatest advantage in the prospect of achieving this is that Gülen has an *alim* background. It is true that he is an influential leader but he is first of all an expert of Islamic theology (*kalam*), Qur'ânic exegesis (*tafsir*), science of hadith (*usul-u hadith*) and Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) similar to Rumi as we have seen above.

Through his sermons, teachings, books and activities, Gülen has inspired a whole generation in Turkey and abroad and has reduced the gap between *ulama* (high) Islam and folk Islam. For the lasting peaceful coexistence, Gülen has encouraged his followers and sympathisers to establish educational and intercultural dialogue institutions in and outside of Turkey. These people –following in the footsteps of Rumi- are also active participants in society and perform public service by establishing schools, charities and hospitals. The community's enthusiasm for establishing secular schools in both the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds, specifically schools serving people of all faiths and nationalities, is unprecedented not only among Sufis but all faith-based groups and movements, thus, socially innovative. Instead of being isolated from the society, they try to reconcile their spiritual life with their worldly one, following Gülen's discourse.⁶⁹ These schools aim to instil –through the good example of teachers, educators, and staff- universal values such as honesty, cooperation, freedom, happiness, humility, love, respect, responsibility, and acceptance of the other.

The movement's schools in areas where ethnic and religious conflicts are escalating, such as Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, the Philippines, Banda Aceh, Northern Iraq, Darfur and South-eastern Turkey have played remarkable peacemaking roles in decreasing levels of conflict in these areas.⁷⁰

Through its schools and outlets the Gülen movement is spreading an Anatolian Muslimness; a renewed Rumi practice of Islam that emphasises love, empathy, mutual respect and enrichment, intercultural activism, education and social innovation for a cohesive society. With the help of the schools in about 100 countries all over the world, many people, not only Muslims, are getting a good and quality education in a multicultural, multi-faith environment so that in future they will continue to be open to dialogue and they will hopefully attain good socio-economic status within their societies.

⁶⁸ Ozdalga, Redeemer or Outsider, Muslim World, 2005, pp. 441-442.

⁶⁹ Mandaville states that "in the case of Turkey's Gülen movement... we find elements of Sufi spirituality fused with socio-economic liberalism in a highly successful transnational educational project. Dozens of Gülen-sponsored schools, emphasizing a modernist curriculum against a backdrop of 'non-invasive' Islamic morality, now operate throughout much of the Balkans and Central Asia", Peter Mandaville (2003) "What does progressive Islam look like?". ISIM Newsletter. Leiden: ISIM. 33-34. p.34.

⁷⁰ Saritoprak, Nonviolence, Muslim World, 2005, p. 423. See also Kalyoncu 2007.



As Thomas Michel puts, in line with Gülen's firm belief that the road to justice for all is dependent on the provision of an adequate education, in addition to the formal education carried out in schools, the movement has also pursued non-formal education through television and radio channels, newspapers and magazines, cultural and professional foundations.⁷¹

It will not be wrong to suggest that Gülen is renewing the message of Rumi in accordance with contemporary tempo-spatial needs of the masses for a lasting peaceful coexistence through education and dialogue. Given that Rumi's discourse and practice are deeply rooted in Islam, Gülen could be said to be renewing Islam (*tajdid*), which is another dimension of his social innovation.

Arabic proverb puts that "*el-merru aduvvu ma jahila*", one is enemy of whom s/he does not know. Thus, if each side knows each other, it is probable that tensions will ease or tensions will not even emerge. With its innovative projects, schools, activities and aid programmes⁷² almost all over the world, from Cambodia, Bangladesh to Mali, Philippines, Lebanon and Argentina, the movement itself becoming a bridge between cultures, countries, nations and faiths.

It has also been observed that students from Gülen schools do not feel that they are lost between cultures. On the contrary, they been, to borrow Roger Ballard's concept, "skilfully navigating between cultures" or surfing on the inter-cultural-net, may be just as Rumi did many centuries ago like a compass with one foot on one faith & culture, the other travelling worlds. What is more, as Harun Tokak -Chairman of the Journalists and Writers Foundation and a companion of Gülen for more than 35 years- beautifully expressed in his column in Daily Yeni Safak on 4 November 2007, Gülen's sympathisers do not only say "Come, come, whoever you are" but they also actually go to people whoever/wherever they are.

As a result of the movement's innovative projects, a new generation with quality education, well-versed in a few languages and with prospects of good jobs and high socio-economic status has been raised. Three main enemies of humanity and mothers of all incoherence, terror, anarchy and conflict (ignorance, poverty and disunity) will be overcome in the long run if Gülen projects succeed. In my humble opinion, Gülen movement is a good start to counter radicalism and radicalisation in the long run. Without such an educational and dialogue project, society's increasing problems of radicalism and radicalisation cannot be solved. One expects that these self-confident new generations who study in pluralist non-denominational multicultural and multifaith environments where Rumi and Gülen's peaceful coexistence ethos prevails will be not be inclined to radicalism. If education and dialogue do not work to build and maintain a cohesive society, nothing will work.

⁷¹ Thomas Michel (2006) Said Nursi's Views on Muslim-Christian Understanding. Istanbul: Soz. 70.

⁷² Kimse Yok mu Association is the major aid organization of the movement and has been active in the last few years.. It has helped earthquake victims in Bandah Aceh Indonesia, Pakistan and so on; sent aid in goods and cash to Lebanon after the recent Israeli onslaught, www.kimseyokmu.org.tr. One can expect that this aid association will increase its activities throughout the world.