

DRAFT:
OCTOBER 2013

THE LOVE OF BEAUTY AND THE BEAUTY OF LOVE: THE SONG OF RUMI

By
Ali A. Mazrui

Director, Institute of Global Cultural Studies
and
Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities
Binghamton University
State University of New York at Binghamton, New York, USA

Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large Emeritus
and Senior Scholar in Africana Studies
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA

Senior Fellow,
Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding,
Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA

Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large
University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria

Acceptance Speech upon receiving the RUMI Award presented by the RUMI Forum at the annual ceremony held at the National Press Club, Washington, DC, October 2013.

I am truly honored to be receiving the Distinguished RUMI Award at this elegant ceremony. I am particularly pleased that my Award is for dedication to education and for the quality of my contributions to the world of learning.

In the past I have been honored by universities, by the media, and by Heads of State primarily for academic endeavours and for my scholarship. What is different about this RUMI Award is its focus on education and my role as a teacher.

I am honored to have taught in four continents—Africa, Europe, North America and South America. I have also taught students of various races, religions and nationalities. I am grateful to have that educator's role recognized today, especially by this RUMI Award.

But I would also like to salute Rumi by introducing poetry in our deliberations tonight. One of the short poems is by Rumi himself. The other is drawn from English literature.

The two poems have been chosen mainly because they are inter-related in their celebration of the fundamental beauty of nature.

Let us begin with a short poem by William Wordsworth.

*Through primrose tufts in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths,
And it's my faith that every flower,
Enjoys the air it breathes.*

*The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure,
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.*

*The budding twigs spread out their fans
To catch the breezy air,
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.*

*If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament,
What man has made of man.*

[lines written in Early Spring].

Here in Wordsworth is the unintended Rumi mood, hundreds of years beyond the Rumi era. Rumi's own voice sings as follows in his poem "All Through Eternity."

*Wherever Beauty looks
Love is also there;
Whenever beauty shows its magnetism
Love lights her fire from that flame.*

*When beauty dwells in the dark folds of night,
Love comes and finds a heart entangled in tresses.
Beauty and love are body and soul;
Beauty is the mine, love the diamond.*

*They have been together
Since the beginning of time—
Side by side, step by step
The love of beauty and the beauty of love.*

Here is Rumi in the unintended future mood of William Wordsworth hundreds of years later. The following abbreviates the beauty of Nature:

*Behold the rose, the lily, the violet—
Behold the peacock.*