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## ARTICLE

# Rumi and Intercultural Dialogue: The Role of Rumi's Teachings in Resolving Cultural Conflicts

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## ABSTRACT

Cultural conflicts constitute a major challenge in contemporary multicultural societies, intensified by globalization, migration, and digital connectivity. Yet, scholarship has not systematically examined how Rumi's mystical concepts may inform modern frameworks of intercultural dialogue and conflict transformation. This study employs a qualitative comparative textual analysis of the *Mathnawi-ye Ma'nawi* and *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, using thematic coding and conceptual synthesis in dialogue with theories of intercultural dialogue, intercultural empathy, ethical cosmopolitanism, and intercultural conflict. The findings show that motifs such as empathic listening, ego-decentring, inner transformation—including *fana fi'l-'ishq*—and ethical recognition of the Other offer affective and normative resources that resonate with, and can modestly extend, contemporary approaches to managing cultural diversity. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that Rumi's spiritual anthropology provides a deeper ethical grounding for empathy-based engagement, enriching current discourses on coexistence and peace. Integrating these insights fosters interdisciplinary exchanges between mysticism and the social sciences and opens new possibilities for developing holistic models of intercultural understanding, education, cultural diplomacy, and mediation. These conceptual affinities also point to

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context-sensitive pathways for applying mystical-ethical resources in real-world settings, while underscoring the need for empirical assessment and careful attention to historical and cultural specificity, thereby encouraging more nuanced, inclusive, and human-centred strategies for addressing today's complex intercultural challenges.

**Keywords:** Rumi; Intercultural Dialogue; Cultural Conflict Resolution; Intercultural Empathy; Inner Peace

## 1. Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected and multicultural world, cultural conflicts have become both more visible and more complex. Intensified by globalization, migration, and digital communication, transnational interactions frequently generate cultural misunderstandings, identity-based tensions, and ideological polarization<sup>[1,2]</sup>. Such dynamics undermine social cohesion and erode interpersonal trust, posing challenges for peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies. Addressing these challenges requires not only political and institutional solutions but also renewed ethical and spiritual approaches that can reorient human relations beyond difference.

Among classical figures whose legacies transcend time and culture, Jalal al-Din Rumi (1207–1273) stands out as a uniquely universal thinker. His mystical philosophy, grounded in Sufi metaphysics, articulates a vision of love, unity, and self-transcendence that continues to inspire diverse audiences across religions and civilizations<sup>[3,4]</sup>. Rumi's emphasis on shared humanity and the imperative to "listen with the heart" reflects an enduring spiritual humanism that speaks powerfully to an age marked by division and cultural fragmentation<sup>[5]</sup>. As rising cultural essentialism and ideological polarization challenge global coexistence, Rumi's inclusive and compassionate worldview offers a valuable ethical and affective framework for intercultural understanding.

Over recent decades, a growing body of literature has revisited Rumi's writings through the lenses of spirituality, pluralism, and humanism<sup>[4–6]</sup>. However, most of these studies have remained situated within literary, historical, or comparative frameworks. While insightful, such approaches rarely establish a systematic connection between Rumi's mystical concepts and contemporary theories of intercultural dialogue or conflict transformation. This gap limits our understanding of how Rumi's teachings might contribute to current debates on empathy, cosmopolitan ethics, and intercultural relations.

To address this gap, the present study develops a conceptual synthesis that integrates Rumi's mystical philosophy into four modern theoretical models: (1) Intercultural Dialogue Theory<sup>[7]</sup>, (2) Intercultural Empathy<sup>[8]</sup>, (3) Ethical Cosmopolitanism<sup>[9]</sup>, and (4) the Intercultural Conflict Framework<sup>[10]</sup>. Accordingly, the study pursues two central research questions:

- (A) How does Rumi conceptualize human beings in relation to cultural difference?
- (B) Which intellectual and spiritual elements in his work can inform contemporary frameworks for intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution?

Through a combined theoretical and textual analysis, the article repositions Rumi not merely as a historical mystic but as a contemporary voice for peacebuilding, intercultural understanding, and ethical engagement. It concludes by outlining how his spiritual anthropology offers conceptual resources for fostering empathy, bridging cultural divides, and nurturing coexistence in diverse societies.

## 2. Literature Review

A substantial body of scholarship has examined the relationship between mysticism and peacebuilding, offering a foundation for understanding Rumi's teachings within the broader context of intercultural conflict resolution. Temizel (2021), for example, emphasizes peace, friendship, and reconciliation in mystical literature—including Rumi's *Mathnawi*—and interprets the metaphor of the reed as a call for a return to one's spiritual origin and a peaceful life<sup>[11]</sup>. However, this study remains largely literary and theoretical, without exploring the practical applications of Rumi's ideas in conflict contexts. Similarly, Simiyari et al. (2021) identify four dimensions of peace in Rumi's *Mathnawi*—peace with nature, the self, others, and God—through the lens of love and ontology. Yet, they do not address intercultural dialogue or contemporary conflict resolution<sup>[12]</sup>. Taken together, these studies demonstrate the

enduring relevance of mystical literature for understanding peace, but they stop short of connecting it to modern frameworks of intercultural interaction.

Another group of scholars situates Rumi within broader traditions of humanism and cosmopolitan ethics. Schimmel (1978) underscores the centrality of love and unity in Rumi's works but pays less attention to their implications for modern intercultural engagement<sup>[3]</sup>. Soleimani (2009) explores Rumi alongside Saadi and Hafez, highlighting their universalist visions of peace, tolerance, and coexistence while attributing Rumi's approach to his mystical journey<sup>[13]</sup>. Bazargan (2010) compares Rumi's encounter with Tatar violence to Gandhi's nonviolent philosophy, underscoring Rumi's pacifism but focusing primarily on historical and comparative dimensions<sup>[14]</sup>. These studies collectively reinforce Rumi's role as a universal thinker and advocate of humanistic values, yet they rarely extend his insights into applied models of cross-cultural or interreligious dialogue.

Several comparative studies further explore Rumi's relevance to philosophical or ethical discourses on peace. Babaei et al. (2025) analyze love in the thoughts of Rumi and Marshall Rosenberg, arguing that love acts as a catalyst for both inner and external peace<sup>[15]</sup>. While valuable, this comparison remains philosophical rather than intercultural. Similarly, other comparative and historical analyses illuminate Rumi's ethical universality but do not articulate how his teachings might inform conflict transformation in multicultural contexts. Taken together, these studies reveal the depth of Rumi's peace philosophy but also expose a persistent gap: the absence of a systematic synthesis linking his mystical worldview to contemporary theories of intercultural dialogue and conflict resolution.

The present study responds to these limitations by proposing a conceptual integration of Rumi's mystical philosophy with modern intercultural frameworks. Building on insights from Intercultural Dialogue Theory, Intercultural Empathy, Ethical Cosmopolitanism, and the Intercultural Conflict Framework, this synthesis seeks to bridge the divide between classical mysticism and contemporary peace scholarship. By mapping the theoretical potential of Rumi's thought for intercultural conflict management, this article contributes a new perspective that situates Rumi not only as a poet-mystic of unity but also as a resource for ap-

plied peacebuilding and intercultural understanding.

### 3. Theoretical Framework: Integrating Rumi's Mysticism with Intercultural Conflict Theories

In an era of increasing cultural diversity, migration, and global communication, intercultural conflicts have become both inevitable and integral to contemporary social life. Addressing these challenges requires integrative, human-centered frameworks that unite spiritual and theoretical insights. The present framework analyzes how Rumi's mystical philosophy complements modern intercultural theories and identifies four conceptual pillars: *Intercultural Dialogue Theory*, *Intercultural Empathy*, *Ethical Cosmopolitanism*, and the *Intercultural Conflict Framework*. Each of these theories offers analytical tools that, when viewed through Rumi's teachings, provide distinctive pathways for fostering understanding and peace across cultural boundaries.

#### 3.1. Intercultural Dialogue Theory

Intercultural Dialogue Theory emphasizes the cultivation of mutual understanding and reciprocal respect among diverse cultural groups. It posits that intercultural education and authentic communication foster social cohesion by encouraging the acceptance of difference and the recognition of shared humanity<sup>[7-16]</sup>. Central constructs in this framework include *authenticity in dialogue*, the *role of educators as cultural bridge-builders*<sup>[17,18]</sup>, and the *acknowledgment of cultural identity within social structures*<sup>[19]</sup>. These constructs form the foundation for analyzing how dialogue contributes to ethical coexistence in multicultural societies.

Rumi's teachings profoundly resonate with these principles. His metaphor of the "reed," separated from the reed bed and longing to return to its source, symbolizes the universal human yearning for connection through shared meaning rather than power.

*Listen to this reed how it complains; it is telling a tale of separation. (Mathnawi, Book 1, verse 1)*<sup>[20]</sup>

This imagery captures the essence of intercultural dialogue: a call to listen from the heart. Rumi's view of

dialogue rests upon sincerity and self-awareness, aligning with the modern emphasis on reflective cultural consciousness. In the Results section, these constructs inform the analysis of *dialogue as spiritual connection* and *listening as ethical practice*.

Key strategies within this domain:

- Cultural self-awareness: Knowing one's own biases and preconceptions as a starting point for authentic dialogue.
- Cultural education and feedback from diverse individuals: Enhancing knowledge of value systems and communication styles across cultures <sup>[17]</sup>.
- Developing educators' competencies as cultural mediators: Teachers must cultivate intercultural skills <sup>[18]</sup>.

### 3.2. Intercultural Empathy

Intercultural Empathy refers to the capacity to understand and internalize the emotions of individuals from different cultural backgrounds <sup>[10]</sup>. It reduces prejudice, builds trust, and fosters inclusive social environments <sup>[21,22]</sup>. Within this framework, *active listening* and *emotional regulation* are key constructs that enable meaningful engagement across cultural lines. Empathy thus functions not only as an emotional response but also as a moral and communicative competence that facilitates intercultural understanding.

Rumi's writings exemplify this form of empathy through his vision of love as the unifying essence of all beings. His verse—

*Everyone became my friend from his own opinion;  
None sought my secrets from within me. (Mathnawi, Book 1, Verse 6)* <sup>[20]</sup>.

—invites readers to recognize others with compassion rather than judgment. For Rumi, empathy arises from spiritual awareness: the heart's ability to see unity within diversity. This study applies the concept of intercultural empathy to interpret Rumi's emphasis on *listening without judgment* and *transforming emotion into understanding*.

Key strategies in this domain include:

- Active listening and sensitivity to nonverbal cues enable a deeper understanding of underlying emotions.
- Fostering empathy through education, travel, and intercultural encounters <sup>[23]</sup>.

- Emotion regulation in dialogue, recognizing that empathy becomes meaningful when individuals can manage their own emotions and listen to others without reactive judgment.

### 3.3. Ethical Cosmopolitanism

Ethical Cosmopolitanism conceptualizes human beings as global citizens with moral obligations that transcend national and cultural borders <sup>[9-24]</sup>. It stresses values of respect, shared responsibility, and international justice as counterforces to ethnocentrism and xenophobia <sup>[25,26]</sup>. Core constructs—*moral universality* and *inclusive belonging*—define this framework's normative orientation toward equality and mutual care.

Rumi's mystical worldview parallels cosmopolitan ethics through his vision of humanity as one divine manifestation. His teaching—“*Know the whole world as emanating from God.*”—embodies a transcultural ethic grounded in love and justice. In Rumi's view, diversity is not fragmentation but divine plurality. This article uses cosmopolitan ethics to frame Rumi's concept of *spiritual unity* as a model for inclusive coexistence and peacebuilding in plural societies.

Key strategies within this framework include:

- Acknowledging the equality of all cultures and celebrating diversity.
- Creating inclusive, safe, and respectful spaces for intercultural engagement <sup>[26]</sup>.
- Promoting fairness and justice in the resolution of cultural conflicts (equal opportunity) <sup>[27]</sup>.

### 3.4. Intercultural Conflict Framework

The Intercultural Conflict Framework analyzes cultural conflicts through multidimensional lenses encompassing individual, communicative, and structural levels <sup>[28]</sup>. It highlights *power dynamics* <sup>[29]</sup>, *emotional regulation* <sup>[30]</sup>, and *mediation styles* <sup>[31]</sup> as crucial determinants of conflict outcomes. This framework advances beyond behavioral approaches by recognizing that cultural conflicts are embedded in both personal and systemic inequalities.

Rumi's philosophy complements this framework through his teachings on inner peace (*sukūn*) and self-transcendence (*fanā*), which encourage humility, flexibility,

and spiritual meditation. His emphasis on deep listening transforms confrontation into connection by prioritizing understanding over victory. In the Results section, these constructs are applied to analyze *spiritual mediation* and *empathic reconciliation* in intercultural conflicts.

Core strategies in this domain include:

- Adapting communication styles to suit intercultural contexts.
- Engaging in constructive mediation led by neutral and culturally competent individuals (Neutral Mediation).
- Collaborative problem solving by identifying shared goals and focusing on underlying interests rather than superficial positions.
- Recognizing structural power asymmetries and striving to balance interactions <sup>[29,30]</sup>.

Integrating these four theoretical perspectives reveals the convergence between Rumi's mystical humanism and modern intercultural thought. Rumi's teachings enrich these frameworks by providing a spiritual dimension to dialogue, empathy, cosmopolitan ethics, and conflict transformation. Collectively, they form the conceptual foundation for examining how Rumi's universalism can inspire contemporary practices of peace and intercultural understanding.

## 4. Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, analytical–interpretive design to explore mechanisms of dialogue and conflict resolution in Rumi's thought. The primary corpus consists of *Mathnawi-ye Ma'navi* and *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi*, using English translations by Nicholson and Arberry, cross-checked with the Persian originals to ensure interpretive accuracy. Selection focused on texts thematically related to peace, love, listening, ego transcendence, and intercultural understanding. Secondary sources include scholarly works on mysticism, intercultural dialogue, and comparative ethics, which support contextual and theoretical triangulation. These selections provide a coherent foundation for identifying Rumi's dialogical principles across spiritual and social dimensions.

We analyze Rumi's texts using qualitative content analysis, applying both inductive and deductive cod-

ing procedures. Inductively, key motifs such as *listening (sama)*, *fana fi'l-'ishq* (annihilation in love), *inner peace*, and *embracing the Other* emerged from the textual data. Deductively, these motifs were interpreted through the lenses of four theoretical frameworks: Intercultural Dialogue Theory, Intercultural Empathy, Ethical Cosmopolitanism, and the Intercultural Conflict Framework. Through iterative reading and coding cycles, the analysis identified conceptual intersections between mystical symbols and intercultural communicative constructs. This analytic process bridges Rumi's spiritual discourse with contemporary theories of dialogue and peacebuilding.

To ensure validity and reliability, the study employed methodological triangulation, integrating textual, interpretive, and theoretical cross-checking. Findings from Rumi's texts were compared with prior research in intercultural studies to validate theme consistency. Peer debriefing and theoretical memoing were used to maintain reflexivity during interpretation. Each identified theme was systematically aligned with the constructs of the four guiding theories, ensuring analytical coherence and transparency. This framework ultimately enables a transition from textual insight to theoretical application, forming the basis for the Results section.

## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1. Rumi's Anthropological Vision and the Foundations of Cultural Tolerance

Rumi, the great Persian poet and mystic, presents a profound and multilayered conception of the human being in his works—particularly in the *Mathnawi-ye Ma'navi*. In his view, the human is not only a spiritual and divine being but also a mirror of the Absolute and a manifestation of unity within multiplicity. This perspective aligns closely with the theory of Ethical Cosmopolitanism, which emphasizes the shared moral responsibility of all individuals as members of a global community. Ethical cosmopolitanism transcends cultural, religious, and ethnic differences, advocating for the moral unity and equality of all human beings. This section explores the question of how Rumi perceives the human in relation to cultural diversity, and how his vision corresponds with the core principles of ethical cosmopolitan thought.



### 5.1.1. The Human as a Reflection of the Divine and an Agent of Universal Spiritual Ethics

Rumi frames the human being as both earthly and divine—a mirror in which the attributes of God are reflected. This dual vision grounds his universal humanism and provides the ethical foundation for cultural tolerance and coexistence. Humanity, for Rumi, embodies the infinite within the finite and is thus called to recognize divine unity in all creation.

*Therefore, in form thou art the microcosm,  
Therefore, in reality thou art the macrocosm,  
(Mathnawi, Book 4, Verses 521)*

*Thou art the sea of knowledge hidden in a dew-  
drop; thou art the universe hidden in a body three  
ells long...  
(Mathnawi, Book 5, Verses 3879)*

Rumi's metaphor of the microcosm suggests that every individual reflects the totality of existence. In this view, the recognition of the divine essence within each human erases boundaries of race, nation, and creed. His cosmology, therefore, aligns closely with Ethical Cosmopolitanism, which views humanity as a moral community bound by shared dignity and spiritual equality. The verses also prefigure modern intercultural ethics by linking self-knowledge to the acknowledgment of others' intrinsic worth. This synthesis of mysticism and moral universality provides a theological foundation for cosmopolitan ethics rooted not in abstraction but in lived spirituality. Building on this anthropology, Rumi envisions the human not merely as a passive reflection of divinity but as an active moral agent responsible for enacting divine attributes—love, mercy, and justice—in the social realm. This transformation from reflection to ethical action bridges inner spiritual realization with outward cosmopolitan responsibility.

*The East and West of this earth become one garden;  
No thorn or weed is found in our unified garden.  
(Divan-e Shams, Ghazal No. 148)*

This verse encapsulates Rumi's transcendence of

geographical, cultural, and religious divisions. His declaration of belonging "neither to East nor West" resonates with the cosmopolitan ideal of moral universality that transcends identity boundaries. Through *fana fi'l-'ishq* (annihilation in love), the self is purified of ego and prejudice, allowing authentic empathy and solidarity with all beings. Thus, Rumi's anthropology moves beyond mystical introspection toward an actionable ethic of global coexistence—an approach that parallels the Ethical Cosmopolitanism emphasis on shared moral responsibility and universal human worth.

### 5.1.2. The Human as a Seeker of Meaning and Reflection of Divine Love

From Rumi's perspective, the human being is not merely a social creature but a spiritual traveler, continuously striving for union with divine truth and love. This journey transforms the human condition from material attachment toward ethical and transcendental awareness. The soul's longing for its origin is, for Rumi, the essence of what makes us human and the foundation of moral consciousness in a plural world<sup>[3,24]</sup>.

*In my soul, there is a drop of knowledge, deliver  
it from sensuality and from the body's clay; Before  
these clays drink it up, before these winds absorb it.  
(Mathnawi, Book 1, verses 1081–1082)*

These verses express Rumi's conception of the Soul as a drop from the ocean of divine knowledge—temporarily confined in the body yet eternally drawn toward its source. The imagery of the drop and the ocean encapsulates his vision of the self as both limited and infinite, bound by form yet seeking formless unity. Through divine love (*'ishq*), the human transcends ego-centered identity and perceives all existence as interconnected manifestations of the same reality<sup>[3–34]</sup>. This mystical anthropology resonates with Ethical Cosmopolitanism, which asserts that moral value and responsibility extend beyond cultural or national boundaries<sup>[24]</sup>. By recognizing the divine in every being, Rumi provides a spiritual foundation for empathy, equality, and universal moral solidarity—principles that directly support intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding in culturally diverse contexts<sup>[32]</sup>.

### 5.1.3. The Unity of Humanity beyond Religion, Ethnicity, and Language

Rumi consistently portrays humanity as a single, interconnected entity and rejects superficial distinctions such as religion, ethnicity, and language as obstacles to spiritual unity. For him, these differences arise not from essence but from perception—from the limited viewpoint of the ego rather than the vision of the heart <sup>[9]</sup>.

*From the place (object) of view, O (thou who art the) kernel of existence; There arises the difference between the true believer, the Zoroastrian, and the Jew. (Mathnawi, Book 3, verse 1256)*

In this verse, Rumi identifies the root of human division as the “place of view,” implying that diversity itself is not the problem; rather, the failure to see beyond one’s partial perspective is. Beneath outward differences lies the same divine reality, a truth that positions all humans as emanations of one soul. This vision parallels the core principles of *Ethical Cosmopolitanism*, which affirms the moral equality of all individuals and challenges exclusionary identities based on creed or culture <sup>[9]</sup>.

Rumi extends this universal vision in his lyrical poetry, calling humanity to transcend inherited boundaries and co-create a world bound by love and shared purpose.

*Come, let us scatter flowers and pour wine into the cup; Let us break through the dome of the heavens and design a new world. (Divan-e Shams, Ghazal 121)*

The invitation to “break the dome” and “design a new world” signifies the transformative potential of love and imagination in overcoming cultural and ideological constraints. This poetic symbolism mirrors the cosmopolitan ideal of *global citizenship*, where compassion and shared responsibility replace division and hierarchy <sup>[33]</sup>. Rumi thus redefines belonging not as loyalty to a single group but as participation in a universal moral community grounded in divine unity and mutual care.

### 5.1.4. Connection to Ethical Cosmopolitanism: The Global Body of Humanity

Ethical cosmopolitanism is grounded in the principle that all human beings—regardless of cultural, religious,

or ethnic difference—form part of a shared global community and bear moral responsibility toward one another <sup>[34]</sup>. Rumi’s mystical anthropology resonates strongly with this idea. He envisions humanity as a diverse yet unified expression of divine reality, where multiplicity is a surface manifestation of an underlying spiritual oneness.

*Separation (plurality) is in the animal spirit; the human spirit is one essence.*

*(Mathnawi, Book 2, verse 186)*

Here, Rumi distinguishes between the bodily realm, where separation and conflict arise, and the spiritual realm, where unity prevails. By asserting that the “human spirit is one essence,” Rumi establishes an ontological foundation for tolerance: outward differences are transient, but the soul participates in a shared, universal truth. This mirrors the cosmopolitan commitment to reducing prejudice and fostering ethical engagement across cultural boundaries <sup>[34]</sup>. Rumi further expands this cosmopolitan vision in his poetic call for creative unity:

*Come, let us scatter flowers and pour wine into the cup; Let us break through the dome of the heavens and design a new world.*

*(Divan-e Shams, Ghazal 121)*

The invitation to “design a new world” represents a metaphysical and moral project: the reimagining of society through love, empathy, and collective responsibility. Rumi’s universalism transforms spiritual insight into an ethical imperative, urging humanity to transcend superficial distinctions such as religion, ethnicity, and language. His emphasis on *love as the connective force of existence* aligns closely with Ethical Cosmopolitanism, which envisions individuals as interconnected members of a single moral body committed to global justice and harmony <sup>[27]</sup>. Through divine love, Rumi articulates a cosmopolitan ethic that bridges spirituality and social coexistence—one that calls for the recognition of every human being as a reflection of the same divine essence.

### 5.2. Mechanisms of Dialogue in Rumi’s Teachings

Rumi’s teachings, deeply rooted in spiritual wisdom and universal love, offer a profound framework for

fostering dialogue and resolving conflicts across cultural and interpersonal divides. His approach transcends mere communication, emphasizing the transformative power of empathy, inner peace, and the transcendence of the self. Drawing from his poetic masterpieces, particularly the *Mathnawi* and *Divan-e Shams*, Rumi presents dialogue as a spiritual journey that begins with listening to the “other” with an open heart, cultivating inner tranquility, and relinquishing ego-driven barriers. These elements align closely with contemporary theories such as Intercultural Empathy and Intercultural Dialogue Theory, which advocate for mutual understanding and the recognition of shared humanity. By weaving together spiritual insights and practical wisdom, Rumi’s teachings provide timeless guidance for creating meaningful, empathetic, and harmonious interactions in a diverse world.

### 5.2.1. Listening as the Foundation of Empathy

Listening occupies a central position in Rumi’s philosophy of dialogue and serves as both a spiritual discipline and an ethical foundation for intercultural understanding. In Rumi’s view, authentic listening transcends the sensory act of hearing; it is an inner stillness through which one suspends ego-driven assumptions and opens the heart to the experience of the other. This practice parallels the principle of active listening in Intercultural Empathy Theory, which requires emotional attunement, humility, and receptivity to perspectives beyond one’s own <sup>[25]</sup>.

*Listen to this reed how it complains; it tells a tale of separation.*

*(Mathnawi, Book 1, verse 1)*

The reed (ney), lamenting its separation from the reed bed, symbolizes the human soul longing to be understood. Its cry represents humanity’s collective desire for empathetic connection—a metaphor for intercultural dialogue grounded in compassion rather than domination. For Rumi, listening becomes a spiritual act of *fana fi’l-ishq* (annihilation in divine love), in which the listener temporarily dissolves the self to perceive the truth of the other. Within the framework of Intercultural Empathy, this mechanism reduces cultural misunderstanding by transforming dialogue into a shared emotional and moral space. In the

proposed model of intercultural dialogue, it constitutes the first stage—hearing through the heart—which initiates authentic connection and mutual recognition.

### 5.2.2. Inner Peace as a Precursor to Outer Harmony

Rumi posits that meaningful dialogue and peaceful coexistence arise only from an inner state of harmony and spiritual equilibrium. For him, the individual who lacks inner calm—consumed by anger, ego, or unrest—cannot truly engage in empathetic or constructive exchange. This principle aligns with the Intercultural Conflict Framework, which emphasizes emotional regulation and self-awareness as essential to managing cultural tensions <sup>[26]</sup>. Rumi, therefore, views inner peace as both a spiritual attainment and a practical mechanism for sustaining intercultural harmony, grounded in self-knowledge and introspection.

*O brother, you are your thought (of yours); as for the rest (of you), you are (only) bone and fiber.*

*(Mathnawi, Book 2, verse 275)*

This verse reveals Rumi’s conviction that one’s inner world determines the quality of all external relations. To communicate sincerely, one must first reconcile internal conflicts and achieve clarity of the self. Rumi repeatedly urges individuals to extinguish inner turbulence—symbolized by the fire of anger and prejudice—through love and patience:

*Little by little, throw water on the fire, that your fire may become light, O man of sorrow.*

*(Mathnawi, Book 1, verse 1333)*

In this imagery, water represents compassion and spiritual awareness, transforming destructive emotion into illuminating wisdom. Through such purification, individuals develop the emotional maturity necessary for intercultural understanding. Within the theoretical framework, this mechanism corresponds to the second stage of the intercultural dialogue model—“peace within as peace with others”—illustrating how Rumi’s psychological insights contribute to modern theories of conflict resolution and emotional regulation across cultures.



### 5.2.3. Decentering the Ego and Embracing the Other

Rumi identifies the ego (*nafs*) as one of the principal barriers to authentic dialogue and peaceful coexistence. For him, most human conflicts arise from attachment to self-centered desires and the illusion of separateness. The path toward genuine dialogue, therefore, requires *fana*—the annihilation of the self in love—which dissolves ego-centric boundaries and awakens the individual to collective unity. This idea parallels the principles of Intercultural Dialogue Theory, which highlight the importance of reducing egocentrism and recognizing the equal moral worth of others <sup>[18]</sup>.

*How should this “I” be revealed by thinking?  
That “I” is revealed (only) after passing away from  
self (fana).*

(*Mathnawi*, Book 5, verse 4146)

In this verse, Rumi presents self-transcendence as a spiritual prerequisite for understanding others. True identity, he suggests, is uncovered not through intellectual reasoning but through the dissolution of the ego in divine love. This process transforms self-centered perception into compassionate awareness—a shift that enables one to engage in dialogue free from defensiveness or prejudice.

*Love came and flowed like blood in my veins  
and skin; it emptied me of myself and filled me with  
the Friend.*

(*Divan-e Shams*, Ghazal 565)

Here, love symbolizes the force that bridges self and other, uniting humanity in shared existence. Within the context of intercultural engagement, such love reflects a profound capacity for empathy and recognition—seeing the “other” not as a threat, but as a mirror of one’s own being. Through this lens, Rumi’s mystical psychology anticipates contemporary theories of intercultural dialogue by asserting that genuine peace and coexistence are possible only when the ego’s boundaries dissolve into universal compassion. In the study’s overall framework, this mechanism corresponds to the third stage of dialogue—transcendence of ego as the foundation for reconciliation and empathy across cultures.

## 6. Toward a Spiritual Model of Intercultural Conflict Resolution

### 6.1. Model Overview

Rumi’s vision of intercultural conflict resolution rests on the principle that genuine peace must begin with inner transformation. He perceives conflict not merely as an external phenomenon but as a reflection of unresolved disharmony within the self. His spiritual framework, therefore, progresses from inner awareness to empathetic engagement and culminates in ego-transcendence through love. This three-stage model—rooted in listening, inner peace, and the dissolution of the self—forms what may be called Rumi’s Mystical Mediation Model. This spiritual synthesis parallels but deepens contemporary theories such as Intercultural Dialogue Theory and the Intercultural Conflict Framework.

Step 1: Cultivate listening as spiritual and emotional openness to the “other”.

Step 2: Attain inner peace as the emotional foundation for constructive dialogue.

Step 3: Transcend the ego through love (*fana*) to achieve genuine intercultural reconciliation.

### 6.2. Process: From Inner Awareness to Transcendence

Rumi’s model begins with *listening*, symbolized by the reed flute (*ney*) at the opening of the *Mathnawi*, where listening becomes a sacred act of empathy rather than a mere exchange of words. This stage aligns with the principle of *active listening* in intercultural empathy, emphasizing openness and suspension of judgment. The second stage, *inner peace*, requires mastering one’s emotions and cultivating self-knowledge, for those who are at war within themselves cannot build bridges with others. In terms of the *Intercultural Conflict Framework*, this step corresponds to emotional regulation and the management of internal biases that escalate tension. The final stage, *fana* or the annihilation, represents Rumi’s ultimate solution to human conflict: the dissolution of the ego and the awakening of love as the universal mediator. Through *fana*, individuals transcend their self-centered perspectives and experience unity with the broader human community. Together,

these mechanisms transform dialogue from an intellectual exercise into a spiritual process that nurtures empathy, humility, and mutual recognition across cultural divides.

### 6.3. Implications and Applications

Rumi's Mystical Mediation Model extends beyond personal transformation to offer a framework for *intercultural education, mediation, and cultural diplomacy*. In education, it inspires pedagogies that emphasize empathy, reflection, and cross-cultural understanding. Mediation provides a model for transforming adversarial negotiation into compassionate dialogue grounded in respect and emotional balance. In diplomacy, it reimagines peacebuilding as an act of shared humanity rather than strategic compromise. In educational settings, Rumi's Mystical Mediation Model can be translated into practical exercises that cultivate empathy and intercultural understanding. For example, in an intercultural dialogue module, students could engage in paired sharing activities with peers from different cultural backgrounds, reflecting on each other's perspectives while guided by principles of inner peace, attentive listening, and self-transcendence. Such exercises operationalize the theoretical concepts of the model, enabling learners to experience and practice the key mechanisms of dialogue and conflict resolution in a controlled learning environment. While applying this model requires overcoming institutional and structural barriers—such as prejudice, power asymmetry, and systemic injustice—it offers a powerful ethical and spiritual alternative to conventional conflict-resolution paradigms. Ultimately, Rumi's model calls humanity to envision a new world founded on unity through love, echoing his timeless invitation:

*Come, let us scatter flowers and pour wine into the cup; Let us break through the dome of the heavens and design a new world.*

*(Divan-e Shams, Ghazal 121)*

This symbolic invitation reinforces the model's moral vision of global unity. This call transcends poetry—it is a moral appeal to reimagine coexistence and to cultivate a global culture of empathy and peace.

## 7. Conclusion

This study demonstrated that Rumi's mystical teachings extend beyond their literary and historical significance to offer a spiritual model for intercultural conflict resolution. By linking Rumi's concepts of heartfelt listening, inner peace, and ego-transcendence (*fana fi ishq*) to contemporary frameworks such as Intercultural Dialogue Theory and the Intercultural Conflict Framework, the research proposed *Rumi's Mystical Mediation Model* as a distinctive contribution. The study thus answered its guiding questions by showing that Rumi envisions human beings as universal spiritual entities capable of transcending ethnic, religious, and linguistic boundaries through love and empathy. This interdisciplinary synthesis situates Rumi's thought within modern discussions of intercultural understanding and peacebuilding.

The findings carry substantial implications for global challenges involving diversity, coexistence, and cross-cultural understanding. In educational contexts, Rumi's teachings can inform curricula that cultivate emotional regulation and intercultural empathy among learners. In mediation practice, his model offers a process-oriented framework that replaces adversarial negotiation with empathetic listening and self-awareness. In diplomacy, these insights contribute to the advancement of cultural and spiritual soft power, encouraging dialogue-oriented and peace-centered international relations. Collectively, these applications affirm that Rumi's vision remains profoundly relevant to fostering sustainable coexistence in pluralistic societies.

Future research could extend this spiritual framework through comparative analysis with other Sufi thinkers—such as Ibn Arabi or Al-Ghazali—to deepen understanding of mystical approaches to dialogue and peace. Empirical studies could also test the effectiveness of the Rumi-based model in intercultural education, classroom interventions, and community mediation programs. Such inquiries would not only validate the practical applicability of this model but also expand the field of intercultural conflict resolution to include the often-overlooked dimension of spirituality as a transformative force in human relations.

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The authors declare that there are no conflict of interest.

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