

RUMI: PIONEER OF PEACE AND HARMONY

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ABSTRACT:

Through this article an attempt has been made to find out the details about Maulana Jalal Al-Din Rumi who has long been identified within the Sufi tradition as one of the most important Sufis to have lived. He not only produced the finest Sufi Poetry in Persian, but was also the master of disciples who later named their order after him.

Key words: Consumed, advice, ardent, contribution, discipleship, uneducated-looking, mystery, bound, ruling house

Today, without doubt, you'll become once more

The station for exalted souls that soar

(Rumi)

INTRODUCTION:

A great spiritual master and poet, Jalal Al-Din Rumi was born at Balkh (Wakhsh, Tajikistan) in 1207 to a family of learned theologians.¹ Jalal Al-Din Muhammad Ibn Muhammad called Rumi was son of Baha al-Din Muhammad ibn Hussain called Baha al-Din Valad. According to certain authorities he was a great –grandson through his grandmother of Sultan Muhammad Khvarizmshah. His father was a noted preacher and Sufi who

never lost any opportunity of emulating the great Ghazali in expressing his detestation of philosophy and scholasticism, and this is said to have excited against him the anger of that doughty theologian Fakhr al-Din al-Razi who enjoyed the protection of the ruling house.

Jalal al-Din was still a boy when his father set out on his forced wanderings through Persia, Iraq, Arabia and Syria; it is related, and there is nothing inherently improbable in the story, that at Nishapur he met Farid al-Din Attar, author of **Mantequt-Tayre**² (The Parliament of the Birds) then an aged and greatly revered figure; Attar divined the spiritual aptitude of the lad and presented him with a copy of his “Asrar-Nama”, telling Baha al-Din that ‘soon his son would set on fire the consumed ones of the world’.

Rumi received his early education from his father, a good scholar, who recorded his meditations in a book, entitled “Ma’arif”, the influence of his instruction and writing is apparent in Rumi’s own work. Shortly after Baha al-Din’s death his old friend from Balkh, Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq of Tirmidh arrived in Qonia, and found Rumi established in the favour of the Seljuq Sultan Ala al-Din Kai-Qubad, preaching in public in succession to his father. Burhan al-Din at once undertook to initiate the young zealot into the inner mysteries of Sufi discipline and doctrine and Rumi in turn assumed the rank of Shaykh and step towards forming a fraternity of the disciples whom his ardent personality attracted in ever-increasing numbers. During his discipleship to Burhal al-Din and on his advice, Rumi went to study further in Aleppo, whence he proceeded to Damascus for perhaps four years before returning to Qonia to attend his teacher in his last days.³

In Konya, BahaValad found the opportunity, under the patronage of the Seljuk ruler Alaoddin Kay Qubad I (1219-36), to continue his work as a preacher and to teach students in a religious school. He had been grooming Rumi to be his successor, but he died in 1230,⁴ only a couple of years after settling in Konya, in 1231. Although the original reasons for his arrival remain unclear, it seems that one of BahaValad’s students Burhanud din Mohaqqeq as stated earlier, arrived Konya from northeastern Persia soon afterwards to take over the management of his school and took responsibility for overseeing the continuation of Rumi’s education and training.

During his stay in Damascus Rumi may have heard the lectures of Ebn Arabi, who was living there at that time. Rumi returned to Konya, and took over leadership of BahaValad's school from BurhauddinMohaqqeq.

After his return to Konya, Rumi's reputation as an authority on religious matters became firmly established there, and he reached the peak of his career as a scholar, achieving what his father seems to have hoped for him. In November 1244, after seven years of excelling as a religious teacher, Rumi experiences a challenging encounter that would prove to be the most significant event of his life. As one would expect, an event as important as this has generated many competing accounts. However, most versions at least share the same basic elements. According to one popular and relatively simple account, Rumi is asked about his books by an uneducated-looking stranger, and responds by snapping back dismissively, 'They are something that you don't understand!' The books then suddenly catch fire, so Rumi ask the stranger to explain what has happened. His reply is: 'something you don't understand.'

Rumi was immediately drawn to this mysterious figure, who turned out to be a wandering mystic called⁵ Shams al-Din of Tabriz with whom his meeting took place in 1244⁶, (popularly known as Shams or Shams-e-Tabrizi) in north-western Persia. The two began to spend endless hours together in retreat. What was shared by the two during this time remains a mystery that can only be guessed from the volumes of poetry that it inspired.⁷

Though it is a matter what passed between the older the younger mystic during their association, but all ancient sources agree that thenceforward Rumi was a changed man.⁸ what is reported consistently about the period of approximately a year and a half that Rumi spent with Shams is that it proved intense jealousy and resentment among his disciples, who also feared that their highly respected master was risking his reputation by mixing with someone so unworthy in their eyes. These disciples eventually drove Shams away, but on hearing reports of sightings of him in Syria, Rumi sent his own son⁹ Sultan valad who used to compose a spiritual biography of his father, the "Vala-Nama" which takes rank as a document of the first importance¹⁰, to ask him to come back. Although Shams did return a year later, in 1247, the man of mystery vanished without leaving a trace behind.

Following this final disappearance it was rumored in Konia that Shams al-Din was dead, murdered at the hands of certain jealous disciples of Rumi. The poet received the reports with incredulity and exclaimed:

Who was he that said?
 The immortal spirit is dead,
 Or how dared he say
 Hope's sun has passed away?

An enemy of the sun,
 Standing his roof upon,
 Bound up both his eyes
 And cried: "Lo, the Sun dies!"

Rumi along with his wife Gowhar Khatun and two children Al-al-Din and Sultan valad¹¹ though made a prolonged journey but after his friend's disappearance, Jalal al-Din devoted himself to Salah-al-Din Zarkub, who as his deputy (khalifah) was charged¹² with the responsibility to manage many of the affairs of the school in his place.

After Salah-al-Din Zarkub's (a goldsmith by Profession) death in 1258, Rumi appointed Husam al-Din AkhiTurkiChallabi in his place. When Husam al-Din became a disciple of Rumi he was already the head of a local order for the training of young men in chivalry. He brought with him his own disciples, the wealth of his order, and the expertise he had acquired in running such an institution. However, his most important contribution was serving as Rumi's scribe and putting the Masnavi into writing as Rumi recited of the Mesnavi, which on occasion he even calls ' the Hosam book', indicating the vital importance of Hosamoddin's role in the work.

During this last ten years of Rumi's life this last beloved follower acted as his sincerest deputy and upon his death in 1273 succeeded him as head of the Mewlavi order. It is stated that a platonic type love had been cultivated by

Sufi songs long before Rumi declared that he and Shams Tabrizi were two bodies with one soul. In this union of loving souls all distinctions vanish, nothing remains but the essential unity of love in which lover and beloved have merged their separate identities. In calling his lyrics the Divan of Shams, Rumi of course uses the name Shams as though Shams and himself had become identical and were the same person. The forms in which he clothes his religious philosophy had been fashioned before him by two great sufi poets, Sanai and Attar. Though he make no secrets of his debt to them both, his flight takes a widewr range, his materials are richer and his method of handling the subject is so original that we can say the Rumi's literary works have a new style¹³.

CONCLUSION:

After a close study it can safely be said that Rumi lived some three hundred years after the first writings of Muslim mystics were produced. Moreover, by virtue of the intense devotion he expressed towards his own master, Shams-e-Tabriz under whose guidance his life was transformed and has become the archetypal Sufi disciple. Although many of the followers of the tradition of his father considered Shams to be totally unworthy of Rumi's time and attention, Rumi considered Shams to be the most complete manifestation of God. He expressed his complete love and devotion for his masters Shams, with whom he spent only about two years in total, through thousands of ecstatic lyrical poems.

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