



# Rumi

## Sufi Mystic Poet

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# Rumi



- Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (Persian: جلال‌الدین محمد رومی), or simply Rumi (30 September 1207 – 17 December 1273), was a 13th-century poet, Hanafi faqih, Islamic scholar, Maturidi theologian and Sufi mystic originally from Greater Khorasan in Greater Iran.
- Rumi's works were written mostly in Persian, but occasionally he also used Turkish, Arabic and Greek in his verse. His Masnavi (Mathnawi), composed in Konya, is considered one of the greatest poems of the Persian language.
- Rumi's influence has transcended national borders and ethnic divisions: Iranians, Kurds, Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turks, Greeks, Central Asian Muslims, as well as Muslims of South Asia have greatly appreciated his spiritual legacy for the past seven centuries. His poetry influenced not only Persian literature, but also the literary traditions of the Ottoman Turkish, Chagatai, Pashto, Kurdish, Urdu, and Bengali languages.

# Rumi: Name



- He is most commonly called Rumi in English. His full name is given by his contemporary Sipahsalar as Muhammad bin Muhammad bin al-Husayn al-Khatibi al-Balkhi al-Bakri (Arabic: محمد بن محمد بن الحسين الخطيبي البلخي البكري). 2
- He is more commonly known as Molānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (مولانا جلال الدين محمد رومی). Jalal ad-Din is an Arabic name meaning "Glory of the Faith". Balkhī and Rūmī are his nisbas, meaning, respectively, "from Balkh" and "from Rûm" ('Roman,' what European history now calls Byzantine Anatolia).

# Rumi: Name



- According to the authoritative Rumi biographer Franklin Lewis of the University of Chicago,
  - "[t]he Anatolian peninsula which had belonged to the Byzantine, or eastern Roman empire, had only relatively recently been conquered by Muslims and even when it came to be controlled by Turkish Muslim rulers, it was still known to Arabs, Persians and Turks as the geographical area of Rum. As such, there are a number of historical personages born in or associated with Anatolia known as Rumi, a word borrowed from Arabic literally meaning 'Roman,' in which context Roman refers to subjects of the Byzantine Empire or simply to people living in or things associated with Anatolia."
- He was also known as "Mullah of Rum" ( مملای روم mullā-yi Rūm or مملای رومی mullā-yi Rūmī)

# Rumi: Name



- Rumi is widely known by the sobriquet Mawlānā/Molānā (Persian: مولانا Persian pronunciation: [moulɒ:nɒ]) in Iran and popularly known as Mevlânâ in Turkey.
- Mawlānā ( مولانا ) is a term of Arabic origin, meaning "our master". The term مولوی Mawlawī/Mowlavi (Persian) and Mevlevi (Turkish), also of Arabic origin, meaning "my master", is also frequently used for him

# Rumi: Biography



- Rumi was born to Persian parents, in Balkh, modern-day Afghanistan or Wakhsh, a village on the East bank of the Wakhsh River known as Sangtuda in present-day Tajikistan. The area, culturally adjacent to Balkh, is where Mawlânâ's father, Bahâ' uddîn Walad, was a preacher and jurist. He lived and worked there until 1212, when Rumi was aged around five and the family moved to Samarkand.
- Greater Balkh was at that time a major centre of Persian culture and Sufism had developed there for several centuries. The most important influences upon Rumi, besides his father, were the Persian poets Attar and Sanai. Rumi expresses his appreciation: "Attar was the spirit, Sanai his eyes twain, And in time thereafter, Came we in their train" and mentions in another poem: "Attar has traversed the seven cities of Love, We are still at the turn of one street". His father was also connected to the spiritual lineage of Najm al-Din Kubra

# Rumi: Biography



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- Rumi lived most of his life under the Persianate Seljuk Sultanate of Rum, where he produced his works and died in 1273 AD. He was buried in Konya, and his shrine became a place of pilgrimage. Upon his death, his followers and his son Sultan Walad founded the Mevlevi Order, also known as the Order of the Whirling Dervishes, famous for the Sufi dance known as the Sama ceremony. He was laid to rest beside his father, and over his remains a shrine was erected. A hagiographical account of him is described in Shams ud-Din Ahmad Aflāki's *Manāqib ul-Ārifīn* (written between 1318 and 1353). This biography needs to be treated with care as it contains both legends and facts about Rumi.
- For example, Professor Franklin Lewis of the University of Chicago, author of the most complete biography on Rumi, has separate sections for the hagiographical biography of Rumi and the actual biography about him.

# Rumi: Education



- Baha' ud-Din became the head of a madrassa (religious school) and when he died, Rumi, aged twenty-five, inherited his position as the Islamic molvi. One of Baha' ud-Din's students, Sayyed Burhan ud-Din Muhaqqiq Termazi, continued to train Rumi in the Shariah as well as the Tariqa, especially that of Rumi's father. For nine years, Rumi practised Sufism as a disciple of Burhan ud-Din until the latter died in 1240 or 1241. Rumi's public life then began: he became an Islamic Jurist, issuing fatwas and giving sermons in the mosques of Konya. He also served as a Molvi (Islamic teacher) and taught his adherents in the madrassa.
- During this period, Rumi also travelled to Damascus and is said to have spent four years there.
- It was his meeting with the dervish Shams-e Tabrizi on 15 November 1244 that completely changed his life. From an accomplished teacher and jurist, Rumi was transformed into an ascetic.



# Rumi: Education



- Shams had travelled throughout the Middle East searching and praying for someone who could "endure my company". A voice said to him, "What will you give in return?" Shams replied, "My head!" The voice then said, "The one you seek is Jalal ud-Din of Konya." On the night of 5 December 1248, as Rumi and Shams were talking, Shams was called to the back door. He went out, never to be seen again. It is rumoured that Shams was murdered with the connivance of Rumi's son, 'Ala' ud-Din; if so, Shams indeed gave his head for the privilege of mystical friendship.
- Rumi's love for, and his bereavement at the death of, Shams found their expression in an outpouring of lyric poems, Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi. He himself went out searching for Shams and journeyed again to Damascus. There, he realised:
  - Why should I seek? I am the same as
  - He. His essence speaks through me.
  - I have been looking for myself!

# Shams-i Tabrizi



- Shams-i Tabrīzī (Persian: شمس تبریزی or Shams al-Din Mohammad (1185–1248) was a Persian Shafi'ite poet, who is credited as the spiritual instructor of Mewlānā Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhi, also known as Rumi and is referenced with great reverence in Rumi's poetic collection, in particular Diwan-i Shams-i Tabrīzī. Tradition holds that Shams taught Rumi in seclusion in Konya for a period of forty days, before fleeing for Damascus. The tomb of Shams-i Tabrīzī was recently nominated to be a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Shams received his education in Tabriz and was a disciple of Baba Kamal al-Din Jumdi. Before meeting Rumi, he apparently traveled from place to place weaving baskets and selling girdles for a living

# Shams First Encounter with Rumi



- On 15 November 1244, a man in a black suit from head to toe came to the famous inn of Sugar Merchants of Konya. His name was Shams Tabrizi. He was claiming to be a travelling merchant. As it was said in Haji Bektash Veli's book, "Makalat", he was looking for something which he was going to find in Konya. Eventually he found Rumi riding a horse.
- One day Rumi was reading next to a large stack of books. Shams Tabriz, passing by, asked him, "What are you doing?" Rumi scoffingly replied, "Something you cannot understand." (This is knowledge that cannot be understood by the unlearned.) On hearing this, Shams threw the stack of books into a nearby pool of water. Rumi hastily rescued the books and to his surprise they were all dry. Rumi then asked Shams, "What is this?" To which Shams replied, "Mowlana, this is what you cannot understand." (This is knowledge that cannot be understood by the learned.)

# Shams Influence on Rumi



- After several years with Rumi in Konya, Shams left and settled in Khoy. As the years passed, Rumi attributed more and more of his own poetry to Shams as a sign of love for his departed friend and master.
- In Rumi's poetry Shams becomes a guide of Allah's (Creator) love for mankind; Shams was a sun ("Shams" means "Sun" in Arabic) shining the Light of Sun as guide for the right path dispelling darkness in Rumi's heart, mind, and body on earth.
- The source of Shams' teachings was the knowledge of Ali ibn Abu Talib, who is also called the father of sufism

# Discourse of Shams



- Some excerpts from the *Maqalat* provide insight into the thoughts of Shams:
- *Blessing is excess, so to speak, an excess of everything. Don't be content with being a faqih (religious scholar), say I want more – more than being a Sufi (a mystic), more than being a mystic – more than each thing that comes before you.*
- *A good man complains of no-one; he does not look to faults.*
- *Joy is like pure clear water; wherever it flows, wondrous blossoms grow...Sorrow is like a black flood; wherever it flows it wilts the blossoms.*
- *And the Persian language, how did it happen? With so much elegance and goodness such that the meanings and elegance that is found in the [Persian language](#) is not found in [Arabic](#).*
- *The meaning of the Book of God is not the text, it is the man who guides. He is the Book of God, he is its verses, he is scripture.*

# Rumi: Becoming a Poet



- Mewlana had been spontaneously composing ghazals (Persian poems), and these had been collected in the Divan-i Kabir or Diwan Shams Tabrizi. Rumi found another companion in Salah ud-Din-e Zarkub, a goldsmith. After Salah ud-Din's death, Rumi's scribe and favourite student, Hussam-e Chalabi, assumed the role of Rumi's companion. One day, the two of them were wandering through the Meram vineyards outside Konya when Hussam described to Rumi an idea he had had: "If you were to write a book like the Ilāhīnāma of Sanai or the Mantiq ut-Tayr of 'Attar, it would become the companion of many troubadours. They would fill their hearts from your work and compose music to accompany it." Rumi smiled and took out a piece of paper on which were written the opening eighteen lines of his Masnavi, beginning with:
  - Listen to the reed and the tale it tells,
  - How it sings of separation

# Rumi: The Poet



- Hussam implored Rumi to write more. Rumi spent the next twelve years of his life in Anatolia dictating the six volumes of this masterwork, the Masnavi, to Hussam.
- In December 1273, Rumi fell ill; he predicted his own death and composed the well-known ghazal, which begins with the verse:
  - How doest thou know what sort of king I have within me as companion?
  - Do not cast thy glance upon my golden face, for I have iron legs.
  - Tomb shrine of Rumi, Konya
- Rumi died on 17 December 1273 in Konya. His death was mourned by the diverse community of Konya, with local Christians and Jews joining the crowd that converged to bid farewell as his body was carried through the city. Rumi's body was interred beside that of his father, and a splendid shrine, the "Green Tomb" (Turkish: Yeşil Türbe, Arabic: **قبة الخضراء**; today the Mevlâna Museum), was erected over his place of burial. His epitaph reads:
  - When we are dead, seek not our tomb in the earth, but find it in the hearts of men.

# Rumi: Teachings



- Like other mystic and Sufi poets of Persian literature, Rumi's poetry speaks of love which infuses the world. Rumi's teachings also express the tenets summarized in the Quranic verse which Shams-e Tabrizi cited as the essence of prophetic guidance: "Know that 'There is no god but He,' and ask forgiveness for your sin" (Q. 47:19).
- In the interpretation attributed to Shams, the first part of the verse commands the humanity to seek knowledge of tawhid (oneness of God), while the second instructs them to negate their own existence. In Rumi's terms, tawhid is lived most fully through love, with the connection being made explicit in his verse that describes love as "that flame which, when it blazes up, burns away everything except the Everlasting Beloved."



# Rumi: Teachings



- Rumi's longing and desire to attain this ideal is evident in the following poem from his book the Masnavi:
- I died to the mineral state and became a plant,
- I died to the vegetal state and reached animality,
- I died to the animal state and became a man,
- Then what should I fear? I have never become less from dying.
- At the next charge (forward) I will die to human nature,
- So that I may lift up (my) head and wings (and soar) among the angels,
- And I must (also) jump from the river of (the state of) the angel,
- Everything perishes except His Face,
- Once again I will become sacrificed from (the state of) the angel,
- I will become that which cannot come into the imagination,
- Then I will become non-existent; non-existence says to me (in tones) like an organ,
- Truly, to Him is our return.

# Rumi: Teachings



- The Masnavi weaves fables, scenes from everyday life, Qur'anic revelation and exegesis, and metaphysics into a vast and intricate tapestry.
- Rumi believed passionately in the use of music, poetry and dance as a path for reaching God. For Rumi, music helped devotees to focus their whole being on the divine and to do this so intensely that the soul was both destroyed and resurrected. It was from these ideas that the practice of whirling Dervishes developed into a ritual form. His teachings became the base for the order of the Mevlevi, which his son Sultan Walad organised. Rumi encouraged Sama, listening to music and turning or doing the sacred dance.
- In the Mevlevi tradition, samā' represents a mystical journey of spiritual ascent through mind and love to the Perfect One. In this journey, the seeker symbolically turns towards the truth, grows through love, abandons the ego, finds the truth and arrives at the Perfect. The seeker then returns from this spiritual journey, with greater maturity, to love and to be of service to the whole of creation without discrimination with regard to beliefs, races, classes and nations.

# Rumi: Teachings

- Rumi's poetry is often divided into various categories:
  - the quatrains (rubayāt) and odes (ghazal) of the Divan,
  - the six books of the Masnavi.
- The prose works are divided into
  - The Discourses,
  - The Letters, and
  - the Seven Sermons



# Rumi: Poetry



- Rumi's best-known work is the Maṭnawīye Ma'nawī (Spiritual Couplets; مثنوی معنوی). The six-volume poem holds a distinguished place within the rich tradition of Persian Sufi literature, and has been commonly called "the Quran in Persian".
- Many commentators have regarded it as the greatest mystical poem in world literature.
- It contains approximately 27,000 lines, each consisting of a couplet with an internal rhyme.
- While the mathnawi genre of poetry may use a variety of different metres, after Rumi composed his poem, the metre he used became the mathnawi metre par excellence. The first recorded use of this metre for a mathnawi poem took place at the Nizari Ismaili fortress of Girdkuh between 1131–1139. It likely set the stage for later poetry in this style by mystics such as Attar and Rumi.

# Rumi: Poetry



- Rumi's other major work is the *Dīwān-e Kabīr* (Great Work) or *Dīwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī* (The Works of Shams of Tabriz; دیوان شمس, named in honour of Rumi's master Shams).
- Besides approximately 35000 Persian couplets and 2000 Persian quatrains, the Divan contains 90 Ghazals and 19 quatrains in Arabic, a couple of dozen or so couplets in Turkish (mainly macaronic poems of mixed Persian and Turkish) and 14 couplets in Greek (all of them in three macaronic poems of Greek-Persian).

# Rumi: Prose



- Fihī Ma Fihī (In It What's in It, Persian: **فیه ما فیه**) provides a record of seventy-one talks and lectures given by Rumi on various occasions to his disciples. It was compiled from the notes of his various disciples, so Rumi did not author the work directly. An English translation from the Persian was first published by A.J. Arberry as *Discourses of Rumi* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), and a translation of the second book by Wheeler Thackston, *Sign of the Unseen* (Putney, VT: Threshold Books, 1994). The style of the Fihī ma fihī is colloquial and meant for middle-class men and women, and lack the sophisticated wordplay.
- Majāles-e Sab'a (Seven Sessions, Persian: **مجالس سبعة**) contains seven Persian sermons (as the name implies) or lectures given in seven different assemblies. The sermons themselves give a commentary on the deeper meaning of Qur'an and Hadith. The sermons also include quotations from poems of Sana'i, 'Attar, and other poets, including Rumi himself. As Aflakī relates, after Shams-e Tabrīzī, Rumi gave sermons at the request of notables, especially Salāh al-Dīn Zarkūb. The style of Persian is rather simple, but quotation of Arabic and knowledge of history and the Hadith show Rumi's knowledge in the Islamic sciences. His style is typical of the genre of lectures given by Sufis and spiritual teachers.
- Makatib (The Letters, Persian: **مکاتیب** or Maktubat ( **مکتوبات** ) is the collection of letters written in Persian by Rumi to his disciples, family members, and men of state and of influence. The letters testify that Rumi kept very busy helping family members and administering a community of disciples that had grown up around them. Unlike the Persian style of the previous two mentioned works (which are lectures and sermons), the letters are consciously sophisticated and epistolary in style, which is in conformity with the expectations of correspondence directed to nobles, statesmen and kings

# Rumi: Theology



- It is undeniable that Rumi was a Muslim scholar and took Islam seriously. Nonetheless, the depth of his spiritual vision extended beyond narrow understanding sectarian concerns. One quatrain reads:
  - On the seeker's path, the wise and crazed are one.
  - In the way of love, kin and strangers are one.
  - The one who they gave the wine of the beloved's union,
  - in his path, the Kaaba and house of idols are one
- According to the Quran, Muhammad is a mercy sent by God. In regards to this, Rumi states:
  - "The Light of Muhammad does not abandon a Zoroastrian or Jew in the world. May the shade of his good fortune shine upon everyone! He brings all of those who are led astray into the Way out of the desert."

# Rumi: Theology



- Rumi, however, asserts the supremacy of Islam by stating:
  - "The Light of Muhammad has become a thousand branches (of knowledge), a thousand, so that both this world and the next have been seized from end to end. If Muhammad rips the veil open from a single such branch, thousands of monks and priests will tear the string of false belief from around their waists."
- Many of Rumi's poems suggest the importance of outward religious observance and the primacy of the Qur'an.
  - Flee to God's Qur'an, take refuge in it
  - there with the spirits of the prophets merge.
  - The Book conveys the prophets' circumstances
  - those fish of the pure sea of Majesty.



# Rumi: Theology



- Rumi states
  - 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.
- Rumi also states:
  - I "sewed" my two eyes shut from [desires for] this world and the next – this I learned from Muhammad.
- On the first page of the Masnavi, Rumi states:
  - "Hadha kitâbu 'l- mathnawîy wa huwa uSûlu uSûli uSûli 'd-dîn wa kashshâfu 'l- qur'ân."
  - "This is the book of the Masnavi, and it is the roots of the roots of the roots of the (Islamic) Religion and it is the Explainer of the Qur'ân."

# Rumi: Additional Materials

- [Rumi: The Most Famous Sufi Poet in the World](#)
- [Rumi-Into Eternity-Sufi Mysticism](#)
- [Best Rumi Quotes on Life to Inspire Deeper Connections](#)
- [Rum-Rise Up](#)
- [Rumi Quotes Illuminating Wisdom](#)
- [Rumi's Quotes Which Are better in Youth to Not to Regret in Old Age](#)