

Personalities >> Hazrat Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi

"There are such lovers of God, whom the Love of God has made quiet, to an extent that they do not know that there is anything else existing in the world."

~ Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti

#### BRIEF FACTS:

Birth Name: Jalaluddin Mohammad Rumi – or Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi

Born in: Balkh, Afghanistan on 30th September 1207

#### Childhood

Hazrat Mawlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Rumi (30 September 1207 – 17 December 1273) is a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian and Sufi mystic. He is one of the greatest saints in Islamic history and is well-known in the West for his Sufi poetry, especially his treasury of couplets entitled Masnavi Sharif.

Mawlana Rumi was born on the 6th of Rabiul Awwal in the Islamic Hijri year 604 in Balkh, present-day Afghanistan. His father, Hazrat Bahauddin Walad, was a great Muslim scholar and also a Sufi saint who descends from the lineage of Sayyidina Hazrat Abu Bakr Siddiq, the first Caliph of Islam.

Mawlana Rumi grew up in this learned household in Afghanistan and became a fully accomplished scholar himself. Eventually, between the years 1215 and 1220, Hazrat Bahauddin Walad, with his whole family and a group of disciples, set out westwards. They performed Hajj and then proceeded on their journey.

## Life in Turkey

They finally settled in Karaman, Turkey for seven years, where Mawlana Rumi's mother and brother both passed away. In 1225, Mawlana Rumi married Gowhar Khatun in Karaman and had two sons: Sultan Walad and Ala-uddin Chalabi. When his wife passed away, Mawlana Rumi married again and had a son, Amir Alim Chalabi, and a daughter, Malakeh Khatun.

On 1 May 1228, most likely as a result of the insistent invitation of Alauddin Keyqobad, ruler of Anatolia, Hazrat Bahauddin Walad finally settled in Konya in Anatolia within the westernmost territories of the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum.

On the road to Anatolia, Mawlana Rumi encountered one of the most famous mystic Persian poets, by the name of Fariduddin Attar, in the Iranian city of Nishapur, located in the province of Khorasan. Attar immediately recognized Rumi's spiritual eminence. He saw the father walking ahead of the son and said, "Here comes a sea followed by an ocean." He then gave Mawlana Rumi his 'Asrarnama', a book about the entanglement of the soul in the material world. This meeting had a deep impact on the eighteen-year-old Mawlana Rumi, and later on became the inspiration for his works.

Eventually, Hazrat Bahauddin Walad became the head of a seminary school (Madrasa) in Konya, Turkey. When he passed away, Mawlana Rumi was only 25 years old and took his father's place at the head of the school.

One of Hazrat Bahauddin Walad's students, Hazrat Sayyed Burhanuddin Muhaqqiq Termazi, continued to train Mawlana Rumi in the religious and mystical doctrines of Hazrat Rumi's father. For nine years, Rumi practiced Sufism as a disciple of Hazrat Sayyed Burhanuddin until the latter died in 1240 or 1241. Hazrat Rumi's public life then began: he became a teacher who preached in the mosques of Konya and taught his adherents in the Madrasa.

During this period, Mawlana Rumi also travelled to Damascus and is said to have spent four years there.

#### Meeting with Hazrat Shams Tabrez

However, it was his meeting with the dervish Hazrat Shams Tabrez on 15 November 1244 that completely changed Rumi's life. Hazrat 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?" and Hazrat Shams replied, "My head!". The voice then said, "The one you seek is Jalaluddin of Konya."

One version of the famous meeting that Mawlana Rumi had with Hazrat Shams Tabrez , was that once Mawlana Rumi was teaching a group of his students and referring to his handwritten books & notes while Hazrat Shams Tabrez happened to come along and asked him about those notes.

Mawlana Rumi replied that the books and notes were beyond the understanding of Hazrat Shams Tabrez. Then Mawlana Rumi continued his class, meanwhile Hazrat Shams Tabrez threw all the books into a nearby pond of water. The students noticed this and started beating him. This caught the attention of Mawlana Rumi who complained about losing his knowledge. Hazrat Shams Tabrez replied that he could return the books, so he recited 'Bismillah' and retrieved the books from the water, which to everyone's surprise, were still intact. Seeing this, Mawlana Rumi was amazed and asked how this was possible – to which Hazrat Shams Tabrez replied that such knowledge was beyond that of an external scholar.

Thus began the relationship between Mawlana Rumi and Hazrat Shams Tabrez . At this stage, Mawlana Rumi is reported to have mostly retired from his public life and spent a lot of time with Hazrat Shams Tabrez . They would spend days discussing divine issues and Sufi thoughts, to the extent that Mawlana Rumi would not teach his classes or visit his family for long periods of time.

On the night of 5 December 1248, as Hazrat Rumi and Hazrat Shams were talking, Hazrat Shams Tabrez was called to the back door. He went out, never to be seen again. It is rumored that Hazrat Shams Tabrez was murdered; if so, Hazrat Shams indeed gave his head for his mystical friendship with Mawlana Rumi.

Mawlana Rumi's love for, and his bereavement at the death of, Hazrat Shams found their expression in an outpouring of music & poetry, thus he compiled a collection entitled Divan-e-Shams-e-Tabrez. He himself went out searching for Hazrat Shams and journeyed again to Damascus. There, he realized:

"Why should I seek? I am the same as He.

His essence speaks through me.

I have been looking for myself!"

The Masnavi Sharif

Mawlana Rumi then formed companionship with Hazrat Salahuddin Zarkub a goldsmith. After Hazrat Salahuddin's death, Mawlana Rumi's scribe and favorite student, Hazrat Hussam Chalabi, assumed the role of Mawlana Rumi's companion.

One day, the two of them were wandering through the Meram vineyards outside Konya when Hazrat Hussam described to Mawlana Rumi an idea he had: "If you were to write a book like the Ilahinama of Sana'i or the Mantiquat-Tayr of 'Attar, it would become the companion of many poets. They would fill their hearts from your work and compose music to accompany it."

Mawlana Rumi then 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.”

Hazrat Hussam implored Mawlana Rumi to write more. Mawlana Rumi spent the next twelve years of his life in Anatolia dictating the six volumes of this masterwork, the Masnavi, to Hazrat Hussam.

In his commentary on the Masnavi Sharif, Mawlana Abdur Rahman Jami , the famous 15th century Persian Sufi saint and poet, writes:

“The word ‘ney’ (reed) in the first couplet of the Masnavi means a perfect and exalted human being brought up in Islam. Such people have forgotten themselves and everything else. Their minds are always busy seeking the rida [approval] of Allah, The Most Exalted.”

Mawlana Jami says that ‘Ney’ also means non-existent, because these men are emptied of themselves. Finally he says ‘Ney’ refers to the reed-pen. A pen’s writings are fully controlled by its writer, which also points to men emptied of existence and perfectly submitting to the will of Allah, The Most Exalted.

Muslim Scholar, Saint & Poet

This brings up the point that Mawlana Rumi was a true Muslim scholar and Sufi. Unfortunately, there have been many mistranslations or misrepresentations of Mawlana Rumi . He himself writes in his Diwan:

“Man banda-yé Qur’ân-am, agar jân dâr-am

man khâk-é rah-é Muhammad-e mukhtâr-am

gar naql kon-ad joz ân, kas az goftâr-am

bêzâr-am az-ô, w-az-în sokhan bêzâr-am”

Meaning: “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.”

Mawlana Rumi states in his Diwan-e-Shams: "The Sufi is hanging on to Muhammad , like Abu Bakr ."

Departure of Mawlana Rumi; Reunion with his Beloved

In December 1273, Mawlana 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 a Companion?

Do not cast thy glance upon my golden face, for I have iron legs."

Mawlana Rumi passed away & reunited with his Beloved Lord on 5th Jamadiul Aakhir 672 Hijri in Konya Sharif, Turkey. His tomb is near to that of his friend & guide, Hazrat Shams Tabrez and his body was laid to rest beside his father under a beautiful tomb named Yesil Turbe or 'the Green Tomb'.

His epitaph written on his tomb reads:

"When we are dead, seek not our tomb in the earth, but find it in the hearts of men."

Teachings & Influences of Mawlana Rumi

Mawlana Rumi was a poet, jurist, theologian and scholar of the highest accord. He emphasized however that true knowledge is not found in books, but at the feet of the Noble Friends of Allah Almighty.

For any given individual, that person is his or her Sheikh or Spiritual Guide (Pir/Murshid). Regarding the importance of the Sheikh, Mawlana Rumi writes:

“Sad kitaboh, sad waraq, dar nar kun

Aur jaan-o-dil rah, janibeh, dil daar kun”

Meaning: “Throw all your (100) books into the fire,

And turn with heart & soul to the Awliya.”

[For without them one cannot reach perfection.]

In the Masnavi Sharif, Mawlana Rumi writes the following:

“Seeing a man who was tilling the earth, a fool who was unable to control himself, cried out, “Why are you ruining this soil?”

“Fool,” said the man, “leave me alone: try to recognize the difference between tending the soil and wasting it. How will this soil become a rose garden until it is disturbed and overturned?”

This verse demonstrates importance of the Sheikh who acts as the tiller, testing the spiritual disciple (Mureed) so that the Mureed’s full inner potential is realized and his/her spiritual station is elevated.

Mawlana Rumi’s importance continues throughout the centuries and across cultures. Hazrat Allamah Iqbal , the great 19th century poet-philosopher of the Indian subcontinent, separated by six centuries of time, famously attributed Mawlana Rumi as his Pir when he wrote “Pir-e-Rumi, Mureed-e-Hindi” and also about himself:

"Tu bhi hai us qaafla-e-shawq mein Iqbal

Jis qaafla-e-shawq ka salaar hai Rumi"

Meaning: "You too are a member of that caravan of longing, O Iqbal!

That caravan of longing whose guide is Rumi."

Mawlana Rumi believed passionately in the use of music, poetry & Sufi dance as a path for reaching God.

For Mawlana Rumi, music helped devotees to focus their whole being on the Divine, and to do this so intensely that the soul was both destroyed & resurrected. It was from these ideas that the practice of whirling dervishes developed into a ritual form.

His teachings became the base for the Mevlevi order which his son Hazrat Sultan Walad established. Mawlana Rumi encouraged sama, listening to music and turning or doing the sacred dance. In the Mevlevi tradition, sama represents a mystical journey of spiritual ascent through mind & 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 One.

All over the world, the name Rumi is a beacon of light for broken-hearts and seekers of the truth. His life story is an amazing demonstration of love & union with the Divine and his teachings pave the way to the Beloved.

Through the Masnavi Sharif, many have opened their eyes to the light of Sufism and found the road to God by following the pen of Mawlana Rumi.

May the Muslim Ummah continue to prosper through the words & wisdom of our beloved Awliya,  
ameen!