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## Mevlana Rumi: Who made Rumi, Rumi?

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi was born sometime in early 13<sup>th</sup> century of the Christian era in the city of the Balkh, now in Modern Afghanistan. Before its destruction by the Mongols, the city of the Balkh was well known for its mosques, seminaries and palaces besides being a centre of learning and trade. Rumi's name was Muhammad, so also was the name of his father better known as Sultanul Ulama Bahauddin Valad. A great scholar, an eloquent speaker, a profound Gnostic and a bold Sufi, jealousies, controversies and differences with Khwarazm Shah compelled Bahauddin to migrate from Balkh when Rumi was about 14 years of age. During the course of the journey, they met Fariduddin Attar at Nishapur (who gave Rumi his book *Asrarnama*), Shaykh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi at Baghdad (who made them his guests) and several other mystics and scholars. In the meantime Rumi was married to Gevhar Khatun in 1225. The journey finally concluded with Bahauddin giving his consent to settle at Qonya at the invitation of the Seljuq Sultan Alauddin Kayqubad. A separate madrasah and a small residence were soon constructed and Bahauddin resumed the work of teaching, preaching, writing and guiding. But just after two years, Sultanul Ulama Bahauddin Sultan Valad, now about eighty-five years of age, got severely ill and breathed his last in 1231/628.

Being a loving father, a learned scholar and a spiritual guide, Bahauddin took every care that his son Rumi should learn and master all the necessary religious, auxiliary and spiritual sciences, but when a year later Sayyid Burhanuddin Muhaqqiq Tirmidhi, who happened to be a spiritual vicegerent of Bahauddin Valad, arrived at Qonya to pay his condolences to Rumi and console him, and became Rumi's guide he found Rumi's education is incomplete. After a few months Burhanuddin advised Rumi to go to Aleppo and Damascus, meet Scholars and Sufi there and improve both his exoteric and esoteric knowledge. Rumi there by moved over first to Aleppo, studying rigorously for two years, and then to Damascus where he stayed for more than four years experiencing a remarkable increase in almost all branches of knowledge benefiting greatly from the scholars and the Sufis, developing a deeper insight and a broader outlook.

Rumi then went to Qayseri and returned to Qonya along with his Shaykh Sayyid Burhanuddin. Burhanuddin was pleased with Rumi's progress in knowledge and maturity, particularly in Islamic law. He now turned toward spiritual progress of Rumi insisting upon him to follow a rigorous course of austerities, teaching him simultaneously the book *Maarif*, written by Bahauddin Valad, over and over again for months and years. He himself was one of the most knowledgeable scholars of his time besides being a Sufi, a Gnostic, and a lover of God who had great command on simplifying the most advanced

and highly intricate issues of Sufism. He had successfully completed his job by making Rumi his own replica. So he took leave and went back to Qayseri, but before he left Qonya he foretold the coming of one “Sayyid-i-Sirran” (Master of Secrets) of Qonya, referring by way of allusion perhaps to Shams of Tabriz. Rumi, however, continued to visit Burhanuddin frequently although he had confined himself to complete seclusion at Qayseri. He also passed away in 1241 leaving Rumi again lonely, sad and broken-eared.

By that time Rumi had made a leading official *Mufti* devoted to rituals, abstinence, modesty and humanitarianism and committed to the Muhammadan (SAW) Path just like his father and his preceptor.

All formalities had been completed but the connection to the powerhouse of restless love of God had yet to be made. It was then that Shams of Tabriz appeared on the scene, himself wandering here and there and searching ardently for a man like Rumi. There are different accounts given with regard to the meeting of these two saints. Leaving the details what we wish to emphasize here is that the connection to the powerhouse was made not overnight but that it took about six months. A flash occurred and both Shams and Rumi started seeing through each other the divine disclosures.

I became you and you became I,  
I became the body and you became the soul.  
Lest nobody dare say,  
I am separate and you are separate.

With love commenced the period of trials, jealousies and humiliations compelled Shams to disappear again and again, the final disappearance reported to be in December 1247.

Then came Salahuddin Zarkub, followed by Husamuddin Cheledi, Rumi was in need of a companion who could also serve as a mirror. First he found this mirror in Shams, then after his disappearance in Salahuddin Zarkub, and after Zarkub's demise in Husamuddin Chelebi who motivated Rumi to give his ecstatic, yet full of knowledge and wisdom, outpourings the shape of *Mesnevi*, the masterpiece of Rumi, which Rumi himself called *Husamname*. The *Mesnevi* reflects, unveils or expounds, in one way or the other, the teachings of the Quran, the precept of the Prophet and the sayings of the mystics. Whether it is the *Mesnevi*, the *Divan-i-Kabir*, the *Majalis-i-Sabah*, the *Maktubat* or the collection of his discourses *Fihi ma Fihi* it all shows the perceptive insight of Rumi unfolding itself on a vast variety of subjects, Rumi himself hidden from the reader's sight.

It could, however, be due to Rumi's own annihilation in God and in the Messenger of God, the Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (May Allah (C.C.) shower him always with His blessings and peace).

Rumi stood for certain ideals: oneness of God, oneness of mankind, oneness of the series of Prophets and Messengers of God finality of the Prophet Muhammad (May Allah (C.C.) shower him always with His blessings and peace) being its continuation and culmination, love of God, love of the Prophet, love and respect of the divinely declared

law, love of man, love of all living beings. (animals, plants, matter, all creation being alive Rumi's perception), love, concern and kindness of all and enmity, acrimony and hatred for none, enduring all sufferings as blessings in disguise, serving the poor, the needy and the destitute, including the hungry and the thirsty animals, indifference toward the riches, comforts and splendors of the world, modesty, humility, forgiveness, self-respect, cleanliness, faith, divinely prescribed rituals, veracity of word and character, God-consciousness, patience, gratefulness, absolute trust in God, submission to divine decrees, burning desire for spiritual union and antipathy toward fame, crowds, arrogance, cruelty, harshness, pseudo-rationalism, pseudo-mysticism, ultra-legalism, blind following, heedlessness, jealousies, greed and vanity.

Rumi continued to stand by these ideals till he breathed his last, teaching, preaching, versifying, practicing and realizing these to as high a degree as possible. But the question remains: Who made Rumi, Rumi?

We find Rumi learning under various scholars, undergoing courses of spiritual training under various preceptors, meeting a variety of people (including Sufis, saints, sultans, vizirs, emirs, traders, farmers, laborers, weavers, hair cutter etc.), visiting different cities, towns and villages, registering all his experiences to his mind, heart and soul. These, however, remained dry, lifeless, passive and static till he encountered Shams who stimulated the experiences inscribed to life. Thereafter, Rumi became a restless soul burning with the desire to return to its origin and achieve spiritual union with his beloved, God. Seeds that were sown long before now burst out to become trees with fruits of wisdom and shades of joy. All that was registered was annihilated only to be revived with love of God and His Messenger with the inherent meaning of the Quran and the Sunnah being expressed through words and actualized through character by Rumi. Bahauddin, Burhanuddin, Kamaluddin, Shams, Salahuddin, Husamuddin just played the roles assigned to them. It was God and His Messenger who in fact made Rumi, Rumi.