

Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī



Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī, also known as *Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī*, and popularly known as *Mowlānā* but known to the English-speaking world simply as *Rūmī*, (30 September 1207 – 17 December 1273), was a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian, and mystic. He was born on September 30, 1207 in Balkh (Afghanistan). His father *Bahā' Walad* was descended from the first caliph *Abu Bakr* and was influenced by the ideas of Ahmad Ghazali, brother of the famous philosopher. *Bahā' Walad's* sermons were published and still exist as Divine Sciences (*Ma'arif*). He fled the Mongols with his son in 1219, and it was reported that at Nishapur young *Rūmī* met 'Attar, who gave him a copy of his Book of Mysteries (*Asrar-nama*). After a pilgrimage to *Mecca* and other travels, the family went to Rum (Anatolia). *Bahā' Walad* was given an important teaching position in the capital at Konya (Iconium) in 1228 by Seljuk king 'Ala' al-Din Kayqubad (r. 1219-1236) and his vizier Mu'in al-Din. *Rūmī* married and had a son, who later wrote his biography. In 1231 *Rūmī* succeeded his late father as a religious teacher. His father's friend *Burhan al-Din* arrived and for nine years taught *Rūmī* Sufism. *Rūmī* probably met the philosopher *ibn al-Arabi* at Damascus.

The general theme of Rūmī's thought, like that of other mystic and Sufi poets is essentially that of the concept of *tawhīd* – union with his beloved (the primal root) from which/whom he has been cut off and become aloof – and his longing and desire to restore it.

The *Masnawi* weaves fables, scenes from everyday life, *Qur'anic* revelations and exegesis, and metaphysics into a vast and intricate tapestry. Rūmī is considered an example of *Insan-e Kamil* –

Perfect Man, the perfected or completed human being. In the East, it is said of him that he was “not a prophet — but surely, he has brought a scripture”. 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 organized. Rumi encouraged **samā**‘, 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’s poetry is often divided into various categories: the quatrains (*rubayāt*) and odes (*ghazal*) of the *Divan*, the six books of the *Masnavi*, The Discourses, The Letters, and the almost unknown *Six Sermons*.

Rumi’s major work is the **Maṭnawīye Ma’nawī** (*Spiritual Couplets*; معنوی مثنوی), a six-volume poem regarded by some Sufis as the Persian-language **Qur’an**. It is considered by many to be one of the greatest works of mystical poetry. It contains approximately 27000 lines of Persian poetry.

Further information: **Masnavi**.

Rumi’s other major work is the **Dīwān-e Kabīr** (*Great Work*) or **Diwan-e Shams-e Tabrizi**|**Dīwān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī** (*The Works of Shams of Tabriz*; تبریزی شمس دیوان) named in honor of Rumi’s master **Shams**.