

# Rumi And His Time

**MOHAMMAD** Jalal-ud-din was born in Balkh on the 30th September, 1207 A.D. and died on the 17th December 1273 A.D. He is popularly known as Maulana Rumi or simply as Rumi.

The forefathers of Rumi settled at Balkh in the northern Persian Province of Khorasan now in the Mazar-e-Sharif Province of Afghanistan. I visited this City in 1967 as a mark of respect to this great saint and spiritual guide whose writings enthralled the World of Islam for Centuries. The dilapidated house of the family lies in the deserted part of the old city sacked and ruined by Chengiz Khan and his Mongol hordes. This family produced a number of jurists and divines. It traces its descent from Hazrat Abu Bakr (R), the first Caliph of Islam. Husain Ibn Ahmed Khatibi the grandfather of Rumi was a great scholar. Persons like Razi-Ud-Din Nishapuri came to learn at his feet. He was recognised as a great spiritual leader not by the contemporary divines and men of learning but also by the Kings and Princes. Rumi's father Baha-Ud-Din Mohammad Ibne Husain Al-Khatibi amply inherited the traditions of his father in the realm of knowledge and spiritual eminence. He was acknowledged as a man of great scholarship. He bore the title of Sultan-Ul-Ulema or the King of Scholars. Baha-Ud-Din aged fifty nine at the time of Rumi's birth was at the pinnacle of his power and popularity. Rumi was brought up in the true tradition of the family. Baha-Ud-Din was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Imam Ghazali who directed his attack to the entire system of Greek philosophy. His defiance of metaphysics and defence of Islam achieved remarkable success. We find the stamp of this influence on the life of Jalal-Ud-Din. Rumi Jalal-Ud-Din grew up in the atmosphere of hostility to philosophy. He, like his forefathers, completely surrendered himself to the doctrine of the Koran and the Sunna. Rumi says in his Mathnavi that in the event of a conflict between the Koran and intellect, the latter must be dropped because the intellect in that event must have been misleading you.

The thirteenth century of the Christian era was the seventh century of Islam. The

Islamic Commonwealth attained its full political maturity within the first century and its entire geographical extent during the seven hundred years of its existence. In this century Islamic social order did not represent the best. Decay had crept into the system. It worked unnoticed Islamic Commonwealth was no longer a structure of steel. The edifice was tottering. The contemporary Muslims accepted what was convenient and rejected what was inconvenient to them. They paid lip service to the Koran. They did not pay it the homage of their actions. The intellectuals failed to understand the limitations of their intellect. They went all out for scholasticism which like poison had eaten into the muscles and sinews of the Muslim body

accepted Islam as their religion. The greatest enemies of Islam became Muslims themselves in preference to the very strong temptations and overtures offered by the Crusaders to the Mongols for acceptance of Christianity as their religion. Baha-Ud-din Rumi's father had to face powerful enemies in his native place Balkh on account of his religious ideas. He publicly denounced the philosophers and rationalists and pressed for a fresh study of the precept of Islam. He did not spare the powerful courtiers that maligned him with the King calling him an intriguer who had designs on the throne. The King Mohammad Khawarizm Shah sent to Baha the keys of his treasury and made him an offer of his throne. Baha replied that he was not concerned with temporal great-

deciple of Shams on the spot. Now began Rumi's period of romance and revolution. A sober and peaceful scholar practising religious ritual gave himself way to dance and music. Rumi who hitherto looked upon music with disfavour went mad for it. Rumi's disciples became dissatisfied with this state of his life and got rid of Shams by killing him.

One day Rumi was dancing in the streets of Konya when suddenly he heard the rhythmic beat of a goldsmith's hammer. He was completely enthralled by this music. In deference to Rumi's state of ecstasy, the goldsmith continued beating the gold leaves. He wasted a good deal of gold but gained the friendship of Rumi. Rumi's disciples became jealous of Salahuddin Zarkob, the goldsmith. The goldsmith describes his function in Rumi's life in the words of his master's son: "They are offended that the Maulana has singled me for his favour

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politic. Islamic Commonwealth at that time was confronted by two of its most dangerous enemies the Crusaders from the West and the Mongols from the East. The havoc created by both is unparalleled in history. A typical letter written to the Pope by the Crusaders after one of their victories in the Palestine runs as below:

"God was appeased by our humility and on the 8th day our humiliation. He delivered the City and its enemies to us. And if you desire to know what was done with the enemies who were found there know that in Solomon's Porch and its temple our men rode in the blood of Saracens up to the knees of their horses".

The Mongols raised a cry of horror in the Islamic Commonwealth. One Million of the inhabitants of Baghdad were said to have been massacred. The Caliphate existing for more than six hundred years ended by one blow.

This was the horrible condition of the world of Islam during the active period of Rumi's life. The powerful writings of this great saint poet exercised a profound influence on the contemporary Muslims and arrested the process of decline of the Muslim society tending towards complete ruin. Mongols, the most inveterate and powerful enemies of Islam had no religion. They having been influenced by the writings of Rumi ultimately ac-

ness and that he would leave the country to remove all misgivings from the King's mind. Baha's powerful opponent was Fakhruddin Razi. He was a courtier and a teacher of the King. Baha ultimately left Balkh with his son Jalal-Ud-din. They met the famous Sufi poet Fariduddin Attar at Nishapur. Rumi was deeply influenced by the philosophy of Attar.

Rumi did not have the normal life of a boy living peacefully under the care of his parents in a settled family. From Nishapur Baha went to Baghdad. He was received there by Sheikh Sahabuddin Suhrawardy, the famous Sufi divine. From there he left for Mecca. Having performed Hajj and after long travels, they went to a place called Larinda. Rumi was eighteen at that time. He was married there to Kaniz Gawhar Khatun, daughter of Khawaja Lalai, Samarcandi. Next year a son was born to Rumi. This son later became the author of "Mathnavi Waladi". The family then moved to Konya at the invitation of the Seljuk King Ala-ud-din Kaiqubad. After two years of their migration to Konya, Bahapassd away. Rumi was twenty four years old at that time. On the death of his father the mantle of the King of Scholars fell on his young shoulders. It was a great opportunity and a great challenge. An able disciple of Rumi's father Burhanuddin Muhaquq

But they know not that I am but a mirror

The mirror does reflect itself. In me he sees himself. Then why should he not choose to see himself?

In the final stage of his life Rumi showered his love and confidence on Hisamuddin Chalapi. The 4th, 5th and 6th Vols of the Mathnavi mention Chalapi. Mathnavi was written at the instance of Hisamuddin. He learnt that Rumi's followers were fond of studying the Elahinama of Hakim Sanai and Mantiqatu Tayr of Attar. He suggested to Rumi to write

something in the style of Elahinama; but in the metre of Mantiqatu Tayr. Jalal-Ud-Din immediately produced a portion of the Mathnavi saying that God had forewarned him of the wishes of the brethren. He already began to compose the work. That fragment consisted of the first eighteen couplets of the introductory verses. Rumi and Chalapi sat for hours together, sometimes working for the whole night on the Mathnavi, Jalal dictating and Chalapi taking down the verses and chanting them allowed in his melodious voice.

Rumi's first period of life upto the death of his teacher Burhanuddin Muhaquq was devoted to pursuit of knowledge. Shams came into his life at the age of thirty seven. He appeared to Rumi as a

symbol of love. It brought a revolutionary change in the life of Rumi, but Shams who brought this change had to surrender life itself for he was killed his glorious attempt to change the course of a great life. Shams had to be killed so that Rumi could develop his own individuality. Shams on the other hand demanded sacrifice of all that Rumi considered as supremely valuable—learning, abstract knowledge and theology.

Salahuddin Zarkob's entry into the life of Rumi was a continuation of the convulsive stage of his life while Hisamuddin Chalapi assisted in the culmination of Rumi's genius. His inner feelings of love demonstrated itself in the physical personalities of Shams, Zarkob and Chalapi.

by name was a permanent teacher of Jalal-Ud-Din from his childhood. After the death of his father Burhanuddin started directing the spiritual life of his student Jalal-Ud-Din. The period of Rumi continued upto the age of thirty seven.

At this time Rumi came in contact with his spiritual guide Shams-Tabriz. In a chance meeting Shams asked him, "What is the purpose of wisdom and knowledge?" Rumi replied, "To follow and reach the Prophet". "This is common place", retorted Shams. "What then is the purpose of knowledge?" asked Rumi. "Knowledge is that which takes you to its source", replied Shams and quoted a verse from Hakim Sanai of Gazani. "Ignorance is far better than the knowledge which does not take you away from yourself". Rumi was so much impressed by this answer that he decided to become the