

A Love Letter from Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi

I am a bird of the heavenly garden
I belong not to the earthly sphere,
They have made for two or three days
A cage of my body.

For 743 years, men in black cloaks have performed a *zikr* in the form of a whirling dance in a continual remembrance of their Creator.

The Sufi poet and mystic Jalaluddin Rumi learned the *sema* from Shems-i Tabriz but it was his son Sultan Veled who standardized the dervish order known as the *Mevlevi*s. Since Rumi's passing in 1273 the *Mevlevi*s have made a kinetic *zikr* that was stylized by Sultan Veled on the basis of the movements established by his father.



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With the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire in 1924, the 'Mevlevi Turn' was interrupted for over 25 years. All the *tekkes* in Turkey were closed and it was against the law to be a dervish.

In 1954 a small group of dervishes led by Sadettin Heper convinced the local government in Konya that it would be harmless to introduce the Turn 'as a historical tradition' to the new culture of Turkey. UNESCO invited the *Mevlevi*s to Paris in 1964. During this, their first European trip, Selman Tuzon and Suleyman Loras sat on the Sheikh's red post as nine *semazens* turned to the music of several dervish musicians. This event signaled the beginning of a widespread interest in the West in the remarkable works of Rumi.

Since then the *sema* has been performed in Konya on December 17th to honor the *Shebi Arus*, the Wedding Night of Jalaluddin Rumi (the night of his passing).

The turners pass the post and bow to the Sheikh. Their tall honey-colored felt hats representing their tombstones are tightly pulled over their ears, symbolizing the tying down of their lower selves. In the Sultan Veled Walk they trail the Sheikh around the *semahane* still wearing the black cloak that reflects their attachment to the world, the box of their actions. Before they begin to whirl, each lets their cloak fall and, like a fledgling bird, unfolds and stretches out his arms as the long white *tenure*, the shroud of their future, engraves a circle in the air. With each turn they invoke the Name of Allah, and perhaps for a moment experience their death before dying.

When the seed of love is planted in the heart of a believer, only Allah knows where it will bear fruit. The *sema* is a spiritual field where one can plant seeds of faith.



A person without faith is like a man who arrives at the marketplace after dark. In the darkness, this man cannot tell what he is buying. There are all kinds of people among the sellers. He pays his money and stuffs whatever they give into his sack. He does not examine what he is getting. That man has paid his money, but he has no idea what he purchased. Back home, he empties his sack. He thought he had bought a rope, but finds he has a snake. The honey proves to be tar. The meat is a stinking carcass. All his money has been wasted, and he has bought himself a heap of trouble in the bargain. The human being entering this world is like a man going to market in the dark.

Listen to the words of the *Sufi* poet.

To market we came
From our mother's womb,
We bought a shroud,
Then back to the tomb.

Mevlana Jalaluddin's life has been well recorded. His years as a religious teacher, his meeting with his *sohbet-sheikh* Shems-i Tabriz, the wandering dervish in search of a real sheikh, the mysterious disappearance of Shems, becoming the poet of love inspired by the Koran and the Prophet Mohammed, his death known as the *Shebi Arus*, his Wedding Night with the Beloved, and his founding of the Mevlevi Order of Dervishes and its continuation have been documented with clarity as well as the fog of unknowing.

Mevlana left a treasure chest some 800 years ago containing the knowledge of how to live that is as relevant today as it was then. On his deathbed he said not to look for him in the grave but in the hearts of learned men. The truth is not altered by time, but the message can be forgotten. If you want the treasure in the mine you must dig in the earth.

We are the heirs of Mevlana Jalaluddin. How will we treat this inheritance? Will we squander it among those who have been deceived by the world? Argue its validity with scholars in classrooms and teahouses; or will we feed yearning hearts, enhance the intellectual desires of youth, and fill the gap of disappointment of those who have reached maturity and seniority and are still empty?

The history of Mevlana can be placed in the history books, but the essence of Mevlana's teaching, his *zikir Allah*, his meditation on Allah and the virtues of his Prophet, constant remembrance, gratitude and adherence to the examples of the Prophet Mohammed belong in each and every heart.

Muzaffer Efendi is talking. "Read the books and then perhaps Allah will reveal to you what is not in the books."

Rumi lived in the thirteenth century but his message is for all time.



Can you make an exegesis of the *Mesnevi*? To understand the works of Mevlana Jalaluddin is a struggle. It is not a coffee shop where you drink your fill, chat and exchange stories, then leave.

Each verse of the *Mesnevi* is a teaching and a love letter. How do you read a love letter from Mevlana Jalaluddin? Words and thoughts born in his heart, mingled with his breath, scratched with ink on paper. Who will read this? Will your tears fall to the paper and cause the ink of words to flow into a drink of meaning? Will you first sweep your heart of the dust of the world so there is space for Rumi's love letter to you?

Will you sit in a clean, quiet place and open your self to the 'sheikh' who sits before you?

Rumi expresses his attitude with these lines:



I am the slave of the Koran While I still have life.
I am dust on the path of Mohammed, the Chosen One.
If anyone interprets my words in any other way,
I deplore that person, and I deplore his words.

The Sufi

There was a tradesman in a small village in the East who sat on his knees in his little shop, and with his left hand pulled a strand of wool from the bale that was above his head. He twirled the wool into a thicker strand and passed it to his right hand as it came before his body. The right hand wound the wool around a large spindle. This was a continuous motion on the part of the old man, who each time his right hand spindled the wool, inaudibly said *La illaha illa 'Llah*. There could be no uneven movement or the wool would break and he would have to tie a knot and begin again. The old man had to be present to every moment or he would break the wool. This is awareness. This is life. Sufi means awareness in life, awareness on a higher level than we normally live.

Nuri, that was his name, was a simple man and taught his sons his trade.



The Persian word *darwish* (literally the sill of the door) is accepted in Arabic and Turkish (*dervish*) to describe the *Sufi* who is the one who is at the door to enlightenment.

Some say *Sufi* (in Arabic *suf* means wool) comes from the wool cloaks worn by these pious beings. Others like to think that its origin is from the Greek word *sophos* that means wisdom.

The similitude of this world is of a garment torn from end to end, that remains attached by a thread at one extremity. This, almost broken, thread is the remainder of life for each of us.

Its length is a secret, known only to God. The repetition of “There is no reality but God,” is a polish for the heart, it is a satisfaction for the heart, it dissolves the hardening of attitudes that has caused a crust to form on the heart.

Neutralizing the Earth's Glue

A Beginning

The body is like the earth, the bones like mountains, the brain like mines, the belly like the sea, the intestine like rivers, the nerves like brooks, the flesh like dust and mud. The hair on the body is like plants, the places where hair grows like fertile land and where there is no growth like saline soil. From its face to its feet, the body is like a populated state, its back like desolate regions, its front like the east, back the west, right the south, left the north. Its breath is like the wind, words like thunder, sounds like thunderbolts. Its laughter is like the light of noon, its tears like rain, its sadness like the darkness of night, and its sleep is like death as its awaking is like life. The days of its childhood are like spring, youth like summer, maturity like autumn, and old age like winter. Its motions and acts are like motions of stars and their rotation. Its birth and presence are like the rising of the stars, and its death and absence like their setting.



Everything in the world is invisible except that which we make semi-visible. By the introduction of awareness, all things can become visible. The aim of the dervish is to open the eyes of the heart and see infinity in eternity. His goal is to loosen himself from the earth's glue which binds him and become one with God, to become a channel for His Light, and enter the realm of no boundaries.

Why is man interested in the magic flying carpet? Where does he think it will carry him? To a land of fantasy or to a place outside of himself where each being has inner peace and freedom?

The mystic Rabia was in her house when her friend said,
“Come out and behold what God has made.” Rabia answered,
“Come in and behold the Maker.”

Jalaluddin Rumi is talking.

In a fair orchard, full of trees and fruit
And vines and greenery, a Sufi sat with
Eyes closed, his head upon his knees,
Sunk deep in meditation, mystical.

“Why,” asked another, “do you not behold
These signs of God the Merciful displayed
Around you, that He bids us contemplate?”

“The signs,” he answered, “I behold within;
Without is nothing but symbols of the Signs.”

The experience of looking within, uncovering the buried treasure
on which we sleep and living in the moment in remembrance
of Allah, has been transmitted through the chain of Sufism.



It is an autumn day in 1960. Naqshibendi Sheikh Necmeddin
deeply inhales the *nargile* before him, turns to the small circle
of listeners in an old Istanbul coffee house, and between puffs
says; “When you are everywhere, you are nowhere, and when
you are somewhere, you are everywhere.”

Man is the magic flying carpet, and the ability to fly, to rise
above all things, completes the weaving process of the carpet.
It is the esoteric meaning of the Prophet Jesus walking on the
water and the mythical horse *Buraq* (breath) that carried the
Prophet Mohammed from Makkah to Jerusalem and then to
Heaven.

In Hindu mythology, the giant bird *Garuda* (breath) lifted the
Gods to Heaven. By becoming aware of breath, man can virtu-
ally ride on his own breath and rise above earthly situations.

Rumi is talking. “A bird that flies upward does not reach the skies, yet it rises far above the rooftops and so escapes.”

The dervish experiences a similar freedom. He may not become the ‘perfect man,’ but he gains a majestic quality in life that neutralizes the earth’s glue, freeing him from worldly cares and anxieties.

A dervish tells the story of his sheikh, a man famous for his love of God, who used to spread his cloak on a lake adjoining the *tekke*. Seated upon it, he was carried wherever he liked. The Sufi poet Sa’di relates in his *Bustan* the tale of the dervish who crossed a river on his prayer carpet because he could not pay the ferryman’s fee.

The method of the Sufis is *zikr*, the repetition of *La illaha illa ‘Llah* (there is no god but God). There are some Sufis who only repeat ‘Allah’ because they know man can die at any moment, and they want only the name of God on their lips and in their hearts. All Sufi orders perform *zikr*. The manner in which *zikr* is performed is the essential difference in the various orders. *Zikr* opens the door to the spiritual world that can also be opened by a gift from Allah.

Sufism is for human beings. It brings to humanity the culture of mankind. The Sufi leads a rhythmic life. In the Koran it is written:

“Men whom neither trading nor selling diverts from the remembrance of God.”

Out of the being of Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi emerged the *Mevlevi*s or Whirling Dervishes, one of the most important and visually exciting dervish orders. At one point in his life, after meeting the wandering dervish, Shems-i Tabriz, Rumi went through a metamorphosis that triggered an opening in him, that transformed his vision and understanding, beyond formal knowledge of Sufism, into the secrets of Sufism. Although little



was known of Shems, there is no doubt that he belonged to a group which knew how to interiorize oneself, thereby reaching the place of the *kalam-i-qadim*, the ancient word. Mevlana described this as a place where:

There comes a Sound, from neither within nor without,
From neither right nor left, from neither behind nor in front,
From neither below nor above, from neither East nor West,
Nor is it of the elements: water, air, fire, earth, and the like.
From where then? It is from that place you are in search of,
Turn toward the place wherefrom the Lord makes His appearance.
From where a restless fish out of water gets water to live in,
From the place where the prophet Moses saw the divine Light,
From the place where the fruits get their ripening influence,
From the place where the stones get transmuted to gems,
From the place to which even an infidel turns in distress,
From the place to which all men turn when they find this world
a veil of tears.

It is not given to us to describe such a blessed place;
It is a place where even the heretics would leave off their
heresies.

The Chishti Sufi master Hazrat Inayat Khan says of Shems, “Shems of Tabriz was an example of a soul who had fully attained God-consciousness, who had arrived at a stage where even mentioning the name of God limited his power as a name limits God. And his life proved that the realization of truth stands above words. People say he experienced ecstasy. But I say he himself was ecstasy. And to the seekers of truth, even today, his words move to ecstasy.”

The *Divani Shems-i Tabriz*, containing 40,000 lines of verse, is an outpouring of feelings and thoughts that describe the natu-



ral state of man unfamiliar to ordinary life, and an expression of his mystical transformation that occurred through Shems. Mevlana's devotion to Shems caused him to write this collection of lyrical verse as if in the voice of Shems.

Within Rumi was the complete oneness of life. He was the living example of a man thoroughly in life. He was a father, husband, and university professor, who merged all these aspects of life into a unified existence, linking all of his life with the thought of God and the practices toward humanity that this thought manifests. He broke through to the Oneness, and solved the problem of seeing One with two eyes.

Although there were men who lived within the principles of Sufism well before they were so labeled, the Sufi orders we know have their foundations with the Prophet Mohammed, who was a huge tree. All Sufi Orders are branches of that tree.

In the autumn of A.D. 622 Mohammed departed his native Makkah and journeyed 200 miles north to Medina where the structure of Islam was becoming more manifest. The Muslims accept this date, the day of 'Emigration' (*Hijra*), as the beginning of the Islamic calendar. He completed the *Hijra* entering Medina on the twelfth day of Rab-i Awal, the date of his birth and the date of his death. The holy doctrine of Islam is the Koran, which was revealed by the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Mohammed, over a period of twenty-three years, in the form of *suras* (chapters) that often pertained to specific instances in his life. All *suras* of the Koran begin with the words *Bismi'llah ir-rahman ir-rahim* (In the Name of God, the Compassionate One, the Merciful), except *sura at-Tawba*. The opening *sura* of the Koran is a prayer called the *Fatihah*, that is repeated by all Muslims:

Praise to God, the Lord of the worlds,
The Compassionate, the Merciful,



The King of the Day of Judgment.
 It is You whom we adore
 And it is with You we seek refuge.
 Lead us on the straight way,
 The way of those on whom is Your grace,
 Not (that of) those who suffer Your wrath,
 Nor of those who stray.

Without knowledge love loses its direction. It becomes diversified, split, a wasteland, like water losing itself in the desert. The love of the Sufi has to be directed to Allah. This is only possible with knowledge of Him. The Sufis say: "If you seek Him, you will never find Him. But if you do not seek Him, He may not reveal Himself to you."



The prayer of the dervish is the prayer of realization. He is ashamed to ask even of God. In the *Fihi Ma Fihi* (In It Is What Is In It), Rumi relates that Adam sinned and was expelled from Paradise. "O Adam, when I took you to task and punished you for your sin, why did you not contend with Me? You could have said, 'Everything is from You. You created everything. Whatever You will comes to be in the world, whatever You do not will can never come to be. Why did you not state this clear defense?'" "O Lord, I knew that but I could not be impolite in Your presence. My love for You would not allow me to take You to task."

Here is a perfect example of *adab*, (spiritual courtesy), that the Sufi practices within the *tariqah* and the world. He is content whatever comes. If there is food, it is right. No food, it is right. No covering, it is right. By this contentment he becomes greater than a king. Sitting under a tree, clothed in a patched robe, he is wealthier than the richest, those who own all the earth and yet are needy, because he has the kingdom of God. His prayer

is *zikr* and *fikr* (reflection). His presence can spark a heart of stone. On the palms of his hands are symbolically written the Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God.

Rumi's spiritual couplets, known as the *Mathnawi-i Ma'nawi* (*Mesnevi*), are a living scripture that has enlightened the souls of numberless beings. In its simplicity, Rumi expressed the law of life in a series of teaching stories, a style influenced by the Sufi Faridu'd-Din Attar. He has chosen the symbol of the reed, separated from the reed bed, as the state of man wandering the earth in the sandals of Moses.

The Chishti Sufi Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan is talking. "There is a beautiful picture Rumi has composed. He tells why the melody of the reed flute makes such an appeal to your heart. First it is cut away from its original stem. Then in its heart the holes have been made; and since the holes have been made in the heart, the heart has been broken, and it begins to cry. And so it is with the spirit of the Messenger, with the spirit of the sheikh, that by bearing his difficulties he becomes hollow like a reed. There is scope for the player to play his melody. When it has become nothing, the player takes it to play the melody. If there was something there, the player could not use it. On one end of the reed flute are the lips of the Prophet, and at the other end is to be heard the voice of God.



"God speaks to everyone. It is not only to the Messengers and sheikhs. He speaks to the ears of every heart, but it is not every heart that hears. His voice is louder than the thunder, and His light is clearer than the sun, if one could only see, if one could only hear. In order to see and in order to hear, man should remove this wall, this barrier, which man has made of self.

"Then he becomes the flute upon which the Divine Player may play the music that can even charm hearts made of stone.

“This is the esoteric meaning of the Prophet Mohammed’s receiving of the *kalamullah*, the Word of God. The message given to Mohammed, in the form of the Koran, is the message of Peace. That is why the religion is called Islam and not Mohammedism. The Prophet was the instrument through which God expressed Himself to man.”

The original words of Rumi are so deep that they penetrate the heart of man, and he has been referred to as ‘the soul of the poet.’ The *Mesnevi* is man’s journey to the Source, to the Beloved.

The lover visible
and the Beloved invisible—
Who ever saw such a love
in all the world?



The spiritual symbol of the flute did not originate with Rumi, although his life is the perfect example of the longing of the reed to be reunited with its stem. An ancient Chinese legend tells of the first music being played on small pieces of reed. The original musician of China cut holes in a piece of reed the distance of two fingers, and the reed flute came into being.

Inayat Khan is speaking. “In Hindu symbology, Krishna, the god of love, is pictured playing a flute. Divine love enters into man and fills his entire being. The flute is the human heart, and a heart that is made hollow becomes a flute for the god of love to play. The pain and sorrow the soul experiences through life are the holes made in the reed flute. The heart of man is first a reed. The suffering and pain it goes through make it a flute that can then be used by God to produce His music.”

Here lies one secret in the *zikr* of the Sufis. All desires should be eliminated from the heart with the repetition of the negation, *La illaha* (there is no god) and replaced with the love of God,

illa 'Llah (but God). When nothing but God is remembered, one's *zikh* is pure.

The Whirling Dervishes repeat their *zikh* as they turn. They empty their hearts of all but the thought of God and whirl in the ecstatic movement of His breath.

Because of the universality of his teaching, Rumi became known as the Sultan of Love. Mevlana Jalaluddin is speaking just before he died. "When you see my funeral procession, my body carried on the shoulders of men, do not think that this is a separation, for it is my union with God. When you see the sun rise at dawn and give off great light during the day only to set at evening, it is not a disappearance, but a rebirth of the sun. The light which comes from it is not affected."

As Mevlana's body was placed into the earth it was as if a seed of love was planted for all men, a seed that bears its fruit in the hearts of learned men. Mevlana spoke of the heavenly spheres and of the hidden treasures buried in the love of God. He lived a diagram of how to complete the weaving of the magic flying carpet and spoke of its real meaning to men who thought that the earth was flat.

Konya Sheikh Suleyman Loras is talking. He is seated on a cushion on the floor of the *sohbet* room, a short walk from Mevlana. "If we do not strive for inner perfection, we will remain what we are now, talking animals. The world has never been without teachers. Each age has its teachers. Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammed were some of the great ones, but there are always *qutubs*, special beings who take care of the world. The perfect man, the complete man, lies within each of us."

The sheikh pauses for a moment, closes his eyes in contemplation, as if he were traveling to another place, then continues.



“All the prophets are Perfect Men, by whom the hidden nature of God is revealed. They are essentially one with God and with each other.

“The prophets differ in so far as individually they manifest diverse attributes of Deity, and only from that point of view can one prophet be regarded as superior or inferior to another.”

Mevlana was a treasure and he left a treasure chest that we are still trying to decipher centuries later. The treasure chest of Rumi contained the *Mesnevi*, 25,000 verses in six books; the *Diwan-i Shemsi Tabriz* (collected poems), 40,000 verses; a collection of his talks; several letters; over 145 documents; and the *Fihi Ma Fihi* (*In It Is What Is In It*) a non continuous collection of spiritual talks that delve into dimensions of Sufi teaching.



Rumi's work is a message to save mankind, a forgotten message that the world today could do well to apply. Mevlana casts a light on the understanding of man's responsibilities as a human being who temporarily resides on earth. The search for knowledge is the responsibility of everyone. A *hadith* of the Prophet states that man should travel to the farthest places to gain understanding. “Seek knowledge even if it takes you to China.”

Rumi did not expound theory but through the understanding of the ‘signs on the horizons,’ keen observation of every day life and Allah's magnitude, one could learn to understand Islam and live according to the Laws of the Creator as taught by the Prophet Mohammed and the true sheikhs.

There are both superficial and meaningful aspects of following the Prophet. If one does not eat melons because there is no reference to the Prophet Mohammed having eaten melons, then this is a superficial following. Following his footsteps, the truth and meaning of the Prophet Mohammed is something else.

We are out of touch, separated from the truths presented by Rumi that were more common in his day and foreign today. How do we reach back and grasp the essence of the past and understand Islam in the contemporary age? We have come to live in the passing phase of peace within a perpetual state of war.

To obtain a true picture of Mevlana it is necessary to separate the myth from the man. Mevlana cannot be only thought of as an independent thinker and sheikh of the thirteenth century. He was connected to those who preceded him, especially the Prophet Mohammed, and an inspiration to those who followed him. He lived according to the Koran, referred to himself as dust at the feet of the Prophet Mohammed, was influenced by the poetry and thought of Sana'i and Fariduddin Attar whose *Conference of the Birds* was certainly a work Mevlana knew. He was inspired by the animal stories in the *Kali'hah wa Dimna* that was translated into Arabic from its Hindu origin in the eighth century. He referred to the stories as a husk and delved deeper into what was beneath the skin of understanding of the original fables.

The thirteenth century was remarkable for its reawakening and expansion of Islam, primarily through Sufism, creating a wider scope of the Muslim world. As if to balance the brutal Mongol invaders, Sufism grew during the thirteenth century to the extent that it spread throughout the Muslim world replacing circles of Sufis with actual *tariqahs* that grew substantially in number. Some of these were the *Mevleviyya*, *Chishtiyyah*, *Kubrawiyyah*, *Ahmadiyyah* and *Shadhiliyyah*, Sufi orders who drew Muslims from every walk of life, from peasants and farmers to ministers and sultans.

Some see Sufism as the 'Heart of Islam' and relate it to the human body where the condition of the heart, that is hidden, has an effect on the entire body.



The organs of the body are not the same but the different organs make the body one. Different people make one nation. Rumi referred to the *Mesnevi* as the ‘Shop of Unity.’ Mevlana Jalaluddin’s teaching from seven hundred years ago is a cure for today’s problems. We are all connected. The rhythm, the beat of every heart is the same.

When a light is extinguished in one place Allah allows it to appear in another.

Some of Rumi’s contemporaries were the Turkish Sufi poet Yunus Emre and the Egyptian exponent of the Shadhili Order, Ibn ‘Ata’illah, who began writing a year or two after Mevlana passed, and whose *Kitab al-Hikam*, (Book of Wisdom) still inspires true seekers. The establishment of *tekkes* throughout the entire Muslim world created an ambience for *zikr* circles and the continuous remembrance of Allah.

The dry heat of the Cairo desert clings to the walls of the stone room, but the circle of Arab listeners is keen to hear the words of the sheikh.

Ibn ‘Ata’illah is speaking. “My God, how kind You are to me! So what is it that veils me from You? My God, my hope is not cut from You even though I disobey You, just as my fear does not leave me even though I obey You. It would be disappointing, truly disappointing, if you were to find yourself free of distractions and then not make toward Him, or if you were to have few obstacles and then not move on to Him.”

“Old age,” Mulla Jami (d. 1492) said, “is the final consequence of youth. The way we spend our youth comes to be written on our faces in old age. If you cannot serve Allah, then serve the servants of Allah.”

Hasan Gai Eaton is talking five hundred years later. “It was a great Sufi Master who said: ‘I have not left the world, the world has left me.’ This after all is what is happening when old age

approaches. So if the world has left me, where do I turn? What do I have? And the only possible answer is either despair or a spiritual way, no alternatives really.”

Pythagoras was once asked, “Are you wise?”

“No, but I am a lover of wisdom.”

Someone once asked Sa’d al-Din Kashghari, the sheikh of Jami to teach him something to which he could devote the rest of his life.

Mawlana Sa’d al-Din put his hand over his heart and answered, “Attend to this; this is what work is all about.”

The skin of man is a cloth with no seams or stitches, sometimes making it difficult to penetrate the thoughts residing in the heart.

Whatever Mevlana praised was in harmony with the Beloved, and whatever he denounced was because of separation from the Beloved. What is good in this world is a gift of Allah, and what we call bad or evil is the misuse of that gift.

Imam al Ghazali is talking: “Eat only what you need, sleep only when overcome, speak only when necessary.”

God is One. What is that to you if you are in a world of dispersion?

They said to Mulla Nasreddin: “There is a great treasure.”

“What is that to me.”

“They are taking it to your house.”

“Then what is that to you.”

Junayd al-Baghdadi saw a man in the market place selling ice. The ice seller was shouting: “Help the man whose capital is melting!” Upon hearing this Junayd swooned and fell to the ground.

Are we not all in this same state? Our capital is melting and so much time has passed. Allah said, “Did We not grant you a



life long enough for him who reflects to reflect therein? And the warner came to you.”

Joy and grief are one. Joy is the cessation of grief. Grief cannot cease unless it exists. Things are apparent by their opposites.

When God wishes to perfect a man and turn him into a complete sheikh, He causes him to enter the state of perfect union and unity, where neither duality nor separation exists. All our agonies arise from wanting something that cannot be had. When one stops wanting, there is no more agony. Desire for the world above all else is the enemy.

Shems talks about levels of knowledge that one must mine from a place that is otherworldly. The Prophet Mohammed gave Shems in a dream the gift of spiritual *sohbet*, and to Ali he told the secret of *Miraj* and taught him the audible *zikr*.



Everyone is not equal and cannot be treated equally. Abu Bakr and Omer were asked the same question by the Prophet Mohammed. Each responded according to their nature and each answer was correct.

Mevlana is talking. “Abu Jahl, the enemy of Islam, saw the Prophet Mohammed and said; “It is an ugly figure that has sprung from the sons of the Hashim!”

Mohammed said to him; “You are right, you have spoken the truth, although you are impertinent.”

Abu Bakr al Siddiq saw the Prophet Mohammed and said; “O sun, you are neither of the East nor the West, you shine beautifully.”

Mohammed said; “You have spoken the truth, O dear friend, you who have escaped from this world of nothingness.”

The companions who were present asked the Prophet Mohammed why he referred to them both as having told the truth when they contradicted one another?”

The Prophet replied; “I am a mirror polished by the Divine Hand. Everyone sees in me that which exists in themselves.”

Mevlana breathed the same air as we do but was nourished differently. His breath was conscious and merged with a continuous *zikr* that was repeated within him.

The *hadith* says “Consideration is from Allah.” When you slow down, leave certain things in life that are not necessary, frivolous things that waste time, then you can sit quietly, breathe in and out, contemplate the beauty and magnitude of Allah and see yourself as a miracle instead of a tired, depressed, ageing person whose entertainment and information comes from screens that are programmed, unvettered, by unknowns.

The west is enamored of Rumi speaking about love. They mistakenly believe that Rumi was referring to physical love when he was breathing words that related to metaphysical love.

Sufism exists only through the existence of Islam. One can be a Muslim without being a Sufi but one cannot be a Sufi without being a Muslim. Sufism is a part of Islam and its completion cannot exist without Islam.

How can the words of Mevlana, a thirteenth century poet and mystic not only be relevant today but hold the answers to the world’s present day problems? The truth is not subject to time. Rumi’s words are not to be read as one would read ordinary poetry or prose. His method is to encourage the reader to travel on a mystical road to God, engaging in the *allusions* that God has placed on the horizons, concentrating on God’s creation, and discarding the *illusions* that man has so willingly and mistakenly hugged to his bosom.

The magical mystical journey where a snake can be manifest to swallow the illusions created by the Pharaoh’s magicians; this journey that can change arrogance to intelligence, insatiable ambition to conscience, envy to compassion, tyranny



into justice and love of the world into the love of God. This journey that leads one to see with the eyes of our heart, and use the warriors of continuous invocation, prayer, meditation, pilgrimage, charity and love to quell the onslaught of negativity that has forced its way into our daily lives.

We are sitting in the garden of Safer Efendi's house in Istanbul. He serves tea and oranges and begins to speak.

"Allah has created the universe in perfect harmony, from the smallest atom to the largest body. Time is created in perfect harmony. The sun reflects on the moon and determines how we count our days. Nothing in this universe is created outside that order. Nothing is left on its own.

"Allah created a world of perfect harmony, not one of equality. Instead of concerning ourselves with the issue of equality we should be working to integrate ourselves into this world of harmony.

"Our minds do not know all the moons, planets and stars that are part of this perfect harmony. All this, seen and unseen, known and unknown has been created by a single order of Allah, 'Be.'

"The human being has a little will and can choose to do or not do as Allah wills. This is a test for man to know himself. The realm of angels is under the will of Allah. Nothing but man can go against the will of Allah. He created this universe of perfect order for His supreme creation—the human being.

"Time is in perfect order. The year is divided into twelve months. Four months are protected and blessed months. Three are consecutive.

"Things are not equal in this perfect harmony. Some places are higher or lower than others. Some days are better than others. Friday is the master day of the week. According to books, Allah began creation on Sunday and concluded the creation

of the universe on Friday. We should understand that when it is mentioned the world was created in six days that the length of the day is not as we know it.

“Some months are better. *Rejab*, *Shaban*, and *Ramadan* are better months. There are holy days in *Rejab*. The night of the first Friday and the twenty-sixth day are singled out. Hazrati Hassan declared five nights the holiest of all. They are the first night of *Rejab*, the fifteenth of *Shaban*, the two *Eids* and the *Night of Power*, that is hidden by Allah. On these blessed days prayers are accepted, repentance gained, and mercy given.

“Halveti Jerrahi Sheikh Muzaffer adds the twelfth day of *Rabi al-Awal* to these sacred days. This was the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed and we would not have any of this knowledge, including the *Night of Power*, if it were not for him.



“Some humans are more blessed than others. Moses, David, Abraham, Noah, Adam, Jesus, Solomon, Mohammed are some of the prophets.

“Allah created some places different from others. Makkah, Medina, Jerusalem, Istanbul, these places are holier than other places. Other holy places are Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, India, places where Allah’s prophets have walked.”

ReTurn towards Allah, concentrating on Him with every mention of His Name. Mevlana was a skein of Light linking heart to heart and left behind the *Mesnevi*, a sheikh for us all.

Baha' al-Din Veled

An angel touched him as he slept. In the dreams of three hundred of the most learned men of the city of Balkh, the Mother of Cities, a holy being lifted the right hand of Baha' al-Din Veled and conferred upon him the spiritual name of Sultan Ulama. The following morning all three hundred men came to him and proclaimed themselves his *mureeds* (disciples).

Mevlana Jalaluddin came from a line of religious scholars. His great grandfather Ahmad Khatib was from the Hanafi School, and his grandfather Husayn Khatib was a Muslim preacher.

Jalaluddin's father Mohammed Ibn Husayn Khatibi, known as Baha al-Din Veled was a religious scholar and a Sufi, initiated into the spiritual lineage of Necmeddin-i- Kubra, sheikh of the Kubrawiyyah Order of dervishes.

Although Jalaluddin's education from his father was primarily in the religious sciences there is little doubt that his initial Sufi experience and knowledge came from the Kubrawiyyah.

The fame of Baha' al-Din as a spiritual teacher grew to such a point that he became known as "The Elder Master."

On September 30, 1207, a son was born to him and his wife Mo'mene Khatun, who was a member of the royal family of Khwarazm. They lived in Vakhsh, a small area not far from Balkh that was a major cultural center. He was named Jalaluddin (the Keeper of the Faith), and although he lived during a time that witnessed shattering physical blows to the Islamic countries by the Mongols, whose interference altered both the political and spiritual station of the Muslim states, he was to become one of the greatest messengers of Universal Peace ever to walk the planet.



Jalaluddin showed signs of what he was to become as a man. At the age of six he fasted for long periods and saw visions, which his father explained to him as ‘gifts from the invisible world.’

Baha’al-Din is talking. “One day as Jalaluddin walked a terraced roof reciting the Koran, he was joined by some other children who proposed that they should all attempt to jump to a neighboring terrace. Jalaludddin said, ‘These acts of jumping from terrace to terrace are for cats to perform. It is degrading for man whose station is superior. If you are bored, then let us spring up to visit the region of God’s realm.’ As he spoke, he vanished from the sight of the other children. Frightened by the disappearance of their friend, the children began to cry for help. As they cried, Jalaluddin reappeared with a warm glow on his face and a light in his eyes. He explained that, as he was speaking to them, visible forms dressed in green cloaks led him away—through mountains of colors that unfolded great space—to view the concentric orbs of the spheres and the dwelling place of holy beings and the wonders of the world of spirits.”

These were uncertain times. Baha’al-Din Velel foresaw the tragedy of the great city of Balkh, Afghanistan, and its king. His popularity wrought jealousy in the king, and his talk brought controversy to the kingdom. This controversy led to a public address in the great mosque where he predicted the pillage of the Mongols, the destruction of Balkh, and the exile of the king.

Baha’al-Din assembled a large caravan, and with family, friends, and students, he left Balkh in 1218 to begin a long, arduous journey before permanently settling in Konya.

The journey from Balkh was unchosen for some and an unfinished one for others. They traveled over craggy hills, forded rivers, ate the dust scattered by horses’ hoofs, and camped on the plains between cities. In the peopled areas, pious men greeted them, and along the turgid roads dervishes in patched

robes bowed to the travelers. Young Jalal sometimes sat in the corner of a covered wagon, eating oranges and figs and listening to his father's mystical teaching stories and Koran readings.

The members of the caravan stopped five times each day to pray. They began each day with the *Salat al-Fajr* that had to be said after dawn but before sunrise. After noon they said the *Salat az-Zuhr* and in the late afternoon the *Salat al-Asr*. The *Salat al-Maghrib* was performed just after sunset, the *Salat al-Isha* at night. So the cycle of their day was interwoven with prayer. And at times, the lack of water caused them to perform their ablutions with sand (*tayammum*). They believed that until the *salik* (traveler) has arrived at the 'gate of union,' he must continue to work and pray with all his strength. Baha'al-Din's intention was to make the holy pilgrimage to Makkah.

They traveled a route that took them through Baghdad to Makkah, Syria and Central Anatolia before settling in Laranda (present day Karaman, Turkey).



Mohammed b. 'Alib. Mohammed Ibn al-'Arabi al-Ta'i al-Hatimi, known as Ibn 'Arabi, was one of the most important Sufi masters. During the years of Baha'al-Din's travels, Ibn 'Arabi was making a *hajj* to the Ka'ba in Makkah.

Ibn 'Arabi is speaking. "The Ka'ba is an outward symbol in the material world of the Presence not seen by the eye, that dwells within the Divine world; just as the body is an outward symbol in this visible phenomenal world, of the heart, which cannot be seen by the eye, for it belongs to the world of the Unseen; and this material, visible world is a means of ascent to the invisible, spiritual world for him to whom God has opened the door."

The pilgrim creates a circular energy around the stationary cube by circumambulating it seven times to represent the seven

spheres. He does this three times at a quick pace and four times walking.

During one of the *tawafs*, circumambulations of the Ka'ba, Ibn 'Arabi envisioned a scene that was to mark an important station of his spiritual development. In his *Futuhat*, Ibn 'Arabi describes passing a corner of the Ka'ba and meeting a 'youth steadfast in devotion,' and, by communicating with him, attained a higher awareness of his own true self.

"On one occasion I was circumambulating His ancient House, and while I was engaged in this, praising and glorifying God. I came to the *Black Stone* and met a youth steadfast in devotion who is both speaker and silent, neither alive nor dead, complex and simple, encompassing and encompassed. When I saw him circumambulating the House, the living circumambulating the dead, I grasped what he was and his significance, and realized that the circumambulation of the House is like the prayer over the dead. Then God showed me the spiritual degree of that youth; that he was far beyond all considerations of space and time. When I had realized this I kissed his right hand and said to him, 'O bearer of tidings, look and see how I seek your company and desire your friendship.' Then he indicated to me by hint and sign that he was created to speak only by signs. I begged him to reveal his secrets to me. He said, 'Behold the details of my structure and the order of my formation and you will find the answer to your question set forth in me, for I am not one who speaks or is spoken to, my knowledge being only of myself and my essence being naught other than my names. I am knowledge, the known and the knower.'"

Ibn 'Arabi left Makkah and stopped for twelve days in Baghdad, where, a half century before, Abdul Qadir Gilani lay on his deathbed. Gilani left the sheikh's cloak for a man he said would be coming from the west and would be called Muhyi-



ddin. He was the *gauth*, the *kutub* of his time, and made this statement fifty years before Ibn‘Arabi came to Baghdad and also before his birth. The *qutub* (pole of his time) is an appointed being, entirely spiritual of nature that acts as a divine agent of a sphere at a certain period in time. Each *qutub* has under him four *awtads* (supports) and a number of *abdals* (substitutes), who aid him in his work of preserving and maintaining the world. Abdul Qadir Gilani was such a being. Before leaving Baghdad, Ibn ‘Arabi was given the sheikh’s cloak.

In Egypt, the people did not understand Ibn‘Arabi and plotted against his life. Unsuccessful attempts were made which finally caused him to decide to return to Makkah where he stayed a year. From Makkah he traveled northwest to Asia Minor and remained briefly in Aleppo before arriving in Konya around the time the caravan carrying Jalaluddin Rumi to Konya left Balkh.

Ibn‘Arabi stayed in Konya and married the widow of a friend. She had a son whom he adopted. He personally trained his stepson in the Sufi doctrine, and the boy, named Sadr al-Din al-Qunawi, became one of the leading spiritual teachers of Konya. Kay Kaus, the ruler of Konya, desired the renowned Andalusian master to remain in his city and presented him with a large house. One day a beggar came to Ibn‘Arabi and asked for some money. Ibn‘Arabi said: “I have no money; take this house,” and then he left Konya.



Baha’al-Din Veled arrived in Baghdad, where he was the guest of the eminent Sheikh Shahabu-d-Din Umer Suhreverdi. Before leaving Baghdad, news arrived of the slaughter of Balkh by the forces of Genghis Khan. Fourteen thousand copies of the Koran were burned, fifteen thousand students and professors were slain, and the arrows of the Grand Khans army fatally reduced the population of its two hundred thousand adult males.

The intelligence and future of Balkh was erased. The birthplace of Jalaluddin Rumi was razed.

The journey continued as the travelers came to Makkah and performed the great pilgrimage. Makkah and Madinah offered them the holy vibrations of their beloved Mohammed and gave them the strength to continue their nomadic lifestyle.

In Nishapur, Iran, it is said that they met with the Sufi Faridu'd-Din 'Attar, who gave young Jalal his blessings and a copy of his *Book of Mysteries*. He told Baha'al-Din, "The day will come when this child will kindle the fire of divine enthusiasm throughout the world."

Attar was a chemist. One day a wandering dervish came to his dispensary for alms but received no reply from the busy proprietor. A second time the dervish asked and was ignored. "You are so busy becoming wealthy here, how will you depart from this world forced to leave all you have amassed?" Attar replied, "Like you, I will give up my soul." The dervish lay down, closed his eyes, and repeating the Name of God, passed away. For Attar this was an initiation. He closed shop, distributed his wealth to the poor, and became a dervish and a scholar. The most famous of his 114 books are the *Memoirs of the Saints* and the *Conference of the Birds*.

Baha'al-Din Veled and the Sufi Attar sat together, drank the customary tea, and spoke of passages in the Koran. Several hours later the travelers were preparing to depart. As young Jalal walked closely behind his father, Attar turned to one of the dervishes and remarked, "Look at this peculiar situation; there goes a sea followed by an ocean."

This story of Attar meeting with Baha'al-Din Veled should be taken with 'a grain of salt' as neither Baha'al-Din, Burhan al-Din, Mevlana, Shems-i Tabriz, Sipehsalar, or Aflaki mention any encounter with Faridu'd-Din 'Attar.



The caravan passed through Damascus, where it is said Baha'al-Din Veled and Ibn 'Arabi once met, and then remained for four years near Arzanjan in Armenia (Erzincan in present-day Turkey). Ismet Khatun, wife of the local ruler, built Baha'al-Din a college where he stayed and taught until both she and her husband died. The caravan then traveled to Karaman (Laranda) where eighteen-year-old Jalaluddin married a young woman named Gevher Khatun, the daughter of Sherefeddin Lala, one of the followers from Balkh.

On this peregrination, many towns asked Rumi's father to remain. "If you build a *medrese*, a school for me, I will stay." In Karaman, a center of learning sixty miles south of Konya, a school was built, and he stayed. It was here that Rumi's mother died.

Mevlana was married twice. From his first marriage he had two sons, Alaudin and Sultan Veled. After the death of Gevher Khatun, Mevlana married Kira Khatun, who bore him a son, Emir Muzaffereddin Alim Chelebi, and a daughter Meleki Khatun.

Baha'al-Din was a theologian and mystic whose fame spread throughout the land. In 1228 Sultan Ala'uddin Kay Qubad invited Baha'al-Din to Konya and built him a school. It was here that he spent his few remaining years. When Baha'al-Din Veled came to the Seljuk capital of Konya with his family and friends, the city was experiencing a cultural regeneration under the leadership of Sultan Ala'uddin.

One day Sultan Ala'uddin invited Baha'u-Din to climb his terraced roof and observe the walls and towers he had erected to fortify Konya.

Baha'al-Din remarked, "Against torrents and the horsemen of the enemy you have a good defense. What protection do you have from the sighs and moans of the oppressed that leap



a thousand walls? Go and attempt to acquire the blessings of your subjects. This is the real stronghold.”

Baha’al-Din was the revered university professor and advisor to the Sultan until his death in 1231. Besides leaving the seed of spiritual knowledge within his son, Baha’al- Din also left his *mystical insights*, the journals and lectures he gave at the university containing his thoughts, notes, dreams, and sporadic ideas that even included an allusion to sexual desires; private feelings that were noted but not necessarily with the intention of publication. They were eventually printed in several volumes under the title of *Maarif*.

The beloved father and first teacher of Mevlana, was buried in the rose garden of the sultan. Shedding tears of grief, the sultan, scholars, lords and servants attended his funeral. Sultan Veled remarked that the sultan’s heart shattered like thin glass. The sultan prepared a feast that lasted a week in honor of the religious sheikh who had lifted his soul to heights he never dreamed of.

After the period of mourning all those who loved Baha’al-Din turned to Jalaluddin and vowed to hold firm to the hem of his knowledge. Jalaluddin, who made Konya his workplace, succeeded his father at the university.

By now Jalaluddin had become a scholar well versed in the Koran and in some of the secrets of the life of dervishes. He began to understand the power of keeping a secret so that the planted seed might have time to go through its inner process of growth and bear flowers and fruits. He knew what is kept within and nourished would be preserved and that which one gives out is dispersed. Although the mouth speaks the name of God, closed lips retain that name.



Konya, known as the holy city, is one of the oldest continuously inhabited towns and, according to Phrygian legend, the first place to emerge after the Flood. At various times in history Konya had been inhabited by the Hittites, Phrygians, Persians, Pergamese, and the Romans. During the time of the Romans its name was changed from Iconium to Claudiconium in honor of the Emperor Claudius. In the first century, St Paul and St. Barnabas preached there. From the seventh to the thirteenth century, the city suffered various Arab raids and occupations. The Seljuks captured it, lost it to the Crusaders, and recaptured it. Control was finally lost to the Emirate of Karaman until Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror declared Konya an Ottoman city in 1476. It remained under Ottoman rule until 1923 when Mustapha Kemal led a military revolution and made all of Turkey a Republic. Kemal gave himself the name Atatürk (father of Turkey) and was Turkey's leader until his death in 1938.

The essence of the heart of man is eternal and does not change. Culture, religion, beliefs, and history all change with time. Konya as a city is a thousand years old and has changed its name, its size, its architecture, and its inhabitants many times. From a Byzantium city to an Islamic one, from an Ottoman city to a part of a Republic, the city changes but the state of its humanity continues to live. All who have resided there tell their story in their own language. The language of Rumi is for everyone in every age. Words Rumi spoke were not limited to time. The deep feeling of Mevlana opens the heart, bridges the dialogue of culture, and through Mevlana man sees the human treasures. Rumi lived his adult life in Konya. It was his horizon, his laboratory, and he proved that the desire of the heart of man has no boundaries.



Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi

Jalaluddin Rumi was born near Balkh on the 6th of *Rabi al-Awal* 604 AH, corresponding to the 30th of September of the year 1207.

His name was Mohammed, called Jalaluddin and in later years referred to as *Khudawandagar*, Lord. On occasion he signed his poetry *Khamush*, the silent one. His disciples knew him as *Sirr Allah al-Azam*, the *Greatest Secret of God*. In Turkey he was called *Mevlana* and in Persia *Mawlana*. In the west he is referred to as *Rumi*, which is a geographical reference.

Mevlana's son Sultan Veled wrote of him, as did Feridun ibn Ahmed, known as Sipehsalar, for his service as a commander in the Anatolian Seljuk palace. He was a student of Rumi's father Sultan Ulama Baha' al-Din Walad (d. 1231) and later served Mevlana for forty years.

Others, like Aflaki wrote from a distance and some recorded fragments of spiritual conversations. The words of Shems-i Tabriz were also noted although he wrote little himself, and his dialogue was so deep that even today, some 800 years later, we are attempting to fish clarity from the ocean of his words.

Nadim al-Din Kubra (d.1220), the sheikh of the Kubrawiyyah Order of Dervishes as well as the sheikh of Rumi's father Sultan Ulama Baha' al-din Veled, describes the inner dimensions of Sufism in his *Usul-al 'Ashara* (The Ten Step Method).

The ten Sufi steps are: *tawba* (repentance), *zuhd* (asceticism), *tawakkul* (resignation), *qana'at* (contentment), *'uzlat* (reclusion), *zikr* (remembrance of Allah, manifestation), *tawajjuh* (turning in heart and mind towards Allah), *sabr* (patience), *muraqaba* (ecstasy), and *rida* (acceptance).

Baha' al-Din infused his being with the teaching of his sheikh and mentored his son Jalaluddin regarding their inner meaning.

