

**Shakespeare's Sequel  
to Rumi's Teaching**

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Troubadour Publications

# Shakespeare's Sequel to Rumi's Teaching

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# INTRODUCTION

## Rumi and Shakespeare

Jalaluddin Rumi, who lived in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is called one of the greatest, sometimes the very greatest of poets, philosophers and spiritual teachers of all time. Rumi's spiritual couplets entitled the "Mathnawi" remain one of the purest literary glories of Persian poetry. His teachings have an almost uncanny relevance to our lives today by stimulating a thirst for knowledge of his writings and their inner meaning. This thirst is probably as great at the present time as it has ever been.

According to Rumi's own account, his life completely changed when he met Shams of Tabriz, a wondering dervish. Rumi recognized in Shams his spiritual guide. Afterwards, Rumi was transformed from an accomplished preacher and jurist into the greatest poet of Persian literature. It was Shams who requested that Rumi should record his teaching.

Shakespeare was an English playwright and poet who lived in the second part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Shakespeare's plays and his Sonnets remain one of the greatest works of English literature. According to Shakespeare's own account given in his Sonnets, at the beginning of his writing career he met his spiritual guide. Like in the case of Rumi, it was his guide who completely changed his life. His guide pointed out to Shakespeare that he was wasting his time and talent on useless activities and meaningless writings. Then his guide taught him what to write, how to write, and when to write. His guide led Shakespeare through a sequence of experiences that allowed the

poet to start to perceive the true value of his talent and the way in which his talent could be of use to a greater purpose.

However, there is much more in common between these two titans of poetry who lived some 350 years and 2,000 miles apart. In his Sonnets Shakespeare acknowledged that his writings were inspired by Rumi's poetry. He referred to Rumi as one of "Alien pens" whom he was asked to study. He described Rumi as "He of tall building, and of goodly pride". Shakespeare admitted that Rumi's verses were so powerful that they were stopping his thoughts before he was able to formulate them.

Rumi's and Shakespeare's writings are primarily instrumental, i.e., they are not meant for enjoyment, emotional stimulation, or display of their skills. The function of their writings was to project specific evolutionary concepts and ideas ahead of their actual realization. In this way the human mind could be prepared for their correct assimilation. In other words, Rumi's and Shakespeare's writings were based on the same inner design; they both belonged to the same school that operated in different places and at different times. Rumi explained the nature of spiritual technology, i.e., the functionality of various techniques and methodologies. His immediate audiences were Persian and Arabic speaking people who were mostly Muslims. This is why he used widely quotations from the Koran and the traditions of Mohamed as well as episodes and characters from Persian and Arabian literature. Shakespeare, who lived in Elizabethan and Jacobean England, used references to the Bible and previously published texts from English, Italian, French, and Spanish literature. Shakespeare's writings are an example of an unaltered illustration of the implementation of the spiritual technology that was described by Rumi. Shakespeare's plays illustrate how this technology was applied to plan, design, and form the European civilization. With this respect, Shakespeare's writings are unique within the entire corpus of Western literature.

Although Shakespeare was strongly influenced by Rumi's poetry, it should be emphasized that his function was to prepare Western society for the next phase of the evolutionary process. Therefore, his writings were not merely an adaptation of Rumi's illustrations from an Eastern environment into the Western culture. Such understanding would greatly diminish Shakespeare's role. Shakespeare was charged with the task of projecting these aspects of the spiritual technology that were needed at his time in order to keep the evolution of human mind in sync with changes of the cosmic matrix.

In this context we may look at Shakespeare's writings as a sort of magnifying glass that unveils further dimensions of Rumi's teaching. His writings allow us to discern the complexities and the intricacies of the evolutionary process that was described by Rumi. Shakespeare's magnifying glass, however, could not work if some basic concepts of Rumi's teaching had not been absorbed, at least partially, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century European society. At this point it should be mentioned that some of Rumi's quotations may be found in English literature as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. For example, there are several direct quotes from Rumi in Geoffrey Chaucer's poetry (Geoffrey Chaucer, a 14<sup>th</sup> century poet, is known as the Father of English literature). By analyzing Shakespeare's writings it is possible to realize that they were addressed to an audience that was exposed, directly or indirectly, to the impact of Rumi's teaching. This is why it is so important to analyze together Rumi's and Shakespeare's writings. In this way we may be able to gauge if, and to what extent, humanity made any evolutionary progress between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Shakespeare alluded to this sort of a measure in his Sonnets when he asked his guide to show him his own image from his previous appearances; because by looking at such an image he would be able to tell whether mankind made any progress, or whether men were caught up in a sort of evolutionary vicious circle.

“Shakespeare’s Sequel to Rumi’s Teaching” is an attempt at answering the question if and what sort of evolutionary gains were achieved between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The answer may be found by looking at the techniques and methodologies of the spiritual technology introduced in 13<sup>th</sup> century Asia Minor and how this technology was advanced and used at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe.

## **Evolution of Man**

The evolution of the human race was directed and continues to be guided, encouraged or restrained into alignment with the universal plan. In accordance with this plan, humanity is evolving to a certain destiny. For the past ten thousand years or so, humanity has been given the possibility of conscious evolution. As the matter of fact, the future of humanity depends on this more rarefied evolution. As part of this recent phase of evolution, the human organism is producing a new complex of inner faculties. These inner faculties are concerned with transcending time and space. Sporadic and occasional bursts of telepathic or prophetic power are the initial markings of the working of these same faculties.

In accordance with the universal plan, a succession of evolutionary energies was made available on the earth at different times in the planetary history. These various energies were needed to execute the evolutionary process. Constructive, vital, sensitive, conscious, creative, unitive, and supracognitive energies were switched in-turn. Each mode of energy was higher in its developmental potentiality than the one before. The switching-in of constructive energy led to the formation of the mineral world. This was followed by the activation of vital energy that was needed for the appearance of the vegetable world. Sensitive energy triggered the formation of the

animal world. Conscious energy led to the appearance of man, with his intellect and reason. Creative energy provided man with the possibility of the activation of man's inner faculties.

Rumi explains how the evolutionary process is reproduced within the life of every man:

First, man appeared in the class of inorganic things. Next he passed from the inorganic class into that of plants. For years he lived as one of the plants, remembering nothing of his previous inorganic state. Then he passed from the vegetable to the animal state. He had no remembrance of his state as a plant, except the inclination he felt towards plants. Especially at the time of spring, he felt an attraction to green trees and the aroma of flowers. Then again, man was led from the animal state towards humanity. In this way he did advance from one world of being to another, till he became intelligent and rational. He has no memory of his former states. During these periods man did not know where he was going but he was being taken on a long journey nonetheless.

From his present state, man needs to continue his migration so that he may escape from his rationality and intellectuality which are driven mostly by greed and egotism. There are a hundred thousand more marvellous states ahead of him. He fell asleep and became oblivious of the past. This world is the sleeper's dream and the sleeper's fancies. Till all of a sudden there shall rise the dawn of death and he shall be delivered from ignorance.

(Book IV.3637-3667)

In the context of Rumi's description, these various modes of energies may be compared to different kinds of "food" that, at different times and at different places on the planet, were made

available to mankind. The switching-in of each of the mode marked a new spiritual millennium. Constructive energy corresponds to the ordinary food of ordinary man. It is needed for the formation of man's physical form. The vital energy triggers the development of the self faculty that functions as the dominating faculty. Its main function is man's self-preservation. The sensitive energy triggers the formation of the manifest faculties of heart and intellect. In their ordinary form, these two faculties are under the control of the self faculty. They are used to satisfy man's greed and sensuality. The conscious energy is needed for the proper alignment (reformation) of man's manifest faculties, i.e., when the intellect and the heart are able to subdue the self faculty. The creative energy leads to the activation of the inner layers of the heart and the intellect (purification). The unitive energy of love, which is the second highest energy available in the galaxy, is needed to fuse together (unite) the inner layers of the intellect and the heart. The fused inner layers can then be transmuted into a new organ of perception. The supracognitive energy is the highest energy available in the galaxy. It acts as the catalyst that is needed for the activation of this inner organ of perception. The organ of inner perception is sometimes referred to as the angelic soul. It allows man to perceive and function in accordance with the requirements of the Realm, i.e., beyond the ordinary space-time limitations. The organ of inner perception existed already in eternity and was required to be actualized in time. Though latent since man emerged from his primate ancestry, it is an organ of experience that has only intermittently been active in certain exceptional individuals. Man is due to inherit it one day as part of his total experience.

Modern man has been faced with the very difficult challenge of accommodating these new evolutionary potentialities that were offered to him. The sequence and the effects of these switching-ins suggest that each new mode of evolutionary energy is made available while man is still struggling to come to terms with the

previous ones. Therefore, the developmental techniques and approaches have to be adjusted in such a way as to be compatible with these various energies as well as with the specific characteristics of the localities and people that are directly exposed to these evolutionary impacts. The custodians of the evolutionary process have been adapting and fine tuning their techniques and methodologies in order to meet these challenges.

Rumi's "Mathnawi" describes the spiritual technology, i.e., techniques, instruments and methodologies that were needed in 13<sup>th</sup> century Asia Minor to allow mankind to keep up with those evolutionary challenges. Shakespeare's plays and his Sonnets describe the spiritual technology that was applied in 16<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe. At that time the spiritual technology was adjusted in such a way as to meet the evolutionary challenges that 16<sup>th</sup> century man was faced with. These advanced approaches were implemented through several evolutionary branches that were activated in various parts of Western Europe.

## **Spiritual Technology**

The Absolute emanates the evolutionary cosmic matrix. This matrix contains a blue-print of evolutionary plans for mankind. These plans are encoded onto rays of creation that percolate through an evolutionary transmission chain. This transmission chain links the Absolute with the level of ordinary man.

The level immediately below the Absolute is described as the Realm or the "Garden". The Realm is the top level of the evolutionary transmission chain. Below the Realm there is a multi-level structure, which consists of higher worlds, intermediate worlds, lower worlds, and the physical world.

The higher worlds are located one level below the Realm. They operate outside ordinary existence. The higher worlds are linked with the next level that corresponds to the intermediate worlds. The intermediate worlds operate outside the limitations of conventional time. The intermediate worlds are in-turn linked with the lower worlds. The lower worlds are linked with the physical world. Ordinary man belongs to the physical world.

An electricity distribution grid may be used as a simplified analogy of the evolutionary transmission chain. Electrical energy is transmitted from a power plant to distribution stations via high voltage transmission links. The high voltage is then gradually reduced by being passed through a number of intermediate substations before the electricity can be fed into houses. The main electrical panel located in a house is the lower link of the transmission grid. The panel is needed to connect a house to the source of electrical energy.

The above referred worlds correspond to the various meditative or inspirational states of the human mind.

In this hierarchical structure man's ordinary faculties, i.e., his intellect, heart, and self, constitute an ordinary state of mind. The first step of the evolutionary ladder corresponds to the proper alignment of these manifest faculties. Proper alignment means that the intellect controls the heart and the heart rules over the self. Such an alignment is formed during the process that is known as spiritual reformation. The reformation leads to the first manifestations of inspirational states of the mind. It allows man to lift himself up from his ordinary animal-like life.

The intellect and the heart faculties are not homogenous. They consist of a multi-layered inner structure. Their inner structure may be unfolded, layer-by-layer, during the purification process. This may be compared to the splitting of atomic orbitals. In their natural form the orbitals remain degenerate; but when exposed to a strong

magnetic field, they may be split into several sub-levels. In the case of human being, such a split is realized by the presence of evolutionary energies. In this way the inner or subtle faculties may be activated. The subtle faculties form the second step of the evolutionary ladder. The subtle faculties are entangled. This means that they are intertwined with each other even though each of the subtle faculties may be exposed to different experiences.

Uniting the subtle faculties leads to the formation of a new organ of supracognitive perception. The organ of supracognitive perception brings man to the Realm. In practical terms this means that man is able to retrace the various stages of the evolutionary process and access the Realm or the “Garden”. In this way he may overcome the limitations of time and space and acquire permanency.

Rumi and Shakespeare describe the processes of activation, formation, and maintenance of these various inspirational states of mind. Some of these states are only partially operational; some are on the verge of becoming active; and some are still latent. This corresponds to certain experiences that are (i) somehow familiar but still not quite comprehensible; (ii) possible but not encountered yet; (iii) seemingly impossible. Such experiences may be presented as a series of events taking place in (i) somewhat familiar environment; (ii) remote locations and at other times; (iii) imaginary places. By using such settings it is possible to illustrate the nature of the spiritual process, the conditions required for the activation of higher states of mind, and the sequence of their manifestation. Such an allegorical presentation is a reflection of man’s struggle towards the fulfillment of his ultimate purpose.

Rumi’s and Shakespeare’s writings are examples of instrumental literature, i.e., literature that depicts the various elements of spiritual technology. The spiritual technology here means the methodologies, techniques, instruments, and symbols that are used

to guide and keep humankind on its evolutionary course. The instrumental literature provides allegorical descriptions of experiences that lead man from his ordinary state to the higher states. The experiences associated with the higher states are invisible to ordinary rational person. This is why Rumi states that the texts that belong to the corpus of instrumental literature contain outer and inner meanings. The inner content is based on seven layers, i.e., an evolutionary cycle consists of seven stages that lead man from his ordinary state to the fulfilment of his evolutionary purpose. The first layer of the inner meaning is perceptible by ordinary intellect. The second and the higher layers are beyond the reach of the rational mind. Therefore, any written interpretation and explanation of Rumi's and Shakespeare's writings are limited to the first layer of their inner meaning.

## **Outline**

The outline of "Shakespeare's Sequel to Rumi's Teaching" follows the layout of Rumi's "Mathnawi".

The "Mathnawi" is presented in 6 books. It is structured around a number of leading stories. The leading stories are interwoven with each other. Very often they are interrupted and broken up into several parts. The leading stories are accompanied by Rumi's commentary and numerous quotations from the Koran, the traditions of Moses, Jesus, and Mohamed, anecdotes from lives of the famous literary and historical characters. The commentary includes multiple and often contradictory points of view. According to Rumi's motto, "things outwardly opposed may inwardly be working together", such opposite points of view serve the same purpose: they indicate the limitations of ordinary intellect and rationality.

“Shakespeare’s Sequel to Rumi’s Teaching” is arranged in such a way that the chapters correspond to Rumi’s leading stories. The selection of the leading stories closely resembles that used by Whinfield in his abridged translation of “Mathnawi”<sup>1</sup>. The stories presented here, however, have been extracted and abridged from Nicholson’s “The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi”<sup>2</sup>. The stories have been referenced to Nicholson’s translation.

Shakespeare’s writings are based on the same design as that of the “Mathnawi”. This means that the same template may be used to unfold the inner meaning of Rumi’s and Shakespeare’s poetry. Therefore, it is possible to apply Rumi’s stories and his commentary to explain Shakespeare’s allegories. At the same time, Shakespeare’s allegories may help the contemporary readers to recognize and understand the inner dimension of Rumi’s poetry. In “Shakespeare’s Sequel to Rumi’s Teaching”, Rumi’s stories are accompanied and explained by corresponding scenes and quotes from Shakespeare’s plays and his Sonnets.

It should be pointed out that the same template may also be used to reactivate ancient stories, mythological tales and legends that belonged to the corpus of the instrumental literature and which became corrupted or outdated. This was the reason that so many of Rumi’s and Shakespeare’s episodes were adapted from previously known storylines. A detailed analysis of the modifications introduced by Rumi and Shakespeare would show that their purpose was to realign the storylines in accordance with the operating evolutionary matrix that was projected at two different times, i.e., in the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, respectively. In this way Rumi and Shakespeare were able to reactivate previously released narratives so they could serve their originally intended purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> “Teaching of Rumi – The Masnavi”, Abridged & Translated by E.H. Whinfield (The Octagon Press, 1979)

<sup>2</sup> “The Mathnawi of Jalaluddin Rumi”, Books I-VI, Edited and Translated by Reynold A. Nicholson (The E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1982)

## Book 1. Spiritual King

The whole of the universe presents an integrated pattern and all created things are linked together. The universe is arranged according to a universal design that is based upon the principle of hierarchy. This hierarchy is compared to the patterns observed in nature, among plants, animals, and heavenly bodies. For example, the rose to the flowers bears the same relation as the oak to the trees, or the honeybee to the insects, or the eagle to the birds, or the lion to the beasts, or the sun to other heavenly bodies. Among men a king is above his subjects. However, the notion of “king” is used in a different context than that ordinarily applied. Namely, a spiritually developed man is superior to other men. The developed man is just as much a separate species among the various kinds of men, as man is a separate species within other creatures. It is in this context that the term “king” is used in instrumental literature. This is why a reigning king is often compared to a lion, an eagle, or the sun. In this symbolic language, the “king” represents a developed human being, while members of the royal court symbolize other aspects of this being. These various aspects, in turn, represent the various inner faculties of the human mind. In other words, the concept of kingdom is used to illustrate the inner structure of the human soul.

The spiritual king, or the guide, is a discernible feature of Rumi’s and Shakespeare’s writings. Let’s make it clear though: Rumi’s and Shakespeare’s guide is not a guru, a preacher, or a facilitator of rituals. He is a living exemplar of human perfection. The guide’s function and his actions remain invisible to ordinary men. Depending on the environment in which he has to work, the guide’s appearance may vary. In Shakespeare’s plays, for example,

he appears as a king, a queen, a husband, a wife, a rogue, a fool, a prince, a maiden, a nobleman, a bastard, a magician, a craftsman, a general, or a clown. In the Sonnets, the guide appears as a young handsome man. Unlike Rumi, Shakespeare does not identify the guide. He leaves it up to the audience to recognize the guide by his actions and his effect on those around him. It is in this context that familiarity with Rumi's poetry may help to understand Shakespeare's plays and his Sonnets.

The initiation of a new evolutionary cycle is usually marked by the appearance of a new guide. The purpose of the guide is to reveal the main objectives of that particular stage of the cycle and its applicable spiritual technology. The applicable spiritual technology is encoded within a set of symbols used by the guide. This means that the guide reveals and explains the meaning of the symbols. He also adjusts the developmental methodology that is needed for a given time and place. The nature of the adjustments made by the guide is a reflection of the progress achieved during the previous stages of the evolutionary process. It is in this context that the following Shakespeare's lines from Sonnet 59 may be understood:

“Oh that record could with a back-ward look,  
 Even of five hundred courses of the Sun,  
 Show me your image in some antique book,  
 Since mind at first in character was done.  
 That I might see what the old world could say,  
 To this composed wonder of your frame,  
 Whether we are mended, or where better they,  
 Or whether revolution be the same.”  
 (Sonnet 59, 5-12)

Let's recall that the Sonnets are a record of the interactions between the poet and his guide. In other words, there are two voices in the Sonnets. Some Sonnets are spoken by the guide, the others by the poet. Sonnet 59 is addressed by the poet to his guide.

The poet makes a reference to an evolutionary cycle that symbolically is described as “five hundred courses of the Sun”. The poet says that any progress made along the evolutionary ladder would be reflected by a change in the “image” of the guide. Therefore, he asks the guide to show his “image” from his previous appearances. By looking at it and by comparing it with the present “image”, the poet would know whether mankind made any progress, or whether men regressed<sup>3</sup>.

And here are a couple of quotes from Rumi’s “Mathnawi” that further emphasise the guide’s (Pir’s) functionality:

“The Pir is the moon, other people are like night.”  
(Book I, 2939)

“The Pir is so old, that he has no beginning; there is no rival to such a unique Pearl.  
Choose a Pir, for without a Pir this journey is exceeding full of woe and affright and danger.” (Book I, 2941-3)

In Prologue to Book 1, Rumi outlines the functionality of the guide by comparing him to a musician. Ordinary man is like a hollow reed that is separated from its origin. The guide, with his breath, fills man with life by awakening his latent soul:

The reed is a hollow pipe with some holes in it. On its own, the reed is just an empty shell that was cut-off from its reed-bed. But when filled with the breath of a musician, the reed becomes alive. It is then that the reed can tell its tale; a tale of sorrows caused by separations. The reed’s lamentation is not mere vibrating air; its longing is like fire. It is the fire that transmutes man’s inner being. This is why a man who lacks such a fire is like a dead person. The reed’s tale serves as guidance for everyone, because everyone is parted from his origin and

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<sup>3</sup> “Shakespeare’s Sonnets or How heavy do I journey on the way” (Sonnet 59)

is ever longing for the day of return. By listening to the reed's story it is possible to find a way towards fulfillment. The reed warns, however, that its story is not comprehensive to ordinary ears and eyes. A soul in a body is like the musician's breath enclosed in a hollow pipe. Ordinary senses cannot see or hear the soul's complains; inner senses are needed to hear and comprehend the meaning of the tale. The reed tells that preoccupations, doubts, and anxieties separate man from true reality and cause all sorts of sufferings. They undermine man's existence. One is wasting his life by allowing suffering to invade and dominate one's self. As long as man allows himself to be dominated by sufferings, he remains at a lower state of being. Yet, the sufferings may help him to weaken his worldly attachments. Only then sufferings can be mastered and eliminated. By making the right efforts man may be propelled towards a superior goal. The ultimate goal of man is to return to his origin. Man should live until he reaches his higher aim. (Book I, 1-35)

The tale of the reed tale is about the very essence of man's inner state. The reed indicates that a skilful musician is needed to awaken man's soul. Shakespeare used this analogy in "Hamlet" to indicate that, for example, Guildenstern, Hamlet's foolish friend, was incapable of making such music or of grasping the concept. Here is Hamlet's comment about it:

"Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak."  
(Hamlet, III.2)

## Book 2. Deceiving Self

A cycle of the evolutionary process is usually described as consisting of seven stages. However, there is no linear progression from stage to stage within a cycle. There will be some “intervals” or “gaps”. These intervals are the most challenging stages of the process. The musical octave with two intervals of irregular increase of frequency is a symbolic illustration of such developmental non-linearity<sup>22</sup>. The overall arrangement of the “Mathnawi” is based on the same principle. In prologue to Book 2 Rumi indicates the first such a gap. He refers to the gap as a delay in the release of Book 2:

“Book 2 has been delayed for a while: an interval was needed in order that the blood might turn to milk. Blood does not become sweet milk until thy fortune gives birth to a new babe. Consider well these words.” (Book II, 1-2)

The delay was needed so the readers had time to adsorb the content presented in Book 1. Because it is necessary not only to read but also to digest the previously disclosed information before one may be exposed to the next portion of the teaching. Otherwise, the reader would be overwhelmed by the impact and would not benefit from it.

Shakespeare used a similar design in his plays, i.e., the evolutionary cycles illustrated in the plays are based on the seven stages. For example, the History Plays illustrate the English evolutionary branch of the modern evolutionary cycle. Each stage corresponds to one of the seven English kings, i.e., King John, Richard II,

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<sup>22</sup> However, it would be naive and too simplistic to assume that the position of the intervals or the numerical proportions of the musical octave are fixed features of the actual evolutionary cycles.

Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, Richard III, and Henry VIII. The non-linearity within this branch is marked by “Henry IV” being presented in two- and “Henry VI” in three-parts.

In Shakespeare’s Italian and Bohemian plays, the gaps are indicated by the “tragedies”, e.g., “Romeo and Juliet” and “Hamlet”, respectively. The tragedies are inserted within a sequel of comedies.

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The spiritual development requires the disciple to pass through seven stages of preparation, before his inner being is ready for its full function. These stages, sometimes called “men”, are degrees in the transmutation of the consciousness. In accordance with the natural capacities and character of a disciple, a guide may optimize the sequence of required experiences. Therefore, certain stages will be induced in some disciples, while others may require a different sequence, or even may be prevented from certain experiences. These various stages may be overlapped; some stages may be phased out, and later on may be phased in again. Two or more stages may appear at the same time. The time period required for the completion of each of the stages is not fixed either, it may vary from one stage to the next. The guide may compress time, if required, and he may load a few stages into a single event. Rumi explains the nature of the guide’s skills in the following comment:

The guides are they whose essence, before this world existed, was part of the Realm. They have received a soul before the creation of the form. Before their bodies were created they passed through many lifetimes. While consultation was going on as to bringing mankind into existence, i.e., before the soul of the universe became fettered by materiality, the guides were acquainted with the material form of every existent being. This is why when you see two guides meeting together, they are one, and at the same time they are six hundred thousand.

Plurality is in the animal soul; the human soul is singular.  
(Book II, 168-188)

The initial stage is often referred to as the deceiving self. The deceiving self corresponds to an ordinary state, which is a mixture of hopes, fears, conditioning, imagination, and emotion. It is the state of most people who have not undergone the refinement process. The formula that allows to overcome the deceiving self is called initiation into “proper conduct”. The proper conduct, however, has nothing to do with artificial and socially acceptable rules of etiquette. A socially acceptable etiquette is of an automatic and reactive manner. It needs the constant stimulus of threat or promise. It may lead only to inferior gains, emotional or intellectual short-lived satisfaction. By acting in such a manner, a person may be able to give the impression that he or she is worthwhile or knowledgeable. However it is insufficient in the developmental process.

Proper conduct may be correctly learnt only from the presence of a guide. The stories included in Book 2 illustrate how the deceiving self is manifested and how the presence of the guide may help to identify it.

## **2.1 The Traveller and his Beast**

Ordinary man is entirely absorbed in satisfying his deceiving self. The deceiving self is often compared to a beast needed to deliver man to a certain point along the journey. Afterwards, this beast would prevent him from moving forwards. At one point, therefore, the beast has to be dismounted. The more refined means of travelling requires the five spiritual senses, i.e., the subtle faculties:

## 5.14 The Jewel of Mahmud

“Proper conduct” is a technical term describing a formula leading to the unveiling of inner states. In its nature, proper conduct is developmentally constructive. Proper conduct, however, has nothing to do with artificial and socially acceptable rules of etiquette. Etiquette is based on a blind imitation of current fashions; it is of an automatic and reactive manner. Such behaviour is part of the civilizing of people, but is spiritually sterile. Rumi illustrates the difference between these two modes of behaviour in the story of King Mahmud’s jewel.

One day King Mahmud hastened to the court where all the courtiers were assembled. He showed them a beautiful pearl. He put the pearl in the hand of the Vizier. ‘How about this pearl?’ he asked, ‘what is it worth?’ The Vizier replied, ‘It is worth more than a hundred ass-loads of gold’. The king said, ‘Break it!’ ‘How can I break it?’ replied the Vizier, ‘I am a well-wisher to your treasury and riches. How should I deem it allowable that a priceless pearl like this should go to waste?’ ‘Well said!’ exclaimed the King and he presented him with a robe of honour. The King took the pearl from him. For a while he engaged the courtiers in conversation concerning new events and old mysteries. Afterwards he put the pearl into the hand of a chamberlain, saying, ‘What would be its worth to a purchaser?’ The chamberlain replied, ‘It is worth half a kingdom. May God preserve it from destruction!’ ‘Break it’, demanded the King. ‘How can I be an enemy to the King’s treasure-house?’ answered the chamberlain. The King praised the chamberlain’s intelligence, gave him a robe of honour and increased his salary. After a short time, the King handed the pearl to the Minister of Justice. The King said the same to all the other courtiers. All the fifty or sixty courtiers, one by one,

gave the same answer in imitation of the Vizier. The King bestowed a costly robe of honour on every one of them. Finally the jewel came into the hands of Ayaz, the favourite slave of the King. 'Now, Ayaz, will not you say how much a pearl of this splendour and excellence is worth?' Ayaz replied, 'More than I am able to say'. The King said, 'Now break it immediately into small fragments'. It happened that Ayaz had two stones in his sleeve. He quickly reduced the pearl to dust, for that seemed to him the proper thing to do. When Ayaz broke that choice pearl, thereupon from the courtiers arose a hundred clamours and outcries, 'What recklessness is this! By God, whoever has broken this luminous pearl deserves punishment'. And yet the whole assembly of courtiers in their ignorance and blindness had broken the pearl of the King's command. Ayaz replied, 'O renowned princes, is the King's command more precious or the pearl? In your eyes, is the command of the sovereign or this pearl superior? Devoid of the spiritual pearl is the soul that prefers a coloured stone and puts my King behind'. The King made a sign to the executioner, as though to say, 'Remove these vile wretches from my seat of honour. How are these vile wretches worthy of my seat of honour, when they break my command for the sake of a stone? For the sake of a coloured stone my command is held contemptible and cheap by evil-doers like these'. But Ayaz interceded for the courtiers, saying, 'It is better to forgive'. (Book V, 4035-4238)

Shakespeare goes a step further into the process by showing how an ordinary person may arrive at such a spiritual state as that demonstrated by Ayaz. In his play entitled "The Taming of the Shrew", Shakespeare used the term "taming" to denote the process that leads to learning proper conduct. Katharina, the main character of the play, is widely reputed to be a shrewish, foul-

“wrong”. This was underlined by Rumi in the following lines: “the Man of God is beyond infidelity and religion; to the Man of God right and wrong are alike”.

By exposing Bertram to an impact of unitive energy (in the bed-trick), it was possible to accelerate his inner reformation. The advanced methodology implemented by Helena helped to achieve optimal evolutionary gains that were needed in that place and at that time. Like in Rumi’s story, Shakespeare used the bed-trick to illustrate how a seemingly sinful act was needed to execute a lawful action.

## 6.2 The Fowler and the Bird

It is not destiny which leads people into difficulties, but their own errors and vices. Namely, ignorance and greed are especially potent at the time of excessive wants. The evolutionary path is full of trouble and challenges for the reason that it is not a path for any one whose inner nature is weak. On this road men’s souls are tried by many traps, just like a sieve used for sifting bran. In the following story Rumi explains the working of such traps.

A fowler went out to catch birds. He disguised himself by wrapping his head up in leaves and grass, so as to avoid frightening the birds away from his snare. A clever bird came near him and suspected that there was something wrong. But he foolishly lingered near and began to question the fowler as to his business. The fowler said he was a hermit who had retired from the world and dressed himself in weeds for the health of his soul. The bird said he was surprised to see a Moslem practicing a solitary life as any form of monasticism was forbidden by Islam. The

fowler replied, 'Anyone, whose intelligence is infirm, is in reality like a clod and rock. Being in his company is like being among clay and stones. One whose only desire is for bread resembles an ass. Anyone who lives with such worldly people is a monk. It is the companionship with such people that is the essence of monasticism'. Hearing that, the bird said to him, 'Well, then, the spiritual war is waged at the time when a brigand like this is on the road. The valiant man enters on the unsafe road for the purpose of protecting, helping and fighting. The innate quality of manhood only becomes apparent at the time when the traveler meets his enemies. This is why at the time of Jesus the right thing was retirement to cave and mountain; but since the appearance of Mohamed the right thing is war against one's inner enemy'. The fowler said, 'Yes; if one has strength and righteous guidance to make a mighty attack on evil and mischief. But when there is no strength, it is better to abstain from confronting such dangerous enemy'. The fowler argued his way and the bird defended his way: their debate on this subject was prolonged by the vehemence with which they argued. The bird then asked what the grains of wheat scattered on the trap were. The fowler replied that they were the property of an orphan, which had been deposited with him because people deemed him to be trustworthy. The bird then asked permission to eat some, as he was very hungry. The fowler, with much pretended reluctance, allowed him to do so. The moment the bird touched the grain, the trap closed upon him and he found himself a prisoner. The bird then abused the fowler for his trickery, but the fowler said he had only himself to blame for his greediness in eating the food which belonged to an orphan. (Book VI, 435-642)

Shakespeare's Hamlet goes through a very similar experience as the bird in the fowler's story. Earlier in the play Hamlet encounters the Ghost of his father who tells him that he had been murdered by Claudius, Hamlet's uncle. When a troupe of traveling actors arrives in Elsinore, Hamlet seizes upon an idea to use the actors to test his uncle's guilt. He would have the players perform a scene closely resembling his father's murder. So, if Claudius was guilty, he would surely react. Hamlet calls the players' performance "The Mouse-trap", for he hopes to catch the villain. However, he does not realize that the players have arrived in Elsinore with their own message for him. The players' message is designed in such a way as to warn Hamlet that he should be cautious of the Ghost's purpose. Namely, the players' performance consists of two sequential episodes<sup>109</sup>. The episodes are presented in reverse order, i.e., the first is the later one. The players' performance starts with a dumb show. The dumb show illustrates Hamlet's adaptation of the Ghost's report, i.e., the murder of Hamlet's father. The second episode that follows the dumb show illustrates the story of Gonzago, i.e., events that took place prior to the murder of Hamlet's father. (These events are a sequel to "Measure for Measure", a play that takes place in Vienna.) In this second episode Hamlet's father is represented by Lucianus. At that time Gonzago was the Duke of Vienna:

"This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna:  
Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista."  
(Hamlet, III.2)

Gonzago is presented as a sick and elderly man. He is liberal and considerate, and in this respect, very different, even opposite to the character of Hamlet's father. In this second episode Lucianus murders Gonzago. In this way, the players intend to inform Hamlet about his father's ascent to the throne. Namely, Hamlet's father killed the previous ruler in order to get the crown. Hamlet,

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<sup>109</sup> "Elsinore" (Shakespeare for the Seeker, Volume 4, Chapter 7.3)

Or who is he so fond will be the tomb,  
 Of his self-love to stop posterity?  
 Thou art thy mother's glass and she in thee  
 Calls back the lovely April of her prime,  
 So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,  
 Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.  
     But if thou live, remembered not to be,  
     Die single and thine Image dies with thee."  
 (Sonnet 3)

In this Sonnet, the guide tells the poet that by remaining idle, he poet will prevent Nature from fulfilling her desire for growth<sup>114</sup>. So, who would be so stupid as to allow his own self-indulgence to cut him off from immortality? The poet, like the poor fakir in Rumi's story, is Nature's greatest treasure. And it is his duty to preserve it and make good use of it. Within his lifetime, and despite his aging, he is capable of fulfilling his evolutionary purpose. But, warns the guide, if the poet fails to arrive at the state of "to be", his potentiality will die with him ("but if thou live, remembered not to be, die single and thine Image dies with thee").

## 6.7 The Three Travelers

The divine secret is not available to those who seek to infer and deduce its nature and quality from the lofty abstractions and sophistication of philosophy. Lofty intellectual speculation does not lead to knowledge. Divine guidance is revealed as an immediate intuition to those who seek it with sincerity and obedience.

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<sup>114</sup> "Shakespeare's Sonnets or How heavy do I journey on the way" (Sonnet 3)

Three men were traveling together on a journey. When these three fellow-travelers arrived at a certain caravanserai, a man of fortune brought them some sweetmeat as a gift. Two of the travelers had already eaten their evening meals when the sweetmeats arrived. Therefore they said, 'We have eaten our fill; let us practice self-restrain and refrain from food. Let's put it away tonight and eat it tomorrow'. The third one was starving because he had been fasting all day. He suggested that the sweetmeats be eaten that night. To this the other two refused to consent, alleging that the man wanted to eat the whole of the sweetmeats himself. Then the third man proposed to divide the sweetmeats into three portions, so that each might eat his own portion when he pleased. But the proposal was objected to by a dogmatic elaboration of the others. The third man therefore agreed, and lay down to sleep in the endurance of pangs of hunger. Next morning, when they awoke, it was agreed between them that each should relate his dreams. And that the sweetmeats would be awarded to him whose dream was the best. The first man said that he had dreamed that Moses had carried him to the top of Mount Sinai, and shown him marvellous visions of the glory of heaven and the angels. The second man said he had dreamed that Jesus had carried him up to the fourth heaven and shown him all the glories of the heavens. Finally the third one said that Mohamed had appeared to him in person. After commending him for his piety in keeping fast so strictly on the previous night, Mohamed said, 'The first of your companions has gone with Moses to the top of Mount Sinai; and the other has been carried by Jesus to the zenith of the fourth heaven. So, they have attained to their proper eminence and because of their talents have mingled with the angels. But you have been left behind and have suffered. Arise therefore and, at least, eat up the

sweetmeats'. The third man said that he had done as he was told. The other two men were at first annoyed with him for stealing their portions of the sweetmeats. But on his pointing out that he had no option but to obey the command, they admitted that he had done right thing. They realized that his dream was the best as he had been awake, while they were asleep. (Book VI, 2376-3013)

As demonstrated by the experiences of the third traveler, the divine intervention is manifested in such a way that it helps to deal with worldly matters. Dealing correctly with worldly matters allows man to gain insights into the invisible worlds. Pericles' experiences described by Shakespeare in "Pericles, Prince of Tyre" illustrate further this particular aspect of the evolutionary process. At one point during his descending journey from Pentapolis, Pericles ended up in Mytilene. It was there that he was reunited with Marina, his lost daughter. During his reunion with Marina, Pericles heard "the music of the spheres":

"The music of the spheres! List, my Marina."

"Most heavenly music!

It nips me unto listening, and thick slumber

Hangs upon mine eyes: let me rest."

(Pericles, Prince of Tyre, V.1)

Shakespeare uses the "most heavenly music" to indicate the manifestation of the divine intervention<sup>115</sup>. Immediately after hearing "the music of the spheres" Pericles falls asleep. It is then that goddess Diana appears to him in his dream. Like in the case of the third traveller in Rumi's story, Pericles is commanded to perform a certain task. He is commanded to go to Diana's temple in Ephesus and there reveal his story:

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<sup>115</sup> "Reactivation of creative energy" (Shakespeare for the Seeker, Volume 2, Chapter 4.1)

Helena is a spiritual guide. Through an invisible link with her father, i.e., the previous guide, she was able to perceive the currently operating cosmic matrix. She was able to see what was needed to advance the process. Bertram was a man who would greatly benefit from Helena's presence if he could recognize her beauty. At the beginning of the play, however, Bertram was completely unaware of Helena's function. Therefore, he was not able to recognize the "treasure" that was designated for him. But Helena was able to bring him back to the treasure<sup>118</sup>.

Now we may recognize that in Rumi's story, the bailiff is the guide. Through an invisible link with the Prefect, i.e., the previous guide, he knows what needs to be done. Therefore, he was able to guide the debtor to his treasure.

## **6.9 The King and his Three Sons**

The story of the king and his three sons outlines the developmental methodology that was implemented at the time of Rumi. This particular methodology was based on a sequential approach, i.e., reformation was the first step that was then followed by purification. Only a correctly reformed inner being could be exposed to the process of purification. The story of the three sons illustrates various difficulties of the evolutionary process when the developmental methodology is not correctly implemented. The experiences of the first son illustrate the limitations of the approach based on spiritual reformation but without purification. The second son goes through the process of spiritual purification but not through the reformation. The story implies that only the

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<sup>118</sup> "Developmental mismatch" (Shakespeare for the Seeker, Volume 2, Chapter 5.1)

third son was capable of experiencing the stage of union, i.e., when the purified inner faculties were fused together to form the inner organ of supreme perception.

A certain king had three sons. One day he called his sons before him and commanded them to travel through his realm, and to inspect the behaviour of the governors and the state of the administration. He strictly charged them not to go near a particular castle which he called 'the robber of reason'. He told them, 'Keep far away from that castle adorned with pictures'. But the three princes disobeyed their father. Before going anywhere else, they proceeded to visit the forbidden castle. If their father had not warned them against that castle, they would never have known about its existence. Therefore, they would never have desired to go there. For it was not well-known; it was exceedingly remote and far away from the other fortresses and the highways. In spite of the orders of the king, they advanced to the fortress, which was a destroyer of self-restraint and a robber of rationality. Being driven by disobedience they approached the tree of the forbidden fruit. They entered into the beautiful fortress. The fortress had five gates to the land and five gates to the sea. Five of those gates, like the physical senses, were facing towards the material world; the other five were leading towards the higher worlds. The castle was full of pictures, images, and forms. Amongst them was the portrait of a beautiful damsel. The image of the damsel made such a deep impression on the three princes that they all became distracted with desire for her. They began to make inquiries, asking, 'Who in the world is she of whom this is the portrait?' After much inquiry, a Sheikh, endowed with insight, disclosed the mystery. The Sheikh told them, 'This is the portrait of the Princess of China. She is kept by the king in a secret bower in a secret palace.'

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