

The Interpretation of Mystical Concepts in The Work “Sharhi Mathnawī Mawlawī” of Ayyub

Umarova Iroda Amanullaevna

Independent researcher, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies,

ABSTRACT: This article examines certain Sufi issues presented in the commentary by Ayub on the work of Jalal al-Din Rumi, "Masnavi-i Ma'navi," written in 1708-1709. This commentary is a rare manuscript housed in the collection of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, cataloged under number 2225/1, and consists of six notebooks, making it a comprehensive commentary. In explaining the Sufi terms in the work "Sharh-i Masnavi-i Mawlawi," Ayub also drew upon the works of other scholars and enriched his examples. The commentary begins with a reference to the work of Abdurahman Jami, "Naynama," from which examples are provided. The discussion of Sufi themes in the work also includes references from the Quran and Hadith. Jalal al-Din Rumi, in his "Masnavi," provides detailed definitions and justifications for terms such as wahdat al-wujud, ilm al-yaqin, haqq al-yaqin, and the perfect human (insan-i kamil). Additionally, examples are presented regarding how the soul comes from another realm and resides in the human body, as well as an analysis of the levels in Sufism.

KEYWORDS: Jalaluddin Rumi, Ayyub, manuscript, Sufism, work, wahdatu-l-wujud, commentary, commentary, path, pir, ashik, couplet, prophets, Holy Quran, hadith, soul, copy, saints, perfect human being, stages of Sufism.

The examination of Jalal al-Din Rumi's legacy, the comprehension of its spiritual core, and the articulation of reflections regarding its substance has retained their universal significance ever since the poet passed away until the present day. Scientists of various eras produced dictionaries, commentaries, and scientific studies to facilitate a more profound interpretation of Rumi's works. The works specifically devoted to his opus “Mathnawī ma’navī” are housed in numerous libraries across the globe. One of them is the work “Sharhi Masnavi Mawlawī” No. 2225, which is stored in the manuscript fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Biruni of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The commentator Ayyub is the author of this scientific work, which includes reviews. This scientific manuscript has been preserved in its complete form until our time, and it consists of six books, all of the commentaries are placed in the edges of the manuscript. To prove our point, we refer you to the following verse:

یافت شرح مثنوی مولوی
خلعت اتمام از لطف خدا
گفت تاریخش بکوش ای دل خرد
طرفه شرح معنوی جانفزا [1]

Translation:

“The commentary on Masnavi Mawlawī

Ended with the grace of Allah,

Try to find out its history, o wise man” [2]

In the verse طرفه شرح معنوی جانفزا (“Torfe sharhe ma’naviyi jonfezo”) given in the last line of this quatrain, the commentator provided information about the year of writing of his work on the calculation of abjad which mainly used in Eastern sources, when the date of the work is calculated, there will appear the numbers of 1120. According to the Islamic lunar calendar, it can be seen that the work was written in 1120 (1708–1709 AD). It is important to note that this manuscript is not the signature of author, it was duplicated a century hundred years after the time of writing. The commentary of author on the duplication of the book was recorded at the end of the book (colophon) by the calligrapher Ibad Muhammad Siddiq in 1221/1806 based on the instruction of the Mirza Muhammad Rabikhan [3].

The work “Mathnawī ma’navī” of Jalal al-Din Rumi is a poetic and mystical work, you can find various mystical phrases and words in its stories.

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All commentaries on the work of “Mathnawī” are written in the genre of prose, the reviewer Ayyub is able to understand it fully, takes the situation into account and approaches the issue in a broad manner. In addition, commentator Ayyub gives examples from the Qur’an and hadiths, works of Abdurrahman Jami, various dictionaries and explanatory vocabularies, as well as other commentaries, compares them with each other, explains his mystical, religious, and theoretical views. When the commentator interprets certain terms, he compares the text with the comments of other commentators and explains its lexical meaning.

The commentary on the first verse of the work gives us information about the concept of “wahdat-al-wujud” in Sufism, and its various stages: “Be aware that the explanation for a great number of enlightenments and truths hinges on the unity of existence and the steps on its way, which defines the essence of numerous such high-level issues”. Jalal al-Din Rumi refers to this concept, which is obvious to people of knowledge and wisdom, in the beginning of the book with the following meaningful and exciting words:

بشنو از نی چون حکایت میکند
از جدائیها شکایت میکند [4]

Translation:

“Listen to the flute, it can tell a story,
Complaining about separation” [5].

According to Najmiddin Komilov’s book of “Tasawwuf” [6], the term “wahdat al-wujud” was further developed in the works of Ibn al-Arabi and Jalal al-Din Rumi many years ago. As a matter of fact, the concept of “wahdat al-wujud” existed in mystical literature and poetical Persian works of poets such as Rumi, Jami until the time of Ayyub, who lived in the 18th century.

The commentary mainly talks about several mystical concepts such as “Ilm-ul-Yaqeen” (“Knowledge of Certainty”) and “Ain-ul-Yaqeen” (“Eye of Certainty”), but the commentator does not only describe these concepts, but also explains these situations. Based on the information of Ibn al-Arabi, scientist Najmiddin Kamilov talks about the three stages of concepts such as “ilm-ul-yaqeen”, “ain-ul-yaqeen”, haqq ul-yaqeen, and “knowledge” in his scientific research. The initial stage consists of bookish knowledge; the subsequent stage involves experiential knowledge in which Najmiddin Komilov participated; and finally, experience itself constitutes the third stage, it transforms into a tool and provides its definition as the comprehension of the truth [7]. The author explains these concepts in his commentary through the hadith: بشنو is a general exclamation, facing, at the beginning of the book, through such a subtle hint, he appealed to the student on the path of Sufism that through “ilm ul-yaqeen” “ain ul-yaqeen”, that is, the effect of listening is perfection, and he assessed tariqa and truth as the burden of Sharia. In these expressions, “sharia” is expressed through words, “tariqa” expressed through behavior (deportment, manner), and “truth” expressed through situation (state). Specifically, he advocates for comprehension by means of hearing and knowledge by means of experiencing and cites the subsequent hadith:

الشريعة اقوالی و الطريقه افعالی و الحقیقه احوالی و المعرفة اسرارى [8]

Translation:

“Sharia is my words, tariqa (sect) is my deeds, truth is my deals, knowledge is my secrets”.

In other words, the obligations of an individual embarking on the path of mysticism are delineated within its phases. “Sharia” is defined in this context as words, “tariqa” as deeds, truth as a deal, and “knowledge” as interior secrets; he conducts a comprehensive analysis of Abdurrahman Jami’s “Nainama” in this regard. Ayyub extensively incorporated the written works of Abdurrahman Jami, a prominent Sufi scholar and literary figure during the Timurid era in Central Asia (“Nainama”, “Yusuf va Zulaikha”). This is because Abdurrahman Jami resided and conducted business in Herat, the capital of the Timurid state in Khorasan, during the latter part of the 15th century. During the reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara, thanks to the efforts of the great statesman and poet Alisher Navoi, science and culture, including fiction and art (miniatures and novels), advanced significantly. Furthermore, trade and cultural ties with North India flourished in this region, and the allusion of Ayyub to Abdurrahman Jami’s written heritage is regarded as a consequence of these favorable developments. Ultimately, international book commerce was also significant during that period. Ayyub initiated the commentary by making an initial reference to Jami’s work, and this reference was not without reason.

Abdurrahman Jami, whose true name is Nuriddin Abdurrahman ibn Ahmad, was a Persian-Tajik poet who lived from 1414 to 1492 and was a prominent member of the Naqshbandi. As soon as he entered the path of Sufism, he decided to follow Sheikh Sa’diddin Kashgari, a member of the sect of Naqshbandi. Abdurrahman Jami engages in correspondence with renowned Sufis and deeply examines the works of Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi. It is well-known that Jalal al-Din Rumi regarded the legacy of Muhyiddin Ibn al-Arabi with considerable reverence. Therefore, it can be argued that Abdurrahman Jami was influenced by Jalal al-Din Rumi’s “Mathnawī” due in part to the similarity of their Sufi sources.

According to the thoughts of Ayyub, Abdurrahman Jami, individuals who achieve perfection in this realm simultaneously obtain immortality in the God and mortality from all existence. The subsequent statements made by Abdurrahman Jami delineate the state of the pipe. One by one, the flute embodies the divine states expressed in flawless human language. The flute resonates with the divine presence and conveys the words bestowed upon it by God through its vocalizations. This state, as defined by

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Sufism, pertains to the verbal expressions of an individual who has attained perfection, or the stage of truth. In Abdurrahman Jami’s verses, the flute refers to a perfect person and says that there is nothing inside him, that he repeats what God has placed in him, and the sound of the flute is the resounding of God’s words, in addition, the flute adds that it is natural that the Furqan, the Bible, and the Psalms are reflected there. Furthermore, the flute’s sound signifies the reverberation of divine words; thus, it is unsurprising that it reflects the Furqan, the Injil, and the Psalms. By means of the flute melody, “Masnavi” by Jalaluddin Rumi and the religious tolerance of the Mavlaviya sect are both conveyed. The constellation and celestial rotation are irrelevant factors concerning the instrument. Whoever ventures beyond this condition will be admonished by me in my voice. At that moment, his closest companions will surround him, and I shall impart divine secrets to his ears. I am susceptible to separation at times; I provide care for the uninformed. At times, I convey the message of becoming his guest and drawing nearer to the Truth; I guide others along this path in a variety of circumstances. I articulate the truth as well as the Sharia. Regardless of what I produce, these melodies do not rightfully be mine. These soul-satisfying melodies comprise the six-volume Masnavi. It requires a lengthy life and a positive disposition to recount a portion of my predicament. I will keep this brief because I have completed my discussion of it. Whoever asserts that flawless individuals can attain coupling and behold the splendor of Allah is in a state of coupling enjoyment, as their condition approaches that of the original.

In this situation, an ideal individual ought to enjoy a close relationship with God and benefit from his prosperity; therefore, it is inconceivable that he would lament separation on this individual's behalf. Consequently, even for an individual who possesses the attributes of an ideal human being, the attainment of God remains elusive. In Ayyub’s summary of the initial verse of Masnavi, it is stated that Rumi draws parallels between the human body and the sound produced by a flute, as well as the psyche. The third book of “Masnavi” provides the following: “The confirmation of this opinion is found therein.”

چون نفحت بودم از لطف خدا
نفخ حق باشم زنای تن جدا [9]

Translation:

“God blew my soul.

I will be merely a breath, if body leaves” [10].

The history of Adam’s genesis is as follows. The Holy Qur’an states that Adam’s body was fashioned by God from clay and was endowed with his soul, signifying that He bestowed life upon him [11].

The commentary pertaining to the initial verse comprises the comprehensive analysis presented in Abdurrahman Jami’s “Nainama”. The conclusion that the commentator possessed the only source containing the specific details contained in Jami’s “Nainama” is that no other source existed. Furthermore, Ayyub referenced another commentator of “Masnavi” and utilized the phrase “commentator Khorezmi” in his commentary on the first verse. He claims that the body of our prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is purportedly reflected in the instrument, and he provides the Qur’anic verse “Iqra wa rabbuka...” as evidence. This verse is regarded as a repository of all knowledge. This verse, according to Mawlana, has a mystic significance. Because there is a progression from form to content and from metaphor to actuality. Ayyub using the aforementioned example from Abdurrahman Jami validated this content.

Following this, Ayyub conducts an examination of the second stanza in Masnavi:

کز نیستان تا مرا ببریده اند
از نفیرم مرد و زن نالیده اند [12]

Translation:

“I was a cane that was cut,

My groaning caused everyone to sigh” [13]

Once more, Ayyub cites the commentary of Abdurahman Jami when interpreting this verse. As per Jami’s commentary, this circumstance was brought about by the omnipotence and desire of God, and in His estimation, every created object is equivalent. Following that, the truth of God is perceived. The illustration of The cane field serves to underscore the revelation of the truth regarding God’s judgment. The metaphor for existence is a grove of reeds. He favors a methodical approach to attaining elevated levels; the taxman accomplishes this incrementally; ultimately, the truth will come to light.

The narrative of the flute’s descent from the reeds is conveyed through the flute’s language; in the flute’s case, the soul was in the presence of God, which corresponds to the reeds. During the period of Adam’s creation, when the soul is implanted within him, Adam is devoid of any privileges, and his emotions are manifested within him. Ayyub elaborated in this review on the phases of the soul’s descent from the other world to the world of bodies and its location within the body, analyzed the Sufi ranks, and concluded that the ideal individual is a member of the sixth rank, or the final rank. Additionally, he states that the sixth vocation is an embodiment of the preceding five.

سینه خواهم شرحه شرحه از فراق
تا بگویم شرح درد اشتیاق [14]

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Translation:

“Let a hundred bribes leave my chest,
I will say my pain and passion” [15]
From the quoted

سر من از ناله من دور نیست [16]

Translation:

Although the verses leading up to “My secret is not far away from my moaning” [17] pertain to the flute’s natural sound, Ayyub asserts that Rumi imbued the poem with mystic qualities. It represents the literal pursuit of actuality from a symbolic state, analogous to how the light within one’s heart strives to attain love. For this reason, a “confused heart” is the term used to refer to a heart that is experiencing love agony. Mawlana, according to some, attained the status of Sayr fi Allah (سینه چاک), which signifies that they perpetually maintained a remembrance of God [18].

من بهر جمعیتی نالان شدم [19]

“I saw how many circles there were,” [20]

The author of this verse’s commentary refers Shams Tabrizi and relates a story concerning him. As per his account, Shamseddin Tabrizi was portrayed as an individual who maintained a private life and sought obedience. In the following verses, Ayyub compares the circumstance of the tax burned with the love of God:

آتش است این بانگ نای و نیست باد
هر که این آتش ندارد نیست باد [21]

Translation:

“Tune of the flute is fire, not the wind,
Who has no fire, let him perish, are not the people” [22]
Ayyub is commenting this couplet:

سر بی عشق را باید بریدن
بدوش این بار را نتوان کشیدن [23]

Translation:

“Head which has no love should be cut off,
It is impossible for you to bear this weight on your shoulders” [24], writes and finishing with the following couplet:

آتش عشق است که اندر نی فتاد
جوشش عشق است که اندر می فتاد [25]

Translation:

“That fire of love that burned the pipe,
That fire of love that burned wine” [26].

It is said that when love ignites, everything will burn but the beloved, according to the commentator.

Concurrently, he references the subsequent stanza, wherein he observes that the melodic rendition of the flute consoles numerous individuals and alleviates the melancholy that engulfs them:

همچو نی زهر تریاقی که دید
همچو نی دمساز و مشتاقی که دید [27]

Translation:

“Where is opium like a flute?
Where is a sincere friend like a flute?” [28].

To provide additional support for the aforementioned, the commentator references the subsequent verses from Abdurrahman Jami’s “Nainama” concerning the state of the flute:

گاه شرح محنت هجران دهم
بیدلانرا داغها بر جان نهم
گاه آرم مزده قرب و وصال
بخشم اهل ذوق را صد وجد و [29]

Translation:

“Sometimes I give suffering and parting,
Compassion for the careless,
Sometimes promise to date,
I gave a chance of coupling the people of love” [30]

هر که جز ماهی ز آبش سیر شد

Translation:

“Who is not a fish, he is sated the water,
Who has no days, whose days are as long as years” [32]

The commentator elucidates that within Sufism, even simple tax collectors who follow the path of truth are considered scholars; Allah provides them with a small amount of water to quench their thirst. However, the epitome of scholarship consists of flawless individuals who resemble fish swimming in the ocean; their thirst for Allah’s love is perpetually unquenchable. On this path, Ayyub classifies individuals into three groups: faultless scholars, immature scholars, and those who have squandered their lives on this path. He concludes this remark with an illustration of a verse from the Holy Qur’an describing three distinct categories of individuals:

فمنهم ظالم لنفسه و منهم مقتصد و منهم سابق بالحیرت باذن الله ذلك هو الفضل الكبير [33]

Therefore, one of them endangers his life (through immorality), another acts moderately, and yet another consistently demonstrates excellence in virtuous deeds through Allah’s grace [34].

The commentator provides detailed commentary on the notion of *wahdatu-l-wujud* across all of his journals. This is elaborated upon in the introductory sections of the first volume, where it is labeled reference to “*wahdatu-l-wujud*” in subsequent passages. For instance, the subsequent:

جمله معشوق است و عاشق پرده
زنده معشوق است و عاشق مرده [35]

Translation:

In the comment of “The phrase is a lover, a lover’s veil,
A lover in prison is dead” [36] couplet, it is telling about *wahdatu-l-wujud*. Consider the position of God to be absolute non-existence, and regard existence as God’s. It has been said that fortunes are showering upon absolute existence. Numerous similar examples are cited throughout the work. Given the esoteric interpretation in which the work is composed, this review could also be referred to as a mystical-explanatory review. Based on the aforementioned instances, it is evident that Ayyub, the commentator in question, possessed an extensive knowledge base. In addition to comparing the Qur’an and hadith, he examined pre-Islamic literary works, the history of the Prophets, the commentary of other commentators, and the exact definition of Sufi reforms. “Sharhi Masnaviyyi Mawlawi” is a work of tremendous scientific and artistic significance.

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