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Mohamad A. Alavi, www.mediatics.net

Transcendent Philosophy Journal is an academic peer-reviewed journal published by the London Academy of Iranian Studies (LAIS) and aims to create a dialogue between Eastern, Western and Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism is published in December. Contributions to *Transcendent Philosophy* do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial board or the London Academy of Iranian Studies.

Contributors are invited to submit papers on the following topics: Comparative studies on Islamic, Eastern and Western schools of Philosophy, Philosophical issues in history of Philosophy, Issues in contemporary Philosophy, Epistemology, Philosophy of mind and cognitive science, Philosophy of science (physics, mathematics, biology, psychology, etc), Logic and philosophical logic, Philosophy of language, Ethics and moral philosophy, Theology and philosophy of religion, Sufism and mysticism, Eschatology, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Art and Metaphysics.

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Submissions should be sent to the Editor. Books for review and completed reviews should be sent to the Book Review Editor. All other communication should be directed to the coordinator.

Transcendent Philosophy is published in December. Annual subscription rates are: Institutions, £60.00; individuals, £30.00. Please add £15.00 for addresses outside the UK. The Journal is also accessible online at: www.iranianstudies.org.

© London Academy of Iranian Studies
ISSN 1471-3217

Volume 19. December 2018
Transcendent Philosophy
An International Journal for
Comparative Philosophy
and Mysticism

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Theosophical Practical Ethics in Quran

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Abstract

This article addresses the theosophical¹ approach to explaining the practical ethics in the Quran. It outlines the important points of Qur'anic ethics, including constructive ethics and unconstitutionality. The general framework of Qur'anic morality has also been identified.

Keywords: Ethics, Quran, Islam, morality, positive ethics and negative ethics.

Introduction

This paper discusses the theosophical approach to Quranic practical ethics. One of the most important concepts in the holy Qur'an is ethics. The Holy Qur'an emphasizes ethics to the extent that some divide the teachings of the Holy Qur'an into three main categories: the principles of religion, Islamic law, and ethics. Qur'anic ethics must be interpreted using the comprehensive system provided in the Holy Qur'an, and rather than through the framework of Greek philosophy.

Qur'an discusses positive and constructive ethics (*hamidah*) in comparison to negative and destructive behaviour. Qur'anic ethics correspond to a set of human possibilities types.

Positive types include Muslims (*muslimin*), believers (*mu'minin*), the God-wary (*muttaqin*), the virtuous (*muhsinin*), the righteous (*salihin*), the pious (*abrar*) and the truthful (*sediqin*). These are opposed to the negative types: disbelievers (*kuffar*), polytheists (*mushrikin*), hypocrites (*munafiqin*), those who go astray (*dalin*), transgressors (*taghin*), (*mostakbirin*) arrogant and the corrupt (*mufsidin*).

Positive ethics are possessed by the positive types of humans, such as “they are quick to do good”- “يسارعون فى الخير”; this includes the believers, the altruistic, the thankful (*shakirin*), the patient (*sabirin*), the pure (*tahirin*) and the chaste (*'afifin*).

These types of *muttaqin* are opposed to the destructive behaviour displayed by the negative types of humans, such as the stubborn (*'anud*), the ignorant (*jahil*), eager (*haris*), the greedy (*haris*), the unchaste (*fasiq*), the immoral (*fajir*), the liar (*kadhab*), the revealer of other peoples' personal secrets, and the holder of grudges. Qur'anic ethics result from the Qur'anic understanding of the human being.

The more exalted and illuminated the existential status of a human being, the more exalted and noble their ethics. In the same way, if the existential status of a human being is lowly, and more dark than illuminated, their ethics will also be closer to darkness, and further from light.

Under the influence of the Holy Qur'an, Muslim philosophers and mystics have produced many works on human ethics, such as Ghazzali's *Ihya*, Ansari's *Manazil al-Sa'ireen*, Ibn 'Arabi's *Futihat*, Rumi's *Mathnawi*, *Awsaf al Ashraf - The Attributes of the Noble* by Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi², Mulla Sadra's *Asfar*³, Mulla Muhsin Fa'idh Kashani's *Ihya' al-Ihya'*, and Mulla Ahmad Naraqi's *Jami' al-Sa'adat*.

Positive ethics are favourable ethics, praised by Allah in the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an provides numerous examples of noble ethics,

and invites human beings towards such action. Those who adopt noble ethics are given glad tidings of rewards in this life and the next.

Constructive and Positive ethics

1. **Good behaviour** (حُسن سُلوك): “And the servants of the Beneficent Allah are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say: Peace.”

(*Surat al-Furqan*, verse 63); “And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it; surely Allah takes account of all things.”(*Surat al-Nisa*,’ verse 86); *Surat Hud*, verses 42-48;; *Surat ash-Shu’ara*,’ verses 27, 28, 58, 59, 61 and 62.

2. **Repel evil with good:** “Repel evil with that which is better. We know that which they describe.” (*Surat al-Mu’minun*, verse 96). “and who are patient, seeking the Face of their Lord, establish their prayers, and spend of what We have given them in private and in public; and who repel evil with good. Theirs shall be the Ultimate Abode.” (*Surat ar-Ra’d*, verses 22); “These shall be granted their reward twice, because they are steadfast and they repel evil with good and spend out of what We have given them.” (*Surat al-Qasas*, verse 54.)

3. **Doing good:** “And for everyone is a direction for which he turns. So race in goodness. And wherever you are, Allah will bring you all together. He has power over all things.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verses 148); *Surat Al-’Imran*, verse 115; *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 30; *Surat al-Ta-Ha*, verse 112; *Surat al-Mu’minun*, verse 96; *Surat al-Qasas*, verse 54.

4. **Hasten unto good deeds:** “They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten in (all) good works: They are in the ranks of the righteous.” (*Surat Al-’Imran*, verses 114); *Surat al-Ma’idah*, verse 48; *Surat at-*

Taubah, verse 100; *Surat al-Anbiya*, ' verse 90; *Surat al-Mu'minin*, verses 56 and 61; *Surat Fatir*, verse 32; *Surat al-Waqi'ah*, verses 10 to 15.

5. **Wisdom**: “Our Lord, send among them a Messenger from them who shall recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom, and purify them; You are the Mighty, the Wise.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verses 129); “Allah has surely been gracious to the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves to recite to them His verses, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom (prophetic sayings), though before that they were in clear error” (*Surat Al-Imran*, verses 164); *Surat an-Nisa*, ' verse 113; *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 125; *Surat al-Isra*, ' verse 39; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 34.

6. **Creating peace between people**: “There is no good in much of their confiding, except for he who bids to charity, honor, or peace-making between people. Whosoever does that for the sake of the pleasure of Allah. We shall give him a great wage.” (*Surat an-Nisa*, verse 114); *Surat al-Hujurat*, verses 9 and 10.

7. **Truthfulness**: *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 23; *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 177; *Surat Al-Imran*, verse 17; *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verse 119; *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 119; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 8.

8. **Debating in the best manner**: “Tell My worshipers, that they should say words that are the finest, Satan would arouse discord among them; he is the clear enemy of mankind.”(*Surat al-Isra*, ' verse 53);; *Surat Fussilat*, verse 33.

9. **Patient**: “And how many a prophet has fought with whom were many worshippers of the Lord; so they did not become weak-hearted on account of what befell them in Allah's way, nor did they weaken, nor did they abase themselves; and Allah loves the patient.”(*Surat Al-Imran*, verses 146, 147 and 152); *Surat an-Nisa*, verse 81; *Surat al-Anfal*, verses 11, 12, and 45; *Surat Hud*, verses 2 and 89; *Surat Yunus*, verse 112; *Surat Ibrahim*, verse 27.

10. **Good-heartedness:** “And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Lo! He, even He, is the Hearer, the Knower.”(*Surat al-Anfal*, verse 61); *Surat Hud*, verses 9 and 10. *Surat al-An'am*, verses 126 and 127.

11. **Forgiveness:** “A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. Allah is the Clement.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 263) *Surat Al-'Imran*, verse 134; *Surat an-Nisa*, 149; *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 126; *Surat an-Nur*, verse 22.

12. **Kindness:** “so that he becomes one of those who believe, charge each other to be patient, and charge each other to be merciful.” (*Surat al-Balad*, verse 17); *Surat al-Fath*, verse 29; *Surat al-Asr*, verse 3.

13. **Friendship:** “And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due, and they obey Allah and His messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Lo! Allah is Mighty, Wise.” (*Surat at-Taubah*, verse 71; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 6; *Surat al-Mumtahanah*, verses 1, 7, 8 and 9; *Surat Al-'Imran*, verses 28 and 118.

14. **Cooperation:** “And cooperate in righteousness and warding off (evil), and do not cooperate in sinfulness and transgression.” (*Surat al-Ma'idah*, verse 2.)

15. **Brotherhood:** *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 11; *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 83; *Surat Al-Imran*, verse 103; *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verse 32; *Surat al-Hijr*, verse 47; *Surat al-Hujurat*, verses 10 and 13; and others.

16. **Good turn(Ihsan):** “Show kindness to your parents, to kinsmen, to the orphans, and to the needy, and speak of goodness to people. Establish your prayers and pay the obligatory charity.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 83); *Surat Al-'Imran*, verse 134; *Surat al-*

Ma'idah, verses 85 and 93; *Surat an-Nisa*, verses 125 and 128; *Surat al-A'raf*, verse 54; *Surat at-Taubah*, verses 100 and 120.

17. **Altruism**: “And those before them who had made their dwelling in the abode (the City of Madinah), and because of their belief love those who have emigrated to them; they do not find any (envy) in their chests for what they have been given and prefer them above themselves, even though they themselves have a need. Whosoever is saved from the greed of his own soul, they are the ones who win.” (*Surat al-Hashr*, verse 9); *Surat an-Nisa*, verse 135; *Surat Ta-Ha*, verse 72; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 23; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 23; *Surat al-Balad*, verse 14.

18. **Hospitality**: “And when he had given them their provisions, he said: 'Bring me a certain brother from your father. Do you not see that I give just measure and am the best of hosts?’” (*Surat Yusuf*, verse 59); *Surat al-Baqarah*, verses 77 and 215; *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 6 and 60; *Surat Yunus*, verse 69 and 78; *Surat al-Haqqah*, verse 34; *Surat al-Muddaththir*, verse 44.

19. **Chastity**: “Say to the believers they should lower their gaze and guard their private parts that is purer for them. Allah is Aware of the things they do.” (*Surat an-Nur*, verses 30, and 60); *Surat al-Ma'arij*, verses 29, 31 and 35.

20. **Avoiding Idle talk**: “Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers; who turn away from idle talk.” (*Surat al-Mu'minun*, verses 1 to 3); *Surat al-Furqan*, verses 72; *Surat al-Qasas*, verse 55.

21. **Purity**: “And who guard their modesty, Except with those joined to them in the marriage bond, Those who seek beyond that are transgressors.” (*Surat al-Mu'minun*, verses 5 to 7); *Surat an-Nur*, verses 30 and 31; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 35; *Surat al-Ma'arij*, verse 29.

22. **Calmness:** “Who have believed and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of Allah. Verily in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest!” (*Surat ar-Ra’d*, verse 28); “It was He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers so that they might add belief upon belief. To Allah belong the armies of the heavens and the earth. Allah is the Knower, the Wise.” “ While the Unbelievers got up in their hearts heat and cant - the heat and cant of ignorance,- Allah sent down His Tranquillity to his Messenger and to the Believers, and made them stick close to the command of self-restraint; and well were they entitled to it and worthy of it. And Allah has full knowledge of all things.” (*Surat al-Fath*, verses 4 and 26.)

23. **Modest in the behaviour :** “Be modest in thy bearing and subdue thy voice. Lo! the harshest of all voices is the voice of the ass.” (*Surat Luqman*, verse 19); “Do not be stingy nor over generous lest you become empty handed and bankrupt.” (*Surat al-Isra,* verses 29) *Surat al-Isra,* verses 110; *Surat al-Furqan*, verse 67.

24. **Thankfulness for blessings:** “Remember the favor of Allah upon you, and what He sent down to you from the Book and Wisdom to exhort you.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verses and 231.) *Surat az-Zukhruf*, verse 13.

25. **Patience:** “Seek help in patience and prayer; and truly it is hard save for the humble-minded,” “Believers, seek assistance in patience and prayer, Allah is with those who are patient.” We shall test you through fear, hunger, loss of life, property, and crops. (Muhammad), give glad news to the people who have patience.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verses 45, 153, 155, 214); *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verses 15, 16, 17, 120, 125, 139, 146, 186 and 200.

26. **Controlling one’s anger:** “who spend in prosperity and in adversity, for those who curb their anger and those who forgive people. And Allah loves the charitable.” (*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse

134); *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 126; *Surat Ash-Shura*, verse 37; *Surat al-Taghabun*, verse 16.

27. **Just actions:** “Say: ‘My Lord ordered justice. Turn your faces to Him in every place of prayer and supplicate to Him, making the religion sincerely to Him. As He originated you, you shall return.’” (*Surat al-A’raf*, verse 29); *Surat al-Mumtahanah*, verse 8.

28. **Humbleness:** The worshipers of the Merciful are those who walk humbly on the earth, and when the ignorant address them say: ‘Peace, ’” (*Surat al-Furqan*, verse 63) “Do not walk proudly in the earth. Indeed, you will never tear open the earth, nor attain the height of mountains.” (*Surat al-Isra,*’ verse 37);; *Surat ash-Shu’ara,*’ verse 215; *Surat Luqman*, verse 18 and 19.

29. **Loyalty to the covenant:** “Those who keep their promise and fear Allah Allah loves the cautious.” (*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verses 76 and 77); “who break the covenant of Allah after accepting it and sever what Allah has bidden to be joined and corrupt in the land. These are the losers.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 27. and verses 40, 80, 100 and 177); *Surat al-Ma’idah*, verses 1, 7 and 12; *Surat al-An’am*, verse 152; *Surat al-A’raf*, verse 42; and others.

30. **Cleanliness:** “thy raiment purify”, “And uncleanness do shun” (*Surat al-Muddaththir*, verses 1 to 5); *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 222; *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 42; *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 103; *Surat al-Hadid*, verse 79; *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 108; *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 33.⁴

Destructive behaviour

Many of the destructive behaviour and negative ethics have been mentioned in the holy Qur’an and Allah has forbidden believers from engaging in them.

1. Refrain from bad deeds: “Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper. (*Surat an-Nisa,*’ verse 123); “The evil and the good are not alike even though the plenty of the evil attract thee. So be mindful of your duty to Allah, O men of understanding, that ye may succeed.” (*Surat al-Ma’idah,* verse 100); *Surat al-An’am,* verse 135; *Surat Hud,* verse 27; *Surat ar-Rum,* verse 10.

2. Interfering in other people’s business: “Believers, abstain from most suspicion, some suspicion is a sin. Neither spy nor backbite one another would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Surely, you would loathe it. Fear Allah, without doubt Allah turns (in mercy) and He is the Merciful.” (*Surat al-Hujurat,* verse 12); *Surat al-Ma’idah,* verse 101.

3. Maliciousness: Allah will not leave the believers in that which you are till He shall distinguish the evil from the good. Allah will not let you see the unseen. But Allah chooses from His Messengers whom He will. Therefore, believe in Allah and His Messengers, for if you believe and are cautious there shall be for you a great wage.” (*Surat Al-‘Imran,* verse 179.)

4. Conceitedness: “Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward folk, nor walk with pertness in the land. Lo! Allah loveth not each braggart boaster.” (*Surat Luqman,* verse 18); *Surat al-Hadid,* verse 23. *Surat an-Nisa,*’ verses 36 and 49;

5. Arrogance: “But those who reject Our signs and treat them with arrogance, - they are companions of the Fire, to dwell therein (for ever). (*Surat al-A’raf,* verses 36, and 13, 133 and 206); *Surat al-Baqarah,* verse 34; *Surat an-Nahl,* verses 23 and 29; *Surat al-Isra,*’ verse 37 and 38; *Surat al-Furqan,* verse 21 and 63; *Surat al-Qasas,* verse 83; *Surat Luqman,* verse 18.

6. Pride: “Who made their religion an amusement and play, and who were beguiled by their worldly life. ' On this Day We will

forget them as they forgot the meeting of that Day; for they denied Our verses.” (*Surat al-A’raf*, verse 51); *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 185; *Surat an-Nisa*, verse 120; *Surat al-An’am*, verses 70 and 130; *Surat al-Isra,*’ verse 64; *Surat Luqman*, verse 33; *Surat Fatir*, verse 5; *Surat al-Jathiyah*, verse 35.

7. Quarrelling: “Obey Allah and His Messenger and do not dispute with one another lest you should lose courage and your resolve weaken.” (*Surat al-Anfal*, verses 43 and 46); *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 188; *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 152; *Surat an-Nisa*, verses 29 and 52.

8. Conflict between one’s speech and action: “Believers, why do you say what you never do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do.” (*Surat al-Saf*, verse 2-3.); *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 44.

9. Lustful: “Decorated for people are the desires of women, offspring, and of heaped up piles of gold and silver, of pedigree horses, cattle, and sown fields. These are the enjoyments of the worldly life, but with Allah is the best return.” (*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 14); “Allah wishes to turn towards you, but those who follow their lower desires wish you to greatly swerve away.” (*Surat an-Nisa*, verse 27). *Surat Maryam*, verse 59.

10. Lying: There is a sickness in their hearts which Allah has increased. For them there is a painful punishment because they lie. (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 10); He has caused hypocrisy to be in their hearts till the Day they meet Him, because they have changed what they promised Allah and because they were liars. (*Surat at-Taubah*, verse 77); *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 105; *Surat al-Hajj*, verse 30; *Surat Luqman*, verse 3; *Surat al-Saf*, verses 2 and 3.

11. Suspicion: “O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a crime. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that (so abhor the other)! And keep your duty (to Allah).

Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.” (*Surat al-Hujurat*, verse 12); *Surat Al-Imran*, verse 154; *Surat al-An’am*, verses 116; “Yet of this they have no knowledge, they follow mere conjecture, and conjecture does not help against truth.” (*Surat al-Najm*, verse 28.)

12. Spyin: “O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a crime. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that (so abhor the other)! And keep your duty (to Allah). Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.” (*Surat Al-Hujurat*, verse 12.)

13. Eavesdropping: “O Messenger, do not grieve for those who race into disbelief; those who say with their mouth: 'We believe, ' yet their hearts did not believe, and the Jews who listen to lies and listen to other nations who have not come to you. They pervert the words in their places and say: 'If you are given this, accept it; if not, then beware! ' Whomsoever Allah wishes to try, you will not own anything with Allah concerning him. For those whose hearts Allah does not will to purify shall be disgrace in this world and a grievous punishment in the Everlasting Life.” (*Surat al-Ma'idah*, verse 41.)

14. Backbiting: “O ye who believe! Shun much suspicion; for lo! some suspicion is a crime. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Ye abhor that (so abhor the other)! And keep your duty (to Allah). Lo! Allah is Relenting, Merciful.” (*Surat al-Hujurat*, verse 12.)

15. Slander: *Surat al-Nisa*, ' verses 20, 112 and 156; *Surat an-Nur*, verses 4, 5, 16, 19, 23, 24 and 25. *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 58; *Surat Al-Hujurat*, verse 6; *Surat al-Qalam*, verses 10 to 16; *Surat al-Humazah*, verse 1.

16. Finding fault: *Surat al-Humazah*, verse 1; *Surat al-Mu'minun*, verse 97; *Surat al-Qalam*, verse 11; *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 79; *Surat Al-Hujurat*, verse 11.

17. Deceitfulness: “Do not sit in every road, threatening and barring from the Path of Allah those who believed it, nor seek to make it crooked. Remember how He multiplied you when you were few in number. Consider the end of the corrupters.” (*Surat al-A'raf*, verse 86.) and *Surat al-Ahzab*, verse 60.

18. Frivolousness, diversion and amusement: “The life of this world is but playing and an amusement. Surely, the Everlasting home is better for the cautious. Will you not understand?” (*Surat al-An'am*, verses 32 and 70); *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verses 57 and 58; *Surat al-A'raf*, verse 51; *Surat al-Anbiya*, verse 17; *Surat al-Ankabut*, verse 62.

19. Ridiculing others: “When they meet those who believe, they say, 'We, too believe. ' But when they are alone with their devils, they say to them: 'We follow none but you, we were only mocking” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verses 14, 15, 67 and 212); *Surat an-Nisa*, verse 140; *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verses 57 and 58; *Surat al-An'am*, verses 5 and 10; *Surat at-Taubah*, verses 35, 64 and 79; *Surat al-Hujurat*, verse 11.

20. Calling others offensive names: “Believers, do not let people mock other people who may be better than themselves. Do not let women mock women, who may be better than themselves. Do not find fault with one another, nor abuse one another with nicknames. An evil name is disobedience after belief. Those who do not repent are the harmdoers.” (*Surat al-Hujurat*, verse 11.)

21. Associating falsehood with Allah and the Prophet: “And whoever shall invent a falsehood after that concerning Allah, such will be wrong-doers.” (*Surat Al-Imran*, verse 94); *Surat an-Nisa*, verse 50; *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verse 103; As such We have assigned for every Prophet an enemy; the satans of humans and jinn, revealing varnished speech to each other, all as a delusion. But had your Lord willed, they would not have done so. Therefore leave them and what they invent.” (*Surat al-An'am*, verses, 112. and 137, 138, 139, 140 and 144); *Surat al-A'raf*, verses 37, 72 and 152.

22. Anger: “who spend in prosperity and in adversity, for those who curb their anger and those who forgive people. And Allah loves the charitable.” (*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verses 134); *Surat at-Taubah*, verse 15; *Surat al-Masad*, verses 1 to 5; *Surat ash-Shura*, verse 37.

23. Sorrow for what has been lost: Qarib: “And when you were going up, and paid no heed for anyone, and the Messenger was calling you from behind; so He rewarded you with grief upon grief that you might not sorrow for what escaped you neither for what smote you. And Allah is Aware of what you do.”(*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 153); *Surat al-Hadid*, verse 23.

24. Cowardice: “Believers, do not be as those who disbelieve and say of their brothers when they journey in the land or go of to battle: 'Had they stayed with us, they would not have died, nor would they have been killed. ' In order that Allah will make that a regret in their hearts. Allah revives and causes to die. He has knowledge of what you do.”

(*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 156 and 158); *Surat an-Nisa,*’ verses 72 and 73; *Surat al-Anfal*, verses 15 and 16; *Surat at-Taubah*, verses 44, 56 and 57.

25. Stinginess: “And do not let those who are greedy with what Allah has given them of His Bounty think it is better for them, but rather, it is worse for them. They will be coiled in that which they were greedy on the Day of Resurrection. And to Allah belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Aware of what you do.”(*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 180); *Surat an-Nisa,*’ verses 37 and 128; *Surat at-Taubah*, verses 34, 35 and 76; *Surat al-Isra,*’ verses 29 and 100; *Surat al-Furqan*, verse 67; *Surat Muhammad*, verses 36, 37 and 38.

26. Hurting others after giving charity to them: “Those who spend their substance in the cause of Allah, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with injury,-for them

their reward is with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. A kind word and forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury. Allah is the Clement. Believers, do not annul your charitable giving with reproach and hurt, like he who spends his wealth to show off to the people and believes neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. His likeness is as a smooth rock covered with dust, if a heavy rain strikes it, it leaves it bare. They have no power over what they have earned. Allah does not guide the nation, the unbelievers.” (*Surat al-Baqarah* verses 262, 263 and 264); *Surat al-Insan* verse 6.

27. Greed: *Surat an-Nisa,* ' verse 32; *Surat al-Baqarah,* verse 168; *Surat al-Hijr,* verse 88; *Surat Ta-Ha,* verse 131.

28. Wastefulness: *Surat al-A'raf,* verse 31; *Surat Al-'Imran,* verse 147; *Surat an-Nisa,* ' verse 6; *Surat al-Ma'idah,* verse 32; *Surat al-An'am,* verse 141; *Surat al-A'raf,* verse 81; *Surat Hud,* verses 12 and 83; *Surat Ta-Ha,* verse 127; *Surat al-Anbiya,* ' verse 9.

29. Wastefulness/تبذير: “And give to the near of kin his due and (to) the needy and the wayfarer, and do not squander wastefully. Do not be a wasteful spender. Squanderers are the brothers of satan. Satan was faithless to his Lord. (*Surat al-Isra,* ' verses 26, 27); *Surat al-An'am,* verse 141; *Surat al-Furqan,* verse 67.

30. Arroganc: “Christ disdaineth nor to serve and worship Allah, nor do the angels, those nearest (to Allah): those who disdain His worship and are arrogant,-He will gather them all together unto Himself to (answer). But to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, He will give their (due) rewards, - and more, out of His bounty: But those who are disdainful and arrogant, He will punish with a grievous penalty; Nor will they find, besides Allah, any to protect or help them.” (*Surat an-Nisa,* ' verses 172 and 173); *Surat an-Nahl,* verse 29; *Surat al-Isra,* ' verses 37 and 38; *Surat al-Sajdah,* verse 15; *Surat al-Zumar,* verse 60 and 72; *Surat Ghafir,* verses 35 and 76.

31. Injustice: “Say: 'My Lord has forbidden all indecent acts whether apparent or disguised and sin, and unjust insolence, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has never sent down an authority, or to say about Allah what you do not know.’” (*Surat al-A'raf*, verse 33); *Surat ar-Ra'd*, verse 25; *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 90; *Surat ash-Shu'ara*, verse 227; *Surat ash-Shura*, verse 42.

32. Corruption: “And to Midian, their brother Shu'aib. He said: 'Worship Allah, my nation, for you have no god except He. A clear sign has come to you from your Lord. Give just weight, and full measure; and do not diminish the goods of people. Do not corrupt the land after it has been set right, that is best for you, if you are believers. 'Do not sit in every road, threatening and barring from the Path of Allah those who believed it, nor seek to make it crooked. Remember how He multiplied you when you were few in number. Consider the end of the corrupters. (*Surat al-A'raf*, verses, 85, 86 and 103 and 142.) and *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 11, 12, 27, 30, 60 and 205; *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verses 32, 33 and 64.

33. Giving false testimony: “If ye be on a journey and cannot find a scribe, then a pledge in hand (shall suffice). And if one of you entrusteth to another let him who is trusted deliver up that which is entrusted to him (according to the pact between them) and let him observe his duty to Allah his Lord. Hide not testimony. He who hideth it, verily his heart is sinful. Allah is Aware of what ye do.”(*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 283.)

34. Betrayal: “Lo! We reveal unto thee the Scripture with the truth, that thou mayst judge between mankind by that which Allah showeth thee. And be not thou a pleader for the treacherous.” (*Surat an-Nisa*, ' verse 105); *Surat al-Anfal*, verses 27, 58 and 71; *Surat Yusuf*, verse 52; *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 92.

35. Breaking a covenant: “Those who break the covenant of Allah after ratifying it, and sever that which Allah ordered to be joined, and (who) make mischief in the earth: Those are they who are the losers.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 27) *Surat al-Anfal*, verses

55 and 56); *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verses 1, 9 and 77; *Surat ar-Ra’d*, verse 25; *Surat an-Nahl*, verse 95.

36. Fraud: “Woe to those that deal in fraud, who, when people measure for them, take full measure, but when they measure or weigh for others, they reduce! Do they not think that they will be resurrected.” (*Surat al-Muttafifin*, verses 1-4.

37. Deception: “And thus have We made in every city great ones of its wicked ones, that they should plot therein. They do but plot against themselves, though they perceive not.” (*Surat al-An’am*, verses 123 and 124); *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 54; *Surat al-A’raf*, verse 99; *Surat al-Anfal*, verse 30; *Surat Hud*, verse 21; *Surat ar-Ra’d*, verses 33 and 42.

38. Hypocrisy: “The hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but Allah is deceiving them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up lazily, showing off to the people and do not remember Allah, except a little,” (*Surat an-Nisa*,’ verses 142); *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 264; *Surat al-Anfal*, verse 47; *Surat al-Ma’un*, verse 6.

39. Jealousy: “Or are they jealous of mankind because of that which Allah of His bounty hath bestowed upon them? For We bestowed upon the house of Abraham (of old) the Scripture and wisdom, and We bestowed on them a mighty kingdom.” (*Surat an-Nisa*,’ verse 54), *Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 109; *Surat al-Fath*, verse 15; *Surat al-Falaq*, verses 1 to 5.

40. Greed: “(And it is said): Do ye twain hurl to hell each rebel ingrate, Hinderer of good, transgressor, doubter.” (*Surat Qaf*, verses 24 to 25.)

41. Bitterness: “And We will remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their breasts; the rivers shall flow beneath them and they shall say: All praise is due to Allah Who guided us to this, and we would not have found the way had it not been that Allah had guided us; certainly the messengers of our Lord brought the truth; and it shall

be cried out to them that this is the garden of which you are made heirs for what you did.”(*Surat al-A'raf*, verse 43)*Surat al-Hashr*, verse 10;; *Surat al-Hijr*, verse 37; *Surat Qaf*, verse 24.

42. Hatred: “Believers, do not take intimates with other than your own. They spare nothing to ruin you, they yearn for you to suffer. Hatred has already shown itself from their mouths, and what their chests conceal is yet greater. Indeed, We have made clear to you the signs, if you understand.” (*Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 118); *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verses 8, 14, 64 and 91; *Surat al-Mumtahinah*, verse 4.

43. Inattentiveness: “Yet after that your hearts became as hard as rock or even harder. Indeed among the stones are those from which rivers burst. And others split so that water issues from them; and others crash down through fear of Allah. Allah is not inattentive of what you do.”(*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 74), “These are they on whose hearts and their hearing and their eyes Allah has set a seal, and these are the heedless ones.” (*Surat al-Nahl*, verse 108); *Surat Maryam*, verse 39; *Surat al-Anbiya*,’ verse 1 and 97; *Surat ar-Rum*, verse 7; *Surat Ya-Sin*, verse 6; *Surat al-Ahqaf*, verse 5; *Surat Qaf*, verse 22.

44. Cruelty: “But because they broke their covenant, We cursed them and hardened their hearts. They changed the Words from their places and have forgotten a portion of what they were reminded. Except for a few, you will always find treachery from them, yet pardon them, and forgive; indeed Allah loves the gooddoers.” (*Surat al-Ma'idah*, verse 13); *Surat al-An'am*, verse 43; *Surat al-Hajj*, verse 53; *Surat al-Zumar*, verse 22; *Surat al-Hadid*, verse 16.

45. Immorality: “ But those who did wrong changed the word which had been told them for another saying, and We sent down upon the evil-doers wrath from heaven for their evil-doing.” (*Surat al-Baqarah*, verse 59); *Surat Al-‘Imran*, verse 82; *Surat al-Ma'idah*, verses 3, 25, 26, 47, 49, 59 and 108; *Surat al-An'am*, verses 49 and 121; *Surat al-A'raf*, verses 163 and 165.

46. Dissoluteness/ الفواحش: “Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you-- (remember) that you do not associate anything with Him and show kindness to your parents, and do not slay your children for (fear of) poverty-- We provide for you and for them-- and do not draw nigh to indecencies, those of them which are apparent and those which are concealed, and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for the requirements of justice; this He has enjoined you with that you may understand.” (*Surat al-An'am* verse 151); *Surat al-Infitar* verse 14; *Surat 'Abasa* verses 40 to 42; *Surat an-Nisa'* verses 15 and 16.

47. Ingratitude: “And if We make man taste mercy from Us, then take it off from him, most surely he is despairing, ungrateful” (*Surat Hud*, verses 9); *Surat al-Anfal*, verse 55; *Surat an-Nahl*, verses 53, 54 and 55; *Surat al-Isra,* verses 67 and 83; *Surat al-'Ankabut*, verse 65; *Surat ar-Rum*, verses 33, 34 and 51.

Ethics rules in the Quran

1.

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً وَاللَّهُ يَقْبِضُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ.
(٢:٢٤٥)

“Who is it that will lend Allah a good loan that He may multiply it for him severalfold? And Allah tightens and expands [the means of life], and to Him you shall be brought back.” (2:245)

1. That which has been donated in the service of Allah is not a loss but is likely to be multiplied. Allah increases and decreases that which He wills; thus, what has been donated in His service will be increased, and returned to the giver.

2. There are three conditions of paying *zakat* which must be fulfilled before it can be called a “good loan”: first, it must be

lawfully earned permitted (*halal*), second, it must be of the best wealth and third, there must be no obligation upon the receiver.

3. Al-Waqidi (c. 130 – 207 [AH](#); c. 747 – 823 [AD](#)) says that the “good loan” is that which is given in the service of Allah with full consent.

2.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةٌ حَبَّةٌ
وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ (2:261)

“The parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is that of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. Allah enhances severalfold whomever He wishes, and Allah is all-bounteous, all-knowing.” (2:261)

The Meanings of the Words:

“سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ”: This is the way of Allah. This phrase refers to anything that has Allah’s consent and approval, and to any action that is performed for a religious end.

1. There are two types of donations (*infaq*): 1) Some donations (such as *zakat*, *khums*, financial *kaffarah* [atonement] and different types of blood money⁵) are obligatory; 2) Other types of donations, such as giving money to charities and *waqf* (religious endowments), making wills and giving other kinds of donations are recommended but not obligatory.

2. This verse indicates that whoever gives charitable donations will receive more than they have donated, both in this world and the next.

3.

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (4:111)

“And whoever commits a sin, commits it only against himself; and Allah is all-knowing, all-wise.” (4:111)

1. It is necessary for whoever commits a sin to realise that their sin amounts to self-oppression.

4.

وَاصْبِرْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (11:115)

“And be patient; indeed Allah does not waste the reward of the virtuous.” (11:115)

1. Prayer (*ṣalat*) is the most important of the acts of worship, and patience (*ṣabr*) is the most important quality. The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious. In the Quran, words that are derived from the root ṣ-b-r occur frequently, with the general meaning of persisting on the right path when under adverse circumstance, whether internal or external, personal or collective.

5.

وَمَا أُبْرِيءُ نَفْسِي إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي إِنَّ رَبِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ (12:53)

“Yet I do not absolve my [own carnal] soul, for the [carnal] soul indeed prompts [men] to evil, except inasmuch as my Lord has mercy. Indeed my Lord is all-forgiving, all-merciful.” (12:53)

One of the types of *nafs* described in the Qur'an is the *nafs al-ammarah* (the imperative, carnal soul), which makes the human being sin. The other types of *nafs* are the *nafs al-lawwamah* (the blaming soul, *Surat al-Qiyamah*, verse 2) and the *nafs al-mutma'innah* (the peaceful soul, *Surat al-Fajr*, verses 27-30).

2. “إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي”, except that which my Lord has mercy on.

3. The forgiveness of Allah conceals the imperfections and faults of human nature; His mercy and compassion reveal the good and beautiful attributes of human nature.

6.

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَ تَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ (13:28)

“—those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah.’ Look! The hearts find rest in Allah’s remembrance!” (13:28)

1. Belief is not simply the ability to understand; rather, it is the *nafs*’s acceptance of that which it has understood. This results in the *nafs* submitting to that which it has understood.

2. Belief in Allah requires certainty and calmness of the heart, which is attained through the remembrance of Allah.

3. The believer gains tranquillity through infinite Divine rewards and blessings.

7.

الْمَالُ وَ الْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ الْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَاباً وَ خَيْرٌ أَمْلاً (18:46)

“Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of the world, but lasting righteous deeds are better with your Lord in reward and better in hope.” (18:46)

In both Shi’a⁶ and Sunni⁷ sources, it has been said by the Prophet (in Shi’a⁸ sources this statement is also found in the *Ahlul Bayt*) that *baqiyat al-salihah* (enduring good deeds) refers to the invocation “*Subahan Allah wa al-Hamdu lillah wa la Ilaha illa Allah wa Allahu akbar.*” In other sources⁹ it is said that this invocation refers to prayer (*salat*).

It has been said that the Prophet said that if one is unable to keep vigil in the night, or fight the enemies of Allah, one is not incapable of saying “*Subahan Allah wa al-Hamdu lillah wa la Ilaha illa Allah wa Allahu Akbar.*” These words are *baqiyat al-salihah*, and therefore one should say them.

1. The verse indicates that every action that a human being performs is protected by Allah; when one performs a good action, it will be rewarded by Him.

2. The remembrance of Allah means that one must think of Him when one is confronted with that which is lawful or unlawful *halal* or *haram*.

8.

وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَن تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَى (20:82)

“Indeed I am all-forgiver toward him who repents, becomes faithful and acts righteously, and then follows guidance.” (20:82)

1. Repentance is only useful for the acts that were performed before the repentance, and not for those acts that one performed afterwards.

2. The forgiveness of Allah only applies to the sins from which one has repented, and not to other sins.

9.

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا
(25:63)

“The servants of the All-beneficent are those who walk humbly on the earth, and when the ignorant address them, say, ‘Peace!’”
(25:63)

1. The following two attributes of believers are mentioned in this verse: 1) Believers are people who walk the Earth with dignity and humbleness 2) When believers witness a bad deed being performed by the ignorant, or when they hear despicable speech arising from ignorance, they answer in peace without sin.

2. Imam Sadiq has said that the phrase “the servants of Allah” refers to those who move according to their nature, and avoid arrogance. Some have said that it refers to those who live with knowledge and patience, and do not lose their grace and dignity when faced with ignorance.

10.

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَ تَكَرَّرُوا اللَّهُ كَثِيرًا وَ انْتَصَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا وَ سَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ (26:227)

“Barring those who have faith and do righteous deeds and remember Allah greatly, and aid each other after they have been wronged. And the wrongdoers will soon know at what goal they will end up.” (26:227)

In *Al-Kafi*¹⁰, it is narrated that Abi ‘Abiddah said that Imam Sadiq said that the most difficult obligation that Allah has placed on His servants is the numerous *dhikr* (remembrance and invocation) of Allah. Imam Sadiq went on to clarify that by the *dhikr* of Allah he was not referring to “*Subaha Allah wa al-Hamdu lillah wa la Ilaha illa Allah wa Allahu Akbar*,” although this is also a *dhikr* of Allah; the *dhikr* of Allah refers to the moments when the human being is confronted with that which is *halal* or *haram*, and so remembers Allah; if the thing is *halal* they act according to it, and if it is sinful and disobedient, they abstain from it.

The numerous remembrances of Allah make the human being constantly aware of Allah, and move him or her towards *Haqq* (truth). This *Haqq* results in the consent and approval of Allah, and turns the person away from untruths that He does not love.

“وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ” : “And those who oppress should know to what final place of turning they shall turn back”: This is the promise of the flag of patience; it is the hope of the revolutionaries engaged in the global movement of *Tawhid*. When they fight and stand up to worldwide oppression and hegemony, these revolutionaries are certain that they will topple the global regime of oppression and injustice, and that the righteous will be victorious (21:105).

11.

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ (29:8)

“We have enjoined man to be good to his parents. But if they urge you to ascribe to Me as partner that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. To Me will be your return, whereat I will inform you concerning that which you used to do.” (29:8)

This verse reprimands those who, at the insistence of their parents, turn away from their belief in the Divine religion.

It has been said that Bahr bin Abi Hakim said that his father went to the Prophet and asked him whom he should serve and be kind to, to which the Prophet replied, his mother. He asked whom he should serve after his mother, to which the Prophet replied again, his mother. He asked another time, whom to serve after her, to which the Prophet replied a third time, his mother. Yet again, he asked whom he should serve after her, to which the Prophet replied, his father, and then after his father, his close relatives.

The Context of the Revelation:

This verse describes Sa'd bin Abi Waqas¹¹. He was very good to his parents. When he became a Muslim, his mother went to the deserts around Mecca and declared that if her son did not turn away from the religion of Muhammad, she would kill herself with the hot stones. The news reached Sa'd. His response was that now that the issue of his religion was at stake then let her die. Thus, this verse was revealed.

1. Obeying one's parents is obligatory, except when they command the individual to become a polytheist, or to cease believing in Allah.

12.

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ
(31:18)

“Do not turn your cheek disdainfully from the people, and do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed Allah does not like any swaggering braggart.” (31:18)

In *Majma' al-Bayan*¹², the sentence “وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ” “And do not turn your face away from people in contempt,” has been interpreted to mean that one should never turn one’s face away from, or speak insultingly to, people. Tabarsi has attributed this interpretation to Imam Sadiq and Ibn Abbas.

13.

وَاقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَاعْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ (31:19)

“Be modest in your bearing, and lower your voice. Indeed the ungainliest of voices is the donkey’s voice.” (31:19)

1. The verse indicates the necessity of moderation in one’s speech and actions.

14.

فَسَنذَكِّرُونَ مَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ وَأَفْوِضُ أَمْرِي إِلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ (40:44)

“Soon you will remember what I tell you, and I entrust my affair to Allah. Indeed Allah sees best the servants.” (40:44)

Tafwiz (delegation), *tawakul* (relying, entrusting) and *taslim* (submission) are three dimensions in the path to worship. The lowest and most superficial of the three is *tawakul*, the next is *tafwiz*, and the best is *taslim*.

15.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصِحُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ (49:6)

“O you who have faith! If a profligate [person] should bring you some news, verify it, lest you should visit [harm] on some people out of ignorance, and then become regretful for what you have done.” (49:6)

The Meaning of the Words

1.1 “فاسق”: This is an individual who has parted from obedience, and has turned to sin and disobedience.

1. Allah says in this verse that when one receives news from an evildoer, one should verify the information. We are warned not to trust in the news delivered by evildoers; in this way, one of the causes of ignorance is removed.

2. These are the four conditions for accepting news: first, the news-bearer is truthful; second, the news-bearer accepts the Book of Allah, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, and consensus (*ijma'*); third, the news in question does not contradict other news; fourth, that people in that particular attention be.

16.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَ لَا تَجَسَّسُوا وَ لَا يَغْتَابَ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا أ يُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرَهُنَّ مُوهٍ وَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ (49:12)

“O you who have faith! Avoid much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy on or backbite one another. Will any of you love to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would hate

it. And be wary of Allah; indeed Allah is all-clement, all-merciful.”
(49:12)

The Prophet has said that whoever dies after having repented for their acts of backbiting will be the last person to enter Heaven. Conversely, the person who dies without repenting for backbiting will be the first person to enter Hell.

One day, the Prophet and his companions were sitting, when suddenly they discerned the foul smell of carrion. The companions asked where the smell was coming from, and the Prophet replied that a group of hypocrites (*munafiqin*) telling lies about, and that was what caused the stench.

It has been narrated in a *hadith* that when a person speaks of someone’s faults or flaws, Allah deems that fault as bad as backbiting. If a person mentions a fault in them that they do not have, then you have committed slander.

It has been said that Jabir said that the Prophet warned against backbiting, for the sin of backbiting is more serious than the sin of adultery. The Prophet explained that when a man commits adultery and repents of that sin, Allah will forgive him; however, a person who backbites will only be forgiven once the person whom they sinned against forgives them.

1. This verse forbids suspicion. سوء ظن.
2. Suspicion is a sin, and to act upon one’s suspicion is also a sin.
3. Backbiting is one of the greater sins.
4. Spying into the affairs of other Muslims is *haram*.
5. The prohibition against backbiting is specific to Muslims.

6. A believer seeks the good of others. He or she does not backbite, desires peace rather than war, and says sorry for his or her faults.

7. It is obligatory upon the believer to be optimistic about others, and not to think the worst when situations appear to cast others in a bad light.

17.

وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ (104:1)

“Woe to every scandal-monger and slanderer,” (104:1)

1. This verse indicates that one should not hurt others by using harsh or rude words or signs, or by seeking faults in them.

18.

الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ (104:2)

“who amasses wealth and counts it over.” (104:2)

19.

يَحْسَبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ (104:3)

“He supposes his wealth will make him immortal!” (104:3)

The greedy individual thinks that worldly wealth will give them eternal existence, but this is not so. Material wealth guarantees neither prosperity nor happiness in this world, and nor is it of any value in the afterlife.

20.

كَلَّا لَيُبَدِّلَنَّا فِي الْحُطَمَةِ (104:4)

“No indeed! He will surely be cast into the Crusher.” (104:4)

1. This verse, which is a continuation of the verse above, indicates that worldly wealth cannot make an individual immortal. Further, it is possible to be sent to Hell as a result of one’s wealth.

2. Hell has seven stations: جهنم، حطمه، لظى، سقر، سعير، جحيم و هاويه. Hell, Crusher, *Laza*(Furnace)(70.15) *Saqar*(the Scorching (Fire)(74.42) *Saeir*(the Blaze)(84.12) *Jahim*(the Fiery Furnace)(82.14) and *Hawyah* (the Plunging) (101.9)

21.

وَمَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا الْحُطَمَةُ (104:5)

“And what will show you what is the Crusher?” (104:5)

22.

نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمَوْقِدَةُ (104:6)

“[It is] the fire of Allah, set ablaze,” (104:6)

23.

الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ (104:7)

“which will overspread the hearts.” (104:7)

1. This verse indicates that hellfire does not only burn the bodies of the people in Hell; rather, it also burns their life and their inner being, whereas the fire of this world burns only the body.

24.

إِنَّهَا عَلَيْهِمْ مُّوَصَّدَةٌ (104:8)

“Indeed it will close in upon them” (104:8)

In *Majma' al-Bayan* says that that Imam Sadiq said that in the afterlife, disbelievers and polytheists will reproach the believers in Hell, saying that *tawhid* must not have solved any of their problems for Allah has placed believers and disbelievers alike in Hell. At this point, Allah will show honour towards the people of *tawhid*; He will command the angels to intercede on behalf of the people of *tawhid*, and they will do so. Then Allah will command the prophets to intercede, and they will do so. Then He will command the believers to intercede, and they will do so. Then Allah will say that he is more compassionate than all of them, and He will command them to exit the fire by his mercy and compassion, and they will all do so.

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Endnotes

¹ Divine wisdom.

² *Awsaf al Ashraf - The Attributes of the Noble*, Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, translated by Ali Quli Qara'i, *al-Tawhid Islamic Journal*, Vol.11, No.3, No.4.

³ See: *Transcendent Ethics Collection of the Selected Papers of the 15th Mulla Sadra Conference*, 22 May 2012, Tehran , Persian (2012).

⁴ The translation of Quran verses has been used from the translation of Nasr, Shakir, Pickthall, Yusufali and Qarib.

⁵ "Blood money" being paid out to the family of victims according to the Islamic Law of Equal Retaliation (*Qisas*).

⁶ *Nur al-thaqaliyn*, vol 3, p 264, Hadith 98.

⁷ *Al-Dur Al-Manthur*, vol 4, p 225; *Tafsir al-Tabari* vol 15, p 166.

⁸ *Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol 4, p 270, Hadith 5.

⁹ *Tafsir al-Burhan*, vol 2, p 470, Hadith 4; *Muhaj al-Sadiqin*, vol 5, page 357.

¹⁰ *Al-Kāfī* is a Twelver Shi'ī ḥ adīth collection compiled by Muhammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī. (c. 250 AH/864 CE - 329 AH/941 CE).

¹¹ Sa' d ibn Abī Waqqās (Arabic: سعد بن أبي وقاص) was of the companions of the prophet Mohammad. Sa'd was the seventeenth person to embrace Islam at the age of seventeen. He is mainly known for his commandership in the conquest of Persia in 636.

¹² *Majma' al-Bayan fi-Tafsir al-Qur'an* (Arabic: مجمع البيان في تفسير القرآن) is a tafsir by the 12th century Imami scholar Shaykh Tabarsi. This commentary is a comprehensive classical tafsir. Tabarsi was a man of great erudition. He was a master of Arabic and a noted theologian and jurist.[1] The work is considered one of the most authoritative Imami Qur'an commentaries. Al-Tabrasi's method is to take up one group of verses at a time and discuss *qira'at*, language and grammar before providing a detailed commentary on the text, based on both Sunni and Shi'i sources and incorporating his own views. His commentary for each passages are divided into five sections: introductory discourse, reading guide, language discourse, revelation and circumstances surrounding it, and meaning.

Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah on the Concept of *tawḥīd*

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Abstract

This article deals primarily with the worldview of the Persian Kubrawī master, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah (d. 650/1253), on the concept of *tawḥīd* (God's Oneness). Also, some examples of methodological approaches to the mystical expressions (*iṣṭilāḥāt*), utilized by Ḥamūyah and Muḥyiddin Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), have been compared in this work.

Keywords: Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah, Muḥyiddin Ibn 'Arabī, *tawḥīd* (God's Oneness), Kubrawī, *waḥdat* (unity), *asmā'* (God's Names), *insān al-kāmil* (Perfect Human Being)

One of the well-known Kubrawī masters, Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah, who referred to Muḥyiddin Ibn 'Arabī as *daryā-yi mawwāj wa bī-nihāyat* ("endless and fluctuating sea"), and whom Ibn 'Arabī called in turn *kanzun lā yanfaḍ* ("an unending treasure"),¹ wrote about the attributes of *baḥr-i waḥdat* ("the sea of unity"). He explains that the very source of the sea of unity perpetually creates new waves (*dar talāṭum ast*). Each *mawj* ("wave") causes the creation of several *fawj* ("waves"), and every *fawj* brings different contrasting patterns (*ashkāl-i mukhtalifah wa mutabāyinah*).² Here, Ḥamūyah refers to two groups who approach and realize these patterns (or shapes) differently.

Among these two, the group of *birūniyān* (“outsiders”) becomes bewildered (*mutaḥayyir*) by experiencing *kathrat-i ashkāl* (“the multiplicity of these shapes”).³ Every one of the “outsiders” is bewildered and entrapped by one of the shapes or patterns produced by the appearance of multiple waves.⁴ The Kubrawī master affirms that each of these shapes (*shikl*) functions as a level or stage (*darakah*) of *jaḥīm* (“Hell”).⁵ On the other hand, the second group, *darūniyān* (“insiders”) are those whose ‘*ayn al-yaqīn*’ (“eye of certainty”) is fixed upon the concept of *waḥdat* (“unity”).⁶ Ḥamūyah’s description of the “insiders,” who “do not tremble with every wind (*bād*), and do not look at [i.e., pay no need to] every dust particle [*khāk*, i.e., mundane matters],”⁷ manifests the characteristics of the “Perfect Man.” (*al-insān al-kāmil*).

The continuation of this description provides us with a more comprehensive understanding of Ḥamūyah’s preferred group. As the Kubrawī master states, the *ātaṣh* (“fire”) of the insiders is *āb-i ḥayāt* (“the water of life”). This water of life runs through the desert of *fu’ād* (“inner realm of the heart”), the lands of *qulūb* (“hearts”) and *mufūs* (“selves”).⁸ Then, Ḥamūyah concludes that these “insiders, [are able to] view the spiritual states in their totality [*ishān dar kull-i aḥwāl nāẓir*].”⁹

In order to pinpoint the essential characteristic of the Perfect Man in his realization of the concept of *waḥdat* (“unity”), Ḥamūyah chooses a set of creative allegorical combinations. As mentioned above, he states that the “outsiders’ fire” represents the “water of life.” This seemingly contradictory combination of “fire and water” perhaps manifests the unique characteristic of these Perfect Human Beings. The distinctive characteristics of the “insiders,” in Ḥamūyah’s words, begin with their “eye of

certainty, which is fixed upon the concept of unity.” This type of *waḥdat*, with its practical realization, based on spiritual *yaqīn* (“certainty”), provides the Perfect Man with the quality of dissolving paradoxical multiplicities into a vision of unity. For the Perfect Man, the *‘ilm al-yaqīn* (“knowledge of certainty”) turns into one unifying vision of existence, through the *‘ayn al-yaqīn* (“eye of certainty”). In other words, because of the clarity of mystical vision provided through the eye of certainty, as Ḥamūyah explains, *darūniyān* are able to look into *kull-i aḥwāl* (“all states”) of the Path at once. This unifying, collective and *kullī* (“universal”) vision of existence is the outcome of dissolving multiple and *juz’ī* (“partial”) understanding of existence through experiencing the qualities of *waḥdat* (“unity”). Therefore, as seen above, in Ḥamūyah’s approach, “unity” takes place between paradoxical elements such as *ātaṣh* (“fire”) and *āb* (“water”). The Perfect Man’s fire becomes *āb-i ḥayāt* (“the water of life”), which runs through the valley of *fu’ād* (“the inner heart”).¹⁰ The fire seems to take upon the duty of burning partial multiplicities into a unifying and clarified manifestation of the water which is the source of existence (*āb-i ḥayāt*). The unified drops of water (which have been turned from multiplicities to unity), then wash and renew the very inner heart of existence.

Ḥamūyah utilizes the *singular* form of the term *fu’ād* (instead of its plural, *af’idāh*), along with the *plural* forms of *qulūb* (“hearts”) and *nufūs* (“souls”).¹¹ It seems that, in Ḥamūyah’s description, through the Perfect Man’s perpetually renewed *yaqīn* (“certainty”), which circumambulates around *waḥdat* (“unity”), *wādī-yi fu’ād* (“the valley of the inner heart”/ “the inner heart of existence”), becomes renewed, and stays aware

and alive. As a result, the rest of existence (represented as “hearts and souls,” in Ḥamūyah’s words), depends upon this water of life (i.e., the Perfect Man’s unifying certainty) for its survival. The focus of the Perfect Man’s eye of certainty upon the essence of unity (as mentioned in Ḥamūyah’s description: *darūniyān dar‘ayn-i yaqīn-i waḥdat thābitand*¹²), enables him to reach a practical realization of the entirety of existence in the abode of *waḥdat* (“unity”). We may then conclude that the Perfect Man’s comprehensive consciousness of *wujūd*, allows him to realize the entire existence as the multiple/*plural* “forms” of *qulūb* and *nufūs* (“hearts and souls”), and also as the only one “reality” manifested in *fu’ād* (“the *single* inner heart of existence”). In other words, the Perfect Man is able to come to the realization of *wujūd* in both aspects of *katlrah* and *waḥdah* at once.

The ability to *naẓar* (“look at/look into”) the entire states of the Path (or experiencing the entire existence) in one single experience becomes possible through the *‘ayn al-yaqīn* (“eye of certainty”). In Ḥamūyah’s view, in order for the Perfect Man to accomplish this unique task, the crucial eye of “certainty” has to be fixed upon “unity.”

Ibn ‘Arabī also explains how this “eye of certainty” provides a clarity through which Perfect Human Beings are able to correct their realization of existence.

In other words, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s understanding, the eye of certainty seems to provide the Perfect Man with a more genuine awareness of reality. This awareness, as Ibn ‘Arabī seems to suggest, stems from a certain type of knowledge with unique characteristics:

Imagination follows the authority (*taqlīd*) of that which sense perception gives to it. Reflection considers imagination and finds therein individual things (*mufradāt*). Reflection would love to configure a form to be preserved by the rational faculty. Hence it attributes some of the individual things to others. In this attribution it may be mistaken concerning the actual situation, or it may be correct. Reason judges upon this basis, so it also may be mistaken or correct. Hence, reason is the follower of authority, and it may make mistakes. Since the Sufis saw the mistakes of those who employ consideration, they turned to the path in which there is no confusion so that they might take things from the Eye of Certainty (*ʿayn al-yaqīn*) and become qualified by certain knowledge.¹³

This type of knowledge, through the “eye of certainty,” leads to the One. That is why Ibn ‘Arabī tells us that “this is the knowledge of the prophets, the friends, and the possessors of knowledge among the Folk of Allah.”¹⁴

As Ḥamūyah states in his account of the *darūniyān*’s characteristics, “The multiplicity of *ṣuwar* (“forms”) does not deprive them of *maʿnā* (“meaning”), and colors and [multiple] realms [of the world] do not become barriers to their *tamkīn* (“stability”) [in the Path].”¹⁵ As a result of this assured recognition of “unity” put into constant practice, multiplicities are guided towards a unifying reservoir in the Perfect Man’s awareness.

In another section of his masterpiece, *al-Miṣbāḥ fi’l-Taṣawwuf*, Ḥamūyah returns to the concept of *wahdat* and its reciprocation with the characteristics of the Perfect Man. In this instance, the Kubrawī master refers to the concept of “unity” by focusing on

one of his favorite symbolisms, the letters of the alphabet. He considers the letter *Alif* (A), the most essential letter, because it represents unity. *Alif*, as Ḥamūyah explains, "... is secluded (*muẓmar*) in each letter, both in meaning (*ma'nā*) and form (*lafẓ*)"¹⁶ In Ḥamūyah's view, *Alif* by itself, represents the Absolute in the realm of *aḥadiyyah* ("exclusive unity") or *Dhāt* ("Essence"). All other letters, in Ḥamūyah's approach, characterize the concept of *katḥrat* ("multiplicity") or the level of *wāḥidiyyah* ("inclusive unity").

Ḥamūyah concludes that the Essence (which by Itself is absolutely unknown) is manifested throughout "existence." Thus, multiplicity is represented in Ḥamūyah's symbolism by all the letters of the alphabet except *Alif*. He states clearly that "from [the letter] *bā'* [i.e., the second letter of the Arabic alphabet] to the letter *yā'* [or the last letter of the Arabic alphabet] are all the letters [which utilized] in form (*ṣūrat*) [to manifest] the expansion (*baṣṭ*) of the Essence of *Alif*."¹⁷ Although these letters (i.e., from *bā'* to *yā'* or from second to the last) are limited in number, he seems to view them as metaphors for boundless and infinite "signs of multiplicity in existence."

In Ḥamūyah's view, each of these characters of multiplicity, represents or manifests *Alif* (i.e., the Absolute), both in form and meaning.¹⁸

Ḥamūyah further delves into the very essential and intertwined ties between "*Alif* and everything else." He explains that "everything came into existence from *Alif*, and It exists in everything, and it is *in* everything and *out* of everything, [rather] this whole [existence] is *Alif*."¹⁹ This description of *Alif*, and its

substantial reciprocation with the concept of multiplicity, remind us of a similar approach by Ibn ‘Arabī to the function of the Absolute’s Names. Ibn ‘Arabī elaborates on the ties between the Names and existence, especially human beings, as follows:

In respect of Itself the Essence has no name, since It is not the locus of effects, nor is It known by anyone. There is no name to denote It without relationships, nor with any assurance (*tamkīn*). For names act to make known and to distinguish, but this door [to knowledge of the Essence] is forbidden to anyone other than God, since “None knows God but God.” *So the names exist through us and for us. They revolve around us and become manifest within us. Their properties are with us, their goals are toward us, their expressions are of us, and their beginnings are from us. If not for them, we would not be. If not for us, they would not be.*²⁰ [Emphasis added]

In the same way that “Names” become manifest within us, revolve around us and exist through us as the *tajalliyāt* (“manifestations”) of the Absolute (according to Ibn ‘Arabī), the “letters” function as the expansion of the Essence of the *Alif* that exists inside and outside of everything (according to Ḥamūyah).

In his description of the ties between *Alif* and everything else (or the rest of the letters), Ḥamūyah views the combination of the letters (from second to the last), or existence in its totality, as the *maḥḥar* (“loci of manifestation”) for *Alif* (i.e., the Absolute).²¹ He also considers *Alif* as the Source that makes the manifestation of everything else [or every other letter] possible

(*muḥḥir*). Every letter (or any form of multiplicity) reveals the principles (*mabānī*) through which the Existence of *Alif* is manifested.²² *Alif* is also *bānī* (“the Founder/Foundation”) of all letters.²³

Although Ḥamūyah states that the streams of water (or letters) are the same as the Sea of Life (or *Alif*),²⁴ this sameness does not suggest a type of uniformity in their essence. Ḥamūyah further explains that “the letters (*ḥurūf*) function as the arteries (*urūq*) of *Alif* and the meaning of *Alif* flows through the letters like [their] spirit.”²⁵

Through explaining substantial correlation between *Alif* and the rest of the letters, Ḥamūyah creatively delves into the concepts of *anwār* (“lights”) and *asrār-i ilāhī* (“Divine secrets”).²⁶ By explaining these concepts, he points out the role of the Perfect Human Beings in reaching *dūst* (“the Friend”/the Absolute”).²⁷ He seems to compare each letter with one spark of light which performs as both *mishkāt* and *hijāb* (“niche and veil”) for the Divine secrets.²⁸ The Perfect Man needs to remove these veils which are scattered over the reality of spiritual meanings (*niqāb ba-rūyi ma‘ānī*).²⁹ Ḥamūyah sees these veils (or all the letters except *Alif*) to be like *shikl-i ādam* (“the human body”) that veils *jamhar-i insānī* (“the human essence or the essence of being human”).³⁰ The human essence is also considered by Ḥamūyah to be a veil for the *ṣirr* (“secret”) of *subḥānī* (“Divine”), *raḥmānī* (“Merciful”) and *sulṭānī* (“Majestic”).³¹ In order to reach the Friend, the Perfect Man needs to pass through all these veils. By mentioning the secrets of *raḥmānī* (Merciful) and *sulṭānī* (Majestic), Ḥamūyah refer to the Divine secrets related to both aspects of *jamāl* and *jalāl* (“Absolute’s Beauty and Majesty”).

By this “combination of Divine secrets,” Ḥamūyah, probably point to the fact that the Perfect Man is not able to reach a collected awareness of reality beyond the multitude of veils, except by approaching the Absolute in both realms of *jamāl* and *jalāl*. In other words, in order to reach a collected awareness of reality, one needs to consider both aspects of *tashbīh* (similarity) and *tanzīh* (incomparability).

We might state that in Humaūyah’s view, the ardent mystic of the Path does not attain the *secret of perfection* for reaching the “Friend” (or *dūst* in Ḥamūyah’s term), except by “having both eyes” (or *dhū’l-‘aynayn*, in Ibn ‘Arabī’s words). In his *Futūḥāt al-Makkiyyah*, Ibn ‘Arabī explains this mystical progression as follows:

He who sees the day does not see the night, and he who sees the night does not see the day. The actual situation is manifest and nonmanifest, since He is the Manifest and the Nonmanifest. So there is a Real and a creation. If you witness creation, you will not see the Real, and if you witness the Real, you will not see creation. You will not see both creation and the Real. On the contrary, *you will witness this in that and that in this- a witnessing through knowledge- since one is a wrapper and the other enwrapped.*³² [Emphasis added]

Ibn ‘Arabī also refers to the reciprocity between the twenty-eight letters of the alphabet (as the manifestations of existence), and *nafas al-Raḥmān* (“the Breath of the Merciful”). Ibn ‘Arabī makes an essential correlation between the All-Merciful’s Breath, and the human breath. He states as follows:

The Essence of the Divine Words, twenty-eight in number (i.e., the number of the letters in the Arabic Alphabet) and endowed with multiple aspects, emanate from the Breath of Merciful, which is the Cloud where our Lord stood at the time where He created the world. The Cloud corresponds to the human breath and the manifestation of the world out of the void and into the various levels of being is like the human breath emanating from the heart, spreading out through the mouth and forming letters on the way. These letters are like the manifestation of the world from the Cloud, which is the Breath of God the Real and Merciful spreading into the specific levels [of existence] out of a potential and non-physical expanse, that is from the void filled by creation.³³

Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah's approach to the letter *Alif* and Its comprehensiveness as the Foundation of all letters, which, as mentioned earlier, "... is secluded (*muzmar*) in each letter both in meaning (*ma'nā*) and form (*lafḍ*),"³⁴ also leads us to the realization of *Alif* as the Absolute in the realm of *aḥadiyyah* (exclusive unity), or, as in Ibn 'Arabī's words, *'amā* ("the Cloud"). The rest of the letters, which symbolize the concept of *katbrāh* ("multiplicity") represent the manifestations of the *Alif*.

Concluding remarks

By looking at the creative approaches of Sa'd al-Dīn Ḥamūyah and their comparison with the views of Muḥyiddin Ibn 'Arabī, this article presented some examples of functionality of the concept of *tawḥīd* in shaping a multi-faceted and substantial *weltanschauung* for mystical wayfaring. The concept of *tawḥīd* constitutes the very foundation of the "mystical wayfaring" in Islamic mysticism. Also, from the ontological standpoint, mystical wayfaring manifests how the "entire existence" is

constantly observed and contemplated by the “Perfect Human Being” (*insān al-kāmil*) within the worldview of *tawḥīd*.

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The *Fedeli d'Amore* in East and West: Rūzbihān Baqlī and Dante

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Abstract

What was happening in the Middle Ages in Europe was not only the military encounter between East and West; Islam and Christianity. Despite the Crusades, the cultural and intellectual influences which each side took from the other was much greater in that period than before. Moreover, the Islamic cultural and intellectual influences in Andalusia and also in the southern part of Italy, especially in Sicily, opened a new window toward Europe. Numerous books in Persian and Arabic, among them philosophical ones, were arriving from the East. Not just the translations and the commentaries of the Greek books, but also the books written by Muslim thinkers themselves came to be taught and discussed at many important European universities and centers such as Paris, Padua, Bologna and Toledo. In this situation with extensive intellectual exchanges, a Florentine poet and thinker like Dante could not be far from what was happening in his surroundings. Did he know Islam and more specifically Sufism? Why did he become a member of the *Fedeli d'amore* in which one finds much similarity to the Sufi circles in Islam? We are not sure if Dante knew Rūzbihān Baqlī, and we do not want to affirm this point in this article, but we can find the ways which enable us to arrive to the same intersection of their thought from different directions. Rūzbihān Baqlī, as one of the greatest Sufis in Islamic world and in Persia, expressed

ideas in his books especially *'Abhar al- 'āshiqīn* which could be a guide for someone like Dante. Rūzbihān believes that every terrestrial love is a path to reach Divine Love; all kinds of love inevitably arrives to the same point. Did this idea influence the way Dante chose to love Beatrice?

We shall try to analyse this and similar questions in this article.

Key words: *Fedeli d'amore*, Rūzbihān Baqlī, Dante, *'Abhar al- 'āshiqīn*, *Divine Comedy*, *'ishq*, Divine Love, Platonic Love, *'irfān*, mysticism, *Sophia Perennis*, Sufism, Islam.

Introduction

In both the Islamic and the Christian traditions there developed from the beginning currents of love mysticism and emphasis upon Divine Love as a path to reach God. In Christianity, some of the great early figures such as Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Saint Augustine emphasized the path of love, but they were also devoted to the path of knowledge, gnosis and illumination. We also see in the Middle Ages in such figures as Erigena, Meister Eckhart and Dante himself this emphasis on Divine Knowledge along with Divine Love. It was in this complex contest that there appeared in the 7th/13th century the school of the *Fedeli d'amore* in Italy, an esoteric and secret society which also had political and social dimensions.

As for the Islamic tradition, we already see in the early woman Sufi mystic Rābi'a al-'Adawiyyah the strong presence of love mysticism. It was, however, especially in Khorasan that a school of Sufism emphasizing love began to manifest itself from the 3rd/9th century onward with such figure as Bāyazīd Bastāmī and later the great Sufi poets Abu'l-Majd Sanā'ī, Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār and Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī in all of whom, however, love was combined with gnosis. Rūmī, one of whose titles is "The King of Love" (Sulṭān-i 'ishq), wrote the *Mathnawī*, which is called "the ocean of gnosis" (*baḥr-i*

ma'rifat). Besides the poetic tradition, there arose in the 6th/12th century in Persia a new form of Sufi writing in which metaphysical knowledge was expressed in an unprecedented fashion in the language of love. The originator of this school was Aḥmad Ghazzālī whose *Sawānīḥ* was written in Persian and marks the beginning of a new genre of Sufi literature. He was followed in this endeavor by ‘Ayn-al-Quḍāt Hamadānī, Fakhr al-Dīn ‘Iraqī and Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī in certain of his works.

One of the greatest figure of this form of love mysticism was Rūzbihān Baqlī of Shiraz. The author of many works, he is known in this field of love mysticism especially for his ‘*Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*’ (‘The Jasmine of Lovers’) which is one of the masterpieces of Persian Sufi literature. In his *En Islam iranien*, H. Corbin refers to this school as the *Fedeli d’amore* of Persia¹ and discusses and analyzes the thought of Rūzbihān under that title.¹

Our goal in this study is to analyze and to compare the ideas of the “*Fedeli d’amore*” of Iran and those of the West. More particularly we shall concentrate on the two colossal figures of Rūzbihān and Dante by first analyzing the theme of love in ‘*Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*’ on the one hand and the works of Dante, especially the *Divine Comedy* and *La Vita Nuova* on the other. Then we shall try to compare and contrast the views of these two great figures of Islamic and Christian mysticism and spirituality.

Rūzbihān Baqlī, School of Shiraz and the *Fedeli d’Amore* of Persia

Sufism developed in Persia from the 2nd/8th century onward primarily in Khorasan and flowered into a school that emphasized love (*‘ishq*) without overlooking sapiential knowledge or gnosis (*‘irfān*). This school produced such luminaries as Bāyazīd Baṣṭāmī, Abū Sa‘īd Abi’-Khayr and later the three great masters of Persian Sufi poetry: Sanā’ī, ‘Aṭṭār and Jalāl al-Dīn Balkhī known in the

West as Rūmī and in the East as Mawlānā (Mevlana in Turkish) and also Mawlawī. But Sufism also developed in Isfahan and Shiraz and somewhat later in Tabriz. The School of Shiraz is associated in its beginnings with Ibn Khafif who emphasized Divine Love and this School continued to produce many important figures devoted to the Sufism of love from Rūzbihān to Ḥāfīz and beyond.² It is for this reason that H. Corbin refers to this group as the *Fedeli d'amore* of Persia borrowing this term from 7th/13th century European history when a secret society appeared in Italy with such a name, a group to which Dante belonged.³

Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī

Abū Muḥammad Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, whom we have chosen as the main figure among the *Fedeli d'amore* of Persia to compare with Dante, was born in the town of Fasā (in the province of Fars) in southern Persia, a town that lies 140 kilometers from Shiraz, in 522/1128. He was attracted to the spiritual life from his youth. For five or six years he lived in the desert in caves, then discovered Sufism, being initiated to the path by Jamāl al-Dīn Khalīl Fasā'ī. Rūzbihān also studied the formal Islamic sciences such as *fiqh* (jurisprudence) with some of the '*ulamā*' of Shiraz. He finally settled in Shiraz where for fifty years he preached in the 'Atīq Mosque and also guided disciples upon the spiritual path. He is also said to have traveled to Iraq, Syria and Egypt and to have made the pilgrimage to Makkah twice. He died in Shiraz in 606/1209 and his mausoleum still stands in the middle of that city where it is visited often by both pilgrims and the curious.⁴

Rūzbihān was a very prolific author, leaving behind such major Sufi texts as *Kashf al-asrār*, *Laṭā'if al-bayān*, '*Arā'is al-bayān*, *Sharḥ-i shaṭhiyyāt*, *Sayr al-arwāḥ* and '*Abhar al-āshiqīn*. Some of these works are in Arabic and others in Persian. Rūzbihān was also a poet and apparently had composed a *dīwān* named *Dīwān al-ma'ārif* which is, however, lost.⁵ But some of his poems have been preserved in such later works on Sufism as *Tuḥfah ahl al-'irfān* and

Rūḥ al-janān. Rūzbihān also came to be known in Persia as “the master of words of ecstasy” (*shaykh al-shaṭṭāḥ*) because of his celebrated collection and commentary upon the words of ecstasy or theophanic locutions (*shaṭḥiyyāt*) of earlier Sufis such as Bāyazīd and Ḥallāj, words or sayings that make no sense externally or even appear as blasphemy but contain inwardly the profoundest esoteric meanings.⁶ The *Shaṭḥiyyāt* includes such utterances as *subḥānī* (glory be unto me) attributed to Bāyazīd and *ana'l-Ḥaqq* (I am the Truth), the famous saying of Ḥallāj that cost him his life.

***'Abhar al-'āshiqīn* and his idea about Love (*'ishq*)**

To study Rūzbihān as a member of the class of Sufis called the *Fedeli d'amore* of Persia, we turn to the masterpiece on love by this great Sufi of Shiraz, entitled *'Abhar al-'āshiqīn*.⁷ At the end of the first chapter (*faṣl*) the author himself provides an index of the titles of all the thirty-three chapters of the book on Love as follows:

Chapter One—On Kindness between the Lover and the Beloved

Chapter Two—On the Introduction to the Book

Chapter Three—On the Mention of Legitimacy and Intellectual Witnesses Concerning Human Love

Chapter Four—On the Virtue of Lovers Who Combine Beauty and the Beautiful with Beautiful Beloved Ones

Chapter Five—On the Virtue of Beauty and Beauty and the Beautiful

Chapter Six—On the Quality of the Substance of Human Love and Its Essence

Chapter Seven—On the Exposition of the Cause for the Subsistence of Love in the Lover

Chapter Eight—On Journeyers upon the Path for Those for Whom there Does Not Exist at the Beginning Human Love in Divine Love

Chapter Nine—On the Description of Lovers Whose Beginning Is Human Love

Chapter Ten—On the Beginning of Love

Chapter Eleven—On the Beginning of Love and Its Test

Chapter Twelve—On the Necessity of Love and Its Effect

Chapter Thirteen—On the Training of Love

Chapter Fourteen—On the Descent of Love

Chapter Fifteen—On Love Making the Heart of the Lover Its Abode

Chapter Sixteen—On the Stations of Human Love and Its Progress to Stations of Lordly Love

Chapter Seventeen—On the Summary of Human Love

Chapter Eighteen—On the Error of the People of Pretention Concerning Human Love

Chapter Nineteen—On the Beginning of Divine Love

Chapter Twenty—On the Beginning of Divine Love Which Is Servanthood

Chapter Twenty-One—On the Station of Sainthood in Love

Chapter Twenty-Two—On Contemplation Which Is the Wing of the Bird of Intimacy in the Station of Love

Chapter Twenty-Three—On the Fear of Lovers

Chapter Twenty-Four—On the Hope of Lovers

Chapter Twenty-Five—On the Ecstasy of Lovers

Chapter Twenty-Six—On the Certainty of Lovers

Chapter Twenty-Seven—On the Nearness of Lovers

Chapter Twenty-Eight—On the Unveiling of Lovers

Chapter Twenty-Nine—On the Vision of Lovers

Chapter Thirty—On the Love of Lovers

Chapter Thirty-One—On the Ardent Desire of Lovers

Chapter Thirty-Two—On the Perfection of Love⁸

The very titles of the chapters of *‘Abhar al-‘āshiqīn* as well as their content reveal the exhaustive and also profound treatment of the subject of Love by Rūzbihān and make this work one of the most significant of its genre in the Persian Sufi tradition.⁹ On the basis of this work alone Rūzbihān must be considered as one of the foremost figures in the class of Sufis whom Corbin calls “The *Fedeli d’amore* of Persia.”

Although the second chapter of this book is entitled “On the Introduction to the Book,” it is in the first chapter that Rūzbihān lays the foundation for the whole work by speaking in an autobiographical manner about his own spiritual journey and his reaching of the highest spiritual stations. He reveals to the reader who in reality this person Rūzbihān is who has authored what follows in his remarkable opus. Then, in chapter two he turns to a discussion of what Love is.¹⁰ He classifies *‘ishq* or Love into five categories: Divine Love (which in its most universal sense we can also call ardent or intense Love), intellectual love, spiritual love, natural love and animal love. This division is followed by a description of each category. He concludes the chapter by pointing out that Love is not the result of fallen human nature but is an abiding reality that has degrees and its own principles and is manifested in this world according to its own laws.

Strangely enough, although the title of chapter three concerns legitimacy and intellectual witnesses for human love, it is mostly about the Prophet of Islam and Divine Love.¹¹ In a chapter full of quotations from the Quran, *Hadīth* and also mention of sayings of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Rūzbihān emphasizes the centrality of Love for

the Divine in the soul of the Prophet and his being an intermediary between God and those of his chosen creatures who love Him. It was not without reason that he was called the “Friend or Lover of God (*ḥabīb Allāh*),” *ḥabīb* being derived from the root *ḥbb* and meaning both friend and lover as well as befriended and beloved. Rūzbihān affirms that the Prophet loved God and God loved him, and “his beauty was the theophany of the Divine Essence.”¹² To demonstrate the delicacy, centrality and power of love, Rūzbihān recites a remarkable poem:

Majnūn saw one day a dog in the desert. He kissed its foot and circled around it.

He was asked from where comes this love for the dog. He said it once crossed Laylā’s street.¹³

In chapter four after confirming that love, the lover and the beloved are all effects of Divine Love, Rūzbihān turns to the analysis of and commentary upon the famous *ḥadīth*, “The person who loves, then abstains, then hides it, and then dies, has died the death of a martyr” which in Islamic teachings means having gained paradise.¹⁴ In explaining this prophetic saying, the author seeks to answer why two people in this world come to love each other. He says that such people had encountered each other in the spiritual world before entering the realm of earthly existence, had seen the presence of the Divine Truth in each other and had developed intimacy with one another in the supernal world. Once in this world, they look upon each other with the same eye of Love, and recognize the other through the eye of spiritual intuition and so love each other. As for the act of hiding Love, its result is the immolation of the lover in the fire of Love. The author emphasizes this point by citing a powerful Arabic poem:

He who burns in the fire of Love is a martyr,
And He who is killed in the path of God is a martyr.¹⁵

Rūzbihān concludes by turning again to himself saying, “In his standing figure (*qāmat*) my heart experiences many resurrections; in beholding His Beauty there are in my soul many religions; in the pilgrimage to Him my heart possesses many esoteric truths; and in the arena of becoming connected to Him, my spirit has many struggles with the army of Love.¹⁶

Chapter five is the longest chapter of the book and deals with beauty and the beautiful or virtue that is combined with goodness and the good since the term *ḥusn* used by Rūzbihān in the title of this section (from which the word beautiful *mustaḥsan* derives) means beauty, virtue and goodness in both Arabic and Persian.¹⁷ This chapter speaks of the primordial nature (*fiṭrah*) of Adam, of the beauty of Joseph which reflected Divine Beauty, of Jacob’s love for Joseph whose beauty was the means to Divine Love and the saying of that perfect theophany of Divine Beauty the Prophet who said, “God is Beautiful and loves beauty.” Rūzbihān quotes many *ḥadīths* about beauty and adds that the secret (*sirr*) of God is in the theophany of His Beauty which is reflected in all of His creation. There is, however, a difference between man (the human being-*insān*) and other creatures. The beauty of man comes from the theophany of His Essence, while that of other creatures comes from the theophany of His Acts. The author adds that the difference between beauty and ugliness is that beauty is the mirror of His Kindness and Generosity while ugliness issues indirectly from his Lordship.

Following this long chapter, Rūzbihān then turns to human love and discusses the elements which, when all present and compounded together, place human love in the realm of the spiritual world.¹⁸ And when all levels of the human being are conquered by “the King of Love,” those who yearn for the Beloved seek Him even through the doors of the five sense. On the path to the Beloved the soul experiences hierarchic levels of Love that Rūzbihān calls familiarity (*ulfat*), intimacy (*uns*), intense friendship (*wadd*) and finally ardent Love (*‘ishq*) itself that conquers all.

The next chapter begins with the assertion that Love is a quality of the Sacred above and beyond all becoming.¹⁹ Before the creation of the world, God was Love, Lover and Beloved in Himself and then with the creation of Adam, the light of these eternal Qualities became manifested in Him and from Him. Rūzbihān then provides a commentary on the ‘‘Light Verse’’ of the Quran (24:35) which speaks of eternal and created light and their relation. The author adds that to the extent that man’s nature becomes purified from sin, both the form and inner essence or meaning (*ma‘nā*) become more purified in reflecting the Light of the Truth and they gain greater beauty derived from Divine Beauty.

Chapter eight concerns itself with those who do not begin with human love and then climb the ladder of perfection to Divine Love but move directly towards Divine Love.²⁰ They begin by combatting their carnal soul, performing acts of worship, invoking His Holy Name, making spiritual retreats and following the path of asceticism until the light of faith dominates their hearts. From there they reach the station of certainty (*yaqīn*), above that the station of unveiling (*mukāshafah*) and finally the vision of the Truth.

Whereas chapter eight deals with those who seek God but do not begin with human love, chapter nine is concerned with the descriptions of lovers who do commence the path of Love with human love.²¹ Rūzbihān describes their condition and mentions how their love begins with sorrow and describes in very poetic terms their state. With this chapter the first part of the book comes to an end, the part which in itself summarizes Rūzbihān’s teachings about Love and so in the next chapter the author returns to the beginning, expanding further in the chapters that follow the truths contained in the first chapters.

Chapters ten and eleven go back to the first steps of the journey of Love when Love begins to stir in the soul, causing the soul to seek (*talab*) and to search for the Beloved.²² But she is not easy to find and he is put through tests until Love appears, steals his reason

making him drunk through the unveiling of Her beauty. He traverses the state of his ego, goes beyond the passionate soul (*nafs-i ammārah*) and drinks the water of life. To make sure that we understand the necessity of the appearance of Love in the life of the soul, the author devotes chapter twelve to the necessity for the existence of Love and its effect upon the soul.²³ He mentions that the seed of Love was planted in the human heart from the beginning and that it had to grow inevitably into a tree whose roots are sunk in the clay of Adam and remain in the being of his progeny and whose branches stretch to Heaven. Then from time to time Eternal Love manifests itself in this human love in certain human beings.

In chapter thirteen Rūzbihān mentions that the capability to love was placed by God in the substance of the human soul and purifies the soul first through the *Sharī'ah* and the companionship of Love until Divine Beauty became manifested in it.²⁴ The souls of the lovers of God reach the state of purity through the path of both the *Sharī'ah* and the *Ḥaqīqah* (The Truth) and these lovers come to learn of the *ādāb*, the correct manners of acting and being, towards the station of Divine Lordship (*rubūbiyyat*). Then the purity of the invocation of the Names of God (*dhikr*) penetrates their hearts. They reach a stage where the Divine Truth (*Ḥaqq*) manifests Itself so that they can also contemplate the non-existence of the created order. From there the place of descent (*manzil*) of Eternal Love becomes manifest to them. The author adds that it is not possible to reach Merciful Love (*'ishq-i raḥmānī*) except through “created love,” the only exception to this rule being the contemplation of the *manzil* of pure Eternity. This exception is reserved for only the prophets and the purified gnostics. For others they must walk upon the spiritual path and face its many dangers, traversing many states which Rūzbihān mentions in the way that is similar to what is recounted in classical Sufi treatises on *aḥwāl* (states) and *maqāmāt* (stations).

The next three chapters return to the subject of the descent of Love into the human heart and inhabiting it.²⁵ He also deals therein with

the stations of human love, which he had treated before, and how they are elevated to the stations of Divine Love. He deals in greater detail than before with the conditions and states that the soul experiences in this process of elevation. He also describes in some detail what effect these experiences have upon the transformations of souls. He mentions that, “Human love is the ladder to Divine Love.”²⁶ In chapter seventeen he summarizes what he had said about human love, and follows with a chapter on some of the errors that those who experience human love are prone to make, pointing out especially the dangers of worldly passions.²⁷

Chapter nineteen returns to the theme of Divine Love and its growth in the human soul, but here Rūzbihān deals with the steps or more literally *manāzil* (way stations) of the path of the realization of Love. He enumerates twelve *manāzil* which occupy the next twelve chapters of *‘Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*. Enumerating the stages, steps or stations of the Sufi path became the preoccupation of many Sufi masters and authorities from the 3rd/9th century onward, from Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Hujwīrī, Kalābādhī, and ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī to Qushayrī whose *Risālat al-qushayriyyah* is still one of the most influential works of Sufi ethics and the description of the stations on the path to the full realization of Unity (*al-tawḥīd*).²⁸ Some Sufi authorities have mentioned seven stages or stations of spiritual ascent, some forty and some even more like the *Ṣad maydān* (“The Hundred Fields of Spiritual Battle”) of Anṣārī.

Rūzbihān follows this long tradition but summarizes the stages of the spiritual path in twelve (plus one) *maqāms* or stations as follows:

One—The Station of Servanthood (*‘ubūdiyyat*).

Two—The Station of Spiritual Guardianship (*walāyat/wilāyat*).

Three—The Station of Meditation (*murāqabat*).

Four—The Station of Fear [of God] (*khawf*).

Five—The Station of Hope (*rajā’*).

Six—The Station of Ecstasy (*wajd*).

Seven—The Station of Certainty (*yaqīn*).

Eight—The Station of Nearness (*qurbat*).

Nine—The Station of Unveiling (*mukāshafat*).

Ten—The Station of Spiritual Vision (*mushāhadat*).

Eleven—The Station of Love (*maḥabbat*).

Twelve—The Station of Ardent Desire (*shawq*).²⁹

Finally, there is the highest (*a'lā*) station that Rūzbihān calls Universal Love (*'ishq-i kullī*) which is the station of the Spirit (*rūḥ*), the chapter being entitled, as already mentioned, “On the Perfection of Lovers.”

The stages enumerated by him are not identical with well-known ones enumerated by some other authorities but there is a strong correlation and parallelism between them except that for most Sufis the highest stations are *fanā'* (annihilation) and *baqā'* (subsistence), while for Rūzbihān they are Love at its highest level in accordance with his understanding of Divine Love. Let us remember, however, that according to Rūzbihān the person who reaches God, or the *wāṣil*, is both annihilated and subsists in Him.

Chapter thirty-three, the last chapter of *'Abhar al-'āshiqīn*, is the crown and also in a sense the synthesis of this remarkable work. It begins as follows:

“Know O brother—may God nourish thee and bestow His Generosity upon thee through the love (*'ishq*) of the people of perfection—that the eternal Essence of God, praise be upon Him Who is transcendent, is qualified by His eternal Qualities from pre-Eternity to post-Eternity. One of the Qualities of the Truth is Love. [The Truth] loved Itself through Itself. It or He was therefore Love, Lover and Beloved Himself. From that Love there appeared a color which is His Quality. And He is above the change of the created order. Spiritual Love (*'ishq*) is the

perfection of general love (as *maḥabbat*) and *maḥabbat* is a Quality of the Truth. Do not err concerning names for '*ishq* and *maḥabbat* are the same. They are His Quality and subsist through His Essence in which there is no change. He is not only His own Lover (*muḥibb*), but also His own ardent Lover ('*āshiq*). No created change exists in Him. Know the Love of the Truth as you know His Knowledge."³⁰

Rūzbihān adds, "There is no division in God's Oneness (*aḥadiyyat*) and when He wanted to manifest the "Hidden Treasure" (*kanz makhfiy*) through the key of His Qualities, He manifested the Beauty of Love within the spirits of the gnostics and appeared to them through [His] Qualities. They found in each Quality a dress: from Knowledge, knowledge; from Power, power; from Hearing, hearing; from Seeing, seeing; from Speech, speech; from Will, will; from Life, life; from Beauty, beauty; from Grandeur, grandeur; from Subsistence, subsistence; from Love, love; and from Ardent Love, ardent love. These were all He and He manifested Himself in them."³¹

Although the expression "unity of being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) did not come into usage in Sufism until a century after Rūzbihān and is associated especially with the School of Ibn 'Arabī, the reality of *waḥdat al-wujūd* can already be seen in this text that we have cited from the '*Abhar al-āshiqīn*. It is also significant to that although this work is devoted to '*ishq*, in the above passage Rūzbihān refers to "the spirits of the gnostics" ('*ārifān*). This assertion is very significant in revealing the inseparable relation between love and knowledge in Sufism even in the School that Corbin calls the "'*Fedeli d'amore* of Persia" and in a work that is devoted to the theme of human and Divine Love and the lovers of God.

The final chapter of '*Abhar al-āshiqīn* then continues with a summation of the author's views on '*ishq* and adds that, "Whoever lives through the love of the Truth will not face death." It is the expression of this truth that was immortalized by Ḥāfiẓ in his famous verse,

hargiz namīrad ānk-i dilash zinda shud bi 'ishq

He whose heart has been enlivened by Love shall never die.

Rūzbihān adds that such a person has already died the death of a martyr, whom the Quran mentions as being alive and nourished by his Lord. He who collected the theophanic locutions (*shaṭhiyyāt*) of the earlier Sufis especially Ḥallāj concludes with an Arabic poem of this famous martyr to whom Rūzbihān was deeply devoted:

Transcendent is He who made manifest the human world which is the secret of the shining light of His World of Divinity;

Then He appeared in His creation in the form of one who eats and drinks.

Dante

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) is without doubt one of the greatest poets of his time and of Western civilization as a whole. He was born in Florence which was one of the important centers for politics, culture and art in 13th century Italy. His family was noble, but it was neither rich nor poor. The name Alighieri could have been possibly derived from the Greek Alagherius. The name Alighieri is very rare in Italian. One can find Alighieri, Alight ed Allighieri, which are Florentine but the name Alighieri itself almost disappeared in later periods. In the southern part of Italy in Sardinia there is a city named Alghero. It is interesting to note that one of the hypotheses about the root of this name is that it is derived from al-Jazīra in Arabic. In any case, Dante does not give us much information about his ancestors. The only one whom he mentioned in his *Divine Comedy* and whom he met in Paradise is Cacciaguida degli Elisei. Cacciaguida, who joined the Second Crusade and was knighted by Emperor Conrad III before his death in the Holy Land. In our present study this ancestor could be seen

as being a key for us to understand in a better way the bond existing between the ideas of the *Fedeli d'amore* and the Knights Templar and the connection that Dante could have had with Islam.

The first name of Dante is the shortened version of Durante. When he was still a child, he lost his mother and his father married again. From this marriage Dante had a half-brother, Francesco, and a half-sister, Tana. Dante also had another sister but we are not sure that she was his own sister from his father's first marriage or she was another half-sister. As one can realize from certain verses of *The Divine Comedy*, Dante grew up in a happy family and he received a very good education. After studying the rudiments with the Dominicans, he went to the Franciscan school of Santa Croce. He had very good knowledge about his country and especially his hometown in which he was born and grew up. By reading the works of Italian and Provençal poets such as Arnaut Daniel, he learned the science of metrics by himself, and through their poems he cultivated his imaginative powers. He had a deep interest in the contemporary art of Florence and himself practiced drawing. Very early in his life, however, he considered himself to be primarily a poet and in Florence, the city of music and poetry at that period, he created a circle of valuable followers.

In 1298 he participated in a military campaign and before that went to Bologna about 1287 and also visited Lombardy. He married Gemma Donati between 1293 and 1300 and his two sons Pietro and Jacopo and probably a daughter were the result of this marriage. Dante became an important political figure in Florence about 1295. It is even said that he went on a mission to Rome at this time. During his political activity, he worked for the independence of Florence from the Vatican. Finally, these efforts and his opposition against the Pope motivated his condemnation, he first being forced to pay a fine and suffering deprivation and later being sentenced him death by fire. But the sentence was not carried out and he was banished from Florence. He refused to request a pardon.

In 1308 Henry of Luxembourg was elected emperor as Henry VII. Dante considered this happening as an opportunity for the future of his country. It was not coincidental that he wrote his famous book *De Monarchia* in three volumes at this time. In this work he claimed that the authority of the emperor is independent from that of the Pope and that he, the emperor, takes his power directly from God. But Henry's popularity decreased and his enemies in the government gathered strength against him. Dante was witness to these events and wrote a diatribe against them. He was, therefore, banished and forbidden from reentering the city. It was around the time of these events that he started to write his *Divine Comedy*, most likely with a sense of disappointment in his worldly situation.

After his banishment in 1302, Dante traveled, or it is better to say took refuge, in different Italian cities such as Verona, Padua, Lunigiana, the mountains of the Casentino in northern part of Arno and probably Bologna. It is also believed that he traveled to Pisa and later to Paris between 1307 and 1309. In 1314 Dante took refuge in Verona and later was offered asylum in Ravenna where his daughter named Beatrice was a nun and where his son Pietro also lived. Dante made his home in this city where he died in 1321. During his last years he did go on a short mission to Venice but lived for the most part peacefully in Ravenna.

Considering the subject of this essay, it is important to mention that it was in Florence that Dante became a member of the *Fedeli d'amore*, a group which believed in and practiced an esoteric spirituality based on chivalric ideas and Platonic love, to the extent that we have knowledge of this movement today. We shall speak more about this matter in the following sections. Dante devoted himself to the study of the whole tradition of Christian culture and religion. He also had a deep knowledge of the Latin writers of

classical Antiquity such as Cicero, Ovid and specifically Virgil and also some knowledge of the Islamic tradition.³²

Works

Dante's important works include of course his major masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, and also such famous writings as *La Vita Nuova*, *De Monarchia*, *Convivio*, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, *Le Rime* and *Eclogues*. Of course among all these works the most important is *The Divine Comedy* which has immortalized the name of Dante as perhaps the greatest poet of Western civilization. Written in triptych form, it consists of three sections *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* and reveals, on the basis of Dante's vast knowledge of Western history and religion, the journey of man in this world. *The Divine Comedy* made him the "father" of the Italian language and his work became henceforth the standard for Italian for many centuries. Dante knew Greco-Roman religious history and culture well and at the same time had profound knowledge of Christianity and medieval European history. He was well acquainted with Christian mysticism and theology as well as certain aspects of Islamic esoterism and philosophical thought. He knew the sciences and cosmologies of his day and his knowledge was complemented by his deep insight into human nature and psychology as well as his profound spirituality.

Dante was also a master of symbolism and knew well ancient Greco-Roman, Christian and also many Islamic symbols. One should mention here the importance of the influence of Virgil on Dante. The significance of this relation becomes more evident when we realize that he is Dante's guide in the *Inferno* in *The Divine Comedy*. Some scholars such as Miguel Asín Palacios³³ believed that Dante wrote *The Divine Comedy* based on the structure of the *Mi'rāj-Nāmāh* of Sanā'ī. The astronomical structure of *The Divine Comedy* is in fact very similar to

traditional Islamic cosmology which is also the structure of the *Mi'rāj-Nāmah* of Sanā'ī.³⁴

As for his other writings, *De Monarchia* is considered as one of the most important works of political philosophy of the Middle Ages, discussing the relationship between the institutions of the papacy and the emperor. *La Vita Nuova* is a work of a different nature and deals mostly with the life of Dante and his relation mostly with Beatrice and also with the concept of love. It has a strong autobiographical dimension. Among his most important works one can also mention *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia*.

Dante and *Sophia Perennis*

The term perennial philosophy which is now well known in the English language comes from the Latin *philosophia perennis* whose first usage is usually attributed to the famous German philosopher Leibnitz. It is now known, however, that this term was used before Leibnitz during the Renaissance by the librarian of the Vatican Agostino Steuco who knew Arabic and who most likely learned this term from Arabic sources which mention the term *al-ḥikmat al-khālīdah* in Arabic or *jāwīdān khirad* in Persian found in the writings of Miskawayh, Suhrawardī and others.³⁵ Also without using this specific term, some earlier Western thinkers such as Saint Augustine referred to an ever living wisdom which is the same as perennial philosophy without the usage of this term.

To emphasize that authentic perennial philosophy is not just a set of doctrines and ideas but also includes a method for the realization of the truth, Frithof Schuon and certain other contemporary writers such as Marco Pallis and Seyyed Hossein Nasr have used the term *sophia perennis*.³⁶ Understood in this sense, it is important to say a few words about the relation of Dante to *sophia perennis*. There is no doubt that Dante knew the expressions of the perennial philosophy in the ancient Greek and

Roman traditions, in Christian sapiential teachings and in Islamic and Sufi sources. Moreover, it is most likely that Dante's familiarity with these traditions was not only intellectual but also in most cases initiatic. We know that he belonged as an active member to the esoteric organization known as the *Fedeli d'amore*. We also know that his relation to the Islamic esoteric teachings was not only on the level of formal learning. As for the traditions of Antiquity, in most likelihood he received some kind of initiation which connected him to the ancient mysteries. As René Guénon has said about Dante: "It is no less permissible to think that from Pythagoras to Virgil, and from Virgil to Dante, the 'chain of the tradition' was undoubtedly unbroken on Italian soil."³⁷ Many scholars in Italy who have studied Western esoteric teachings, such as Julius Evola, believe that initiatic currents from the Roman empire survived in Christian Italy into the Middle Ages and even beyond that period.

In studying the thought of Dante and his relation to the *Fedeli d'amore*, it is important to remember the relation of Dante to these esoteric currents and the *sophia perennis*. When we study the *Divine Comedy*, we see a Christian universe in which there is also the strong presence of Graeco-Roman teachings as well as Islamic ones. It is true that Dante was not familiar with other traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and limited himself to the four traditions that he knew, that is, the Graeco-Roman, the Jewish, the Christian and the Islamic. Nevertheless, at the heart of his worldview stands what we call the *sophia perennis* today. If one turns to the inner meaning of Dante's works especially *The Divine Comedy*, one cannot but agree that he is one of the greatest expositors of the *sophia perennis* in the West.

The Influence of Islam and Sufism on Dante

After the work by the famous Spanish scholar Miguel Asín Palacios (*Islam and The Divine Comedy*) on Dante, a number of

scholars of this field have paid more attention to the relation between Dante and Islamic thought and its influence on him. Considering the importance of Asín Palacios in the question of the relation between Dante and Islam, it is important to say a few words about him and his pioneering work on Dante and Islam. A Catholic priest who was also an excellent Arabist and Islamicist, Miguel Asín Palacios was very much attracted to Islamic mystical thought and wrote one of the most important early works on Ibn 'Arabī in any European language under the title of *Islam Christianized*. At the same time, he became very much interested in the relation between Dante and Islamic teachings especially their esoteric aspect. To this end he wrote the ground breaking work *Islam and the Divine Comedy* which, when it was first appeared, was strongly opposed by the majority of Italian scholars who held a kind of nationalistic view of Dante and did not want to accept any Islamic influence on him. But gradually Asín Palacios' ideas were taken seriously and were pursued further even in Italy resulting in the famous work of Enrico Cerulli *Il Libro della Scala*. Cerulli's research has been followed by a number of later scholars among whom one should mention especially Richard LeMay and Luce López-Baralt. Returning to the presence of Islamic teachings in the West, it should be mentioned that from the 11th century forward many Islamic works, whether scientific or philosophical, were translated into Latin and some local languages and most of the European thinkers from Albertus Magnus to St. Thomas many later thinkers were quite familiar with these translations. Dante was also among these thinkers, and lived when translations from Arabic were becoming widely disseminated.

As for Sufism, there is not any known Latin translations of Sufi works, but there were some translations in the local languages such as Provençal of which Dante was aware. Moreover, the *Fedeli d'amore* had a direct relation with some Islamic Sufi and gnostic (*'irfānī*) currents which were transmitted to them orally. One should consider this matter in evaluating the relation of Dante and Sufism. The reality of this matter is indicated by the fact that

among the companions of the Prophet of Islam it is just ‘Alī who is mentioned in *The Divine Comedy* and we must also remember his significance as the head of the chain (*silsilah*) of the Sufi orders. It is important that in comparing Rūzbihān and Dante, we pay attention to the interior aspect of the relation between Dante and the inner teachings of Islam.

Dante and the *Fedeli d’amore*

In every religion, whether Abrahamic or non Abrahamic, one can find the element of love both human and divine. Christianity, however, is a religion that emphasizes particularly love and Christ himself said: “God is love.” Of course in Islam also love (*Wudūd*) is one of the Names of God, but in Islam God is not only love. Rather, Love is one of His Qualities. He is also Knowledge, Mercy, Justice etc. In Christianity because of this emphasis on love, most mystics have followed the path of love although the element of knowledge and gnosis was not totally absent as we see in the case of such famous Christian mystics as Erigena, Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa. Throughout the history of Christianity we, therefore, see many groups united by the mystical bond of love for Christ or God, but also the presence of sapience and gnosis.

As already mentioned, in the 13th century in Italy there appeared a secret society which identified itself with love in an esoteric manner and called itself the *Fedeli d’amore*. This secret organization was not only deeply influenced by Christian teachings about love but also had connections with the Order of the Temple and without doubt with certain Sufi teachings. Moreover, the *Fedeli d’amore* possessed esoteric knowledge including knowledge of the symbolic meaning of forms and numbers associated with Pythagoreanism. We can see the strong presence of this kind of knowledge in *The Divine Comedy*. For

example, one can cite the symbolic use of the number three and nine which play such an important role in this work.

In general the Church opposed esoteric organizations during the Middle Ages although there were some exceptions. The opposition to such organizations can be seen in the case of the Cathars, the Order of the Temple and the *Fedeli d'amore* themselves. That is why such organizations were suppressed, persecuted and finally disappeared from the scene as identifiable organizations. As far as the *Fedeli d'amore* are concerned, although there is no sign of their survival as an organization after the Middle Ages, traces of their influence can be seen in such figures as the Italian painter Rafael especially in his paintings of the Virgin and the German poet Novalis in his poetic treatment of her as Sophia.

We have already mentioned that an ancestor of Dante was a knight in the Holy Land where he died. It is quite possible that Dante himself wrote about some of the ideas that his ancestor had learned from the East concerning organizations such as the Templars and even the *Fedeli d'amore* or that Dante learned about the *Fedeli d'amore* in Florence. In any case there is no doubt that the destruction of the *Fedeli d'amore* and similar organizations had a great role to play in the eclipse of esoteric teachings in Western Christianity at the end of the Middle Ages although of course something of these teachings survived into the Renaissance and even later periods of European history.

Another element that needs to be mentioned about the *Fedeli d'amore* and Dante is chivalry. In the Islamic world there existed what was called *futuwwah* in Arabic or *jawānmardī* in Persian, both terms meaning chivalry, and chivalry was closely connected to Sufism. There is no doubt that during the Crusades some Westerners who were in the Holy Land especially the Templars had direct contact with this aspect of Islam and the ideas of Islamic spiritual chivalry had an influence upon the medieval

West. There is also little doubt that Dante and the *Fedeli d'amore* were influenced by this aspect of Islamic spirituality.

Dante and the Question of Love

Although in the religious sense love is central to Christianity, Western Christianity was also heir to the Platonic doctrine of love. In certain of his works, especially the *Symposium*, Plato speaks extensively about love in its relation to both beauty and the truth and considers the highest love to be what has come to be known in Western thought as Platonic love. This tradition entered into Christian thought and such figures as Saint Augustine were immersed in both traditions, that is Christian love and Platonic love. Of course there were many Christian mystics who emphasized love only as a sentiment and attraction for God in the soul and they did not pay attention to the role of knowledge in relation to Divine Love. Dante is one of those Christian figures who combined the centrality of love with wisdom and knowledge which Christian mysticism has often identified with the Virgin Mary as the embodiment of Sophia. This personification and identification of love with the feminine is, moreover, seen in the case of Dante in the figure of Beatrice in the *Paradiso* and his love for her.

Much discussion has taken place about the role of Beatrice in the life of Dante. In *La Vita Nuova* Dante speaks about Beatrice as she "Who must be called Love." The question that arises is the following: who was really Beatrice and why does she play such a central role in the life of Dante? There is no doubt that there was such an earthly woman named Beatrice whom Dante loved, but she played a more important role for him than simply that of an earthly woman who entered his life. Otherwise, why among all possible people, she would be the one to be chosen as his guide in the *Paradiso*? There is no doubt that Dante saw in her an idealized celestial-like figure symbolizing Sophia who became his guide in

the final phase of his journey to God. It could also be said that she was above all the symbol of Divine Love. In the perspective of Dante it might be said that Beatrice had even a cosmic and metaphysical role and when at the end of the *Divine Comedy* Dante writes, *l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle* (The Love that moves the sun and the other stars) Beatrice as the symbol of Love is also present. It must, therefore, be said that Beatrice represents for Dante all degrees and stages of love: human, cosmic and Divine.³⁸

There is no doubt that there were several women in Dante's life and that at the same time Dante had a human love for the young Beatrice which, however, was never physically consummated. Moreover, Dante's love for Beatrice cannot be said to have been only Platonic. Rather, this love became sublimated in his being into Platonic, cosmic and even Divine Love. She, therefore, became for him the symbol of Love on all its levels from the human to the Divine, a Love that was pure and was never combined with lust. Since in Dante's worldview Love was the motivating force of the universe and the ladder to God, he chose Beatrice as his guide in the *Paradiso* instead of so many Christian saints or even Christ himself or the Virgin whom he could have chosen. The remarkable genius Dante chose a figure who was not a prophet, a saint or a philosopher but a simple Italian woman who, however, embodied for him the reality of Love on all its levels. Externally as a simple Italian woman Beatrice could not have had knowledge of Christian cosmology or metaphysics, but in *The Divine Comedy* it is she who guides him through the cosmos to the Divine Presence.

Another important point to note is that Dante's guide in the *Paradiso* is a woman and not a man while his early guide in *The Divine Comedy* was the male poet Virgil. Considering the fact that Christ never married and that monasticism was considered in a sense as the ideal in Christian society, it is very interesting to note that Dante chose a female figure for his guide. This mystery

becomes unveiled if we pay attention to the esoteric doctrine of Divine Femininity and the identification of Sophia with the Virgin. Perhaps the reason for Dante's choice being not the Virgin but Beatrice was that he wanted to show the central role of Love all the way from the human to the Divine, and of course the Virgin could not be used as a figure in the *Divine Comedy* who would symbolized all levels of Love including the human.

In discussing the question of Dante and Love it must be emphasized that for Dante, although he emphasized the centrality of Love, this Love was never separated from gnosis and Divine Knowledge. It was not important that as a person Beatrice did not know any cosmology or metaphysics but the symbolic figure of Beatrice, as she appeared in the *Divine Comedy*, is not only one of purity and innocence but also of Sophia and sapience. In this matter of combining love and knowledge Dante is very close to the perspective of many Sufis including Rūzbihān Baqlī.

Love in Islamic and Christian Mysticism

Mysticism in its original sense as having to do with the Divine Mysteries has existed in all the major religions of the world although in different forms and of course Islam and Christianity are not exceptions to this rule. Rather, we can see strong mystical elements in both these religions going back to their origin. In the case of Islam many Western scholars have tried to show that originally Islam was a "simple religion of the desert" and did not possess the element of love, but that this element entered Islam through contact with Christianity. But from the Islamic point of view this assertion is totally false and the love for God and the Prophet goes back to the origin of Islam. There are many verses of the Quran which speak of mutual love of God and man such as "He loves them and they love Him." (*Sūrah* 5, *āyah* 54) There are also numerous *ḥadīths* which speak about love. Furthermore, the love of the Prophet is central to Islamic piety. Therefore, when we speak of love mysticism in

Islam, we are not talking about foreign influences but about a reality that is a fundamental part of the Islamic revelation.

In Islam, however, God is not only Love and there is no verse of the Quran or a *ḥadīth* which states that God is only Love although Love (*al-Wudūd*) is a Divine Name. In Islam, as already mentioned, Allah possesses many Names and Qualities of which one is Love, but there are also other Divine Qualities such as Mercy, Power and Justice that are also Qualities of the Divine. In light of this truth it can be said that Islamic mysticism is essentially a mysticism of knowledge combined with love whereas in Christianity it is predominantly a mysticism of love that, however, is not divorced from knowledge as we see so clearly in Dante himself. When we look at the history of Islam and Christianity, we see a difference in the manifestation of these two kinds of mysticism, that is, of love and of knowledge. In Christianity mysticism begins with Love and notable crystallizations of Christian knowledge mysticism or gnosis appear in only a few cases in early Christianity as we see for example in Clement of Alexandria and Origen, but the greatest manifestations of Christian gnosis come many centuries later in figures such as Erigena, Dante and Nicholas of Cusa.

In Islam the development of mysticism followed a different path. At the very beginning of Islam in such companions as ‘Alī there is a synthesis of the mysticism of knowledge and of love combined with reverential fear. Then from the second Islamic century onward we see first of all a mysticism or Sufism based on the fear of God as is evident in the early Mesopotamian ascetics (*zuhhād*). Of course even then we see a figure such as Rābi‘a al-‘Adawiyya al-Qaysiyya who followed the path of Divine Love. But when we look at the history as a whole, we see that this period of asceticism and fear of God was followed by love mysticism and then by the mysticism of knowledge. When we reach the 6th/12th century we see that in many cases especially the Sufism of Khorasan love and knowledge were combined together as we see in Sanā’ī, ‘Aṭṭār and

Rūmī. This truth is also to be seen among many non-Persian Sufis especially the great master of Islamic gnosis Ibn ‘Arabī who not only composed metaphysical works such as the *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, but also wrote the love poem *Tarjumān al-ashwāq*. It is interesting to remember that three of the greatest Christian mystics Dante, Catherine of Avila and Saint John of the Cross were deeply influenced by Islamic mysticism concerning especially certain cosmological ideas and the use of some symbols.

There were, however, also influences of Christian mysticism and especially monasticism on certain early Sufis perhaps in encouraging them toward a more ascetic life. We know on the basis of historical records that some early Muslim mystics would visit Christian monasteries especially in Syria and that they were deeply impressed by the spirituality of some of the monks. They often quoted the saying of the Prophet that of all non-Muslims the Christian monks were closest to Islam and that the Prophet respected them deeply. It is not accidental that Eastern Christian monasteries were so well protected by Muslims during Islamic history and that after five centuries of Turkish rule over Greece, Mount Athos remained the most important center of Christian spirituality in the East. Even in the 20th century many people from the West, who sought to rediscover Christian mysticism, went to either Mount Athos or some of the monasteries in the Islamic world itself especially in Turkey, Syria, Egypt and Iraq and not to European monasteries.

The reason for this reality is that in the Islamic world not only did Sufism survive strongly for centuries and is still alive today, but also that Christian mysticism began to wane in the West after the Middle Ages. I do not mean by this assertion that Christian mysticism disappeared completely. Important figures such as Jakob Böhme and William Law appeared in the modern period but in the West. However, Christian mysticism became ever more difficult of access during the last few centuries. In the 19th century if one were living in Cairo or Istanbul, it would be very easy to

find living centers of Sufism and outstanding Islamic masters from whom one could learn Islamic mysticism. But a person who was living in Paris or London in the 19th century, where could he or she seek instructions in Christian mysticism? There were of course a few mystics here and there primarily in the Catholic world but they were very rare and it was not easy to have access to them. That is also one of the reasons why from the 19th century onward, so many Westerners turned to the East especially India to find mystical teachings and appropriate teachers to teach them mysticism.

What caused the eclipse of mysticism in the West was more than anything else rationalism along with the externalization of religion itself mostly for social purposes. In Islam rationalism never took hold although Muslims produced a great deal of philosophy which, however, was rational but not rationalistic. Moreover, the Sufi emphasis upon Divine Love combined with realized knowledge prevented rationalism from becoming dominant. One is reminded here of a poem of [Hāfiz](#), one of the greatest Persian Sufi poets, that has been sang over the centuries by Persian speaking Muslims:

“The people of intellect are like the central point of the
protractor of existence and yet,
Love knows that they are simply wondering in this
circle.”

A Comparative Analysis

Both Rūzbihān and Dante were nurtured and educated in major centers of their respective civilizations, and both were highly cultured. Both men wrote not only in the primary classical language of their culture, namely Arabic and Latin, but also in their mother tongue, Persian and Italian, respectively. Both traveled widely, Rūzbihān in Persia itself and the Arab lands nearby including Arabia where he made the pilgrimage to Makkah, and Dante in much of Italy and parts of France. In contrast Rūzbihān was a Sufi

master with numerous disciples while Dante belonged to a secret society and we do not know whether he had any disciples in an initiatic sense or not. Both were deeply attached to their religion, but while Rūzbihān is considered as one of the great saints of Shiraz, Dante was never canonized. Rūzbihān lived at peace with Muslim religious authorities while Dante supported the emperor as “rival” to the pope and was in trouble with Vatican authorities.

There was also much difference in the political and social life of Rūzbihān and Dante. The former did not participate in external political life or social organizations of Shiraz although of course his large *ṭarīqah* or Sufi order had without doubt an effect upon the social and even political life of that city. In contrast Dante, as we have seen, was socially and politically very active. He was exiled, even condemned to death, went on diplomatic missions and participated in the fractious politics of Florence actively. Only the last years of his life, spent in exile, were peaceful and to be compared from this point of view with the life of Rūzbihān, who, however, did not live in exile and died peacefully in the city in which he had spent most of his life.

The writings of Rūzbihān and Dante also represent similarities and contrasts. Both wrote major works in their respective traditions that are read widely to this day. Both wrote poetry and prose of high literary quality but in the field of poetry Dante occupies a unique position. Rūzbihān wrote fine verses in Persian but he does not rank among the greatest Persian poets while Dante was the greatest Italian poet. That honor in Persia goes among others to Rūzbihān’s compatriots Sa’dī and Ḥāfiẓ who, like him, are also buried in Shiraz. To this day when young poets go to Shiraz to receive inspiration, they go to the tomb of Ḥāfiẓ and not Rūzbihān even though he is considered by many a more significant figure in the Sufi tradition as a whole than is that supreme poet of the Persian language Ḥāfiẓ whose *Dīwān* occupies a unique position in the annals of Persian poetry.

As for Dante, his *Divine Comedy* is the greatest masterpiece of Italian poetry and according to many the foundation of the Italian language. Some have even called it the greatest literary work of Western civilization. Among some of his other works also there is a finesse of language that reveals his literary genius. Moreover, Dante did not write only on Christian mysticism but on a variety of subjects ranging from metaphysics and cosmology to social ethics and politics while Rūzbihān's works are devoted almost completely to religious and mystical subjects. Also Dante drew much more from pre-Christian European and also Islamic traditions than Rūzbihān drew from non-Islamic sources. Although Dante knew the Bible well, including of course the Old Testament, he did not produce a commentary on the sacred text of Christianity while Rūzbihān wrote one of the major mystical Quranic commentaries in Islamic history with the title '*Arā'is al-bayān*' which is not as well known in the West as it deserves to be.

The language used in the mystical works of Rūzbihān and Dante is similar in a profound way. In both cases they use the language of symbolism freely. Dante calls the highest level of meaning of *The Divine Comedy* anagogical which means symbolical in the profound traditional sense of the word as has been made clear by such Western authorities as R. Guénon.³⁹ Without understanding the language of symbolism, it would be impossible to comprehend *The Divine Comedy* at its deepest level. The same truth holds true for Rūzbihān except that Dante drew from Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Greek and Roman sources for his choice of symbols, while Rūzbihān drew mostly from the Quran and *Hadīth* and to some extent the Bible and also pre-Islamic Persian sources. The meaning of symbolism and the significance of the use of symbolic language is, however, shared to a large extent by them. Moreover, Dante was influenced in a profound way by certain aspects of Islamic esoterism and cosmology the parallel to which we do not see in Rūzbihān with regard to Christianity in its later development in the West. This difference is reflected in the use of some images, symbols and ideas by the two figures who constitute the subject of

our study. We do not see by any means the influence of Western Christian thought or symbolic language upon Rūzbihān, while the influence of Islam, both on the level of meaning and of language, on Dante and the *Fedeli d'amore* as a whole is well-known.⁴⁰

Let us turn to the central concern of both Rūzbihān and Dante, that is Love. It is this reality that binds them above everything else to the same spiritual universe. They both loved God and also experienced Love on various levels of the created order including the love of a woman. There have been some Christian authors who, on the basis of the distinction between *eros* and *agape*, have said that all human beings can experience love as *eros*, but only Christians have access to supernatural Love as *agape*.⁴¹ Needless to say, we reject this view completely and believe that these two men experienced the Love of the same God and that their Love was the manifestation of the same Divine Love in two different human beings. In any case both Rūzbihān and Dante were followers of the path of Divine Love, which, however, was not shorn of knowledge and gnosis.

When it comes to the question of love and knowledge, there is a strange paradox when one compares Rūzbihān and Dante. Usually, as stated above, Christian mysticism emphasizes mystical Love while there were figures such as Dante himself as well as Erigena, Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa in whom one sees also the element of sacred Knowledge and gnosis. As for Islamic mysticism, as again mentioned above, there is an emphasis upon gnosis and illuminative knowledge that is usually combined with love. Rūzbihān and Dante were both mystics who combined knowledge and love, but the element of knowledge of sacred history and especially cosmology is more emphasized in *The Divine Comedy* than in the works of Rūzbihān. Nowhere in the corpus of the saint of Shiraz do we see the elaborate treatment of cosmology that is found in Dante's poetic masterpiece.

It is also important to compare and contrast the role of the feminine in the life of our two mystics. On the highest level they both revered

the Virgin Mary. The case of Dante as a medieval Catholic is well-known but not everyone knows that Rūzbihān considers her to have had the station (*maqām*) of a prophet (*nabiyyah*). On the human level, both married and experienced female companionship in their earthly lives. There is, however, a major difference between them in this matter. Everyone who knows Dante has heard of Beatrice. She represents all levels of Love for Dante from the human to the Divine and it is this simple girl, symbol of femininity on all levels, who is his guide in the *Paradiso*. No corresponding figure can be found in the works of Rūzbihān although in the *'Abhar al-'āshiqān* he also writes eloquently about human love as a ladder to Divine Love.

And then there is the question of the influence of these two colossal figures. Dante is considered as the father of the Italian language and his literary influence upon Italian is much greater than the influence on Persian of Rūzbihān who lived at a time when Persian had been flourishing for several centuries. Masterpieces of Persian poetry such as the *Shāh-nāmāh* ("The Book of Kings") of Firdawsī as well as such masterpieces of Sufī literature as *Kashf al-mahjūb* ("The Unveiling of the Veiled") of Hujwīrī and *Asrār al-tawhīd* ("Secrets of Divine Unity") of Abū Sa'īd had already appeared. Although the literary influence of Dante on later Italian literature was much greater than that of Rūzbihān on Persian literature, the spiritual influence of Rūzbihān on later Sufism has been greater than that of Dante on later Christian mysticism.⁴²

Conclusion

Although one can speak of the *Fedeli d'amore* of the medieval West and the *Fedeli d'amore* of Persia and their similarities in certain domains, as we have sought to demonstrate, the startling fact is their very different destinies. In the West such organizations as the Templars and the *Fedeli d'amore* were opposed by the Church and soon were either destroyed or marginalized. In contrast in the

Persian world, and the Islamic world in general, major figures who may be said to belong to the tradition of the *Fedeli d'amore* of Islam, such as 'Iraqī and Jāmī, continued to appear and today Sufism is still strong in Shiraz as well as in many other places in the Islamic world. A figure such as the famous saint of Shiraz, Waḥīd al-awliyā', who may be said to belong to the tradition that produced Rūzbihān, died only a few decades ago.

The *Fedeli d'amore* in Italy belonged to a secret society with esoteric teachings but they did not possess a spiritual chain (*silsilah*) like Sufi orders at least as far as we know. There are some indications that Dante was aware of spiritual orders with their hierarchy and spiritual masters, but there are no indications that such an order existed in Italy or that he belonged to it. Everyone who has studied *The Divine Comedy* knows that of all Muslim figures he chose 'Alī to reside in the *Inferno* with the Prophet. Most likely this choice was not only for political reasons, but primarily for a spiritual one. Dante probably knew of 'Alī's spiritual significance as the head of Sufi chains (*silsilahs*) and indirectly such a choice by Dante indicates 'Alī's spiritual preeminence for Muslims and its recognition by the Italian poet.

Finally in casting an eye upon the later history of Islam and Christianity as far as the spiritual teachings of those two men are concerned, one can observe in Europe the continuation of secret societies following the degeneration or destruction of such organization as the *Fedeli d'amore*, but such societies became more and more politicized and externalized until one is confronted with 18th century Freemasonry that has a major role to play in the French Revolution and whose members were excommunicated by the Catholic Church. In contrast Sufi orders continued to preserve their vitality in various Islamic countries including Persia. A comparative study of the heritage of Rūzbihān and Dante has much to teach us about the ever more divergent paths that Islam and Western Christianity were to follow after the Middle Ages when they had created sister traditional civilizations with so many similar spiritual

and intellectual developments and visions of the nature of God, man and the cosmos that, despite certain theological and artistic differences, it may be said that they belonged essentially to the same universe of meaning.

Endnotes

1. See H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, volume. 3, Paris, 1971.
2. See A.M. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, 1978, pp. 83 ff.
3. See H. Corbin, *En Islam iranien*, pp. 20 ff. In his analysis of '*Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*' Corbin complains about the difficult style and flowery language of this book with which we concur completely.
4. For a detailed study of Rūzbihān's life and works see M. T. Mīr, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl wa āthār wa ash‘ār-i Shaykh Rūzbihān Baqlī ī Fasā‘ī Shīrāzī*, Shiraz, 1354 (A. H. solar). See also K. Murata, *Beauty in Sufism: The Teachings of Rūzbihān Baqlī*, Albany (NY), 2017.
5. For the complete list of Baqlī's works see Mīr, op. cit., pp. 32–40. All the poems of Rūzbihān that have survived are included in this volume and reveal his mastery as a Persian poet. To this day during the month of Ramaḍān some of his poems especially quatrains are recited by the faithful in Shiraz.
6. See the introduction of C. Ernst, ed. and trans., to Rūzbihān's *Words of Ecstasy in Sufism*, Albany (NY), 1985.
7. For this study we have used the critical edition of J. Nourbakhsh, *Kitāb ‘abhar al-‘āshiqīn*, composed by Shaykh Rūzbihān Baqlī Shīrāzī, Tehran, 1349 (A. H. solar).
8. See '*Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*', pp. 12-13.
9. The '*Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*' stands along with the *Sawānīḥ* of Aḥmad al-Ghazzālī, *Fī ḥaqīqat al-‘ishq* or *Mu‘nis al-‘ushshāq* of Suhrawardī and *Lama‘āt* of ‘Irāqī as the most outstanding work on Love in Persian prose, from the point of view of both the beauty of language and depth of content.
10. Rūzbihān, '*Abhar al-‘āshiqīn*', pp. 14–16.
11. *ibid.*, pp. 17-21.

12. *ibid.*, p. 19.
13. *ibid.*, p. 20.
14. *ibid.*, pp. 22-25.
15. *ibid.*, p. 24.
16. *ibid.*, pp. 24-25.
17. *ibid.*, pp. 26ff.
18. *ibid.*, pp. 36ff.
19. *ibid.*, pp. 42ff.
20. *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
21. *ibid.*, pp. 48-50.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 51-57.
23. *ibid.*, pp. 58-60.
24. *ibid.*, pp. 61-64.
25. *ibid.*, pp. 65ff.
26. *ibid.*, p. 77.
27. *ibid.*, pp. 78-81.
28. See Imam Abu'l-Qāsim al Qushayrī's *Risālah*.
29. 'Abhar al-'āshiqīn, p. 87.
30. *ibid.*, p. 119.
31. *ibid.*, p. 119.
32. On the life and works of Dante see A. Ricolfi, *Studi sui Fedeli d'Amore*, Milan, 2006; L. Valli, *Il linguaggio sagreto di Dante e dei Fedeli d'amore*, Milan, 1994; and G. Rossetti, *il mistero dell'Amor platanico del Medio Evo*, Milan, 2013.
33. Corbin, H. *En Islam iranien*, vol. 3.
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36. Ricolfi, A., *Studi sui "Fedeli d'Amore"*, Brossura, 2013.
37. Rossetti, G., *Il mistero dell' Amor platonico del Medioevo*, Brossura, 2013.
38. Scherillo, M., *La Vita Nuova di Dante*, Milan, 1911.
39. See Guénon, *The Esoterism of Dante*.

40. We have already mentioned the works of M. Ásin Palacios and E. Cerulli concerning this subject.
41. Such Catholic authors as J. Maritain, R. C. Zaehner and L. Gardet have written along these lines, but many later scholars, even some Western ones, have refuted them.
42. This truth is reflected in standard histories of Christian and Islamic mysticism.

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An Islamic Perspective of Leadership: Said Nursi and Sayyidhood Leadership

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Abstract

According to Said Nursi (1877-1960), there is no position except servanthood in Islam. His argument is based on the hadith '*sayyidul qawm khadimihum*' the master of the people is the one who serves them which is quintessential of Islamic leadership. To him, a nation's ruler is a public servant and ruling does not mean domination and despotism. Nursi states that rulers are obliged to serve people and he considers serving as the second article of an Islamic constitution. Instead of calling Islamic leadership servant, guardian or transformational style as some scholars argue in the modern time, I would call Nursi's understanding of leadership '*sayyidhood*' which is drawn from his Magnum Opus *Risale-i Nur*. To him, leadership through action comes before leadership through words. *Sayidhood* leadership is universal as Islam. This article will take the concept of *sayyidhood* in the hadith as a theoretical framework, beginning with the analysis of the hadith's literary meaning and grammatical usage. It also suggests that Nursi revives four major characteristics of *sayyidhood* leadership which are *tamthil* (the inadvertent overspill of genuine practice), *istighna* (a state of being expectationless), *ithar* (altruism) and *musbet hareket* (positive action). By applying these four major principles, the leader can be independent, exemplary, pluralistic and altruistic. He or she will be persuasive rather than oppressive and universal rather than ideological. *Sayyidhood* leadership minimises, selfishness, nepotism and egoism, however, it is highly idealistic and Muslim leaders rarely apply.

Keywords: Islamic leadership, sayyidhood, Said Nursi, servant leadership

INTRODUCTION

There are many theories and types of leadership have been raised in the western literature since the 50s. Servant leadership was coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in “The Servant as Leader,” an essay that he first published in 1970¹ in West. Almost forty-five years before Greenleaf, Said Nursi revived, reintroduced and exemplified a broader type of servanthood leadership which I would call “*sayyidhood* leadership.” His view of leadership is based on the hadith of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), “the master of the people is the one who serves them” which summarises *sayyidhood* leadership in three words including servant leadership. I would call this hadith the quintessential of *sayyidhood* leadership in Islam. Nursi’s philosophy of leadership is a reflection of above mentioned hadith according to needs of our modern time.

This paper will propose a new leadership concept called *sayyidhood*² leadership and apply this to the case of Said Nursi as a key Muslim scholar and spiritual leader who has exemplified this type of leadership style. According to Nursi, there is no position except servanthood in Islam.³ To him, a nation’s ruler is a public servant and ruling does not mean domination and despotism. Nursi states that rulers are obliged to serve people and he considers serving people by leaders as the second article of an Islamic constitution.⁴ This article will take the concept of *sayyidhood* by using above hadith as a theoretical framework, beginning with the analysis of the hadith’s literary meaning and grammatical usage. Although this hadith permeates through all aspect of leadership, this paper will hone on the spiritual significance of the idea of *sayyidhood* leadership. It draws four major characteristics of *sayyidhood* leadership from Nursi’s works. They are *tamthil* (the inadvertent overspill of genuine practice)⁵, *istighna* (a state of being expectationless), *ithar* (altruism) and *musbet hareket* (positive

action). For Nursi, by applying these four major principles, the leader will be independent, exemplary, pluralistic and altruistic. Such leadership will be persuasive rather than oppressive, universal rather than ideological. It will minimise selfishness, nepotism and egoism. However, because of influence, sayyidhood leadership can cause envy among the adherents of the same faith and can be seen as a threat by the rulers.

There are hundreds of books written in regard administration and leadership in the Islamic history. The Fourth Caliph Ali's Nahj al-Balagha, İbnü 'l-Mukaffa's (d.759) Risala fi-l-Sahaba and al-Adab al-Kabir, Ibn Taymiyya's (1263-1328) As-Siyasatu Shari'yya Fi Islahi Ra'i Wa Raiyya, Ibn Qutaiba's (828- 889) Uyün al-Akhbār are few of them. One of the first books which fully dedicated to Islamic leadership in the history is "The Law of Islamic of Governance" Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya" by al- Mawardi (972-1058). He provides a detail information about the qualifications, tasks and responsibilities of leaders⁶. However, he does not discuss *sayyidhood* leadership. Another primary source for leadership is al-Ghazali's (1058-1111) book *Nasihah al-Muluk* (Counsels for Kings). He delves into the required characteristic of Kings and Wazirs⁷ but does not mention *sayyidhood* leadership. Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) critically analyse various types of leadership (royal, political, military, tribal, religious) in his book *Muqaddimah* in detail and remarks on the leadership of the descendant of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) but he does not indicate *sayyidhood* leadership.⁸ Imam Rabbani (1564-1624) mentions the ethical principles of leadership in his letters to rulers and religious leaders but he does not name *sayyidhood* leadership.⁹

I examined the scholarly comments on the Qur'anic verse (4:59) which is related leadership in more than thirty classical and modern periods' major tafsirs (Qur'anic exegesis). Almost all tafsir scholars discuss who are the *ulu'l amr* (..authority among you...) (Qur'an, 4:59) and their characteristics. Most of them argue that "*ulu'l Amr*"

are the scholars but again none of authors of these tafsirs discuss *sayyidhood* leadership.

Bakum and Badawi classify Islamic leadership styles into two: a guardian leader and a servant leader.¹⁰ They discuss the characteristic of servanthood and guardian leadership in the light of the Qur'an and sunnah. The book is based on Islamic sources in a western scholars' leadership framework. Sami Helewa analyses Qisas al- Anbiyas (the story of the prophets) and draws lessons of 'just' leadership.¹¹ However, none of these scholars touch *sayyidhood* leadership.

This article first will define *sayyidhood* leadership in the light of the sacred texts. Secondly it will analyse how Said Nursi reinterpreted and exemplified above hadith which is the kernel of *sayyidhood* leadership in the light of the Qur'an and the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), Sahabah, the Companions, great major scholars, saints and Islamic leaders in accord with the modern age. Finally, it will explore how Nursi draws and acts upon the belief that a leader should never see himself as a leader, but as a servant of Muslims and all peoples regardless of their faith, colour and ethnicity as a universal ruler. This article argues that Nursi's understanding of leadership in the sunnah of the Prophet is aligned with the *Salaf Saliheen's*¹² spirituality, rather than political Islam as he says, "all-Wise Qur'an severely prohibited me from the world of politics. . . . Indeed, service of the Qur'an prevents me from thinking of socio-political life."¹³

SAYYID IN THE QUR'AN AND SUNNAH

The word of *Sayyid* is mentioned in the two verses of the Qur'an (3:39, 12:25). A classical period exegete at-Tabari (838-923) explains *Sayyid* as a jurist who is pious, kind, most honorable¹⁴ of believers, and devoted to and most noble in religion. ar-Razi (1149-1209), Zimaksihari (1070-1143)¹⁵ and ¹⁶al-Qushayri (986-1074) state that *Sayyid* is one who does not want any position, expects any

rewards from any creation, and is free from any unlawful desires, making him the best of his people.¹⁷ By this definition, the attributes of *sayyidhood* is more important than a biological connection to descendants of the Prophet. Muhammad Tabatabai defines sayyid as following: “The one who manages the people’s affairs related to their lives and livelihood or concerning a socially accepted virtues, subsequently it was used with increasing frequency for honourable and noble inasmuch as above mentioned management affairs entails honours and excellence emanating from his authority, wealth or other such virtues”¹⁸

The Prophet first used the *Sayyid* title for himself¹⁹ and then gave it directly to his grandson Hasan (r.a).²⁰ In Islamic literature, it is an honorific title denoting male accepted as descendants of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).²¹ *Sayyidhood* is the leadership style of Prophet, the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and righteous leaders. After the Prophet, *Sayyidhood* lasted thirty years²² during the caliphate period, including the term of Hasan, the Prophet’s grandson. Since the Umayyad dynasty, *asabiyya*²³ became the heart of Islamic leadership with some exceptions. Some great Islamic leaders applied *sayyidhood* leadership in their life in varying degrees. This, however, is out of the scope of this article.

The most prominent hadith on *sayyidhood* leadership narrated an incident that occurred during the Madinah period. The Prophet was serving water to his companions when a Bedouin came in and shouted: "Who is the master of this people?" The Messenger answered in such a way that he introduced himself while expressing a strong principle of Islamic leadership and public administration using three words: (*sayyidu'l qawm khadimuhum*) "The master of the people is the one who serves them."²⁴

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF SAYYIDHOOD LEADERSHIP

As mentioned above ‘*sayyidul qawm khadimihum*’ the master of the people is the one who serves them, hadith is the quintessential of

leadership. To understand leadership in depth; it is necessary to analyse the hadith from grammatical, literal and contextual perspectives. Then, the focus will turn to how Nursi understands *sayyidhood* leadership within the service of faith and humanity and how he applied this hadith in his daily life.

In order to understand the relevant hadith, the words used require analysis. The term ‘*Sayyid*’ has twenty-seven meanings²⁵ such as: chief, master, lord, sir, noble man and gentleman. Thus, *sayyidhood* necessitates understanding of all aspects of a tribe and consultation with the people one serves. Based on the hadith, people who serve others must be their ‘*Sayyids*’ or chiefs or the chiefs must be like *Sayyids* who must be knowledgeable and have the capacity to enlighten the heart and mind. This title necessities to be insightful and follow the footsteps of the Prophet and Four Rightly Guided Caliphs. For enlightening heart and mind, it necessitates having *marifa*, a depth knowledge of God, wisdom and a great inspirational vision which includes understanding leadership according to need of the time.

Ma’rifa is a step to understand God’s names in depth after the faith for reaching the degree of *muhabba* (love). A leader who equipped with *ma’rifa* would be able to be full aware of service and love his people. This can reflect in serving at the degree of ascetic love that is considered as a form of *ibada* (worship). For attaining *ma’rifa*, the first step is to be well versed in Islam sciences and other disciplines that is essential for leadership. Secondly, *ma’rifa* is of two kinds: ‘cognitional (‘ilmi) and emotional (háli)’.²⁶ For *sayyidhood* leadership both are necessary. The later one can inspire *zawq ruhani* (spiritual joy and satisfaction) which will be a source of motivation for serving. The *Sayyid* is also expected to be one of the best ethically among the tribe or nation as the majority of mufassirs (Qur’anic exegetes) agree on it.

The second word ‘*al-qawm*’ translates to the people or the tribe. It is with *harfi ta’rif* (letters of *alif* and *lam*) which means the tribe or

people are well-known by the leader from administration perspectives according needs of the time. A tribe or a nation can include all types of people, poor, rich, saint, sinner, Muslim, non-Muslim, pious, atheist and various ethnic groups. *Sayyid' al-qawm* means a knowledgeable and compassionate servant who serves of all people without any discrimination and favouritism. This shows the universality of *sayyidhood* leadership.

The third word of hadith '*khadim*' comes from the root word for *khadama*, service. Based on that word, we have the word '*khidmah*', meaning to serve, be of service, provide work, or put into operation while '*khadim*' means domestic servant, attendant, or waiter.²⁷ Detailed meanings include a person whose job is to provide a service in a public place, someone who does menial work or is employed as a designated person or government official, or a servant in a royal or noble household.

The word '*khadim*' in the hadith is a form of 'ism fa-eel'. Lexically, *fā' il* means 'doer'²⁸ and person doing pointing to a continuous action, and meaning that a leader must always serve his people without discriminating against anyone. Also, because *khadim* is a form of 'ism fa-eel' and by adding the noun of "*hum*" it means the availability of a leader at all time in case of any one in the nation needs to be served. Another aspect of the quality of "*khadim*" is humility which constrains the leader not seek fame or pride. Nursi views fame as a serious spiritual sickness²⁹ and poisonous honey that kills the heart (spirituality).³⁰ Particularly for a leader. All words of the hadith point out the universality of *sayyidhood*.

Nursi revives leadership through service (*khidma*) not just in theory but also in practice. He states that "we are hands working (*khadims*) on a dominical boat which will disembark the Community of Muhammad (pbuh) at the Realm of Peace, the shore of salvation."³¹ He believes that serving God is incomplete without serving humanity through faith, crucially forming a link between a traditional understandings of religious piety (*taqwa*) with social

action. Nursi revives leadership through service (*khidma*) not just in theory but also in practice.

Instead of using the word 'leadership,' Nursi uses the word '*khadim*' from the hadith. He draws and acts upon the belief that a leader should never see himself as a leader, but as a servant of Muslims and all people. Nursi displayed this in the form of a theoretical concept and principle in *Risale-i Nur*.

According to Nursi, *khadimhood* is to disregard one's desires and strive for others' wellbeing without showing off or seeking attention.³² The '*khadim*' does not get proud or boastful because his duty is to serve the people and he sees every person as a master. The salary or wages he receives should be just enough to see his basic needs. A *khadim* cannot become wealthy because of his wages and must be in a situation similar to that of his or her poor citizens or constituents. Nursi ends by saying that a sincere *khadims* can be said to be spiritually a part of *Ahl al-Bayt*, the family of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). This is because they have no worldly ambitions.³³

Looking at the above-mentioned hadith in historical context, it is seen how the Prophet first serves his people before speaking about the importance of serving people. He responds to rudeness with a gentle smile before beginning to talk, perhaps as a way of diffusing the negative feelings and making his position clear. This is a characteristic of the Prophet, practicing before preaching and to wait a short time before speaking or responding. Therefore, the leadership through actions comes before leadership through words. The leader should be opened to any criticism and respond it with the words of wisdom as the Prophet did. The way to educate leaders and build their character is not solely through courses in religion, leadership or ethics, but mainly through the setting of good examples, known as *tamthil*.

Sayyidhood leadership in Nursi's works, the sultanate of hearts is preferred to the sultanate of politics and servanthood is opted to ordering and commending. Nursi's lifestyle, particularly during the "New Said" period and his works, reflect *sayyidhood* leadership despite he never claimed or considered himself as a leader but as servant of the Qur'an. He describes himself as *Raju'l Fajer*, a sinful man,³⁴ and *Asi Said*,³⁵ Rebellious Said. By calling himself with such titles Nursi follows the way of companions (*sahaba*) and great scholars. He applies a deeper meaning of humility in Islam and wants to show the people that the source of all success and goodness is only God not from anyone else as the Qur'an states: "What comes to you of good is from God..."(4:79). In light of this verse, a believer particularly a pious and knowledgeable one attributes his/her good deeds to the enabling God while accepting all responsibility for his/her misdeeds. So Nursi too.

In the history of Islam, the Prophet, his companions, numerous saints, purified, perfected scholars, and those honored with nearness to God, have held that the signs of greatness in the great, are humility and modesty. While recounting the Prophet's Ascension (to the heavens), the Qur'an refers to him as God's servant³⁶, as a sign of his humility and utmost modesty. Abu Bakr Siddiq, the second caliph views himself as bankrupt in righteousness.³⁷ Nureddin Zangi (1118-1174) calls himself a dog.³⁸ Imam Rabbani (1564-1624) views himself less valuable than a donkey.³⁹ Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) states that "the more one is humble to himself, the more he is raised up to God."⁴⁰ Abd al-Rahman Jami (1414-1492) is known as the first scholar who called himself *Qitmir* lamenting the separation of the beloved or humiliating himself by writing that he is as low as a dog.⁴¹ By humbling themselves, they wanted people's favor to be directed to the religion or the nation instead of a pride for egoism. There is a difference between humiliation and humility. Humility (*tawadu'*) is an honourable attribute in the sight of God and a spiritual ethical principle in Islamic tradition.

For Nursi, giving up egotism and being humble is one of the preconditions for serving Islam, particularly in leadership. Nursi states that “you should know that this century the people of misguidance have mounted the ego and are galloping through the valleys of misguidance...The people of truth have to give up the ego if they are to serve the truth.”⁴² Thus, the former righteous and exacting religious scholars (*Salaf Saleheen*) were ego-free servants of the Qur’an. If the works of *Salaf Saliheen* are considered a huge treasury and sufficient for every ill including leadership, but there is a need of a key to open it to benefit for this century in his works. However, there is a need to revive their works according to needs of time.

SAYYIDHOOD IN RISALE-I NUR

Although Nursi views Imamate [Leadership] as matter of secondary importance, he considers a subject in the sciences of theology (*kalâm*) and the principles of religion.⁴³ As a theologian, Nursi particularly, during the “New Said” refrained from the politics. His involvement with *sayyidhood* is more spiritual than politics.

Nursi uses the *Sayyid* title so often for the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) and then for his descendants. Nursi considers the Prophets’ descendants are the centre for the spiritual, moral progress of the ‘World of Islam’ and the source and guardians of the Prophet’s practices. Also, they are charged with complying the Prophet sunnah in every respect.⁴⁴ He calls the Prophet as *Sayyid* of all saints.⁴⁵ Nursi summarises *Sayyids*’ main tasks are to enlighten people regarding the faith, guide them to the right path, particularly during mischief, corruption and chaos of *ummah*. He states that they “stand as commanders at the head of all blessed chains of spiritual authorities in the assemblies of all the regions of the world in all centuries.”⁴⁶

When Salih Ozcan asked Nursi, if he is *Sayyid* or not, he responded that his both parents are *Sayyid*. His mother Nuriye is a descendant

of Husain and father is a descendant of Hasan.⁴⁷ However, he never publicised it in his life time.

In the next section, this paper will focus on four major and distinguishing characteristics that are associated with *sayyidhood* in Nursi's spiritual leadership philosophy: *tamthil*, *istighna*, not having worldly ambitions, a state of being expectationless, or expectations for reward or recognition, *ithar*, altruism and *musbet hareket*, positive action.

a. Tamthil or the inadvertent overspill of genuine practice

For Nursi, *tamthil* comes before *tabligh* for *da'wah* and he believes that the finest representatives of Islam throughout Islamic history were the Prophet, his companions, and then his descendants or *Sayyids*.⁴⁸

Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) represented a universal *tamthil* of Islam at the peak of a complete perfection as messenger of God because he was sent "as a mercy to the worlds" (Qur'an, 21:107). In the Qur'an it is stated that "there has certainly been for you in the Messenger of God an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in God and the Last Day and [who] remembers God often" (33:21). The Prophet had two aspects of his mission which are *tabligh* and *tamthil*. His *tamthil* includes every aspect of his life is at the degree of peak of *al-insan al-kamil*, the perfect human. This is essential for all prophets who represented the truths at the highest level according to Islamic theology. Because the issues related to faith can be elucidated through *tamthil*. In fact, acceptance of truth by the people depends on the degree of *tamthil*. It does not just apply to religious or ethical issues only but also to all fields, including politics, sciences, justice, human rights, dignity, the environment and so on. *Tamthil* can be applied individually, as a group, nation, or ummah, that is, the whole Muslim community.

The *tamhtil* will be more effective in a peaceful society because, during conflicts, firstly the truths are killed and they cannot be heard. Nursi states that where there is conflict or heated arguments, the truth cannot be presented or heard.⁴⁹ Therefore, Islam was spread so quickly throughout the Arabian Peninsula after the Prophet signed Hudaibiyya Peace Treaty with Meccan polytheists. A Muslim is a representative of peace on earth and is “the one from whose hand and tongue other Muslims are safe.” as the Prophet mentions.⁵⁰ In that case, it is wrong to do anything which can harm peace and safety.

It is a characteristic of *Sayyid* to seek wining people over, not politically, but spiritually. Displaying another trait common to the majority of *Ahl al-Bayt*, they refrain from politics, focus on enlightening hearts and minds. Nursi refers to the Prophet’s cousin Ali (r.a), as the ‘King of Sainthood.’ He was a blessed person, worthy of the highest position, not merely of political rule. He became a spiritual ruler whose status surpassed that of the political Caliphate, a Universal Master, whose spiritual rule will continue even until the end of the world.⁵¹

The truths of religion can be conveyed in the best way through the *tamhtil*, precisely the subjective principles such as faith in God, the hereafter, angels, hell and heaven etc. Without a perfect *tamhtil*, these articles of faith cannot be understood or believed. Therefore, there was need of prophets for role modelling. God sent prophets to show the religion through *tamhtil*. Nursi states that the truth can be understood if it is clothed with the cloth of *tamhtil*.⁵² Otherwise, it will be like a utopia which will be seen as impossible to put into practice. If the *tamhtil* is not perfect, the religion cannot be understood properly. If religion is only conveyed through proselytising, then it will become like an ideology and will not exist any longer (like Fascism and Communism). It can be said that for Nursi, *tamhtil* is an indispensable characteristic of *sayyidhood* leadership.

b. Istighna (a state of being expectationless) in Sayyidhood

Istighna minimises conflict of interest in the leadership. Nursi views believers, especially those who serve the religion [imams, sheikhs who are considered spiritual leaders by the people], as having an obligation to serve humanity without expecting rewards, material or otherwise, because the world is an ‘abode of service,’ not the place of pleasure, reward, and requital.⁵³ He calls this ‘*istighna*⁵⁴,’ in *Risale-i Nur*.

According to verses of the Quran, one of the essential characteristics of prophets is *istighna*. The verse “*in ajriya illa a’la rabbil alemin*” (‘...I ask you for no wage; my wage is only due from God...’ 10:70) or in similar form is mentioned twelve times. Three times it refers to Prophet Noah, who conveyed the message of God for close to a millennium and lived longer than any other prophets. Suitably, the first time the *istighna* verse appears, it is about Noah. Both of these show the significance of *istighna* in leadership.

Istighna is a component of the companions of all prophets, saints (*awliya*) and great leaders in Islamic history. Well-known examples include four Rightly Guided Caliphs, Umar ibn Abdul Aziz (682-720), Salah ad-Din Ayyubi (1138-1193), Imam A’zam (699-767), Imam Malik (711-795), Imam Shafi’i (767-820), Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855), Imam al-Ghazali and Mawlana Jalal ad-Din Rumi (1207-1273). These leaders led a simple life, gave away or shared what they received as gifts or spoils of war, and did not leave any inheritance. Among Saladin’s possessions at the time of his death, there was one piece of gold and forty pieces of silver.⁵⁵ He had given away his great wealth to his poor subjects, leaving almost nothing to pay for his funeral. Following the greatest leaders in the history of Islam, Nursi did not leave any inheritance except little money which was sufficient for his burial. Nursi strictly applied *istighna* principle in whole of his life.

c. *Ithar* (altruism)

Cambridge Dictionary defines altruism “willingness to do things that bring advantages to others, even if it results in disadvantage for yourself.”⁵⁶ The term is used as the contrary of “self-interested or “selfish” or “egoistic.”⁵⁷ According to al- Ghazali , *ithar* or sacrifice for others is the highest stage of generosity.⁵⁸ Like Sufis, Nursi calls this ‘*tafani*’ as “annihilation in the [Muslim] brother.”⁵⁹ This means that a person forgets the feelings of his own carnal soul and lives as part of a collective personality, a *jama’ah*, and ultimately, the *ummah*. In that way, each person is like a bodily organ working together with other organs without harming one another. Just as the hand does not harm the eye, but protects and cleans it, the believers protect and support each other.⁶⁰

Ithar is one of the important characteristics of all prophets, their disciples, or companions, great scholars and spiritual leaders in human history. *Ithar* (altruism or preferring others to one’s self) is one of the major principles of religions and an ethical principle of moral philosophy. It has a significant place in the Qur’an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) who is the pinnacle in regard of altruism. It is also considered as an indispensable moral value for establishing a civilization. In *Risale-i Nur* *ithar* is based on the Qur’an, Sunnah and *Salaf Saleehen’s* (the ‘Righteous Predecessors’ in the first two centuries of Islam) interpretations.

The Prophet’s *ithar* is not just in this world but also in the hereafter. He would think his community⁶¹ when everyone thought of himself or herself. Abdul Quddus Gangohi’s (1456-1537) states that: “Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned.”⁶² As Nursi considers his ascension from the creation to the Creator as inner face of sainthood but returning from the Creator to the creation is his messengership⁶³ which is the highest degree of altruism. By applying *ithar*, the leader will be an example to other

public staff. In return, it will create prosperity and progress for a society.

d. Positive Action

The Prophets are embodiments of positive action⁶⁴ including in leadership. Positive action dictates a focus on what needs to be done rather than reacting to others. It means engrossing oneself in constructive actions of the building and repairing rather than engaging in destructive behaviour.⁶⁵ There is a strong correlation between positive action and *sayyidhood* leadership. One characteristic of *sayyidhood* is having a gentle persuasion as the Prophet responded to the bedouin and refrained from inciting conflict. The Prophet's strategy was to make friends out of enemies.⁶⁶ Those who act positively are pro-active rather than reactionary. They prefer peace instead of conflict as much as they can. Acting positively is seen by Nursi as an essential principle of serving.

Just like many great spiritual leaders including Nursi is no stranger to suffering assaults. As Hans Kung argues in the early Turkish Republic era, the government engaged in an ambitious and Jacobin secularisation program that essentially sidelined Islam from all aspects of life and oppressed religious leaders.⁶⁷ His responses to aggressive secularism or accusation were according to philosophical, ethical, and legal principles. He responded to the accusations and charges through means of a lawyer or legal processes. Despite all oppression, tyranny and suffering, Nursi and his followers did not revolt or preached for the revolt.

In my humble view, there are six major reasons for Said Nursi act positively against aggressive secularists and some jealous religious leaders.

1. The strategy of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) and the other prophets mentioned in the Qur'an were to form

friendships and alliances instead of creating enemies or cementing hatred. So, Nursi followed the same strategy.

2. Nursi views securing safety and stability in a country as the duty and obligation of all.⁶⁸

3. He sees every individual including those who are anti-religion as potential believers or future friends.

4. Nursi believes Islam means peace and it can be flourished in a peaceful society. Where violence wreaks havoc, it is not possible to convey the truth and principles of faith.

5. If patience is not shown against oppression and injustice, and the response is a negative action such as violence, it can lead to breaching of innocent people's rights and even conflict. This will cause more oppression and provoke further enmity.

6. Responding to injustice and oppression negatively will only harm the enforcers, not the people who decide and order for the injustice.

Positive action means to focus more on the major problems rather than prioritising minor one and try to solve them in a civilised way instead of blaming external causes. By doing that Nursi is applying Ibn Arabi's "*al-insan al-Kamil*" perfect human model in the service of faith and humanity. He brings faith, Islam and human together. This leads to a productive and beneficial role model⁶⁹ which is characteristic of *sayyidhood* leadership.

Nursi's definition and application of *sayyidhood* leadership philosophy is highly idealistic, particularly in a materialistic society. His understating of above mentioned hadith regarding leadership is *sunna* centred and rarely applied in the Islamic history by the rulers and most of the religious leaders. Possibly, it can be achieved by the spiritual elite in various levels.

In the contemporary world, political leadership revolves around benefit, national and self-interest. Although Nursi revived the guidelines for *sayyidhood* leadership, he does not provide the details in regard to how this can be applied in our modern times. Possibly, he left the details to be developed further according to needs of a society or a country. However, although it is very difficult, the spiritual aspect of *sayyidhood* leadership can be implemented as a role model is spirituality more than in politics.

CONCLUSION

The leadership literature in general has avoided religious sources and in particular Islamic sources. Although some notable attempts have been made in recent years to identify a good leadership model for Muslims, it was done within the Western leadership framework and trying to fit Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) leadership style in these frameworks. This has restricted the identification of what leadership style Islam proposes especially when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as the quintessential archetype of leadership is considered by Muslims. This paper attempted to establish an Islamic leadership framework and identified four characteristics of what is called *sayyidhood* leadership model. This model was then applied to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to further refine it and tested on Said Nursi as a relatively modern Muslim scholar who discussed these characteristics in his writings and represented them in his spiritual leadership style. As mentioned above, it is highly idealistic but it can be applied in different levels. At a time when Muslims need leadership and are looking for the best leadership models to get them out of the crisis they are in, *sayyidhood* leadership model offers some hope.

Endnotes

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³ Said Nursi, *Tarihce-i Hayat*, (Istanbul: Envar Nesriyat, 1995) 620.

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⁵ Ozcan Keles defines tamthil as "The inadvertent overspill of internalisation", Ozcan Keles Blogsite, <http://www.ozcankeles.org/tamsil-the-inadvertent-overspill-of-internalisation-21/> retrieved 23.02 2017

⁶ See Abu'l Hasan Al- Mawardi, *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, trans. Dr Abdullah Yate, Ta-Ha Publications, London , 1996

⁷ See Al-Ghazzali, *Nasihah Al-Muluk* (Counsel of Kings), trans.F.R.C. Bagley, (Oxford University Press, London 1964)

⁸ Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, (New York, Princeton University Press, 1969)176-177, 201-202, 388-389.

⁹ See Imam Rabbani,*Mektubat Tercemesi*, Huseyin H. Isik, (Istanbul, Hakikat Kitabevi, (2014)

¹⁰ Rafiq I. Beekun & Jamal Badawi, *Leadership: An Islamic Perspective*, (Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publication, 1999) 14-15.

¹¹ See Sami Helewa, Models of Leadership in the Adab Narratives of Joseph, David, and Solomon : Lament for the Sacred, Lexington Books, published online, 1.11.2017.

¹² *Salaf Saliheen* is an honorific title which is being used for the first three generations of Islamic history. They are the companions (*sahabah*) their successors (*tabiun*) and successor of the successors (*tabau tabiun*)

¹³ Said Nursi, *The Letters*, trans. Sukran Vahide (Istanbul: Sozler Ofset, 1997) 68-69

¹⁴ At- *Tabari*, *Jamiu'l Bayan*

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¹⁸ Muhammad Husein Tabatabai, al-Mizan, available <http://www.almizan.org/>

¹⁹ Tirmidhi, Hadith no: 3615, <https://sunnah.com/urn/634770> retrieved 17.04.2017

²⁰ Bukhari, *Fadâilü ashâbi-Nabî*, 22, Sunan Abu Dawud Hadith no 4662 <https://sunnah.com/abudawud/42/67> retrieved 11.04.2017

²¹ Ho, Engseeng, *Graves of Tarim*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, Berkeley, 2006)149, Morimoto Kazuo, "Introduction", in *Sayyids and Sharifs in Muslim Societies: The Living Links to the Prophet*, edited by Kazuo Morimoto, (London: Routledge, 2012) 1-13.

²² Abu Dawud, Hadith no 4647, <https://sunnah.com/abudawud/42/52> retrieved 22.04.2017

²³ It means group solidarity. According to Ibn Khaldun it is social solidarity and sense of same goals. For detail information see Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, chapter I and II, http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ik/Muqaddimah/Chapter1/Toc_Ch_1.htm retrieved 10.14.2015

²⁴ Deylemî, *Müsned*, II, 324, Hindi, *Kenz'ul-Ummal*, c. 6, s. 710 in Fethullah Gülen, *Messenger of God: Muhammed*, (New Jersey: The Light Inc, 2005) 270.

²⁵ Sayyid means "Leader or chief. - (over)lord ; boss ; distinguished ; eminent ; emir ; emperor ; generous ; high-ranking ; king ; leading personality ; magnanimous ; magnate ; monarch ; noble ; noble(man) ; notable ; peer ; person of distinction ; president ; prince ; principal ; senior ; sir ; superior ; supreme ruler. See Lexilogos Arabic Dictionary, <http://www.almaany.com/en/dict/ar-en/%D8%B3%D9%8A%D8%AF+%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D9%88%D9%85+%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%85%D9%87%D9%85/> retrieved 3.10.2015

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³¹ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 215.

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⁴⁰ Imam al-Ghazali, *Ihya Ulum ad Din*, trans. Fazl ‘ul Karim, III, (Karachi:Daru’l Ishat, 1993) 253.

⁴¹ Farah Fatima Golparvaran Shadchehr, *Abd al-Rahman Jami: Naqshbandi Sufi, Persian Poet*, Unpublished Dissertation, (The Ohio State University, 2008)77-105. available at https://etd.ohiolink.edu/rws_etd/document/get/osu1217869380/inline

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⁴⁵ Nursi, *The Letters*, 237.

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⁴⁹ Said Nursi, *Asari Bediyye*, (Istanbul: Envar Nesriyat, 2012) 107, 680.

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⁵³ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 23.

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⁵⁹ Nursi, *The Flashes*, 216-217.

⁶⁰ Nursi, *Flashes*, 217. **A hadith states: "The example of the believers in their affection and compassion and benevolence is like the body; if one part of it becomes ill the whole body comes to its aid with fever and sleeplessness"** (Bukhari and Muslim).

⁶¹ Allah's Messenger said, "For every Prophet there is one invocation which is definitely fulfilled by Allah, and I wish, if Allah will, to keep my that (special) invocation as to be the intercession for my followers on the

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An Overview of the Commentaries of the *Rumi's Mathnawī*

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Abstract

This paper analyses some of the most important interpretations of the Rumi's Mathnawi, in Chronological Order, from Sharḥ Jawāhir al-Asrār wa Zawāhir al-Anwār: Kamāl al-Din Ḥossein ibn Ḥasan Khawrazmī (15th century AD) to The Structure of Rumi's Mathnawi: Seyed G (Salman) Safavi (21st century AD).

Keywords: Rumi, Commentaries of the Mathnawī, Khawrazmī, Anqarawi, Khawja Ayyūb, Lahuri, 'Abd al-Latif, Akbar Abadi, Bahr al-Ulum, Sabziwari, Nicholson, Furūzān Far, Golpinarli, Jafari, Humā'ī, Isti'lāmī, Zarrinkub, Zamani, Safavi.

Introduction

The profound effect and influence of Rūmī's thought on the intellectual and spiritual currents of thoughts on the world have been celebrated and explored by scholars East and West in the field of mysticism and Sufism for centuries. The works of Rūmī,

and in particular *Mathnawī-i Ma'nawī* (henceforth referred to as the *Mathnawī*), reflect his spiritual character. The *Mathnawī* tells the story of the journeys of mystics (*ʿarīfān*), and is a commentary on the spiritual states and ranks of saints.

The *Mathnawī* is a didactic work, the product of Rūmī's period of maturity and soberness. In this way the text differs from his *Dīwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*, which was the product of his ecstasy and annihilation (*fanā'*). The *Mathnawī* is a commentary on Rūmī's spiritual experiences and journeys. Mystics believe that the seeker (*muwīd*) and the object that is sought for (*murād*) reflect one another, like twin mirrors. As such, the *Mathnawī* has been described as "one of the most important literary books, the most superior spiritual exposition, and a summary of the intellectual journey and final conclusion of the intellectual wayfaring of Muslim nations."¹

Although the stories of the *Mathnawī* vary, the primary story is that of the Unity of Reality (*Ḥaqq*), and the Oneness of the Perfect Human and the Mystics. According to Rūmī himself, the *Mathnawī* is the product of Divine Inspiration rather than human thought. Rūmī likened this process of inspiration to the impregnation of his spirit by spiritual realities, which were then born as the verses of the *Mathnawī*.

The themes of tolerance, friendship, faithfulness, peace, and purity are reflected in the works of Rūmī, and particularly in the *Mathnawī*, in such a way that they can be understood by all people, regardless of differences of language or culture. In this way, the works of Rūmī transcend illusory differences, becoming bestsellers even in the West. Rūmī describes the *Mathnawī* as "the Root of the Root of the Root of the

Religion”, “the Greater Jurisprudence”, “the Illuminated Path”, and “the Manifest Proof.”

The stories of the *Mathnawī* can be grouped into five categories:

1. Stories about the states of the saints and Shaykhs, such as “Aḥmad Khizrūya”, “Dhu'l-Nūn al-Miṣrī”, “Ibrāhīm Adham”, “Bāyazīd Bastāmī” and “Abu'l-Ḥasan Kharqānī”, among others.
2. Folklore such as “the Tale of the Haughty Grammarian”, and “the Story of the Sūfī, Faqīh and the Seyed”.
3. Historical stories such as “the Conquest of Sabziwār”, “Vakīl Sadr-i Jahān”, “Imād al-Mulk”, “Ayāz”, and others.
4. Secret stories, such as “the Story of the Reed, “the Slave Girl and the King”; of “Maḥmūd and Ayāz”, of “the King’s Falcon”, of “the Romans and the Chinese”, of “the City and the Village”, of “the Dhāt al-Ṣuwar Castle”, of “the Parrot and the Merchant”, etc.
5. Stories of different cultures of the world, such as “the story of the Three Fishes” and “the story of Nakhjīrān and the Lion” (both of which are derived from *Kalīla wa Dimna*, which is in turn derived from Indian *Panchatantra*, known in the West as the *Tales of Bidpāi*). According to the commentary of Istī'lāmī, some of these stories, such as the story of “I have become the Peacock of 'Illiyīn,” and “the story of Luqmān“, come from versions of the famous Aesop’s Fables.

According to Furūzān Far, one of the most eminent authorities on Rūmī in last century, “Besides including explanations on the realities of religions, the principles of *taṣawwuf* (mysticism) and commentaries on the secrets of Qur’ānic verses and prophetic

traditions, the *Mathnawī* is a manifestation of the ranks and status of Mawlānā (Rūmī) and his chosen companions. However, Rūmī's primary objective in writing the *Mathnawī* was to express, in the shroud of allegory and stories, his own spiritual state and that of those chosen ones and the story of Moses and Jesus and the Shaykhs of the path (*ṭarīqa*) and stating the secrets of the lovers by telling the story of others."²

After Rūmī's death, his spiritual influence spread along with his poetry. After his close disciple Ḥusām al-Dīn Ḳalebī, his son Sultān Walad as the Shaykh of "*Mawlawīyya ṭarīqa*", the Sūfī Order that Rūmī founded; led and spread Rūmī's system of thought (the *Irfān* of Love or Practical *Irfān*) beyond both the eastern and western borders of Anatolia. By establishing a common symbolic language and intercultural relationships, the works of Rūmī have created bonds of friendship and understanding between different peoples throughout the world. The scholars of Turkey, Iran, Transoxiana and the Indian subcontinent have been immersed in Rūmī's poetry for centuries, and in unison they sing the rhapsody of love and humanity.³

The Turkish poet Yunus Emre worked to spread the *Mathnawī* and the *Mawlawīyya ṭarīqa* in India's cultural and spiritual societies. In the final years of the Ottoman Empire, Ṭāhir al-Mawlawī wrote a twelve-volume commentary on the *Mathnawī* in Turkish. Later, a Kurdish scholar by the name of Shafīq Jān completed al-Mawlawī's commentary and published his own commentary on the *Mathnawī* in six-volume using the same methodology of al-Mawlawī's commentary. In Egypt, al-Dasūqī Shitā' translated the *Mathnawī* into Arabic and also wrote a commentary on it. Another commentator, Muḥammad Kafāfi,

wrote a two-volume commentary on Books One and Two of the *Mathnawī* in Arabic, although, the work was left incomplete due to his death.

After the Mongol invasion and the ensuing turmoil of Khurāsān and Iraq's intellectual, political and social structures, a number of '*wrafā'* (mystics), including the young Rūmī and his father, migrated to and settled in Anatolia, including the city of Konya. This migration resulted in the transfer of Khurāsān's culture and knowledge to Asia Minor and the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

In this way, Anatolia in general, and Konya in particular became a meeting place for intellectual and spiritual movements and trends from both the Western and Eastern lands of Islām, and a major center of mysticism and scholarship, from which the poetry and ideas of Rūmī and other mystics spread back out across the Muslim world. The *Mathnawī* was also the subject of much attention and study in the cultural milieu of Khurāsān and Transoxiana.

As Kamāl al-Din Hossein Khawrizmī's commentary on the *Mathnawī*, and the special attention paid to the *Diwān-i Shams* by Muḥammad Pārsā, the leader of the *Naqshbandīyya* Order, demonstrate. Ya'qūb Charakhī (from the Shaykhs of the *Naqshbandīyya* Order wrote a commentary on the *Mathnawī* as *Risāli Nā'iyyi-yi*. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, who famously described the *Mathnawī* as the "Qur'ān in the Persian language" in his book *Nay Nāma*, wrote a poetic commentary on the eighteen opening verses of the *Mathnawī*.

Writings on the *Mathnawī* by the followers of the *Kubrawīyya* Order, such as Hossein Khawrizmī's "*Jawābir al-Asrār*", and

those of the *Naqshbandīyya Order*, such as Khawja Ya‘qūb Charkhī’s *Nā‘īyya* and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī’s *Nay Nāma*, were widely read on the Indian subcontinent, and formed the basis for that region’s special cultural tradition of the study of the *Mathnawī* from the tenth century onwards. Shāh ‘abd al-Laṭīf, the most famous poet of Sindh, was greatly influenced by the *Mathnawī*. For some years, Rūmī’s influence in India stagnated. However, Shiblī Nu‘mānī once again paved the way for the influence of Rūmī’s ideas and thoughts on the Muslims of India.⁴

Gorgeos D. Hungria (1422-1502) was the first European who referred to the *Mawlawīyya ṭarīqa* in his travelogue. Hans Christian Anderson (1805-1875) wrote his observations of the Samā’ ceremony in Turkey in 1842, in a book entitled *Poet’s Bazaar*. Julia Pardoe (1806-1862) published his observations in *The City of the Sultan* in 1837 by studying the *Mawlawīyya ṭarīqa* in Istanbul. John P. Durbin (1800-1876) has also referred to the *Samā’ Mawlawīyya* ceremony in his work entitled *Observations in the East*.

In the past century, Edward Henry Whinfield (1836-1922), James William Redhouse (1811-1892), Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868-1945), and Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969) played an important role in introducing Rūmī and the *Mathnawī* to the western world. Nicholson, besides translating into English and providing a commentary on *A Selection of Diwān-i Shams*, translated the whole text of the *Mathnawī* in a work titled *Rūmī’s Mathnawī* (1925-1940); this work contains eight volumes and includes the whole of the *Mathnawī* and a commentary on some of its verses. Arthur Arberry also translated some of Rūmī’s *Mathnawī* in a work titled *A Selection*

of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*; he also translated Rūmī's *Fīhi Mā Fīhi* in a book titled *Discourses of Rūmī*.

Another western scholar of Rūmī, the German orientalist Annemarie Schimmel (1922-2003), translated *Fīhi Mā Fīhi* into German (published as *Ich Bin Wind Und Bist Feuer*, meaning *I am wind, you are fire*), in which she analyses Rūmī's life and character, and the greatness of the *Mathnawī*. '*Rūmī's perspective on Allāh and the world, Ādam's descent, the creation's ascent, supplication, the fire of love and the dance of the sama*' are the titles of the chapters of her book. Schimmel's other works on Rūmī include *The Triumphal Sun*, which looks at Rūmī's works and thoughts, and *A Selection of Diwān-i Shams* translated into German, which is a selection of Rūmī's Ghazals and Rubā'īyyāt.

William Chittick, one of the most important American specialists on Islām, '*irfān*, Rūmī and Ibn 'Arabī, published a number of seminal works on the study and analysis of Rūmī's thought and perspective, the most important of which are *the Sūfī Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rūmī*, *Shams al-Din Tabrizi, Me and Rūmī: The Autobiography of Shams-i Tabrizī* and *The Sūfī Doctrine of Rūmī*.

The commentators of the *Mathnawī* in Iran, in Chronological Order from the eighth century onwards, are as follows: 'Alā' al-Dawla Simnānī, Shaykh Naṣir al-Din Chirāq Dihlawī, Mīr Seyed 'Alī Hamadānī, Qawām al-Din Sanjābī, Shāh Qāsim Anwār and Khawja Abu al-Wafā' Khawrizmī. These commentators refer either to Rūmī or his poetry.

The first ever commentary on the *Mathnawī* was written by Kamāl al-Din Ḥosseīn Khawrizmī, Niẓām al-Din Maḥmūd Shīrāzī (Shāh Dā'ī), Ya'qūb Charkhī (from the Shaykhs of the

Naqshbandīyya Order), ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, Asīrī Lāhījī, and ‘Alā’ al-Din ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Shāhrūdī have written commentaries on selected sections of the *Mathnawī*, or on some of its verses.

Alongside his *Lubb al-Mathnawī* (a selection of the *Mathnawī*), Ḥossein Wā’idh Kāshifī has, in a selection titled *Lubb al-Lubbāb*, divided the *Mathnawī* into five hundred topics, with the verses relating to each topic presented within that section. Furūzān Far considers this book to be among the best commentaries on the *Mathnawī*.⁵ This book demonstrates the *Mathnawī*’s fundamental value to the *Naqshbandīyya* Sūfī Order.

The 11th century philosopher Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī composed a selection of the *Mathnawī* from a philosophical perspective, in a book entitled *Sirāj al-Sālikīn*. Mullā Muḥammad Sālīh Qazwīnī, Quṭb al-Din Muḥammad Lāhījī ‘Ishqawārī, ‘Alī Gilānī Fumanī, Hājj Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī Nūrī, and Mirzā Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad Ṣādiq Khān have each written commentaries on sections or some of the verses of the *Mathnawī*.

Hājj Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī’s mystical-philosophical commentary entitled *sharḥi Asrār* (based on Sadrean Philosophy), written in the 13th century, is amongst the most unique and significant commentaries on the *Mathnawī*. During the latter part of the same century, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Mostawfī Kāshānī compiled the *Fihrist-i Kashf al-Abyāt-i Mathnawī*.

In the 20th and 21st century, Badī’ Al-Zamān Furūzān Far, ‘Allāma Muḥammad Taqī Ja’farī”, Jalāl al-Din Humāeī, ‘Abd al-Ḥossein Zarrīn Kūb”, Seyyed Ja’far Shahīdī, Muḥammad Istīlāmī, Seyyed ‘Abd al-Karīm Surūsh (who wrote the correction

of the *Mathnawī* according to the Konya manuscript and, in addition, produced a commentary on a large section of the *Mathnawī*, Karīm Zamānī, and Seyed Ghahremān Safavi (who for the first time discovered and analyzed the structure of the *Mathnawī*) are among those who have written commentaries on the *Mathnawī*, each with different approaches.

Furūzān Far writes, “The criticism that can be levelled against all commentators of the *Mathnawī* is that the majority judge Rūmī’s beliefs based on their own knowledge and the limit of their own thought; and some, in explaining the ambiguities of the *Mathnawī*, clutch at the hem of the books of wisdom and philosophy and give commentaries on the it using the methodology of philosophers. Whereas, if instead of this hard work they studied that book with precision, they would have given a better commentary.”⁶

Rūmī’s poetry has inspired an impressive commentarial tradition. The number of commentaries on the *Mathnawī* alone is vast, and can be categorized in several ways:

1. Based on methodology: mystical (*‘irfānī*), literary, philosophical and comparative
2. Based on geography: Iran, Turkey, the Indian Subcontinent and the West.
3. Based on quantity: commentaries on the prologue, selected commentaries, verse-by-verse commentaries, thematic commentaries and complete commentaries.
4. Based on theme.

5. Based on form: poetic commentaries and prose commentaries.

The Analysis of Some of the Most Important Commentaries of the *Mathnawī*, in Chronological Order

***Sharḥ Jawābir al-Asrār wa Zawābir al-Anwār*: Kamāl al-Din Ḥossein ibn Ḥasan Khawrazmī**

Kamāl al-Din Khawrazmī was one of the many notable writers, poets, and mystics of the 9th century (A.H.). He was one of the Shaykhs of the *Kubrawīyya* Order, and one of the students of Abū al-Wafā' Khawrazmī, who was also known as *Pīr-i Firishtī*. Abū al-Wafā' was a mystic who was both a poet and musician, and a great admirer of Rūmī. "Initially, Kamāl al-Din wrote a poetic commentary on the *Mathnawī* and named it *Kunūz al-Haqā'iq fī Rumūz al-Daqā'iq*."⁷

Sharḥ Jawābir al-Asrār wa Zawābir al-Anwār is the oldest commentary on the *Mathnawī* and includes a comprehensive introduction, in addition to commentaries on three of the Six Books of the *Mathnawī*. According to Khawrazmī's, the *Mathnawī* is "the general statement of the words of *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* [Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib] ... and the commentary of these words."⁸

Khawrazmī's references to the statements and opinions of Greek philosophers, to the works of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), and to the credible commentaries on the Holy Qur'ān, reveal his familiarity with these sources. The introduction to his commentary is comprised of ten articles, and includes historical accounts of the states of the Shaykhs of the Spiritual Orders (*turuq*) in the style

of *Risāla Qushayrīyya*, the concepts and principles of theoretical *'irfān*, the customs and vocabulary of *taṣawwuf* (Sūfism), accounts of the virtues of the Shi'ite Imāms up to Imām Ja'far al- Ṣādiq in the hagiographic style of 'Aṭṭār's Memorial of the Saints (*Tadhkirāt al-Awliyā'*), in addition to a discussion of the Divine Names and Attributes, and a commentary on the stations of *'irfān* called *Uṣūl al-Uṣūl*.

Khawrazmī's commentary is characterized by its reference to verses of the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth* (prophetic narrations), its use of parables and stories, the author's own poetry (written in different styles such as the *qaṣīda*, the *ghazal* and the *Mathnawī*), reference to Persian sources from various authorities, such as the works of 'Aṭṭār, Rūmī's *Kullīyyāt-i Shams*, the *Divāns* of Irāqī, Khāqānī and Ḥallāj. The commentary also refers to Ibn 'Arabī's works, such as *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and Qayṣarī's commentary and the other works.

In addition to comparing Rūmī's thought in the *Mathnawī* with the ideas of other eminent scholars and the Shaykhs of *'irfān*, Khawrazmī's work also presents a summary of the relevant stories and parables of the *Mathnawī*, and explaining Rūmī's spiritual states, from his migration from Balkh to his settlement in Konya. This commentary, however, lack of enumeration of the verses of the *Mathnawī*, nor does it address some of its more difficult verses and the mystical (*'irfānī*) and philosophical terminology contained therein. Furthermore, the commentary is based on a version of the manuscript that is not considered credible.

***Sharḥ-i Kabīr (Fātiḥ al-Abyāt):* Rusūkh al-Din Ismā‘īl Ānqarawī**

Ismā‘īl Ānqarawī, known as Ismā‘īl Dadi and Shaykh Shārīḥ, was a Turkish commentator of the *Mathnawī* in the 10th century AH. Ānqarawī was a Shaykh of the *Bayrāmī* Sūfī Order, a branch of the *Khalwīyya Tarīqah*, before later joining Rūmī’s *Mawlawī* Order. His commentary, entitled *Fātiḥ al-Abyāt*, is the most comprehensive commentary on the *Mathnawī*. Furūzān Far has referred to this commentary as “scholarly and well-researched.”⁹ This commentary has played an important role in introducing Rūmī’s masterpiece to the centres of study in the West.

Nicholson, whose commentary and translation is the most important resource for the study of Rūmī in Western scholarship, has called Ānqarawī’s commentary as the “best eastern commentary on the *Mathnawī*,”¹⁰ and based his own commentary on it. Shaykh Yūsuf ibn Aḥmad Mawlawī’s Arabic commentary on the *Mathnawī*, titled *Al-Minhāj al-Qawī li Ṭullāb al-Mathnawī*, resulted in the familiarisation of Arabic-speaking scholars with the *Mathnawī*. A large section of this text is also derived from Ānqarawī’s commentary.

In his commentary, Ānqarawī made use of works such as Zamakhsharī’s *Kashāf*, the poetry of Ibn al-Farīd, the *Nihāya* of Ibn Athir, the ideas of Sa‘d al-Din Farghānī, and the sayings of Sūfī Shaykhs such as Junayd al-Baghdādī and Bāyazīd Basṭāmī. In his commentary, Ānqarawī imitates the structure of the text of the *Mathnawī*. He quotes from the Qur’ān, Prophetic traditions (*aḥādīth*), Islāmic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in the form of *irfān* combined with the science of Islāmic theology (*kalām*),

and states the principles, teachings and knowledge of *irfān* and Sūfism in code, in secret and through signs.

Ānqarawī's commentary also includes a commentary on the prologue of each Book of the *Mathnawī*, an explanation of many of the symbols found in the work's numerous parables and stories, and a discussion of the sources Rūmī may have drawn upon in composing his masterpiece. Although Ānqarawī was a *Mawlawīyya* Shaykh, he used the terminology and ideas of the school of Ibn 'Arabī to comment upon the *Mathnawī*. Because of this, some critics consider him "unaware of Rūmī's style of work and his philosophy."¹¹ The Turkish text of Ānqarawī's commentary includes both the translation and commentary of the verses of the *Mathnawī*, but some of the verses are translated without commentary. Further, the sources of the verses, the *aḥādīth* (Prophetic traditions), anecdotes and parables have not been mentioned.

Ānqarawī is the only major commentator on *the Mathnawī* who accepted the existence of a Seventh Book, an opinion that earned him the ire of scholars of Rūmī in his own time. Most Persian scholars of the *Mathnawī* believe that this controversial Seventh Book "it has been put together out of imitation by one of the people of Asia Minor who was of the followers of and believers in Rūmī, and who was not very familiar with the Persian language. Due to a lack of intelligence, he has composed not one verse which contains an exquisite thought or a noble phrase"¹².

The work of Shams al-Din Aḥmad al-Aflākī, the most important biographer of Rūmī, also seems to call the authenticity of this Seventh Book into question. In his *Manāqib al-ʿArifīn*, Aflākī writes, "One day, they asked Mawlānā: is there a preference or

superiority between the Books of the *Mathnawī*? He replied: the superiority of the Second to the First is like the Second Sky over the First, and the Third over the Second, and the Fourth over the Third, and the Sixth over the Fifth, just like the superiority of the Angelic World (*malakūt*) over the Material World (*‘ālam al-mulk*), and the superiority of the Archangelic World (*jabarūt*) over the Angelic World.”¹³

Ānqarawī’s commentary includes a list of resources on different topics, a commentary on particularly difficult verses, an analysis of and comprehensive commentary on the introduction to Book Two of the *Mathnawī*, and a discussion of the mystical and literary aspects of some of the verses through Persian, Arabic and Turkish poems and sayings.

The text is also replete with references to the works of Ibn ‘Arabī (with particular reference to *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya*), and also offers a spiritual interpretation of the Qur’ānic stories, and a spiritual commentary on the Qur’ānic verses to which Rūmī refers. However, Ānqarawī’s commentary is based on a manuscript of the *Mathnawī* that is not as accurate as current editions, and he makes little reference to Rūmī’s other works and to the influence of other poets and scholars such as ‘Attār and Sanā’ī upon Rūmī.

***Mukāshifāt-i Razavī*: Mawlawī Muḥammad Riḍā Lāhūrī**

Mukāshifāt-i Razavī was written in the 11th century AH by Muḥammad Riḍā Lāhūrī. The name of the commentary refers to the blessing of Imām Riḍā, the Eighth Shi’ite Imām. This commentary is one of the oldest from the Indian subcontinent,

and one of the few written from the perspective of the Persian-speaking population of India about Rūmī and *Mathnawī*. Muḥammad Riḍā analyzes and provides a commentary on all the difficult verses of the Six Books of the *Mathnawī*. The commentary on the verses is versatile and conceptually rich.

After a short analysis of a given story, Muḥammad Riḍā explains Rūmī's objective in writing that story, and then begins his commentary on the verses. The commentary references the majority of the Qur'ānic verses and *aḥadīth* cited in the *Mathnawī*, as well as sayings of the Shi'ite Imāms. The commentary also provides an index to these verses, *aḥadīth*, and sayings. However, these references and the index are not complete, and he does not explain some of the more difficult terms employed by Rūmī, and certain Arabic terms are used without reference to their source.

***Asrār al-Ghuyūb*: Khawja Ayyūb Pārsā Lāhūrī**

Asrār al-Ghuyūb was written by Khawja Ayyūb Pārsā Lāhūrī in the 12th century (A.H.), in what is now Pakistan. Furūzān Far ranks Khawja Ayyūb among the intelligent and ingenious Sūfis.¹⁴ In this commentary, Khawja Ayyūb uses previous commentaries on the *Mathnawī* written in the 11th century, such as *Sharḥ-i Laṭā'if Ma'navī min Ḥaqā'iq al-Mathnawī* by Shaykh 'Abd al-Laṭīf 'Abbāsī Gujarātī, the aforementioned *Mukāshifāt-i Razavī*, and the *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī* by Mir Muḥammad Nūr Allāh Aḥrārī and *Jawābir al-Asrār wa Zawābir al-Anwār* from the 9th century (A.H.).

Khawja Ayyūb critiques these other commentaries in his own. As a follower of Ibn ‘Arabī, Khawja Ayyūb praises the Shaykh al-Akbar in his commentary. The commentary includes definitions on each of the difficult words of a given verse, and a phonetic guide to their pronunciation. Khawja Ayyūb’s commentary also references Qur’ānic verses, narrations and *aḥādīth*, and also includes a discussion of the miracles (*karāmāt*), speeches, and stories attributed to Rūmī (derived from biographies such as *Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn*). However, this commentary doesn’t discuss all of the verses of the *Mathnawī*, and is based on a manuscript that has several problems.

Sharḥ Laṭā’if Ma‘nawī min Ḥaqā’iq al-Mathnawī: Shaykh ‘Abd al-Laṭīf ‘Abbāsī Gujarātī

Shaykh ‘abd al-Laṭīf is the first person from the Indian subcontinent to have critically analysed the different versions of the *Mathnawī*. He produced one of the first critical editions of the work, and wrote his own prologue for it. Besides correcting and comparing different versions of the *Mathnawī*, Shaykh ‘abd al-Laṭīf wrote a dictionary of the *Mathnawī*, known as *Laṭā’if al-Lughāt*. This was in addition to his own volume from *Mathnawī*, which, according to some, is the volume that accompanies the prologue of ‘Abd al-Laṭīf.

After years of studying and research on the *Mathnawī*, he wrote a commentary on many of its difficult verses entitled *Sharḥ Laṭā’if Ma‘nawī min Ḥaqā’iq al-Mathnawī*. Many later *Mathnawī* scholars of the Indian subcontinent, including Walī Muḥammad Akbar Ābādī, regard this commentary as the foundation of their own work. *Mirāth al-Mathnawī* and a commentary on *Ḥadīqa*

al-Haqā'iqā of Sanā'ī are among Shaykh 'abd al-Laṭīf's other works.

Futūḥāt-i Ma'nawī: Baḥr al-'Ulūm

The *Futūḥāt-i Ma'nawī* is a commentary on the Six Books of the *Mathnawī* written by 'Abd al-'Alī Muḥammad ibn Niẓām al-Din Muḥammad Sahālavī, known as Baḥr al-'Ulūm, in 14th century in India. This commentary compares Rūmī's mystical expositions with those of Ibn 'Arabī's school. Baḥr al-'Ulūm drew on the *Sharḥ Laṭā'if Ma'nawī*, and like Akbar Ābādī before him, referred to Ibn 'Arabī's, *Futūḥāt al-Makīyya* and *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* throughout his commentary.

“Both commentators (Akbar Ābādī and Baḥr al-'Ulūm) have attempted to make Rūmī's thoughts compatible with the opinions of Ibn 'Arabī, and as such, they have been distanced from the intended meanings of Rūmī.”¹⁵ Baḥr al-'Ulūm's commentary identifies and cites the Qur'ānic verses, *aḥādīth*, and technical terms employed by Rūmī in the *Mathnawī*, and furthermore, identifies the sources of the parables and stories contained therein. Western scholars have considered this commentary as the best prologue and guide to the spiritual teachings of Rūmī.

Makḥzan al-Asrār: Walī Muḥammad Akbar Ābādī

Makḥzan al-Asrār is a commentary on the six Books of the *Mathnawī*, written by Walī Muḥammad Akbar Ābādī in India in the 12th century. It is “relatively a useful book and has many

delicate points.”¹⁶ The commentary has a clear resemblance to the *Futūḥāt-i Ma’navī* by Baḥr al-‘Ulūm, and includes a comparison of Rūmī’s sayings and perspective with those of the school of Ibn ‘Arabī. The author reviews and critiques previous commentaries (from the 11th century) such as *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī* by Mir Muḥammad Nūrullāh Aḥrārī, the *Mukāshifāt-i Razavī* (Shaykh Akbar Ābādī pays special attention to this work from a theological perspective, and levels heavy criticism against it in certain places), and the aforementioned *Sharḥ-i Laṭā’if-i Ma’navī* and *Jawāhir al-Asrār*.

The *Makhzan al-Asrār* is a rich source of information on various the theological and political trends current on the Indian subcontinent, and the effects these trends had on the study of the *Mathnawī*. Later commentators such as Nicholson, Zamānī and Furūzān Far have used this commentary in their works.

The *Makhzan al-Asrār* makes reference to most of the Qur’ānic verses and *aḥādīth* cited in the *Mathnawī*, explains key spiritual terms, and analyses the relationship between some of the stories of the *Mathnawī*. However, this commentary does not cover all the verses of the *Mathnawī*. Like other commentators of the *Mathnawī* in the Indian Subcontinent during that time, Shaykh Akbar Ābādī references Ibn ‘Arabī’s *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* and *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* in his commentary on some verses, although he refers to Rūmī as his “true *murshid* (guide).”¹⁷

***Sharḥ-i Asrār*: Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī**

The *Sharḥ-i Asrār* was written by the great philosopher Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī in 13th century (AH) Iran. “As far as it

has been possible, he has compared the *Mathnawī* with the opinions of philosophers, particularly Mullā Sadrā Shīrāzī.¹⁸ He interprets the difficult verses of the *Mathnawī* from a philosophical Shi'ite perspective and describes the *Mathnawī* as a poetic interpretation of the Qur'ān. He writes, "these writings of Rūmī are the roots of religion and the science of *ta'wīl* (esoteric interpretation)"¹⁹.

This mystical (*īrfānī*) commentary of the *Mathnawī* interprets many of its difficult verses with reference to the Qur'ān and *aḥādīth*, and compares the esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of the verses of the Qur'ān with those of the *Mathnawī*. The text also provides explanations for certain philosophical and mystical subjects through his commentary on certain verses of the *Mathnawī*, and also discusses the perspective of Ibn 'Arabī and his school.

Sabziwārī's commentary is characterized by its interpretation of some verses using other verses from the *Mathnawī*, its use of verses by other poets to explain certain other verses of the *Mathnawī*. Sabziwārī's commentary also provides a critical correction of some verses, deals with certain literary points, and the correct spelling of some words.

The Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddin Rūmī: R. A. Nicholson

Nicholson's monumental eight-volume *Mathnawī of Jalalu'ddin Rūmī* was written in England between 1925 and 1945, and is amongst the best works on the *Mathnawī*. The author based this work on his own critical edition of the text of the *Mathnawī*, the result of comparing ten of the oldest hand-written manuscripts,

from the 7th and 8th centuries (AH). The superiority of the *Mathnawī* translated and corrected by Nicholson over the other editions of *Mathnawī*, is the removal of extra verses, the references to the closest manuscripts written in Rūmī's era, and the differences found in all editions of the *Mathnawī*.

“The *Mathnawī* corrected by Nicholson is without a doubt the best text of the *Mathnawī* ... his translation is one of the best guides for understanding Rūmī's *Mathnawī*.”²⁰ Nicholson's work is a complete translation of all Six Books of the *Mathnawī*, and demonstrates a mastery of Rūmī's allegories, parables and mystical and philosophical terminology.

While Nicholson's work is largely based on Ānqarawī's commentary, he also refers C.E. Wilson's 1910 English commentary on the Second Book of the *Mathnawī*. In a preface to the Persian translation of Nicholson's commentary of the *Mathnawī*, Seyed Jalāl al-Din Ashtīyānī writes: “In this century, fortune befriended the hardworking scholar, who in the task of writing a precise commentary on the *Mathnawī*... offered the most correct manuscript of the *Mathnawī* to the seekers of knowledge... and from the aspect of his own commentary on the *Mathnawī*, gained great fame and can be considered as the greatest scholar of the *Mathnawī* in the West.”²¹

The most important characteristics of Nicholson's commentary on the *Mathnawī* are as follows:

1. Writing in a summary manner.
2. Stating where the work of others has been used and abstaining from any form of dogmatism.

3. Relying on a scientific research methodology.
4. Relying on credible primary sources in Persian and Arabic.
5. Referring to the multiple Arabic sources and noting the commonalities between them.
6. Referring to other commentaries on the *Mathnawī* (Persian, Arabic and English).
- 7 Relying on the works of Rūmī, especially the *Mathnawī*, in explaining difficult sections of the text.
8. Mentioning historical events and the sources of stories, parables, narrations and signs.
9. Pointing out citations of verses of the Qur'ānic, *a ḥadīth*, and other religious narrations.
10. Explaining important linguistic and grammatical points.
11. Explaining difficult terms and allegories.
12. Explaining details of Islāmic mystical, philosophical, and legal thought.
13. Revising English translations of some of the verses of the *Mathnawī*.
14. Mentioning spurious manuscripts that, for various reasons, are not included in his critical edition of the *Mathnawī*.
15. Critically engaging with the opinions of some of the commentators referred to in his text.²²

16. The interpretation of *Mathnawī* by referring to *Mathnawī* and the other works of Rūmī.
17. Not mentioning the majority of the Arabic verses of the *Mathnawī*.
18. Referring to the opinions and thoughts of Ibn ‘Arabī (although he criticises other commentators for interpreting the *Mathnawī* according to Ibn ‘Arabī’s school of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*).
19. Referring to the sources used in different sections (Persian, Arabic and English).
20. Providing explanations of points of Persian grammar Persian.
21. Referring to the *Divān-i Shams* and to verses from Sanā’ī, ‘Attār, Hāfiz, Ḥallāj, Ibn al-Fāriḍ and others.
22. Referring to Persian literary sources such as *Tadhkirāt al-awlīyā’*, the *Gulistān*, *Bahāristān*, *Mirṣād al-‘Ibād*, *Kalīla wa Dimna*, *Qābūs Nāmeḥ*, *Jawāmi‘ al-Hikāyāt* and others.
23. Comparing some of the verses, vocabulary, and symbols from the *Mathnawī* and Qur’ān with their counterparts in the New Testament.
24. Including a mystical interpretation and *ta’wīl* of some of the stories (in some cases by referring to the opinion of other commentators, especially Ānqarawī, and by referring to other influential works of Islāmic mysticism and philosophy such as *Al-Lum‘a*, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, *Qumwat al-Qulūb*, *Risāla*

Qushayrīyya, Kashf al-Mahjūb, Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm al-Dīn, Mishkāt al-Anwār, Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā', Al-Milal wa al-Niḥal and others.

Furūzān Far, in the introduction to his unfinished commentary on the *Mathnawī*, writes that “the commentary of Reynold Nicholson on the *Mathnawī* is without a doubt the most precise commentary on the *Mathnawī*. It is written on the basis of the correct principles of criticism and by mentioning sources and evidence. It is a trustworthy reference for discovering the secrets and solving the riddles of the *Mathnawī*.”²³

Sharḥ-i Mathnawī-i Sharīf: Badī' al-Zamān Furūzān Far and Seyed Ja'far Shahīdī

Sharḥ-i Mathnawī-i Sharīf, written by Furūzān Far in Iran in the 1350s (AH), is without a doubt one of the best commentaries on the *Mathnawī*, even though Furūzān Far only commented on 3012 verses. Seyed Ja'far Shahīdī finished the remaining verses of the *Mathnawī* in the same style as Furūzān Far.

Tawfiq Subḥānī, the great contemporary expert on Rūmī, who edited *Maktūbāt, Majālis-i Sab'eh* and organized *Dīwān-i Shams* and *Mathnawī* based on Konya manuscript and translated the works of Turkish scholars of the *Mathnawī* into Persian for the first time, is of the opinion that, if one was to attentively read Furūzān Far's commentary on the 3012 verses for which he was able to provide commentary before his death, one would need no other commentaries. For he is of the opinion that Rūmī expressed the majority of what he intended to say in Book One of the *Mathnawī*. In fact, there is a tradition in Rūmī's own

Order, the *Mawlawīyya*, that the first eighteen verses of Book One are the essence of the *Mathnawī*.

Like Nicholson, Furūzān Far benefited from the commentaries of past scholars more than other commentators. He also explored Imām Muḥammad Ghazzālī's influence on Rūmī more than other scholars: "the style and methodology of discussion and the thought and the information of *Ḥujjat al-Islām* (Ghazzālī) in *Iḥyā' al-'Ulūm* has left a deep effect on Rūmī's thought."²⁴ Although Furūzān Far's commentary on some of the verses of the *Mathnawī* makes frequent reference to Ibn 'Arabī's ideas, unlike many of the *Mathnawī*'s commentators, he does not consider Ibn 'Arabī's influence on Rūmī to be conclusive.²⁵

Furūzān Far's commentary is distinguished by its use of the Konya manuscript (the most accurate manuscript to date), and its critical engagement with other commentaries. The work also defines and explains several difficult words and terms before the commentary. Furūzān Far also includes an introduction before each story, in which he lists the technical vocabulary of philosophy, *'irfān*, jurisprudence and theology (*kalām*) that appear in the subsequent story. Moreover, the commentary contains an index of the general subjects and principles of Rūmī's thought.

Furūzān Far uses the sayings and poems of Sanā'ī and 'Aṭṭār, and other Persian and Arabic sayings and verses to explain certain verses of the *Mathnawī*. Furthermore, the commentary identifies the topic of each verse and the source of each *hadith*, and gives general descriptions of the individuals mentioned in a given verse or story. He provides a commentary on and interpretation of the verses in a simple language, on the basis of Rūmī's other works, as well as those of Bahā al-Din Walad

(Rūmī's father), Burhān al-Din Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī, *Maqālāt-i Shams*, and the works of Rūmī's son, Sultān Walad. Furūzān Far refers to the opinions of past scholars by analysing the historical, social and intellectual context of certain verses.

Nathr wa Sharḥ-i Mathnawī-i Sharīf: 'Abd al-Bāqī Gulpinārī

Nathr wa Sharḥ-i Mathnawī-i Sharīf was written in recent decades, in Turkish, by 'Abd al-Bāqī Gulpinarlı and translated by Tawfīq Subḥānī into Persian. Gulpinārī's deep personal connection to Rūmī's spirituality, which was the essence and centre of Rūmī's thought, resulted in the dedicating most of his life to research on Rūmī, the *Mathnawī* and the *Mawlawīyya* Sūfī Order. Gulpinārī was the last *murshid* (guide) of the *Mawlawīyya ṭarīqa* and was a complete authority on the works of Shams Tabrīzī and Sultān Walad.

Gulpinārī used the Konya manuscript as the basis for his translation and commentary, since it was written under the supervision of Rūmī's disciple, Husām al-Din and Sultan Walad and is considered the most reliable manuscript. In his work, Gulpinārī sought to offer a commentary on the *Mathnawī* based on Rūmī's own ideas, remaining faithful to Rūmī's unique perspective, in contrast to other commentaries written on the basis of the ideas of the School of Ibn 'Arabī.

Gulpinārī's commentary incorporates information and insights from the commentaries of past scholars such as Ānqarawī, Nicholson and Furūzān Far, especially in reference to the sources of parables and stories, and in using other verses of the *Mathnawī* to comment on a given verse. This commentary also

analyses the historical context of the stories of the prophets and saints, frequently referring to Christian and Jewish sources. Gulipnārī's work also cites the majority of the verses and *aḥādīth* quoted in the *Mathnawī*; however, this text does not comment upon all of its verses.

Naqd, Tafsīr wa Tablīl-i Mathnawī-i Ma'navī: 'Allāma Muḥammad Taqī Ja'farī

Naqd, Tafsīr wa Tablīl-e Mathnawī-i Ma'navī is composed of fifteen volumes, and was written by 'Allāma Muḥammad Taqī Ja'farī as an introduction to Imām 'Alī's *Nahj al-Balāgha* (Peak of Eloquence), and a commentary on it. In addition to paying attention to the mystical (*'irfānī*), philosophical, and intellectual dimensions of the *Mathnawī*, 'Allāma Ja'farī's commentary takes a critical view.

In his perspective, although Rūmī's poetry does not reach the same aesthetic level as that of Hāfīz and Sa'dī, the knowledge presented in Rūmī's poetry is unique, and his thoughts on cosmology, Divinity and the nature of the human state are based on foundational Islāmic principles.

'Allāma Ja'farī argues that the *Mathnawī* and *Divān-i Shams* do not present us with a single authorial figure who comprises the various voices and aspects of Rūmī contained in these two works. He cites the following verses of Rūmī in defense of this argument:

“Life is ever arriving anew, like the stream / though in the body it has the semblance of continuity,”²⁶

New day, new night, new garden and new trap / each breath a new thought, it is a new joy and a new garden.”²⁷

‘Allāma Ja‘farī’s commentary on the *Mathnawī* is an encyclopaedia of different sciences and subject matters. In this work, after explaining the verses, he analyses Rūmī’s thought by putting it into dialogue with other thinkers, particularly contemporary ones. In an extensive article, ‘Allāma Ja‘farī explains and interprets the “elements of the attractiveness of the words of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Balkhī [Rūmī] from the viewpoint of Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī.” Amongst these elements are:

1. Relying upon the Holy Qur’ān: The verses of the *Mathnawī* frequently refer to those of the Qur’ān. 231 verses from Book One, 227 verses from Book Two, 289 verses from Book Three, 359 verses from Book Four, 91 verses from Book Five, and 225 verses from Book Six make reference to verses of the Qur’ān. Many verses of the *Mathnawī* are also direct adaptations of verses of the Qur’ān. This is the case for 71 verses from Book One, 305 verses from Book Two, 95 verses from Book Three, 111 verses from Book Four, 71 verses from Book Five, and 67 verses from Book Six.

2. Usage of, and attention and reference to, Islāmic narrations: These are the numbers of narrations referred to or interpreted in the *Mathnawī*: Book One: 71, Book Two: 80, Book Three: 67, Book Four: 28, Book Five: 71, Book Six: 411. The number of narrations directly adapted in the verses of the *Mathnawī*: Book One: 60, Book Two: 90, Book three: 72, Book Four: 40, Book Five: 37, Book Six: 46.

3. Rūmī's mastery of various forms of knowledge, both human and Divine. Rūmī himself considers the knowledge to which he refers as the result of Divine Favour:

“Word became the Water of Life, because it comes from knowledge of Divine Mercy / Do not deprive your spirit of it, for it causes benefits”²⁸

4. That Rūmī did not regard poetry as his profession; as he himself says, he has not been a poet:

“I am thinking of rhymes, and my Sweetheart says to me, / Do not think of aught except vision of Me.”²⁹

5. Rūmī's liberating use of parables and stories. He writes in order to encourage humankind to be free:

“O son, burst thy chain and be free! / How long wilt thou be a bondsman to silver and gold?

If thou pourest the sea into a pitcher / how much will it hold?
One day's store.

The pitcher, the eye of the covetous, never becomes full: / the oyster shell is not filled with pearls until it is contented.”³⁰

6. Rūmī's excitement in receiving and expressing intuitive truths

“The friend loves this agitation: / it is better to struggle vainly than to lie still”³¹

“In this way be thou ever scraping and scratching (exerting thyself to the utmost): / until thy last breath, do not be unoccupied for a moment.”³²

“Before the (blows of the) bat of His decree, “*Be, and it was*” / we are running (like balls) in Space and beyond.”³³

Āz Daryā bi Daryā is an index of the verses of the *Mathnawī* in four volumes. *Mawlavī wa Jahān Bini-hā*, another of *Allāmah Ja‘farī’s* texts, analyses and compares Rūmī’s thought with that of different schools of thought, and compares and examines Rūmī’s views in the *Mathnawī* and *Diwān-i Shams*.

Mawlawī Nāmi (Mawlavī Chi Miḡūyad): Jalāl al-Din Humā’ī

Mawlavī Nāmi, written by Jalāl al-Din Humā’ī in 1977, in the last three decades, is among the most important works about the *Mathnawī* and its secrets and mystical (*‘irfāni*), philosophical and social context. In his work, Humā’ī analyses Rūmī’s life during three distinct periods: the period of adolescence (from childhood to the age of 25), the period of maturity (from the age of 25 to the age of 39) and the period of being ‘burnt’ (from meeting Shams) which lasted until the end of his life.

He writes, “My primary intention and objective in writing this work was to state Rūmī’s thoughts and beliefs as can be derived from his own sayings, particularly from the noble *Mathnawī*, which illuminates all his states and his pure sincere essence, and is the comprehensive collection of his thoughts and beliefs.”³⁴ By using verses and *aḥādīth*, and by relying on the opinions,

thoughts, sayings and poems of the philosophers, poets and Shaykhs of *ʿirfān*, Humāʿī explains and interprets Rūmī's thought, and organizes Rūmī's beliefs and thoughts in two chapters, comprised of four articles:

1. Rūmī's thoughts and beliefs regarding mores, and ethical and social customs.
2. Rūmī's thoughts and beliefs regarding religious beliefs and issues of jurisprudence and law.
3. Rūmī's philosophical and theological thoughts and beliefs.
4. Mystical (*ʿirfāni*) beliefs, or love and *ʿirfān* in Rūmī's doctrine.

“The contents of the *Mathnawī* and the saying[s] of Rūmī in this noble composition are in general three sections, which we have named the common, the special and the more special sections, or the *mubkamāt* (undisputable verses), the *mutashābihāt* (ambiguous verses), and that which is the dividing boundary or the common boundary and the purgatory between the non-allegorical and the allegorical.”³⁵ Through the discovery of the relation between the story of “*The Fortress [named] the Destroyer of Reason*” in the Sixth Book and the story of “*The King and the Handmaiden*” in the First Book of the *Mathnawī*, Humāʿī shows the structural parallelism of these Two Books.

Sharḥ-i Mathnawī: Muḥammad Istiʿlāmī

Muḥammad Istiʿlāmī's *Sharḥ-i Mathnawī* was published in 1996 over seven volumes. In the first six volumes, Istiʿlāmī arranges

the text of the according to the most credible manuscripts. This section is followed by explanations of the Book. The seventh volume is comprised of an “Index of Subjects and Themes, Special Names, Names of Books, Names of Cities, Philosophical Terms, Verses of the Qur’ān, *Aḥādīth* and Stories.”³⁶ Isti’lāmī’s commentary is distinguished by the fact that:³⁷

1. It provides an understanding the meaning of each verse, in the context of Rūmī’s intended meaning for each section.
2. It gives simple and clear explanations that are mostly devoid of jargon.
3. It avoids distractions, portraying knowledge in an exhibitionist manner, and saying more than is necessary.
4. It maintains clear divisions between the commentator’s own thoughts and ideas and the those of Rūmī.
5. It offers explanations which range from giving the meaning for a specific word or term to exploring the relationship between Rūmī’s writing and Qur’ānic concepts, *aḥādīth*, religious and historical narrations, and many other subject matters. These explanations are provided for readers who have some prior knowledge of these concepts.
6. It interprets the *Mathnawī* with reference to the *Mathnawī* itself; different topics, allegories, and thoughts are repeated many times in the *Mathnawī*.

The text of the *Mathnawī*, as arranged and commented on by Isti’lāmī, is based on four manuscripts: namely, the handwritten manuscript of 668, the handwritten manuscript of 667, a manuscript in Rūmī’s museum which was compiled during his

life time (or a shortly thereafter), and the manuscript dated 715 AH. In Isti'lāmī's view, these four manuscripts are "the most correct, complete and trustworthy"³⁸ of manuscripts. In the final correction, the text is compared with Nicholson's *Mathnawī*.

Isti'lāmī's work builds on past commentaries, and in particular the commentaries of Nicholson and Furūzān Far. It provides a general commentary on the verses, which considers the general meaning of the related verses from a conceptual perspective. This work also mentions the sources of the stories and the verses from Furūzān Far's *Aḥādīth-i Mathnawī* and *Ma'khaz-i Qiṣaṣ*. The text offers explanations for the terms without mentioning their sources. It also offers analysis of words and mystical (*'irfāni*) terms, and adds the vowels, vocalising the Arabic words. The work is generally well-written.

Sirr-i Nay (Naqd wa Sharḥ-i Tahlīlī wa Taḥqīq-i Mathnawī):
‘Abd al-Hossein Zarrīn Kūb

Sirr-i Nay, written by Zarrīn Kūb in the early 1970s (CE), is a critical, analytical and comparative commentary on the *Mathnawī*. In the First Chapter, the commentator explains and analyses Rūmī's motives in composing the *Mathnawī*, the aspects that differentiate it from Rūmī's other works as well as from other *Mathnawīs*, the *Mathnawī*'s position in the world of *'irfān* and *taṣawwuf*, Rūmī's methodology in composing and arranging the *Mathnawī*, and the reflection of social events and conditions in the *Mathnawī*. He also offers an interpretation and esoteric explanation of some of the stories and their relation to each other.

In the Second Chapter, Zarrīn Kūb analyses the periods of Rūmī's life by offering a critique and analysis of the opinions of past scholars, based on credible sources. In the Third Chapter, he analyses Rūmī's style of writing; he considers the *Mathnawī*, like the *Majālis al-Sab'ah*, to be a distinct example of the "pulpit style,"³⁹ the primary characteristic of which is allegorical analogy.

In the Fourth Chapter, he refers to common words, culture, scholarly concepts and definitions that characterize the text's language. Next, he defines certain Sūfī terms, and refers to Rūmī's mind as "being drowned in *hadīth* and tradition (*sunna*)."⁴⁰ He notes some of the important characteristics of the *Mathnawī*: namely, the presence of innovative words and definitions, and the usage of words, phrases and definitions that are appropriate to the content of the story.

In the Fifth Chapter, he describes to Rūmī's style of writing as simple, by pointing to Rūmī's familiarity with the works and poems of Persian-speaking poets such as Sanā'ī, 'Aṭṭār and the Shaykhs of *'irfān*. He also views the "unity, comprehensiveness and completeness"⁴¹ of the *Mathnawī* as a sign of the precise and sensitive geometry of Rūmī's mind.

In the Sixth Chapter, which is entitled "*The Story of the Reed*", Zarrīn Kūb refers to some of the sources of the stories and allegories of the *Mathnawī*. He develops his analysis based on their structure and content. In Chapter Seven, he considers Rūmī's use of Qur'ānic verses, parables, definitions and laws as a clear illustration of Rūmī's absolute mastery of, and familiarity with, the Divine Word, and the secrets and subtleties of the Qur'ān. He describes the *Mathnawī* as a 'mystical interpretation of the Qur'ān'.

In the Eighth Chapter, he analyses Rūmī's method of using narrations and *aḥādīth*, and their effect on the *Mathnawī*, which also includes some Sūfī narrations. The *aḥādīth* which are used in the *Mathnawī* relate to wisdom and knowledge, origin and resurrection, ethics, morality and education, the attributes of Prophet Muḥammad's nation (*umma*), the laws of the religion, and the mores of the tradition. These *aḥādīth* are usually used in order to provide a Sūfī interpretation or to explain Sūfī teachings.

In the Chapter Nine, the author analyses the influence of Greek philosophy, the science of theology (*kalām*) and the work of Muslim theologians, particularly Imām Muḥammad Ghazālī, on Rūmī's thought and opinions. The author points to Rūmī's familiarity with Ibn 'Arabī's thought and opinions. He considers a possible lack of compatibility between Rūmī's doctrine and that of Ibn 'Arabī, especially in light of Shams' gibes against Ibn 'Arabī.

“Some of the companions had misgivings in regards to *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyyah*, for they considered its purpose to be not at all clear. Suddenly, Zakī Qawwāl entered from the door, upon which Rūmī claimed that *Futūḥāt-i Zakī* was far better than *Futūḥāt al-Makkīyya* and then began to perform the *samā'*.”⁴² Rūmī's use of Bahā' Walad's *Ma'ārīf*, Seyed Burhān Muḥaqqiq Tirmidhī's *Ma'ārīf*, and Shams' *Maqālāt* are also subject to the author's analysis.

In the Tenth Chapter, Zarrīn Kūb expands upon one of the major themes of Rūmī's work, namely that the inclination of the firmament in all its degrees, from human to animal to inanimate matter, is love. He explains that human love arises from the nature of humankind, and is founded upon knowledge.

However, the love he describes is not the everyday meaning of the word. Rather, he regards it as based on spiritual fondness, fellowship, the denial of the self and alienation.

By purifying the human being, love provides the means of perfection: “What the Sūfīs refer to as Divine Love and the Love of *Allāh* is, in reality, a conscious experience, which the end of the path of this Love might lead to.”⁴³ In Chapters Eleven to fifteen, the author analyses the mutual relation between the world and humankind, and says that Rūmī considers the man to be the ‘Greater World’ and, from a conceptual perspective, even beyond the ‘Greater World.’

Sharḥ-i Jām‘-i Mathnawī-i Ma‘nawī: Karīm Zamānī

Sharḥ-i Jām‘-i Mathnawī-i Ma‘nawī, written by Karīm Zamānī in 1994, is a thematic commentary on the *Mathnawī* in seven volumes. In this commentary, after a general introduction to the story, the commentary on related verses is presented. In developing this text, Zamānī relied upon other commentaries on the *Mathnawī*, and in particular that of Ānqarawī. In Zamānī’s perspective, the two following verses are the foundation of Rūmī’s *Mathnawī*:

“I said to him: ‘it is better that the secret of the Friend should be disguised: / do thou hearken (to it as implied) in the contents of the tale.

It is better that the lovers’ / secret should be told in the talk of others.”⁴⁴

In the author's opinion, the *Mathnawī* has three types of audience: the masses, the middle classes and the elite.

1. Verses containing Rūmī's counsel in gatherings, lectures, and sermons are at the level of the understanding of the masses:

“This world is the mountain, and our action the shout: / the echo of the shouts comes (back) to us.”⁴⁵

“Let us implore God to help us to self-control: / one who lacks self-control is deprived of the grace of the Lord.”⁴⁶

2. Verses which contain intricacies for those who have journeyed on the path and for seekers of the realm of thought and esoteric experience; this includes the majority of the verses of the *Mathnawī*:

“‘Tis not pen to describe (the outward) form: / (what is written) in letters is (qualities like) ‘learned’ and ‘just’;

(And qualities like) ‘learned’ and ‘just’ are only the spiritual essence / which thou wilt not find in (any) place or in front or behind.

The sun of the spirit strikes (with its beams) on the body from the quarter where (where the relation of) place does not exist: / it (that sun) is not contained in the sky.”⁴⁷

3. A small number of verses are concealed from the understanding of the masses. These are specific to the audience that has the ability to receive the reality and secrets that Rūmī speaks of: these are essentially the sayings he produced while in a state of spiritual ecstasy.

The Structure of Rūmī's Mathnawī: Seyed Ghahremān (Seyed Salman) Safavi

The Structure of Rūmī's Mathnawī, written by Seyed Ghahremān (Seyed Salman) Safavi⁴⁸, was published in the UK in 2006, and translated by Mahvash Sādāt Alavi (the present author) into Persian in 2009. By stressing Rūmī's creativity, his esoteric vision, and the principles of theoretical *'irfān*, this work has, after 700 years, provided a critique of the prevalent view amongst the scholars of the *Mathnawī*. That is, in both the East and West, scholars have been of the opinion that the *Mathnawī* is without structure.

By taking a synoptic approach to the text, using a unique hermeneutic and structuralist methodology, and through employing the principles of parallelism and chiasmus, this work demonstrates innovative, connected and organised structure of the *Mathnawī* in the form of sixteen diagrams. Safavi published work on the structures of the Third and Sixth Books of the *Mathnawī* in Tehran and Philadelphia in 2008, using the same methodology and synoptic approach.

The author, from a philosophical approach to the text, believes that the language of *Mathnawī* is a symbolic language, not an allegory. In the symbolic language, a word refers to several meanings and also refers to the interpreter who understands the true meaning of each word from each section or story. Today, in the case of Hermeneutics, there are different point of views about the relationship between a text and the author after the creation and issue of the text, and also the question that how much the interpreter can remain loyal to the author's intention.

In Safavi's perspective, a sequential reading of the text is not sufficient for an understanding of its meaning as a 'Whole'. Rather, it is only sufficient for understanding the meaning of each individual verse or phrase; thus, this method cannot be used for achieving a synoptic understanding of the text. In the synoptic approach, to understanding each story, the discourse's purpose can first be achieved by separating the characters and identifying the concepts of each one.

Context is the key in this synoptic approach. For example, reading the verses on love in the six books of the *Mathnawī*, and commenting on them without taking into consideration the literary context of each book, obscures the primary message of the text. This is because the meaning of love in Book One of the *Mathnawī* is very different to that in Book Six. The same applies to every other book, for in each book, love is the signifier of a specific rank and station. Thus, the meaning of the verses can only be achieved by taking their context into consideration.

The *Mathnawī* is a selection of teachings and stories; the beginning and end of the stories are unclear when the text is approached through a sequential methodology. However, through the synoptic approach, the intertwined nature of the story is revealed, and the meaning and holistic message of the text becomes illuminated.

Safavi argues that: "The Mathnawi, of the thirteenth century, is one of the most highly acclaimed mystical poems in classical Persian. Consisting of around 26,000 verses, arranged in six books, it has appeared to both traditional and western scholars alike as being randomly composed and lacking in structure or architecture. Since, however, Rūmī was a highly skilled poet, able to create any impression he desired, it is improbable he

would have written a defective work. When this is coupled with his constant affirmation that the world of appearances is not the real world, there is reason thoroughly to scrutinise both the structure of the work and the scholarly consensus concerning its apparent randomness. This is done here by a detailed analysis of Book One. Rūmi has divided each book up into sections of varying lengths, and at the beginning of each section he has given a title. The examination consists of analysing each section to establish its thematic and narrative contents. It then becomes apparent which sections should be taken together to form the larger wholes, which could be called discourses, maqalat, or, since in Book One the narrative element is strong, stories. There are twelve such stories or discourses in Book One. Having established these larger wholes, the analysis then examines the relationships of the sections and their themes to one another within each discourse or story. This yields the major discovery of this thesis: the sections within each story are organised not sequentially, although, of course, one follows another, but synoptically using the two compositional principles of parallelism and chiasmus. This is entirely unexpected. It accounts for the seeming randomness of the sequential reading, while at the same time yielding beautiful structures and organisation when read synoptically. But the synoptic organisation is not simply aesthetically satisfying; it provides equally importantly the patterns of significance and the distribution of emphasis. Not only are the sections of each story organised by parallelism and chiasmus, so, it is argued, is Book One as a whole, so that the stories stand to one another in a similar pattern. Seeing Book One synoptically reveals that the pattern of significance which organises the stories sequentially is the progressive development of the nafs, or self-hood, on the spiritual path. It is further suggested that Book One stands

chiasmically in parallel to Book Six. The Mathnawi then is far richer than has hitherto been recognised. In combining the outer randomness of the sequential order within the sophisticated inner organisation of significance and purpose permitted by the use of parallelism and chiasmus, Rūmī has reflected in the structuring of his great work his constant message that beneath the empirical world of our senses there lies an inner spiritual world of unity and great beauty. Far from lacking architecture, the Mathnawi, it is argued, is closely planned, integrating the double structuring, the sequential and the synoptic, with the overall message of the work.⁴⁹

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A Global Language for Happiness Rational vs. Religious Approach in the Novel of *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*

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Abstract

Going to great pains to find a feasible global language in the era of Islamic Golden Age, Ibn Tufail concocted a philosophical novel named *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*.

Hayy, the hero of Tufail's novel, is a child of nature. Casting about for real happiness, he finds that real pleasure and true happiness is just to view God.

Nature has a fundamental role in happiness of Hayy in four main levels. First, his way begins from nature, from which is created Hayy and in which is raised by a roe. Second, Hayy realizes all natural things insofar as becoming a leading scientist. Third, resulted in the preceding stage, he ascertains rational reasoning. Fourth, proceeding with rational reasoning, Hayy arrives at mystical experiences so that through all natural beings conveys to God.

Finally, Hayy meets up with a religious stranger from another island and learns that his devout beliefs are totally in accordance with Hayy's own findings.

Keywords: Ibn Tufail, happiness, rational approach, religious approach, global language.

Introduction

How might we find a common language for all religious and non-religious individuals and societies to preserve peace and a sustainable future in the globe? That is the point I want to make in this paper. Being a politician, Ibn Tufail seemingly has an amazing response.

A politician, novelist, philosopher, and physician, Ibn Tufail (c. 1105 Spain–1185 Morocco) is an influential, yet less known, Spanish polymath who has informed a wide range of later thinkers. (Conrad 1996; Goodman 2009) While only one of his works has survived intact, the impact of this one piece is visible on major works of science and fiction. “Hayy Ibn Yaqzan,” i.e. alive the son of awake, is regarded as the first recorded writing in history that is intentionally cast as a philosophical novel, expressing Tufail’s views via imagery.

Hayy Ibn Yaqzan rendered in 1671 into Latin under the title *Philosophus Autodidactus*. (Ockley, 1929) Among other English and Arabic editions, (Ibn Tufai, 1929; 1993; 1996) more recently published an Arabic-English version to which I will refer from now on. (Maftouni, 2017)

The star of ibn Tufail’s novel, Hayy has truth and happiness as his primary objective, striving to attain these elusive concepts throughout the story. While deprived of contact with other human beings and their writings, Hayy goes on to discover the ultimate truth and genuine happiness solely in interaction with nature. Isolated in an island surrounded by the sea and disconnected from any mainland, Hayy imagined that there was no where in the world but that island.

It naturally seems that this island symbolizes the world in which humanity needs happiness. In this island, Hayy gets happiness figuring out that true happiness and pleasure is quite simply to view God. At long last, Hayy understands that the conten of religion is

nothing but the very lessons of nature.

In subsequent lines, I will analyze Hayy's endeavor in his four journeys so as to show the role of nature in the happiness of humanity.

The First Journey : Beginning from Nature

It is evident that Hayy is a child of nature in two meanings according to two versions of the story narrated by Tufail. Based on the first version, Hayy was created in an island where human beings came into the world without parents. He then raised by a roe. (Maftouni, 2017, 25) As per the second version, he was born into a human mother and father who were living in a great island—other than the island of our story—the governer of which had a rather beautiful sister prevented from marriage. At last, she married privately a near relative called Yaqzan and gave birth to a son called Hayy. Then “being afraid that it should be discovered, ... she put him into a little ark.” (Ibid, 36) All courtesy of the tide, Hayy was carried ashore on the island of our story, *Lone Island*. Again the roe in a quest for her lost fawn, hearing a cry, believed it was her fawn and came up to the ark. In this second narrative, likewise, Hayy raised by a roe.

Whichever version is the case, Hayy is born in an island without any other inhabitant, opening his eyes to a roe-mother. His first journey, i.e., the first period of his subjective movement, consists of three parts: initially, Hayy learns all natural beings and becomes a great physicist. Further, He learns from nature his acts. Then he generates empirical sciences like anatomy, autopsy, and vivisection.

The time is not exactly determined, though it is after the age of two and before seven when he starts to think about nature and learn whatever object is around him:

By this time he began to have the ideas of a great many things fixed in his mind, so as to have a desire to some, and an aversion to others, even when they were absent. In the meanwhile he considered all the several sorts of animals, and saw that they were all clothed either with hair, wool, or feathers; he considered their great swiftness and strength, and that they were all armed with weapons defensive, as horns, teeth, hoofs, spurs, and nails. (Ibid, 55-56)

Next, Hayy learns from nature the way of life. He ponders over his points of strength and weakness vis-à-vis nature. As a weak spot in nature, Hayy observes that certain animals have some birth defects or weaknesses. “Then he considered such animals as had any defect or natural imperfection, but amongst them all he could find none like himself.” (Ibid, 57)

As some points of strength in nature he observes:

whenever there happened any controversy about gathering of fruits, he always came off by the worst, for they could both keep their own, and take away his, and he could neither beat them off nor run away from them ... He observed besides that his fellow-fawns, though their foreheads were smooth at first, yet afterwards had horns bud out, and though they were feeble at first, yet afterwards grew very vigorous and swift ... *Besides, he observed that their genital organs were more concealed than his own were.* (Ibid, 57-58)

Hayy considers all these topics , and he cannot understand the reason of these differences. Moreover, he involved a great grief because of these matters. “When he had perplexed himself very much with the thoughts of them, and was now near seven years old, he despaired utterly of having those things grow upon him, the want of which made him so uneasy.” (Ibid, 59)

So, Hayy learns from nature to cope with the situation and remedy his weaknesses. For instance, he “got him some broad leaves of

trees, of which he made two coverings, one to wear behind, the other before.” (Ibid, 59) In the meantime he was growing up passing his seventh year. (Ibid, 61)

In this time strikes some important event, that is, the death of his roe-mother, which induces a remarkable growth in his scientific motives. “She grew lean and weak, and continued a while in a languishing condition, till at last she dyed, and then all her motions and actions ceased.” (Ibid, 63) Because of finding the problem of the roe, Hayy pursues anatomy and autopsy.

So Hayy becomes one of the greatest scientists. “He arrived to the highest degree of knowledge in this kind which the most learned naturalists ever attained to.” (Ibid, 89) “He made all these discoveries whilst he was employed in the study of anatomy, and the searching out of the properties peculiar to each part, and the difference between them; and all this before the end of that time I speak of, i.e. of the age of 21 years.” (Ibid, 97)

The Second Journey: From Nature to Rational Reasoning

The second journey or second part of Hayy’s movement is that he begins to think in broad fashion—that is, rational reasoning. The origins of rational reasoning could be seen before his age of 21, when he studies some kinds of animals. For example, he concludes that each animal has a soul, requiring the unity of the animal soul: “This animal spirit was one, whose action when it made use of the eye, was sight; when of the ear, hearing; when of the nose, smelling; when of the tongue, tasting; and when of the skin and flesh, feeling. When it employed any limb, then its operation was motion.” (Ibid, 91)

This reasoning happens when Hayy is 21 years old. And after the age of 21, Hayy goes on with rational reasoning in a serious way. As Tufail points it out: “Then he embarked on the other methods.”

Some English renderings lack this critical phrase. (Ibid, 17) This new methods are pertaining to his ways of thinking including two levels in the first of which Hayy begins to put natural beings into some categories and generalize them. The second level is that he goes on with generalization, venturing in the mystical realm. He goes on with generalization all the way to what could be considered mystical territories.

The first level of generalization may well be seen in following lines:

He then proceeded further to examine the nature of [all] bodies in this world of generation and corruption, viz. the different kinds of animals, plants, minerals, and the several sorts of stones, and earth, water, vapor, ice, snow, hail, smoke, flame, and glowing heat; in which he observed many qualities and different actions, and that their motions agreed in some respects, and differed in others. (Ibid, 98)

By this way of thinking, Hayy figured out that “a whole species was one and the same thing, and that the multiplicity of individuals in the same species is like the multiplicity of parts in the same person, which indeed is not a real multiplicity.” (Ibid, 103)

The second level: This way of reasoning leads Hayy to the spiritual world, however, he just touches on it. So it might be called a quasi-mystical experience. “And thus he attained a notion of the forms of bodies, according to their differences. These were the first things he found out, belonging to the spiritual world; for these forms are not the objects of sense, but are apprehended by intellectual speculation.” (Ibid, 115)

looking more deeply at the mind-blowing topics, Hayy is affected and then has a retreat from intellectual world to the sensible world until the next stage that he will be absorbed in the spiritual beings:

When his contemplation had proceeded thus far, and he was got to some distance from sensible objects, and was now just upon the

confines of the intellectual world, he was diffident, and inclined rather to the sensible world, which he was more used to. Therefore he retreated a little and left the consideration of abstracted body (since he found that his senses could by no means reach it, neither could he comprehend it) and applied himself to the consideration of the most simple sensible bodies he could find. (Ibid, 130-131)

The Third Journey: Mystical Thinking

Between his age of 21 and 28, Hayy's knowledge grows up to the mystical experiences. He, for example, thinks on proving some agent would be called God: "Now he knew that every thing that was produced anew must needs have some producer. And from this contemplation, there arose in his mind a sort of impression of the maker of that form, though his notion of him as yet was general and indistinct." (Ibid, 133)

From the age of 28 to 35, His state is so that he is conveyed from every natural thing to intelligibles and focuses on the God features. When intelligible knowledge totally sheds light on his mind, in light of this knowledge Hayy again begins to study nature believing all actions of all beings owe to God: "and it appeared to him that those actions which emanated from them were not in reality owing to them, but to the efficient cause which produced in them those actions which are attributed to them." (Ibid, 134)

Now, when he had attained thus far, so as to have a general and indistinct notion of this agent, he had a most earnest desire to know it distinctly. And because he had not as yet withdrawn himself from the sensible world, he began to look for this agent among sensible things; nor did he as yet know whether it was one agent or many. Therefore he enquired strictly into all such bodies as he had about him, viz. those which he had been employed about all along, and he found that they were all liable to generation and corruption. And if there were any which did not suffer a total corruption, yet they were

liable to a partial one, as water and earth, the parts of which, he observed, were consumed by fire. Likewise among all the rest of the bodies which he was conversant with, he could find none which were not produced anew and therefore dependent upon some agent. (Ibid, 136-137)

In this point, Hayy puts them all aside, and passes his thoughts just on the the heavenly bodies. And now he is about the end of the age of 28. Then the whole world appears to Hayy as one individual going so far as to see all things other than God non-existents.

In like manner he enquired into all the attributes of imperfection, and perceived that the maker of the world was free from them all. And how was it possible for him to be otherwise, since the notion of imperfection is nothing but mere non-existence, or what depends upon it? And how can he any way partake of non-existence, who is the pure existence, necessarily by his essence; who gives being to every thing that exists, and besides whom there is no existence; but He is the being, He the perfection, He the plenitude, He the beauty, He the glory, He the power, He the knowledge? He is He, and besides Him all things are subject to perishing. (Ibid, 162-163)

This reasoning occurs when Hayy is about the end of the age of 35. (Ibid, 157) Such observation of the supreme agent, or simply say God, is so deeply established in Hayy's heart that departed from considering anything else: "... and his heart was altogether withdrawn from thinking upon this inferior world, which contains the objects of sense, and wholly taken up with the contemplation of the upper, intellectual world. (Ibid, 164)

In the meanwhile, Hayy begins thinking about himself as a thinker who is able to find the supreme agent, and infers that it should be an incorporeal being free from all material properties. Having thus learned that his essence was not that corporeal mass which he perceived with his senses and was clothed with his skin, he began to entertain mean thoughts of his body, and set himself to contemplate that noble essence, by which he had reached the knowledge of that

superexcellent and necessarily existent being.

And whilst he was thus exercised, he used to wish that it would please God to deliver him altogether from this body of his, which detained him from that state; that he might have nothing to do but to give himself up wholly and perpetually to his delight, and be freed from all that torment with which he was afflicted as often as he was forced to avert his mind from that state by attending on the necessities of the body.

Hayy proceeds in this manner till passing his age of 50. (Ibid, 260)

The Fourth Journey: Returning to Nature

The fourth journey is the highest mystical level of Hayy's spiritual movement. He figures out that real happiness and real pleasure is to view God. The following shows his mystical position in the fourth stage: "When he had abstracted himself from his own and all other essences, and beheld nothing existing but only that one, permanent being." (Ibid, 229)

But he also finds out that nature and all natural beings could very well function as the way of real happiness, real pleasure, as well as salvation. So, he finds out that he must take account of his body and the material part of life. Just in this stage he becomes a nature protectionist. "When he saw what he saw, and then afterwards returned to the beholding of other things." Thereby Hayy returns to the sensible world protecting nature. For example, he is used to removing all impeding or harmful things from animals and plants, if possible.

If he saw any plant which was deprived of the benefit of the sun by the interposition of any other body, or that its growth was hindered by its being twisted with any other plant, he would remove that which hindered it if possible, yet so as not to hurt either; or if it was

in danger of dying for want of moisture, he took what care he could to water it constantly. (Ibid, 211)

Observing any weak creature pursued by any ferocious animal, or caught up in a trap, or hurt “with thorns, or that had gotten any thing hurtful into its eyes or ears, or was hungry or thirsty, he took all possible care to relieve it. And when he saw any watercourse stopped by any stone, or any thing brought down by the stream, so that any plant or animal was hindered of it, he took care to remove it.” (Ibid, 212)

Conclusion

Searching a global language in the era of Islamic Golden Age, Ibn Tufail devised a way of happiness for humanity regardless of religion, albeit consistent with it.

Nature plays a distinctive roles in human happiness. Depicting his views in the novel of Hayy, Ibn Tufail explains following functions for nature:

1. Happiness begins from nature, from which is created Hayy and in which is raised by a roe-mother.
2. His second step is learning all natural objects until becoming a leading scientist, specifically in anatomy, autopsy, and vivisection.
3. The third stage is to learn rational reasoning based on the previous pace.
4. Keeping rational reasoning, Hayy arrives at mystical experiences so that through all natural beings conveys to God. In this step, he returns to nature and becomes a nature protectionist.

After all, Hayy encounters a religious stranger showed up from

another island, finding his beliefs in a complete accordance with his own thoughts.

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Suhrawardi on Philosophy of Light and Illuminationist Philosophy

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Abstract

Shahabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi (1153-1191) is the first Muslim and Iranian philosopher who established his philosophical system based on Light, and calls it as Wisdom of Illumination (Hikmat Al- Ishraq). Light, in Suhrawardi's philosophy, has two ontological and epistemological roles. From ontological aspect, Suhrawardi divides the whole system of being into two Light and Darkness or Shadow, and believes that Light and Shadow are as two constitutional elements of the world. He emphasizes that Light is a self-evident and undefinable reality which shadow is derived from its lack. Suhrawardi divides Light and Shadow into two groups of Substance and Accident, and says there are two kinds of lights including abstract and accidental lights. Abstract lights are independent in their existence, like God, and Accidental Lights are not independent, like Ideas and Angles. Darkling existents have two kinds including Darkling Substances that have no need to place and Darkling accidents are depended on other beings and places. The very important point of Suhrawardi's division of Light and Shadow, is considering of gradual and hierarchical relations and participation of all existents by the reality of Light, that is, as much as every being is more abstract, it can participate more Light and has more independency, which God as Light of Lights is placed in the top of this gradual chain. Suhrawardi, from

epistemological approach, makes a real relation between Light and Illuminationst knowledge. He, first, argues that Light is very self-consciousness and Intuitive Knowledge, and then by paying attention to hierarchical levels of existents, explains their epistemic relations by using of illumination and intuition. He says the knowledge of existents to Supernal Lights is acquired by intuition and observation, while the knowledge of Supernal Lights to Lower ones is achieved by Illumination. Here, Illumination is very radiating and lightening of lower lights by supernal lights. So, Light is both the ontological and epistemological cause of things, namely, all things are originated and recognized by Lights, specially, Light of Lights who is God.

1. Introduction

The history of Islamic philosophy in the Eastern part of Islamic world, in particular Iran, has witnessed to emergence of some great philosophers who not only have had essential role in establishing great philosophical schools but also continuation of the tradition of Islamic philosophy and introducing new philosophical theories were of their most achievements which have been lead to independency and distinguishing Islamic philosophy from Greek philosophy. In this case, it is specially possible to speak of prominent role of Muslim philosophers like Farabi, In Sina, Khajeh Nasir Al Din Tusi, Suhrawardi, Mir Damad, Mulla Sadra and Allameh Tabatabaei. Needless to say that of these philosophers, Ibn Sina is founder of Islamic Peripatetic Wisdom, Suhrawardi as founder of Illuminationist Wisdom and Mulla Sadra as establisher of Islamic Transcendent Wisdom which these three Islamic philosophical schools have increasingly played role in flourishing of rational life of the Eastern part of Islamic world, and also this role is continued.

In this context, Shahab Al Din Yahya Suhrawardi has a prominent place. He was born about one century after Ibn Sina, and has spread his Illumination Wisdom (Ishraqi Hikmah) in a such condition that due to Ghazzali's anti-philosophical oppositions, and his theological

and mystical attacks to philosophy, in general, and to Farabi and Ibn Sina in particular, and because of unsuitable religious and political circumstances of the Eastern part of Islamic societies, there were not good relation between them and philosophy and philosophical thought. It was Suhrawardi who was sacrificed by these conditions and was condemned to death by those jurists who had disagreed with philosophical free speech. Suhrawardi's philosophical struggles, with its Illuminationist tendency, however, and its continuation through his followers, from one hand, and logical defense of Khajeh Nasir Al Din Tusi of Peripatetic philosophy of Ibn Sina and its continuation, from other hand, has been really falsity of theories of those Western thinkers who have thought that Islamic Philosophy was ended after Ghazzali's attacks and death of Ibn Rushed. In this case, Western thinkers' insufficient recognition about philosophical theories of Suhrawardi and its historical and longitudinal links with Ibn Sina's Peripatetic philosophy was caused to such an ignorance, while exact studying the philosophical process of the Eastern part of Islamic world, in particular Iran, is indicated that, as well Khajeh Nasir Al Din Tusi who was reviver of Ibn Sina's Peripatetic philosophy after Ghazzali's attacks, Suhrawardi was the first Muslim philosopher who by establishing a new philosophical school as Hikmat Al Ishraq based on centrality on Light, was able to start a new philosophical process having Illuminationist tendency in Iran and some Islamic nations of the Middle East which has been continued and radiated up to now.

Suhrawardi, in effect, not only was not as the agent for stagnancy of intellectual thought but also his struggles for linking peripatetic philosophy and mysticism and illuminative wisdom has its special prominence. He by placing rationalistic discourse as introduction to entering to illuminative wisdom, and presenting new explanations of principles and methods of peripatetic philosophy, has tried to complete it that fact is clear both in his critical works regarding peripatetic backgrounds and new philosophical teachings concerning illuminative wisdom. Meantime, Suhrawardi was the

only sage helped to joining philosophical and illuminative teachings with Shie'i theology and theoretical mysticism (Razavi, 1998, P 27; Nasr, 2010, P 264). In this regard, continuation of intellectual and philosophical life of Iran and some Islamic nations has indebted to Suhrawardi's efforts.

Based on this fact, rereading of Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy and introducing it to contemporary thinkers who seek some kind of mystical thinking and are interested doing research in Islamic philosophy is unavoidable necessity. In this research is tried to study some epistemological and ontological virtues of the Light as the most important element of Illuminationist Wisdom. First, as a preface before the main debate, we have a short speaking of Suhrawardi's life and works.

Shahab Al Din Yahya Suhrawardi, as founder of Illuminationist Wisdom, was born in 1153, in Suhraward a village near the city of Zanjan, in the Western part of Iran. He after 38 years living and philosophical and spiritual traveling in Islamic lands, was putted in jail by command of Salahuddin Ayyubid in the city of Aleppo in Syria due to hostility and conspiracy of religious clergies of that city and was died because of hunger or suffocated in 1192. The short lifetime less than forty years for Suhrawardi, in the contrary, was worthy for writing philosophical and mystical works. He in his short lifetime succeeded to write about 50 philosophical and illuminative prominent treatises and books that the most significant is the book of Hikmat Al Ishraq (the Philosophy of Illumination) as his magnum opus. We can divide his works into five groups:

1. Four great learning treatises, in Arabic, including of Hikmat Al Ishraq, Al Talvihah (Intimations), Al Moqavemat (Opposites) and Al Masha'er Va Al Motarehat (the Paths and the Conversations). Except Hikmat Al Ishraq, the rest are about philosophy having peripatetic tendency, and Hikmat Al Ishraq is about explaining special principles and virtues of Suhrawardi's Illuminationist Wisdom.

2. Shorter learning treatises, in Persian and Arabic, like Hayakelen Noor (Luminous Bodies), Alalvah Al Imadyieh (Table of Imad Al Din), Partow Nameh (Treatise on Illumination), Ea'teqadul Hukama (the beliefs of Sages), Alluma'at, Yazdan Shenakht and Bustanul Quloob which most of them are shorter explanations of four mentioned in detail books.

3. Story and shorter treatises that was written in mysterious and symbolic language and have mystical and Illuminationist contents. These treatises introduce the spiritual journey of seeker from elementary stages for reaching real knowledge and divine illumination. All of these treatises are in Persian, except one, and consisted of Aql Surkh (the Red intellect), Awaz Par Jabraeil (the Chant of Gabriel's Wing), Loghat Moran, Ruzi Ba Jama'at Soufyian (A Day Among The Sufis), Resalah Fil Mea'raj and Safir Simurgh.

4. Some interpretations of Ibn Sina's books and of the Quran like translation of Ibn Sina's Risalah Al- Taysr (Treatise of the Birds), Persian Translation of Ibn Sina's Isharat and Tanbihat, Risalah Fil Haqiqat Al Ishq (Treatise on the Reality of Love) according to Ibn Sina's Risalah Al-Ishq and Commentaries on some verses of the Quran.

5. Some praises and prayers and blessings that was written in mystical and Illuminationist language.

Of the most significant virtues of Suhrawardi's works are their variety in Persian and Arabic language, and applying of symbolic language, and philosophical, mystical, Illuminationist and the Quranic teachings. It should, in addition, be noted Suhrawardi's utilizing of Greek sages and philosophers thought such as Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, and some of Iranian sages of pre-Islamic era, specially teachings of Zoroastrianism, and Egyptian and Indian sages which these utilizing has strengthened Suhrawardi's Illuminationist Wisdom beyond geographical boundaries and has deeply linked it with other philosophical,

mystical or illuminative traditions. In this regard, Suhrawardi's struggling to revival Perennis Wisdom and wise teachings of divine prophets has the prominent importance. Suhrawardi, finally, is a theosopher who has deeply linked philosophical thought with illuminative and mystical wayfaring that this has grown and reached its peak in the process of historical evolution in Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom.

2. The Place and Significance of Suhrawardi's Illuminationist Wisdom

As it was said, Suhrawardi has a prominent place in the history of the tradition of Islamic philosophy. His significance can be due to some reasons: 1. Establishing the philosophical school of Illumination, 2. Continuation of Islamic intellectual, mystical and philosophical tradition in Iran and some Islamic lands, 3. Revival of Perennis Wisdom and making relation between the Prophetic wisdom and discursive and illuminative philosophy, 4. Introducing and adding some new issues and theories to Islamic philosophy through replacing Light instead of Being as the base of illuminative philosophy, 5. Utilizing of symbolic and mysterious language for speaking of philosophical and mystical truths.

The first point is that Suhrawardi is the first Muslim philosopher who, after Ibn Sina founded the independent philosophical and mystical school of Illuminationist Wisdom which participates both of Ibn Sina's peripatetic foundations and mystical and illuminative principles that was lead to distinguish it from Peripatetic philosophy. Suhrawardi, in the Wisdom of Illumination, meantime utilizing of some principles of Ibn Sina's Peripatetic philosophy in sections such as logic, physics, theology, cosmology and so on, in some cases criticizes his philosophizing and by using of new expressions tries to introduce his new philosophical theories. He, in addition, has written some books in peripatetic method as well, and has produced some works in illuminative form that indicates

separation of his philosophical tendency from Ibn Sina. In this case, the book of Illuminationist Wisdom (Hikmat Al Israq) as Suhrawardi's philosophical and mystical magnum opus and his some Persian and symbolic works like Hayakel Al-Noor, Partow Nameh, Alvah Imadi, Logat Mooran and so on are considerable. It seems that Suhrawardi's emphasizing on some subjects, in these works, particularly on principality of Light instead of Being, and establishing Illuminationist philosophy based on the reality of Light and more using mystical intuition and illumination in epistemology, paying attention to angelology, referring to Iranian, Indian, Egyptian and Babylonian sages, and utilizing of story and symbolic language, and considering the peripatetic philosophy as an introductory stage for getting Illuminationist wisdom, can be considered as the prominent virtues of his new philosophical school (Nasr, 2010, P 214). Finally, the aim of establishing illuminative wisdom is to providing the path of journey for those who want to detach from corporeal universe and reach observation of God that purification and using guidance of perfect master has proper importance (Razavi, 1998, P 94-95).

The second note is that although Suhrawardi was one of critics of Ibn Sina's peripatetic philosophy, but contrary to Ghazzali who totally had opposed to peripatetic philosophy and had a big role in stagnancy of philosophical thought, Suhrawardi was not opposite to philosophy, he merely criticized some aspects of peripatetic philosophy, in particular its more emphasizing on logical and discursive reasoning, and has believed that not only peripatetic and rationalistic philosophy is necessary for philosophical journey, but also is as an introductory stage for reaching illuminative truth. Based on this fact, Suhrawardi is as the continuer of the intellectual, philosophical and mystical tradition in Iran and some Muslim nations that could transferred this tradition to his commentators and next sages like Qutb Al Din Shirazi, Sharzuri and especially Mulla Sadra. In fact, when Muslim nations of Middle East, during 12 & 13th century were not in suitable conditions intellectually and philosophically, and philosophical thought had proceeded in the

Western part of Islamic world, this was Suhrawardi who, in the Eastern part of Islamic nations, has preserved it through its combinations to illuminative and mystical approaches and transferred to next generations (Nasr, 2010, P 213).

The third point is concerning Suhrawardi's role in revival of Perennis Wisdom (Al Hikmat Al Khaledeh). He believed that the wisdom has been originated and started from the divine prophets, in particular the Prophet Hermes, and during the history hierarchically through divine prophets and Greek, Iranian, Indian, Egyptian and Babylonian sages, has reached Suhrawardi. In Suhrawardi's illuminative tendency the Prophet Hermes has received philosophy as divine and heavenly revelation from God and transferred to his successors, and they have preserved it in different forms until the time of Suhrawardi. This point of view does not believe that philosophy and wisdom belong to any geography or nation, but emphasizes that this worthy heritage has been kept by sages of different nations in order to reach us. So, wisdom is a global and general knowledge (Dinani, 1997, P 26-24). This is very viewpoint that is called as Traditionalism in contemporary century and asserts on immortal truths and traditional metaphysics so that seeks it in many religious and mystical traditions beyond spatial and temporal boundaries.

The forth note is that Suhrawardi, contrary to Ibn Sina and Farabi, has taken place Light instead of existence as the center and base of his illuminative philosophy, and has changed the centrality of his philosophy from discursive reasoning to mystical intuition and illumination. In other words, Ibn Sina's division of realities to existence and quiddity or essence which was the base of other divisions of peripatetic philosophy has been replaced by Illuminative division of realities to Light and Shadow. Hence, his philosophy has been constituted based on Light and Shadow divisions. It seems this changing was the most important base for establishing Illuminationist philosophy and has distinguished it from peripatetic philosophy, since it has been caused to form the

structure of illuminative philosophy different from peripatetic philosophy. In this case, it should be noted Suhrawardi's making use of some sources like Ghazzali's book of *Mishkat Al Anwar*, teachings concerning Light and Shadow in Zoroastrianism of ancient Iran and some verses of the Quran in which the terms Light and Shadow are used. Suhrawardi's paying attention to using of Light and Shadow division has some commonalities with Muslim Gnostics' viewpoints.

The fifth point is concerning Suhrawardi's abundant enjoyment of symbolic, mysterious and narrative language for explaining mystical and illuminative truths. In this regard, plurality of his Persian works, such as *Yazdan Shenakht*, *Bustan Al Qloub*, *Aql Surkh*, *Awaz Par Jabraeil*, *Safir Simourg*, *Hayakel Al Nour* and *Partow Nameh* which amount to third of his works, is indicated the significance of Persian language and its symbolic stories for rendering mystical and illuminative truths to the people of wisdom. There is, in these treatises, no explicitly explanation of Suhrawardi's Illuminationist teachings, but he goes on to speak of those stories that its artists show the journey of seeker towards ultimate reality and unifying with God (Nasr, 2010, P 255).

Mentioned notes meantime explaining Suhrawardi's special role in continuation of intellectual and philosophical life of Islamic thought, is showed this illuminative theosopher's straggle for passing the boundaries of peripatetic philosophy and establishing a new philosophical school having its new horizons which this has been lead to continuation of intellectual and philosophical tradition of Iran and some Muslim nations in 12th century until now and has had the great role in forming of Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom.

3. General Virtues of Illuminationist Wisdom

The importance and place of Suhrawardi's Illuminationist wisdom in the history of Islamic philosophy and wisdom, is especially related to establishing a new philosophical school and linking it with mystical tendencies. Here, for more understanding illuminative wisdom, we give its definition and virtues. In order to illustrate of Illuminationist wisdom, Suhrawardi first methodologically separates it from peripatetic philosophy, and asserts that Illuminationist Wisdom is called a wisdom that is merely not attained through rationalization but through radiating of the lights of truth on human's heart. So, in Suhrawardi's viewpoint, Illuminationist wisdom, originally is a attainable and tasting wisdom which is receiving very divine lights through their radiation on seeker's heart that this radiation is happened when human seeker meanwhile attaining to discursive philosophy and expertise in rational syllogism has acquired necessary conditions by inner purification (Nasr, 2010, P 218-217). It is also can be said that for Suhrawardi, Illuminationist wisdom is a kind of intrinsic observation and mystical examination by which the reality of existence is appeared for human so far as it exists (Dinani, 1997, P 23). Illuminationist wisdom, in effect, is a complementary to peripatetic philosophy, so that through acquiring necessary experiences in peripatetic arguments, it is possible to enter to the realm of illuminative wisdom. Suhrawardi, in fact, by separating wisdom from philosophy, emphasizes that philosophy is a kind of discursive and rationalistic thought, but wisdom is a kind of behavior intuition and journey, and that philosophy has introductory role for actualizing wisdom. So, Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy does not deny peripatetic philosophy, but is as its complementary for reaching the truth (Razavi, 1998, P 93).

Of the more significant notes for understanding Illuminationist wisdom, is Suhrawardi's paying attention to two the East and West direction in the earth. So far as, the East is the direction of sunrise, and the West is the direction of sunset, based on this fact,

Suhrawardi considers Illuminationist wisdom as the wisdom of eastern or Oriental people and the Orient, and believes that the West is a land in which the sun sets. Hence the West is the land of matter, ignorance and mere discursive thoughts, while the East is the land of real knowledge which was composed of purity and sacredness, and can free human from mundane restrictions (Nasr, 2010, P 217). It should be, in addition, pay attention to the relation of epistemic and ontological illumination between Suhrawardi's philosophy and the Sun towards existents of the world. As the Sun radiates and illuminates on all existents of the world, and is their ontological cause, that is, it is due to the light of the Sun that existents are recognized and know each other, the radiation of the Sun, also, is the cause of their origination and growth. Such a relation, according to Suhrawardi's illuminative wisdom, exists in radiation of divine lights on human's heart, namely, God as Lights of Light, both lights up human's hearts and makes possible their origination and growth. It is based on this fact that God, in the Quran, has been introduced as the Light of heavens and the Earth and all existents among them.

The next note is priority of acquiring discursive philosophy for understanding the nature and importance of illuminative wisdom, that is, getting skill in discursive reasoning in peripatetic style is of necessary requirements for receiving, understanding and explaining most of divine illuminations. Since, although there is no deep relation between receiving divine illuminations and discursive reasoning, but the language of reasoning is necessary for deep understanding and explaining it for other people. According to this fact, it can be said that for Suhrawardi illuminative wisdom has another method in which most truths of the universe is known through inner and esoteric discovery and illumination not through discursive thought, but for taking necessary requirements and understanding or explaining intuitive data for others, it is needed to use discursive methods and arguments. For Suhrawardi, in effect, discursive reasoning, not only is the introductory condition for entering to illuminative wisdom, but also discursive skill and power of human's intellect facilitate understanding and interpretation of

mystical and divine illuminations. Discursive reasoning and its application for interpretation of mystical illuminations, increases human's intellect experience and provides its transferring to others.

Finally, although entrance to the realm of illuminative wisdom requires intellectual capacities, it should, however, be noticed that, in effect, divine illuminations are not attainable and receivable, but they are as divine gifts and graces that is bestowed to those humans who are worthy to receive them. Suhrawardi, also, believes that attaining to illuminative wisdom is impossible without helping of a master and inner desiring and demanding, and asserts that obeying the commands and teachings of the perfect master is required for getting spiritual stages and degrees (Dinani, 1997, P 19).

By considering mentioned notes, it can be possible to take into account some virtues for illuminative wisdom, as follow:

1. Emphasizing on discovery, illumination and intuition of divine truths instead of their discursive recognition,
2. Centrality of Light instead of existence and explaining of the structure of the world and its existents based on the quality of their participation of the reality of Light and Shadow,
- 3, paying more attention to Prens Wisdom and that philosophy and wisdom are gradually transferred in the form of divine revelation and inspiration through divine prophets and sages in different traditions during the history,
4. Application of symbolic and mysterious language for explaining illuminative truths,
5. Special emphasizing on esoteric purification to being worthy for receiving divine illuminations,
6. Centrality of the eastern part of the earth as the land of illumination and radiation of divine lights,
7. Separation of Wisdom as a kind of inner receiving from philosophy as a kind of discursive thought, and considering philosophical rationalistic thought as the introductory instrument of illuminative wisdom,
8. Stressing on Presential knowledge instead of acquired one.

4. The Nature of Light and Shadow

As it was said, Light and its virtues is as the center and base of Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy so far it can be possible to call his philosophy as the philosophy of principality of Light. In this case, we can consider some matters like definition of Light, division of realities into Light and Shadow or Darkness, principality of Light, gradual hierarchy and relation in reality of Light, ontological stages of Light, the relation of Light and illumination or observation, virtues of God as the Light of Lights, kinds of lights and the lightened universes.

Here, we can ask this question that why Suhrawardi underlies Light instead of Existence as the base of illuminative wisdom and his philosophy? It seems, in response, there can be said two notes: first that Suhrawardi did not satisfy of peripatetic viewpoints concerning centrality of tenth intellects issued from God, then he has tried to explain divine creation on the issuing of luminous realities. For Suhrawardi, in fact, the problem of peripatetic explanation of the universe is that tenth intellects have different essences and there are no longitudinal gradual and hierarchical relations among them, while the united nature of light makes possible to explain hierarchical longitudinal relation of the whole system of being. Second, all humans have primary and most apparently perceptions of light and its role in their life, since not only light is self-evident fact in our life, but also it makes possible to see, recognize, distinguish and classify things based on their colours, qualities, beauties and ugliness. In fact, it is through light the world and its existents, is seen, recognized and differentiated, meantime this is light which is the cause of origination and life of existents, like plants, animals, humans and so on, while, for Suhrawardi, there is such a clear and self-evident conception and primary perception of the existence. It seems Suhrawardi applies the word light as a metaphor in plural meaning such as reality, fact, existence and so on. He, in the book of Hikmat Al Ishraq, says that his purpose of the light neither is its metaphorical meaning, nor sensible, although

both of these meaning, finally, are some aspects of light, in particular sensible light as an accidental is the lower stages of light. Hence, Suhrawardi, divides reality into two kinds of Light and Shadow, and says light is divided into Abstract Light and Accidental Light, and shadow is very darkness which is divided into Body (Darkened Substance) and Accidents (Darkened Accidents)(Suhrawardi, 1987, P 198). So, in Suhrawardi's viewpoint, all existents, even God, either was created from light or Shadow, the latter either accept light or don't accept.

Based on mentioned notes, the nature and essence of the light is of the most fundamental questions for Suhrawardi, since there are sensible and metaphysical tendencies of the light that should consider what is Suhrawardi's understanding of the light? He, for defining the light, first asserts that it is impossible to define it, because the light due to its evidence and clearness can't be defined. In Suhrawardi's words "if there is something that no need to its definition and illustration, then it must be self clear and apparent, and that there is nothing more clear and apparent than the light. So there is nothing more needless than the light for definition" (Suhrawardi, 2009, Vol. 2, P113). Hence, Suhrawardi says that the light essentially and by nature is apparent and manifests all existents, and also it is more apparent than everything that its appearance is surplus to its essence (Suhrawardi, Ibid; Dinani, 1997, P 73-74). For definition of the light, Suhrawardi, also emphasizes that the light is essentially apparent and the cause of other things appearance, since the appearance is essential for the light, then the light is clearer and more apparent than all things that their appearance are accidental and additional. Suhrawardi, also, asserts on self-consciousness for defining the light, so that, every self-consciousness is a kind of light, that is, the light is presence of truths to us without any obstacle. So, every human being who is self-consciousness and recognizes his/her essence without any obstacle and by helping of others is very the light (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 211). He, also, says light is a reality by itself is appear and cause to appear other existents, and it by itself is more appear than

everything which appearance is beside its essence (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 208). Suhrawardi, in this case, thinks that the human's soul is the same as light, so that, the oppositeness of light and shadow is similar to that of human's soul and body in which soul as light lies opposite to darkened body. Since soul both presents for itself and has self-conciseness and is immaterial substance that these virtues show that the substance of soul is like the light (Razavi, 1998, P 106).

These definitions show that Suhrawardi's understanding of the light is merely not consisted of sensible and observable lights, like the light of the Sun but he considers the light very reality and the origin of existents that they gain their being from the light and as much as participate of light have life. There are some tendencies similar this in Ibn Sina's peripatetic philosophy and Mulla Sadra's transcendent philosophy in its high level in which Existence is considered as the origin and base of all realities of existents and that it is indefinable due to its self-evidence and clearness. Therefore, in Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy, the light is very appearance and manifestation of phenomena and facts, and that there is no thing or conception clearer than light which can be used for defining it.

It seems Suhrawardi's conception of light encompasses all kind of observable and abstract lights, then light is as the common reality of them. So light is as the gradual and hierarchical reality of things so that we can see a chain of existents that are started from God as the light of lights and is continued to the next existents and finished to the weakest one that has no participation of the reality of light that is called as shadow.

The next point in Suhrawardi's philosophy is considering the Shadow or Darkness contrary to the light. Shadow, here, is meant absence or lack of light. In fact, so far light is very actuality and perfection, Shadow, in the contrary, is the same as poverty, defect and nothing (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 198). Therefore, there are two opposite realities or facts that first one is the light and another one is

the shadow. So, the whole system of being either was originated from light or from shadow which the latter has no participation of light. Here, it should paid attention to the differences of Suhrawardi's perception of the light and shadow with Ibn Sina and Mulla Sadra's tendencies of Existence and Nothing. So, for Suhrawardi, all existents, including corporeal and abstract ones, constitute two groups: the first group is those of existents that participate of light and have two kinds; the second group is those of existents which don't participate of light and is called as Shadow and have two kinds. Hence, it can be said that oppositeness of light and shadow, for Suhrawardi, is not the oppositeness of between Privation and Possession or of between Affirmation and Negation, but it is the oppositeness of a thing with its boundary, that is, light is the context of existence and shadow is its boundary and limitation. So, Suhrawardi's perception of light is not corresponded to Islamic philosophers' perception of existence, and his understanding of shadow is not the same as their perception of privation. It seems Suhrawardi's understanding of light and shadow has some similarities with Islamic philosophers' conception of Existence and Essence or Quiddity. Therefore, deep relation between perfection and realities of things with their participation of light, can indicate the principality of light, namely, the light is as the most fundamental and authentic element of the whole system of being by which we classify levels of existents.

5. Ontological Kinds and Role of Light

Suhrawardi, after explaining the reality into light and shadow, divides the totality of existence and existents based on the quality of their participation of light. The significance of such a division is Suhrawardi's straggling to disobeying of Aristotelian and Ibn Sinian division of the whole system of being in which the totality of being, after God and tenth intellects, are divided in to two groups, including five substantial categories and nine accidental categories.

Suhrawardi, in opposition to peripatetic philosophers, considers God within his categorization of existents and calls Him as the Light of Lights and in its peak.

All existents, in this division, are divided into two main groups: first existents that their essence is from light, and second existents that their essence is not from light but is from shadow. The first group has two kinds including Abstract Lights and Accidental Lights, and second group has two kinds including bodies or things and accidents or qualities (Suhrawardi, 2009, Vol. 2, P 107-117).

The first kinds, for Suhrawardi, are abstract lights which have the high level and intensity of luminosity, and have self-consciousness and Presential knowledge. Suhrawardi, in some cases, defines abstract light as independent light or the light its motion is referred to its will (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 202, 240). He, also, says whoever apprehends his/her essence is a pure light and every pure light is the same as self-appearance and self-consciousness (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 209).

Suhrawardi thinks that God as the light of light, human's souls, angels and Dominant lights (Anvare Qahereh) are some samples of such Abstract lights. Dominant lights are abstract and pure luminous entities that, after God, are places in longitudinal and latitudinal chains. These lights are free from any material and corporeal virtues in a pure abstraction (Suhrawardi, 2009, Vol. 2, P 30-31; ???). The most significant virtues of these abstract lights are their self-consciousness, immateriality, being live and active and having Presential knowledge to themselves and others. Based on this fact, Suhrawardi says that every self-consciousness is very the abstract light (Yasrebi, P 119). In Suhrawardi's point of view, so far as there is no causality among darkened things and bodies, finally this is abstract lights that are the real cause of accidental lights, corporeal things and accidental qualities, since only abstract lights are self-aware and have agency towards other existents (Yasrebi, P 127).

The second kinds are accidental lights (Anvare Araziyeh) which their essence is not light. Some of these lights can be sensible lights like light of the Sun, lamp and fire (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 315).

The third kinds are called as darkness, shadows, bodies or things that have no participation of light, but are independent in their existence.

The forth kinds, finally, are very corporeal accidents or qualities which not only have no participation of light but also are dependent on others in their existence (Nasr, 2010, P 226). Of the more significant virtues of Suhrawardi's division of bodies that their origin is shadow, is rejecting any kind of causality among them. Hence, there is no causal relation among darkened things, then their causal origin is the light (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 202-203).

It seems one of the more important notes of this Suhrawardi's division of existents based on their participation of light or shadow, is its epistemological indication, so that, it can be possible to divide existents based on their Presential knowledge of themselves. In this regard, an existence that have self-consciousness has two kinds, either it is independent in this case, it is an abstract existent and its essence is of light, since being self-luminous is essentially involved awareness of the essence, or it is dependent on other existent for self-consciousness, in this case is called as accidental light, the example of the first one is God, species forms and human's souls, and the second one is stars and the Sun. The third kinds are those of existents due to their ontological darkness have no awareness of themselves but are ontologically independent which are called as bodies or corporeal things, and the forth kinds, finally, not only have no self-consciousness but also have no ontological independency which are called as darkened qualities (Nasr, 2010, P 226).

Suhrawardi, in this division, by taking into account to causal relation base on light among existents which differently participate of light, and that all existents are illuminations of God as the light of

lights that He has own successor in every realm, like the Sun in heavens, fire among things and Rational light among human's souls, tries to indicate gradual and hierarchical reality of light. Here, Suhrawardi regarding the human's soul, specially believes that its origin is from light, since human becomes happy when sees fire and light of the Sun, and fears of darkness. For Suhrawardi, all causes in the world will return to light finally, and all motions in the world, including heavenly and earthy ones, are effects of the Guiding Lights (Anvare Al Modabbareh) which them eventually are nothing except illuminations of the light of lights (Nasr, 2010, P 227). In other words, there is no difference among lights by considering their luminous reality, their only difference is referred to their perfection or defect that are additional to their essence (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 217).

6. Virtues of Longitudinal and Latitudinal Lights in Origination of the World

By paying attention to the role that Suhrawardi considers for the light in the whole system of being, is introduced longitudinal and latitudinal chains of existents that due to their different participation of the reality of light are places in various levels and have plural functions. God as the light of lights is placed in the peak of this chain. From God as the lights of lights, is emanated next lights and luminous universes. It should, here, be noticed that Suhrawardi, like peripatetic philosophers, believes in the rule of unity that according to it since God is unique and one, and there is no plurality in His essence, only one light can be emanated from Him which is called as the Most Proximate Light (Noore Aqrab) or Dominant Light (Noore Qaher) that is entitled as or similar to the first intellect in peripatetic tradition. Meanwhile, it should be asserted that Suhrawardi rejects emanating of shadows from the light of lights, since, emanating of light and shadow together is caused to be composed the essence of God (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 224).

So, the plurality of lights is started from the proximate light. Next lights are emanated from the proximate light and make the longitudinal chain of the Lower Proximate Lights. In fact, there are two ways for emanating next lights by the proximate light, first, it reflects on the richness of God as the light of lights that its result is emanating next light, and then it thinks of its essential poverty and needing to the light of lights that its result is issuing Outer Sphere which is a darkened being. Therefore, the proximate light both is the origin of next light and mostly the first darkened entity in order to continue the chain of emanation. In this chain, every upper light dominates on own lower light, and vice versa, every lower light loves own upper light (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 247). So, there are, after the light of lights, longitudinal and latitudinal chains of supernal and lower lights which make possible to issue accidental lights. Suhrawardi thinks that reality of light is the distinguishable virtue of the light of lights and next light, that is, all lights are common and differentiated in intensity and weakness of light and their luminous perfection or defect. Therefore, light is the linking factor and reality of all existents in the world including God, next lights and angels and souls (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 224-227).

The chain of lights, for Suhrawardi, is mere not longitudinal, but has latitudinal virtues that is caused to emanate the Masters of Species (Arbabe Anva'a) or Platonic Ideas. In fact, some virtues of longitudinal lights, like love, cruelty, intuition and illumination, towards each other are led to emanating some latitudinal classes of lights that is named as the Luminous Ideas or Luminous Lights. The most important virtue of these lights is that they are placed beside of each other and are as the effects of longitudinal lights and causes of material species of the corporeal world. Suhrawardi calls this luminous species as the angel and origin of corporeal existents and that they manage the material world. These luminous angels are as the real governors of this world and guide all its motions and direct all its changes (Nasr, 2010, P 228). The next luminous classes are emanated from these accidental lights which are named as the Guiding lights (Anvare Modabbareh) which move heavens by their

love. These lights dominate on human's souls and guide them. If fact, of the most properties that is considered for guiding lights is their causal relation to the corporeal world (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 261). Here, every light is as a sample and origin of some humans, like Gabriel who is the sample of human kind. Humanity is a picture of this Archangel who is a mediate between humans and supernal universes, and in a center in where eastern lights are concentrated (Nasr, 2010, P 229).

Suhrawardi continues the chain of lights to reach the darkened and corporeal world, in which there are things that their essence is not of light and they have poverty, defect and needing to the Guiding lights. Suhrawardi, however, thinks that corporeal things are not the same, but there are various and different degrees based on the quality of their acceptance of light. Therefore, corporeal things are simple or component, and simple things is divided into three groups: first things that prevent penetrating lights to them, like soil and dust, second things that accept and attract lights such as water, and third, things that accept lights in different degrees. Suhrawardi pays more attention to the third group of things and considers heavens and air as its samples. So, corporeal things according to their ability to accepting and attracting lights have various degrees (Nasr, 2010, 229).

Now, by considering plurality of emanating lights and shadows from the light of lights and the most Proximate light (Noore Aqrab), Suhrawardi, finally supposes four ontological universes which are constituted from light and shadow that are called as 1. The Universe of Dominant Lights (Alame Anvare Qahereh), 2. The Universe of Guiding Lights (Alame Anvare Modabbareh), 3. The Corporeal World (Alame Brazekh) and 4. The Universe of Suspended and Luminous Ideas (Alame Misal).

a. The Universe of Dominant Lights

This universe is consisted of very longitudinal lights that are emanated from God, and that their numbers are more than tenth peripatetic intellects. Suhrawardi believes that Dominant lights maybe are about 120 and more lights. These longitudinal lights have no material dependency and are as divine attributes and his angels and forces (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 250).

b. The Universe of Guiding Lights

This universe is those lights that are placed in latitudinal chains and are called as Accidental Lights or Luminous Lights (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 258-259). These lights are as the origin of corporeal things and manage them. Sometimes these lights are called as Platonic Ideas, but Suhrawardi mentions that there are some differences between them. He says that Platonic Ideas are as divine entities that were made by Demiurge and that corporeal things participate of them, although Suhrawardi, by considering epistemological relations, such as illumination, observation, love and cruelty, between these lights, tries to distinguish them from Platonic Ideas. Other difference, for Suhrawardi, is accidental plurality of guiding lights which Platonic Ideas do not have. In fact, accidental luminous lights constitute intermediary class of longitudinal worldly system. In this class of lights, contrary to peripatetic philosophy, there are numerous abstracted entities that have direct relations to existents of the corporeal world. According to peripatetic philosophy, except Active Intellect, there is no existent having direct relation to the corporeal world.

c. The Corporeal World

This world is the world of darkness and shadow that includes of stars, earth, planets, animals, plants and human's bodies.

d. The Universe of Suspended Lights

This universe is also called as Imaginary World (Alame Misal) which is an intermediary universe between the universe of guiding lights and the corporeal world. Suhrawardi pays more attention to the place and role of the Imaginary world. By introducing this world, Suhrawardi tries to ontologically and epistemologically make links between abstract and material entities, and to answer this question that how material existents have been originated from abstracted beings while there is no similitude between them. For removing this gap, Suhrawardi considers the imaginary world which is not completely abstract and not completely material, but is half abstract and half corporeal. In fact, entities of the imaginary world have some properties of corporeal world, like color, size and shape but have no weight and place, and have some virtues of the abstract world. So, existents of imaginary world are as lower lights of the chain of lights that is finally ended to the corporeal world. In other words, existents of imaginary world have both luminous and darkness virtues, that is, it participate both of the universe of lights and shadows. So, the imaginary world is the intermediary world between the universe of lights and universe of shadows that makes possible to emanate corporeal things from dominant and guiding lights.

In short, Suhrawardi considers gradual and hierarchical relations between the universes based on their participation of light. In this regard, the universe of dominant lights, specially the most proximate light, has the most participation of light. In the next level, the guiding lights or luminous ideas have more utilizing. Then it is the imaginary world that due its intermediary virtues has less participation of lights, and finally the corporeal world that has no participation of light since their entities are pure darkness except that some of them accept and attract lights in different degrees.

7. God as The Light of Lights and His Role in the World

As it was said, Suhrawardi, contrary to peripatetic philosophers, considers God as the light of lights within and in the top of his categorizing the whole system of being. The most important common virtue of God with other existents is that all of them and God are common in utilization of the reality of light, God, however, is the only light that other lights, like the most proximate light and guiding light, towards Him are poor and defect, while God is the absolute richness and pure light. In the language of Suhrawardi, God as the light of lights is the Surrounding, Subsistent, Sacred, Supreme and Highest Light. He is the most Victorial light and Absolute Self-Sufficient that there is nothing beyond Him (?????). In fact, Suhrawardi's believes that light is a common reality between all the highest lights which is led to this fact that their adversity is because of their intensity of luminosity. So, God is the only existent His luminous intensity is infinite and does not need to other lights. On the other hand, Suhrawardi's division of entities into light and shadow, and lights into abstract and accidental, and shadows to bodies and accidents, has its rational and acceptable meaning. There is an abstract light on the top of this chain of lights who is God as the origin of lights and shadows. Suhrawardi, in effect, believes that the chain of longitudinal lights is infinite but it should, finally, be ended to a light that is pure light and the origin of all longitudinal and latitudinal lights (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 220).

Hence, God as the light of lights not only is on the peak of the chain of lights but also is the only existent who has infinitely participated of lights and has absolute richness. In fact, God is the same as pure light. Consequently, such God is one God and uniqueness of His the most fundamental attribute, that is, the light of lights is one and there is no plurality and composition in His essence, and has attributes the same as his essence (Yasrebi, P 134, 122).

Knowledge is of the most significant attributes of the light of lights. Suhrawardi thinks that God's knowledge to His essence and other

things is through Knowledge by Presence. Since the light of lights dominates over all His effects, and there is no obstacle between Him and other existents, then He knows all effects through His Presential Knowledge, because all of them have been presented and appeared to Him, meantime the light of lights is ontologically and epistemologically as the real cause of all of them and every perfection that they have, He has previously places in the high level and degree. So God as the light of lights both is the origin of emanation of existents and through His illumination and radiation makes possible that existents know Him and each other (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 221). Suhrawardi, in effect, believes that God's knowledge to His essence is the same as His essence for Himself, and that since both the existence and essence of God are light, and there is no difference between them. So, God's knowledge to His essence, for Suhrawardi, is very presence of an abstract light for His essence, since the nature of light is appearance (Zuhour), and because it is an independent entity, then it appears for itself and knows itself by Presential knowledge. Since, in Suhrawardi's words, every abstract light has self-consciousness and that every self-consciousness is very abstract light (Yasrebi, P 169). The base of God's knowledge to all other than Him, also, for Suhrawardi, is due to lack of any obstacle between God and them, that is, because there is no obstacle between God and other things, then all of them have been presented before Him. Based on this fact, the whole system of corporeal world and heavens and planets are reflected as astonishing order of luminous abstract lights (Yasrebi, P 174). In Suhrawardi's saying, the light of lights appears for Himself, and beside Him in itself is appeared for himself. So, He is the knower of himself and others and there is nothing behind Him in heavens and the earth, since there is no impediment for seeing them. So, His knowledge and sight is the same, and His luminosity is included of His power, because the light in nature is very in itself emanation (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 264). Hence, Suhrawardi illustrates God's knowledge to His essence based on the rule of illumination, and says God's knowledge to His essence is consist of that He is self-independent light and His knowledge to other things is very

their appearance in the light of His radiation (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 268).

8. Sensible Light and the Corporeal Universe

As it was explained in previous sections, light, in Suhrawardi's illuminative philosophy, is divided into main kinds including abstract and accidental lights. Here, we understand that Suhrawardi's purpose of accidental light is very sensible lights and observable things through our eyes which indicates that Suhrawardi's theory concerning the reality of light includes both abstract and sensible lights. He, but, considers some virtues for sensible lights that shows its superiority to darkened entities. Suhrawardi thinks that one of the most fundamental functions of sensible light is its radiating and throwing light upon other things which is caused them to be recognized. So, sensible light is superior to any kind of corporeal things and their accidents, since it is due to sensible light that life, growing, recognizing things and their qualities are possible that this fact shows that sensible lights is originated from abstract lights. Hence, Suhrawardi says most of shadows and accidental qualities are effects of sensible lights (Dibaji, P 14).

9. Illuminative and Intuitive Knowledge

One of the most significant aspects of Suhrawardi's illuminative theory of light is epistemic applications of this theory which is explained in the terms of illumination and intuition (Ishraq and Shohoud). Suhrawardi, contrary to peripatetic philosophers, thinks that visionary perception is not impression of the pictures of things in eye or issuing a ray of lights from eye towards things, but he argues that it is very direct presence of a thing before our eyes. Here, our soul, for actualizing visionary perception, produces light

and due to radiation of soul, things are observed and seen. So, it can be said that vision is the same Presential illuminative of soul by faculty of vision through this faculty, the soul can see Ideas of things, and that in the process of seeing the real seer is our human's soul not physical eye (????). Therefore, visionary perception is to see Ideal forms which this indicates that in the process of vision the relation of our soul and observed things is a kind of illuminative relation in which the soul has illuminative domination over a thing. In fact, in this process, the idea of a thing is presented near the soul and it knows ideas through Presential knowledge. So, illumination is the radiation of soul towards corporeal things and having Presential knowledge of their ideas which such a relation exists between other lights.

As it was previously said, Suhrawardi's supposed lights make a longitudinal and latitudinal chain of abstract lights that can see each other since there is no obstacle between them. This epistemological relation first is called as Illumination which is done by the upper lights, and then is called as observation or intuition that is done by the lower lights. There is, in effect, a kind of Presential knowledge between the lower and upper lights. Here, by illumination is meant radiation of the upper lights on the lower lights and having Presential knowledge between them. By intuition and observation is meant seeing the upper lights through lower lights. According to Suhrawardi, illumination is consist of light's ray that is radiated by the light of lights over pure light and next lights, as the Sun shines to things and lightened them (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 248). So, lights, including longitudinal and latitudinal lights, have Presential knowledge towards each other and their different places, even, don't prevent such recognizing. In other words, the knowledge of some lights is provided through illumination and some lights through observation, for example, lights' knowledge to other lights beside them or to upper lights is attained by intuition, but their knowledge to the upper lights is attained by illumination. So, illumination is attained from the upper level to the lower level, but observation, in the contrary, is happened from the lower to the

upper light. Hence, observation and intuition, in the corporeal world, when is attained that our eyes are correct and things are observable. In the luminous world, but, due to lack of any obstacle all the lower lights see their upper lights and they radiate for the lower lights which is called illumination. It is important to say that, for Suhrawardi, only the upper lights have the ability to illuminate and radiate. So, illumination is a descendent process and observation is an ascendant process.

Of Suhrawardi's prominent innovations, here, is making a kind of link between observation and argument, so that, discursive thought is a kind of observation through which human sees ideas in the imaginary world. In fact, rationalistic thinking is consisted of thinking about ideas which has no compatibility with guess and theory, then the process of argumentation is necessitated the being of an intellectual world where settlements are Ideas (Razavi, 1998, P 145-146).

Intuitive and illuminative knowledge is attached to inner purification that enters human to the Ideas world and is able him/her to see and recognize plural lights which Suhrawardi calls these lights and paths as ascension stages of intuitive knowledge, and believes that these intuitive lights that is emanated from the Intellect World are the elixir of power and knowledge, and whoever experiences these lights the natural world is under his/her domination, although the necessary requirement for such experience is detaching from corporeal interesting. Some of these lights are as follow:

1. A light that shines upon the novice and is pleasant but not permanent.
2. A light that shines upon others and is more like a lightningbolt.
3. A light that soothing and enters the hearts of the Gnostics. It is as if warm water is poured on you, a pleasant sensation is then experienced.

4. A light that descends upon the hearts of the men of vision and lasts a long time.
5. A light of extreme grace and pleasure which is induced through the power of love.
6. A light that burns and is induced through knowledge that is attained through intellection.
7. A light which at first is luminous and is more intense than the light of the Sun.
8. A light that is emanates from the self and shines upon the entire spiritual components.
9. A light which induces a special heaviness such that it exerts a pressure beyond one's ability.
10. A light that is the cause of the movements of the body and the material self (Razavi, 2013, P 61).

Suhrawardi, finally, considers four kinds of intuition including inner intuition, sensible intuition, imaginary intuition and hearty intuition. Inner intuition is very human self-consciousness to him/herself, his/her faculties and attributes. It seems this kind of intuition is presence of soul for itself which is one of the definitions of light. Sensible intuition is consisted of human direct experience of external things without their mental form through illuminative relation. The clear sample of such intuition is perceptual vision of things. Imaginary intuition is observation of the ideas of our mental conceptions in the Imaginary world. Hearty intuition is very discovery and direct observation of abstract realities and high lights through Presential and hearty knowledge which is acquired by removing corporeal interests and mundane desires. Suhrawardi, in this regard, says that hearty intuition is outcome of two factors; first, detaching of soul from body through purification, and second, illumination or radiation of divine lights upon human's heart. The

first factor indicates that as much as human's ability is increased due to purification and detachment, his/her participation of intuitive knowledge is increased. Second factor links directly intuition to illumination and light and asserts its illuminative virtue. So, Illuminative knowledge in its high stages is consisted of hearty intuition. Hearty intuition, for Suhrawardi has two unique virtues, first, it is as the highest stage of human knowledge, since it can harmonize human intellect and heart, second, intuitive influences and inspirations are arguable and transferable, that is, human can take some arguments for his/her intuitive inspirations and explain for those who are worthy for getting them.

10. Conclusion

As it was mentioned, Suhrawardi is the first philosopher, after Ghazzali's attacks to peripatetic philosophy, who was able to keep intellectual and philosophical Islamic tradition. This main task was done by Suhrawardi through establishing the school of Illumination and introducing new issues to the tradition of Islamic philosophy which have been continued to next centuries up to now. It seems, in the process of building the philosophical school of illumination, the most significant and applied element was the light and its virtues. So, based on the reality of light, Suhrawardi succeeded to establish the philosophical school of Israq that has as follow advantages:

1. Coherency of Suhrawardi's theories regarding Islamic theories of Gnostics is of its virtues. Since Gnostics pay more attention to mystical discovery and intuition and knowledge by presence, also, have recognized and explained some levels of light and shadow. In this regard, it can refer to Ibn Arabi and Ghazzali's viewpoint concerning light and shadow. We, for example, can see the book of *Mishkat Al Anvar* of Ghazzali.
2. The second virtue of the theory of light and shadow is its the Quranic roots. The Quran repeatedly used the terms light and

shadow in chapters like: 24/35; 5/15; 6/1; 2/257; 57/12-13. In the verse 35, of the chapter Noor, we read: Allah is the lighter of the heavens and the earth. The example of his light is like a tube, in which there is a wick. the wick is in a lamp and the lamp is as a glittering planet kindled from a blessed tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West. Its oil would almost shine forth though no fire touched it. Light upon light; Allah guides to his light whom he will. Allah strikes parables for people. Allah has knowledge of all things (24/35). And in the Surah Baqarah, we read: Allah is the guardian of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light. As for those who disbelieve, their guides are idols. They bring them out from the light into darkness (2/257). These two verse and other verses of the Quran indicates the importance and centrality of the light in the whole system of being and human creation and guidance. In addition, it can be noticed that Suhrawardi's utilizing of the Prophet Muhammad's words and some Islamic invocations which indicate the centrality of light. He, for example, refers to this recite of the Prophet of Islam: As the heavens are from light, and some narratives invocation of divine prophets, like Joushan Kabir in which has been said that: O' the light of lights, all heavenly existents are lightened and attained light from you, and all people of the earth are lightened through your light. O' the light of every light, every light in the world will turn off through your light (Suhrawardi, 1987, P 280-281).

3. Conceptual and confirmative evidence of light for all people is of merits of Suhrawardi's theory. Since, the perception of light is clear for people, and so far it has epistemological and ontological role in human's life shows its centrality in totality of existence. In fact, since being clear and evidence of a conception has exact relation to its presence and appearance for our minds, in this case, light is more evidence than everything and not only is self- appearance but also it cause to appear other things which indicates its axial role in the world.

4. Other virtue of Suhrawardi's theory of light is to consider epistemological and ontological relation between many kinds of sensible and abstract lights. In other word, all sensible and abstract lights are common in emerging from light, but their differences are intensity of being light. So, light is as the common factor and base of the whole system of being that all existents based on their gradual and various stages participate of it. This fact shows the importance of longitudinal and latitudinal chain of lights and links between sensible and abstract lights, so that, all of them make a connected chain.

5. It is should be noted, also, that considering longitudinal and latitudinal chain of lights help Suhrawardi to explain their plural functions. In this regard, longitudinal lights emanate latitudinal lights that are very luminous ideas which are as the origin of corporeal things, while there are direct luminous relations between longitudinal and latitudinal lights.

Resources

- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2010), *The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia*, trans by Saeid Dehghani, Tehran, Qasideh Sara Press.
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- Suhrawardi, Shahab Al Din (2000), Translated by John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai, Brigham Young University Press.

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