

## The Artistic aspects of Ayub's "Sharh-i Masnavi-i Mawlavi"

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**ABSTRACT:** This article partially outlines the artistic aspects of the commentary by Ayub on the work of Jalal al-Din Rumi, "Masnavi-i Ma'navi," written in Persian in 1708-1709. This work is preserved in the manuscript collection of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan under the number 2225/1. "Sharh-i Masnavi-i Mawlavi" is written in a script close to naskh in nasta'liq style, is a rare and complete manuscript that encompasses six books of the "Masnavi," with a total volume of 443 pages. In the commentary, poetic lines are explained in prose. Ayub employed various styles and artistic genres to enhance the imagery, expressiveness, and artistic value of the commentary, aiming to convey information to the reader more profoundly. The article provides examples of the most frequently used artistic techniques in the commentary. It also examines and presents examples of poetic fragments attributed to the commentator, poetic and prose excerpts borrowed from the works of other commentators, verses from the Quran or parts of them, hadiths or their fragments, artistic presentations of stories or narratives, as well as accounts from the history of the Prophets narrated by the commentator in a storytelling genre.

**KEYWORDS:** style, meaning, source, spirit, Jalaluddin Rumi, work, commentary, manuscript, "Masnavi Manavi", "Sharhi Masnavi Mawlavi", Ayyub, poetry, prose, verse, artistic genre, Sufism, prophets, Holy Quran, hadith, spirituality, allegory, art of analogy.

An essential component and prominent position in the spiritual legacy of humanity is occupied by the academic pursuit that originated from the study of the teachings of the contemplative poet Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. This scientific work has persisted since the poet's time until the present day. The samples of the work "Mathnawī ma'nawī" have been copied and commentaries written in different languages, which serve the scholars and writers to understand "Mathnawī" more deeply. The collection of manuscripts of Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Biruni of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan contains several copies of Jalal al-Din Rumi's "Mathnawī ma'nawī" and numerous commentaries devoted to this work. One of them is a Persian interpretation with number 2225/1 entitled "Sharhi Masnaviwi Mawlavi" written by the commentator Ayyub. This scientific manuscript is preserved in its entirety, includes six books of "Mathnawī", and consists of 443 pages.

The commentary of the text of "Mathnawī" is positioned in the margin, while the text itself is positioned in the center of the page. Close to the copy, a nastaliq letter contains the manuscript.

The commentary in "Sharhi Masnaviwi Mawlavi" employed a distinctive writing style and drew guidance from various sources to elucidate its meanings. At times, he contrasted multiple copies of "Mathnawī" and occasionally provided illustrations from his work.

The commentary commences with the commentator elucidating the intent behind the composition and employing artistically rich adjectives to characterize his profound frailty in this undertaking: "Ayyub, who is pitiful, destitute, inconsequential, condemned in the valley of sins, and submerged in a sea of guilt, declares that he laboriously composed a commentary on the verses of this exemplary book for an extended period, with the explanation of the chapters that proved challenging to comprehend being a constant burdensome task. However, he refrained from doing so due to his limited perception and mental frailty. The pleasure prevailed and exceeded the limits and stole his faith from the hands of this poor man [1].

It is evident from the aforementioned description that the name of the author is Ayyub. The author affirmed that he accomplished his objective and established the deadline for the task in the calculation of abjad as follows: "He became a guide in such a valley of uncertainty and doubt; the responsible work was completed, and the dream came true.

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The finishing date came promptly to my limited imagination and wounded intellect:

یافت شرح مثنوی مولوی  
خلعت اتمام از لطف خدا  
گفت تاریخش بکوش ای دل خرد  
طرفه شرح معنوی جانفزا [2]

Translation:

"The commentary on [Masnavi](#) [wi](#) [Mawlavi](#)

Ended with the grace of Allah,

Try to find out its history, o wise man" [3]

In the verse طرفه شرح معنوی جانفزا ("Torfe sharhe ma'naviyi jonfezo") given in the last line of this quatrain, the commentator provided information about the year of writing of his work on the calculation of abjad which mainly used in Eastern sources, when the date of the work is calculated, there will appear the numbers of 1120. According to the Islamic lunar calendar, it can be seen that the work was written in 1120 (1708–1709 AD). It is important to note that this manuscript is not the signature of author, it was duplicated a century hundred years after the time of writing. The commentary of author on the duplication of the book was recorded at the end of the book (colophon) by the calligrapher Ibad Muhammad Siddiq in 1221/1806 based on the instruction of the Mirza Muhammad Rabikhan [4]. Indicating the date of completion in the introduction to the review signifies that the reviewer revised the work for the required changes after it had been written. On this basis, the commentary of Ayyub is the result of years of research, and the commentator has read "Mathnawī" on numerous occasions. Based on the aforementioned quatrains attributed to Ayyub, it can be deduced that Ayyub possessed the capacity to produce prose and verse in Persian.

Despite being composed in prose, the commentary is replete with poetic lines. An instance of this is when the commentator cites verses from Rumi's "[Mathnawī ma'navī](#)" following the statement of purpose:

ای ضیاء الحق حسام الدین بیا  
ای صقال روح و سلطان هدا  
مثنویا مسرح و مشروح ده  
صورت امسال اورا روح ده [5]

Translation:

Oh, "Hisomiddin, the shine of the Truth, please arrive,

The sultan of the polished soul and peace,

Make the "[Mathnawī](#)" clear and detailed,

Give inspiration to examples from the work" [6]

"The opening of the fortune-telling made up of these sacred words by the angel of the heart (spirit) caused to double up the pleasure of the sick heart of commentator. In spite of his helpless and poor condition, the commentator with a rich heart had a (clearly intended) zeal and launched himself into editing this dangerous (difficult) work [7]. According to Ayyub, in order to solve the above problems, he supposedly opens a fortune from the work "Mathnawī", and the page with the above verses is opened. In the content of the verses, there are verses attributed to Hisomiddin Chalabi, and this gave Ayyub the strength and energy to write this review. The method of divination mentioned in this commentary is typical of the customs of the peoples of the Middle East (divination from the Qur'an, divination from various books). In particular, in the case of Ayyub, here we see the method of divination from "Mathnawī". Although this situation was an impetus for writing commentaries, it can be said that the main reason for writing reviews is Ayyub's returning to the work of Rumi. The above-mentioned examples, the poetic lines included in the comments, the use of several adjectives to strengthen the meaning in the comments, and the skillful use of artistic similes show that Ayyub was not only a simple commentator, but also a skilled writer. In addition, commentator Ayyub also had poetic skills. In the introductory sections of the critique, he provided excerpts of his verses. The commentator also gives a statement of purpose and the tasks set in writing a commentary and appeals to the priesthood of Rumi:

The author quotes the following verse: "In order to cover the content of the chapters in writing the book, the commentator Ayyub appealed to the priesthood of *Hazrat-i Mevlânâ*, who is the embodiment of Truth, and asked for help".

نمله جات برجل من جراد  
تو سلیمانی کن ای عالی نژاد [8]

Translation:

"Just as an ant brings a grasshopper's leg,

Be like Suleiman, you noble one" [9].

The commentator interprets the verse in "Mathnawī" in prose, and in order to enrich it more artistically, he gives an example from his work:

آتش است این بانگ نی و نیست باد  
هر که این آتش ندارد نیست باد [10]

Translation:

"The melody of the flute is fire, not the wind,  
Who has no fire, let him perish, is not the person" [11]

The author commented on this verse in prose, and at the end he quotes a verse in poetic style to this effect:

سر بی اشقرا باید بریدن  
بدوش این بار را نتوان کشیدن [12]

Translation:

"The head which has no love should be cut off,  
It is impossible for you to bear this weight on your shoulders" [13]

The commentator Ayyub incorporated numerous prose and poetic examples from external sources into his commentary on "Mathnawi" to animate and enhance the commentary's artistic dimension. In the initial two verses presented at the commencement of the initial notebook, it annotated a segment from Abdurrahman Jami's "Nainama" with a corresponding commentary:

بشنو از نی چون حکایت میکند  
از جدائیها شکایت میکند  
کز نیستان تا مرا بریده اند  
از نفیرم مرد و زن نالیده اند [14]

Translation:

"Listen to the flute, so it can tell a story,  
It complains about separations.  
I was a reed, they cut it,  
Everyone sighed at my moaning" [15].

To interpret these stanzas, the commentator quotes 92 stanzas from "Nainama" and writes a detailed prose commentary on it. Such a large volume of poetic passages is not observed in other notebooks of "[Sharhi Masnaviwi Mawlawi](#)". When Ayyub comments on a part of the passage, he dwells on the art of "istiora" (metaphor, simile), and in subsequent comments, if any artistic genre is used in "[Masnaviwi](#)", "this is allegory", "here is istiora" has given many comments on words or phrases. It is evident from this remark that Ayyub possessed an extensive understanding of artistic genres and types. For example, when commentator Ayyub gave a mystical analysis of the concepts of "sun", "love", "lover", Mawlānā compared his closest companion Shams Tabrizi to the sun:

خود عزیزی در جهان چون شمس نیست [16]

Translation:

"There is no sun like Shams in this world" [17].

The commentator quotes his full name in the form of "Shamsiddin Tabrizi" in the commentary of this verse, and the above verse has two meanings: in the sense of the Sun, because the Sun is considered the only and dear one in the solar system; Shams Tabrizi gave a rare analogy that the value of people on earth is like the sun. Jalal al-Din Rumi writes about his praise:

چون حدیث روی شمس الدین رسید  
چرخ چارم آسمان سر در کشید [18]

Translation:

"While reaching us Shamsiddin's face,  
Shams's face was hidden in the sky" [19].

In this verse, an astronomical concept based on the geocentric system of Ancient Greek astronomy, which existed in Eastern astronomy in the Middle Ages, is given. According to him, among the celestial bodies (planets, the Moon is also considered a planet) in the Solar System, the Earth is in the center, and the rest of the planets revolve around it in the form of a sphere. The place of the Sun was in the fourth sphere (sky). In the content of the verse, when the praise of Shamsiddin Tabrizi reached the fourth heaven, the real Sun became embarrassed and squeezed his neck on his shoulders. Ayyub writes that according to some commentators, when Shams Tabrizi was mentioned in some circles, people did not mention the real Sun (شمس). According to the commentary of Ayyub, the praise of Shams Tabrizi in "[Masnaviwi](#)" is higher than the Sun.

Since "[Masnaviwi](#)" is a mystical work, it is possible to find a lot of situations in which the concepts of mysticism are explained through various symbols. In commenting on such situations, Ayyub emphasized the art of similes, and such comments form a large part of the commentary.

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Also, in the commentary, stories from the history of the Prophets are presented, and the commentator himself writes artistically:

جسم خاک از عشق بر افلاک شد  
کوه در رقص آمد و چالاک شد [20]

Translation:

"Through Love the earthly body soared to the skies,  
The mountain began to dance and became nimble [21].

In his commentary on these verses, the commentator Ayyub alluded to two historical occurrences associated with the prophets. The initial account pertains to the Prophet Muhammad's ascension, which emphasizes that despite his greatness, he remains a progeny of Adam and his physical form is composed of dust. Following the manifestation of God's love, the earth rose swiftly above the Throne of the Most High, according to Rumi. The second example describes a prophet named Moses having a conversation with God on Mount Tur, when God fixed his gaze on the mountain, it dissolved (carrying love within its core).

The commentary contains many stories about Rumi's life and his sainthood, and the commentator takes most of them from the work "Manoqib ul-Orifin" and writes in an artistic form as above:

آنکه جان بخشد گر بکشد رواست [22]

Translation:

"Whoever gave his life, even if he kills, it is worth" [23].

The commentator Ayyub gives several interpretation from "Manoqib ul-Orifin". According to the review, Shamsiddin Walad Mudarris narrates as follows: "Mawlānā Jalaluddin Rumi employed a flute player by the name of Khamza. His mastery of the flute was immense, and Mawlānā Rumi was insatiably devoted to him. One day, he passes away from illness. They inform Rumi about his death and start preparing for the funeral. Upon entering his residence, Jalaluddin Rumi exclaims, "O my dear friend Khamza, get up!" while entering his residence. "I am here!" exclaims Hamza before rising to play the flute. For three days and nights, they descend into various dances to the melody of the flute. Amidst this circumstance, approximately one hundred infidels from Romania converted to Islam. Khamza passed away as soon as Hazrat Mawlānā departed [24].

In addition, many examples from the Qur'an and hadiths are given during the commentary. The commentator cites these examples in full or in part in Arabic and writes a commentary on them in Persian. Sometimes he gives these explanations from the history of the Prophets, sometimes from the Qur'an and hadiths themselves in artistic form.

The work "[Sharhi Masnavi](#) [Mawlavi](#)" is considered an artistically gorgeous work and is a clear example of the artistic and creative skills of commentator. The comments of Ayyub in prose and poetry ensured the artistic perfection of the work. The comments written in such styles are read by the reader with great attention and are imprinted in his mind through various artistic styles and symbols.

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