

**'LOVE THE WHOLE AND NOT THE PART'**  
**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF BOOK ONE OF**  
**THE *MATHNAWĪ* OF JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the narrative and thematic structure of Book One of the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. The *Mathnawī*, 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. Rūmī 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, *maqālāt*, 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 *Mathnawī* then is far richer than has hitherto been recognised. In combining the outer randomness of the sequential order with 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 *Mathnawī*, it is argued, is closely planned, integrating the double structuring, the sequential and the synoptic, with the overall message of the work.

**In The Name of Allāh, The Beneficent, The Merciful**

**Acknowledgements.**

*Praise belongs to Allāh  
- and praise is His right since He deserves it -  
And abundant praise !*

*I seek refuge in Him from the evil of my selfhood,  
For surely the selfhood commands to evil  
Except as my Allāh has mercy.*

According to Jāmī, the *Mathnawī* is the *Qur'ān* in Persian. Primarily, therefore, I should thank Almighty God Who revealed the *Qur'ān* to the Prophet Muḥammad, Peace be upon Him; then the Prophet Muḥammad who brought the *Qur'ān* to mankind; after that Iran, Cradle of Spiritual Civilisation, which gave birth to many great poets; finally to Maulawī Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who composed the *Mathnawī*, after the model of the *Qur'ān*.

I also express my heartfelt thanks to the Department of the Study of Religions at SOAS, and particularly to the former Head of that Department, Simon Weightman, my Supervisor, who was always available and helpful, and contributed greatly to the preparation of this thesis. Without his guidance it would undoubtedly have been impossible to complete this thesis with its new approach to the *Mathnawī* of Maulawī.

My thanks are also due to Professors S.H.Nasr and W.Chittick, who shared their ideas and thoughts with me in their conversations and in the papers they gave to the International Rumi Conference held in London.

I wish to express my gratitude to my parents who gave me my first spiritual education through their manners and words. Last, but by no means least, I am indebted to my beloved wife, Mahvash Alavi, for her true encouragement, for support that I never found wanting and for her practical assistance. I am happy also to thank my dear children, Shahideh, Sadra and Hasti for their patience and understanding during my years of study.

*Praise be to God who hath guided us hither  
We had not been guided had not God guided us*

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## INTRODUCTION

### *The Scope of the Present Thesis*

This thesis is an investigation into the structuring of Book One of the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, who will hereinafter be referred to as Maulānā. It had been hoped initially to investigate the structuring of the entire work, but it quickly became apparent that the level and quantity of detail required to uncover and illuminate the macro-compositional structuring of even one of the six books of the *Mathnawī*, precluded such an ambition for a study constrained by the time and word limits of a university doctoral thesis. While the decision to restrict the thesis to the examination of a single book was made with some regret, it is believed that the outcome, both in terms of discovery and of exposition, fully justifies such a self-limitation. In order to investigate the macro-compositional features of this book, however, further limitations have proved necessary. Most aspects of the poem which could be considered micro-compositional, – style, metre, imagery, word and line meanings, changes of voice and the like: that is, the verbal, poetical and semantic features – have had to be subordinated and back-grounded in order to reveal and clarify the macro-compositional rhetorical, narrative and thematic structuring which organises contexts, emphases, significances and rationales. While the reason for this emphasis in the treatment is the single-minded concentration on the higher levels of organisation in the work, there are two reasons why such an imbalance should not cause concern. The first reason is that the surface verbal level of the poetry is almost too rich, and, it could be argued, so absorbs the attention and response of the reader or hearer that there is little consciousness left to question or perceive the higher level organisation of the poem. The second reason is that, in consequence of the first reason, the surface verbal level of the poetry has already been very thoroughly studied both in seven hundred years of commentarial literature and also, more recently, in works of academic scholarship. This thesis, therefore, in its concentration on the relatively neglected aspect of structuring, will to a degree redress the present imbalance in the scholarship.

## *The Scholarly Understanding of the Structure of the Mathnawī*

The way scholars have regarded the structuring of this great work is almost unanimous. Edward Granville Browne addresses not so much the structure as the contents: "It contains a great number of rambling anecdotes of the most various character, some sublime and dignified, others grotesque and even (to our ideas) disgusting, interspersed with mystical and theological digressions, often of the most abstruse character, in sharp contrast with the narrative portions, which, though presenting some peculiarities in diction, are as a rule couched in very simple and plain language."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, William Chittick uses the word 'rambling', although he applies it, quite correctly, not to the anecdotes themselves but to the totality: "... the *Mathnawī* is a rambling collection of anecdotes and tales derived from a great variety of sources, from the *Qur'ān* to the folk humour of the day."<sup>2</sup> Arthur Arberry, having quoted with approval Reynold Nicholson's proposition that "The poem resembles a trackless ocean." goes on to say: "Written sporadically over a long period of time, without any firm framework to keep the discourse on orderly lines, it is at first, and even at repeated readings, a disconcertingly diffuse and confused composition..."<sup>3</sup> It is of course the French who make a virtue of this lack of order and account for it in terms of 'inspiration', as if creativity is always necessarily anarchic. Baron Bernard Carra de Vaux writes: "The composition of the *Mathnawī* is, it must be granted, very disjointed; the stories follow one another in no order, the examples suggest reflections which in their turn suggest others so that the narrative is often interrupted by long digressions; but this want of order seems to be a result of the lyrical inspiration which carries the poet along as if by leaps and bounds, and if the reader yields to it, the effect is by no means displeasing."<sup>4</sup> From Eastern Europe, Rypka writes: "Our amazement at his vast power of imagination... is somewhat modified by the lack of balance in the material..."<sup>5</sup> Annemarie Schimmel, who has written extensively on Maulānā and his work, writes of the *Mathnawī*: "The book is not built according to a system; it lacks architectural structure; the verses lead one into another, and the most heterogeneous thoughts are woven together by word associations and loose threads of stories."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Browne, E G, *A Literary History of Persia*, Volume II, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1951, p. 520.

<sup>2</sup> Chittick, W C, *The Sufi Path of Love*, Albany, SUNY Press, 1983, p.6

<sup>3</sup> Arberry, A J, *Tales from the Masnavi*, Richmond, Curzon Press, 1993, p.11

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Lewis, F D, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West*, Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2000, p.542 from the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

<sup>5</sup> Rypka, J, *History of Iranian Literature*, Dordrecht, D Reidel Publishing, 1968, p. 241.

<sup>6</sup> Schimmel, A, *The Triumphal Sun*, London, Fine Books, 1978, p.35.



But it is interestingly Reynold Nicholson, who knew the work better than almost anyone else after his thirty five years' work on it, who felt there was much more going on than appeared on the surface, although he never himself quite identified nor explained what it was. He writes at the end of his great task: "Anyone who reads the poem attentively will observe that its structure is far from being as casual as it looks. To say that "the stories follow each other in no order" is entirely wrong: they are bound together by subtle links and transitions arising from the poet's development of his theme; and each Book forms an artistic whole."<sup>7</sup> Then, tantalisingly, he continues: "The subject cannot be discussed here, but I may refer the reader to an excellent analysis and illustration of these technicalities by Dr Gustav Richter which has been published recently."<sup>8</sup> Richter's study, now readily accessible in English translation<sup>9</sup>, proves, however, to be a valuable and suggestive analysis of Maulānā's style in the *Mathnawī* rather than of its structure; it is more micro-compositional than macro-compositional, although it does in places touch lightly on structural implications. In discussing Richter's essays, Franklin Lewis writes: "Richter shows how the *Masnawi* follows the paradigm of the *Qur'ān* in integrating stories, parables, ethical exhortations and didactic philosophy, which may at first glance seem randomly digressive, but when regarded more deeply resolve into an intricate pattern, like a Persian carpet."<sup>10</sup> He then quotes Foruzanfar from the Introduction to his commentary (*Sharh-e Masnawi*, 1:ii): "The *Masnawi* is not divided into chapters and sections like other books; it has a style similar to the noble *Qur'ān*, in which spiritual insights, articles of belief, the laws and principles of faith, and exhortations are set forth and mixed together according to divine wisdom. Like the book of Creation, it has no particular order."<sup>11</sup> On the question of structure, or rather of the absence of structure, then, Iranian and Western scholars are united.<sup>12</sup> None of the many commentaries written on the *Mathnawī* even mentions structure,

<sup>7</sup> Nicholson, R A, *The Mathnawī of Jalālu'ddīn Rūmī*, Vol VI, Cambridge, E J W Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926, p. viii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* p.viii-ix.

<sup>9</sup> The second of Richter's lectures is concerned with the *Mathnawī*, and it is this that The Institute of Islamic Studies-London has had translated into English and published the journal *Transcendent Philosophy*, Vol 2, No 3, September 2001, pps. 15-34.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis, F D, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West*, Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2000, p.560.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p.561.

<sup>12</sup> Representative of Persian scholarship are the following: "It is true to say that the *Mathnawi* has no plan or pre-arranged scheme of chapters. The sequence of its contents is determined by the flowing outpouring of the speaker's mind, and Rumi has composed the *Mathnawi* in accordance with the needs of his audiences and the demands of the occasion." 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub, *Sirr-i Ney*, 'Elmi, Teheran, 1985, p.47; "The *Mathnawi* is the outpouring of Maulānā's unfettered mind. There is no affectation, formality or prior consideration in its creation; Mawlāwī's speech is delivered naturally like a fountain gushing out from the heart of the earth.. It is extempore improvisation" 'Abd al-Karim Soroush, *Qomar-i 'Ashiqaneh*, Teheran, 1990, p. 32; "Mawlāwī composed the *Mathnawi* extemporaneously" Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar, *Resale-yi tahqiq dar ahwal wa zindigani-yi Mawlana*, revised edition, Zawwar, Teheran, 1954, p.108; "The great difficulty in the study of Rumi results from his manner of exposition. In his *Mathnawi*, the threads of various motifs cross one another and are interwoven into such a confused fabric that one requires a good

being concerned wholly with the meaning of words or lines, with the origin of stories, anecdotes and quotations, and with possible Sufi symbolic or allegorical interpretations.

One scholar, Julian Baldick, takes issue with Nicholson concerning his assertion that each book is an artistic whole, on the grounds that a story is begun at the end of Book III and is completed at the beginning of Book IV.<sup>13</sup> But Baldick's most valuable observation is that the overall subject of each of the books of the *Mathnawī* corresponds precisely with each of the six sons in the *Ilāhī-nāmeḥ* of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. The *Mathnawī* and the *Ilāhī-nāmeḥ* share the same overall plan. Book I of the *Mathnawī* deals with the *nafs*, the self-hood, Book II deals with *Iblīs*, the Devil, Book III deals with '*aql*, intelligence, Book IV with '*ilm*, knowledge, Book V with *faqr*, poverty, and Book VI with *tauḥīd*, unity or unicity. Baldick then rejoins the scholarly consensus, when he writes: "It would be wrong, however, to lay stress upon the plan of the *Maṣnavī*. It is unlikely that here, or in the case of 'Aṭṭār, attempts at structural analysis would add anything once the obvious has been pointed out."<sup>14</sup>

For there to be a scholarly consensus concerning the absence of structure in the *Mathnawī*, suggests there is a serious shortage of alternatives, since it is not in the nature of scholars to agree one with another unless they really have to. This thesis tests the consensus view, but first some explanation is needed as to why one should want to.

### ***Why Further Investigation of the Structure of the Mathnawī is Necessary***

In the face of such broad agreement that there is no structure to the *Mathnawī* and Baldick's opinion that even the attempt to analyse the work structurally would add nothing, why have four years' research been devoted to doing just that ? The first reason was the encouragement provided by Nicholson's intuition that the structure of the *Mathnawī* is far from being as casual as it looks. Since Nicholson devoted much of his working life to the *Mathnawī*, and retained throughout his high regard for the work, such an intuition requires to be taken seriously. The second reason was the conviction that Maulānā was far too well-read

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deal of patience to follow him. On the feeble thread of an insignificant story, he strings the beads of his ideas and feeling without any system." 'Abd al-Hakim Khalifa, *The Metaphysics of Rumi*, Lahore, 1965, p. 3; "This book is a chain of stories which are the narration of life, and accompanying them there comes some guidance and deliberations; and they have no order." Muḥammad 'Alī Islami Nadushan, *Bagh-sabz-i 'Ishq*, Teheran, 1988, p. 110.

<sup>13</sup> Baldick, J, "Persian Sūfī Poetry up to the Fifteenth Century" in *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Erske Abteilung, Der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten, Von Spuler, Iranistik Zweiter Abschnitt Literatur, Lieferung 2, Brill, pps. 113-132

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p.126

in literary works, and far too accomplished a poet himself, to write a bad book, or at least a badly constructed book, as Arberry and other scholars imply he has. It seemed absurd that someone who could control poetry in terms of content, imagery and style and beguile the reader or hearer as effectively as Maulānā, should prove to be defective at the macro-compositional level of structure. His control was such he was able to create any impression he wished, and if the impression is that the work is unstructured and rambling, that surely must be because he wished it to appear so at the surface level. It was not difficult to see why this might be so. One of the most persistent messages to come from the *Mathnawī* is that the world of appearance is not the real world, but that we do not see the real world until and unless we have become transformed in our natures. It seemed then entirely reasonable to examine the *Mathnawī* closely to see whether there is within and beyond the surface texture of the work a level of integration and significance that corresponds to the order, intelligence and beauty of the spiritual world to which Maulānā seeks to lead his readers. The third reason is to be found in recent developments in the world of scholarship, and requires a fuller explanation.

The modern reader, - particularly, but by no means only, the Western reader, - is ill-prepared to comprehend and appreciate pre-modern works, and there are reasons for this. The first reason is that books have now become commonplace; they are treated as a commodity which is mass produced, marketed and consumed, and then often disposed of. They have become ephemeral: even text-books having a short shelf life since they are regularly up-dated. Given this situation, it is difficult for a modern reader, when confronted with a pre-modern work, not to treat it as just another 'book', or even worse as 'text' with all the modern implications that word has acquired from information technology. In pre-modern times, especially before the era of the printing press, a work was just that, it was a major undertaking. Sometimes it involved just one author, perhaps with an amanuensis, and scribes who produce the necessary manuscript copies; sometimes, as in India, a whole group of Brahmins would be brought together by a king to produce a work which would legitimise either the king, a religious position or a sacred place within the prestigious Sanskrit tradition. The work that was the outcome of such a process probably incorporated a large amount of ancient material which the team, more editorial than authorial, combined with certain new materials. The outcome in these cases was, more often than not, an 'event' rather than a 'book'. This is why it is necessary always to ask what such a work did, or was designed to do, in the historical context in which it was created. Design is an excellent word here, because it combines the notions of the purpose and rationale of a work with that of its macro-compositional structure. Recent scholarship is pushing beyond the idea that a pre-

modern work is just a 'book' whose text will yield all through the hermeneutic process; much more is involved than the meaning of the text and, in this connection, it should be noted that the modern theory of Speech Acts requires one to ask of somebody's utterance: "What is the speaker doing, or seeking to do, by meaning what his utterance means?". It is necessary to add to the meaning of the words, the significance of their being said in that particular manner and in that particular context, in order to arrive at a full understanding. To semantics, in other words, it is necessary to add pragmatics. In pre-modern times the word hermeneutics was used solely to refer to the physical task of locating and collecting copies of manuscripts for the purpose of producing an edited edition of a text; the discipline that combined both semantics and pragmatics was rhetoric, which is why rhetorical is used in the title of this thesis. In this way, then, recent thinking in academia is requiring a much fuller, more comprehensive treatment of pre-modern works than a non-specialist modern reader might instinctively bring to his reading of contemporary books.

Another area in which the modern reader is ill-prepared to confront pre-modern works is in the field of literary criticism. Several notions deriving from the Romantic movement have become fixed in people's minds as desirable qualities in works: originality, inspiration and the subjective flow of consciousness. The given paradigm is that of a love-lorn poet alone in some Parisian attic pouring out his soul in inspired and highly original verses. Wonderful as this might be, - it could well provide the lyrics for commercially highly successful songs in contemporary culture - it does little to prepare a reader to appreciate pre-modern works produced prior to the Romantic movement. Taking originality first, this was never highly rated as a literary virtue in any developed culture; rather, it was considered a virtue to adhere to traditional norms rather than to break them, although it was expected that a work should have some form of independent stance somewhere within it. Inter-textuality is the contemporary word for the way in which authors make use of, or refer to, pre-existent works in their own writings. In former times, it was customary to situate one's work in an existing genre and tradition, and to mark this by acknowledging by name, emulation or quotation the literary giants on whose shoulders one stood. While such acknowledgement was, no doubt, often wholly genuine, at the same time it also often made the unexpressed claim that the author belonged in the same league as those referred to, and that the work was a legitimate new addition to the tradition. Further, in a time of court patronage, poets were required to produce works that served to legitimate the regime as a locus of high culture, which is why texts tended to be so erudite and learned, and why so many traditional themes were so constantly re-worked. Implicit though in pre-modern inter-textuality is the unspoken message: "This is what the former greats have produced, but this

work goes one better.” Convention required that poets appear humble, modest and respectful, while the regime of patronage demanded they perform exceptionally to legitimate their patrons within existing norms, which was additionally the way to ensure their own future livelihood. Such a climate required erudition, ingenuity and expediency, and neither left much room for originality, nor attached much importance to it.

The second Romantic literary virtue referred to above is inspiration. Unlike originality, inspiration was highly regarded in pre-modern cultures, but more for the revelation of truth than for aesthetic outcomes. Indeed, since inspiration, especially divine or angelic inspiration, was so highly regarded, those who claimed it were more likely to be arraigned for heresy than to receive the plaudits of literary critics. The Romantic notion of human subjective inspiration was not one shared by many pre-modern cultures for whom inspiration was an important spiritual concern not a humanistic personal one. Further, personal subjectivity was not regarded as a highly valued or significant literary element in works whose purpose was the negotiation of reality and truth; in fact, many early works did not have a single named author. It is, then, the contention here that the modern reader is ill-prepared to confront pre-modern works. This is partly the result of the widespread use of word-processors and the familiar automatic way in which books are read and often written, as linear narratives; partly because of attitudes to literature that derive from the Romantic movement and applaud originality, imagination and the stream of subjective consciousness; partly because what literary education the modern reader might have received will have dealt with only a very limited repertoire of genres. More recent scholarly work, a review of which is incorporated into Chapter One, suggests that new approaches are required.

But there is a fourth, more pressing, reason. This has to do with the astonishing popularity which ‘Rūmī’ has recently acquired in the West, largely as the result of English translations, or ‘re-creations’, of short poems from the *Diwān-i Shams-i Tabrīzī*. A recent study by Lewis documents the rise of ‘Rūmī’ to this kind of cult status.<sup>15</sup> Although it will never reach the scale of awfulness represented by the commercialisation of Christmas, the contemporary bandwagon adds urgency to the need to clarify the nature of the *Mathnawī*. This is not to disparage the legitimate and serious interest shown by spiritual seekers in one of the world’s great mystical poets. The present phenomenon has happened before with other mystical writers and, doubtless, will happen again. In previous decades it was not uncommon to find, on the book shelves of the spiritually-minded, Tagore’s translation of

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<sup>15</sup> Lewis, F D, *Rumi Past and Present, East and West*, Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2000

one hundred poems of Kabir. Even if its presence there was, to some extent, emblematic, there must be many who derived pleasure, solace, even wisdom, from this little book. Does it matter that only four out of the hundred poems could legitimately be ascribed to Kabir? No, because scholars continued to wrestle with the considerable textual problems of the Kabir corpus and went on to produce full translations of those poems likely to be the most authentic and to analyse and explain Kabir's message and the background to it. Were it not for Tagore's name, few might have known Kabir even existed. Perhaps it will be so with "Rūmī. What then is the concern?

The *Diwān-i Shams* is a large collection of Maulānā's mystical poems, and it is excellent that selections of these are translated and published. Gradually the better selections, the most authentic and the most effective, will be winnowed from the chaff. The problem arises if the most authentic are not the most effective, but the most effective and least authentic become popular. This would be to deprive readers of an authentic encounter with Maulānā. Equally, however, it could be argued that since Maulānā was a very effective and powerful poet, however accurate a translation is semantically, if it lacks Maulānā's power and effect, it cannot be considered authentic. But time, and scholars as translators and reviewers, will eventually sort it out and deliver authentic encounters with Maulānā through selections from the *Diwān*. Is the same to happen with the *Mathnawī*? Nicholson has already translated the whole work into English, so readers can have access to it in its entirety. The translation is dated in style and vocabulary but is very accurate and close to the original Persian. The criticism of this translation is that, in addition to being dated, although it is accurate, it lacks the authenticity of effect. Nicholson also did something else which is of more questionable value: he published selected passages from the *Mathnawī* as *Tales of Mystic Meaning*.<sup>16</sup> Arberry, following Nicholson as always, did the same thing, not once, but twice.<sup>17</sup> More such selections are known to be on their way. In this thesis it is argued that, far from being randomly constructed, the *Mathnawī* is in fact highly organised, but the organisation only becomes visible when the work is read synoptically not sequentially. Nicholson suspected such an organisation was there but never found it, nor did Arberry. In the organisation is the design, the significance and rationale of the entire work and of its manifold parts. An ode from the *Diwān-i Shams* is a complete, self-contained unity, in consequence it can be extracted for an anthology. Every passage from the

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<sup>16</sup> Nicholson, R.A., *Tales of Mystic Meaning, Being Selections from the Mathnawi of Jalal-ud-Din Rumi*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1931

<sup>17</sup> Arberry, A.J., *Tales from the Masnavi*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1960; and *More Tales from the Masnavi*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1963.

*Mathnawī* is inter-related, in various ways and at different removes, to every other passage. It is surely absurd to believe that a merely semantically accurate rendering of a passage from the *Mathnawī*, however elegantly or effectively expressed, can convey anything of Maulānā's purpose if it is snatched from its contexts, deprived of its relationships and emptied of significance. To do so is 'to love the part and not the whole', in direct contravention of Maulānā's injunction. The proliferation of translated selections from the *Mathnawī*, - as opposed to from the *Diwān*, - would take readers away from the wholeness of Maulānā's design and the beauty and unity of the real world he has hidden. It would perpetuate the myth of the randomness of the *Mathnawī*, and deprive people of the incentive to search and search for the hidden ordering. There is therefore an urgent need to identify and make known the synoptic nature of the *Mathnawī*, since therein lies its rationale, if only in order to make the compilers and readers of such translated selections fully aware of how much they are missing.

There are then four reasons which have combined to produce both the inspiration and the justification for the present re-examination of the work and its structure: first, that Maulānā was too considerable a poet to write a badly constructed work; second, that the most perceptive and well-informed suspect there is something else in the *Mathnawī* but cannot quite identify it; third, the need for new scholarly approaches to pre-modern works; and, fourth, the risk that the current popularity of Maulānā will further obscure the synoptic nature of the *Mathnawī* through the proliferation of published selections in translation.

### ***The Organisation of the Present Thesis***

Chapter One establishes the methodology used in this examination. It first examines the nature of the problem of structure in the *Mathnawī* and identifies the given existing levels of organisation: the verse, the section, the book and the work. It then proposes that attention be given to two intermediate but unmarked levels of organisation, that of the thematic 'paragraph' and that of the larger discourse or story. The first permits the plotting of themes, the second permits the identification of the larger wholes below the level of the book. A preliminary analysis has suggested that, whereas the order of the verses and sections is necessarily sequential, the organisation of the discourses, and probably of the book, and of the total work, is synoptic. After a discussion of recent work on the synoptic

reading of texts, this suggestion is developed into a hypothesis. The hypothesis is that there are two organisational principles at work in the *Mathnawī*, the sequential ordering of verses and sections, and the synoptic organisation of discourse, book and work, based on the principles of parallelism and chiasmus. This hypothesis is tested in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

Chapter Two consists of a summary of the narrative and thematic contents of Book One of the *Mathnawī*, but along the lines of the proposed hypothesis. It identifies twelve discourses or stories. Each discourse is summarised thematically, the structure of the each discourse is analysed and the parallel and chiasmic relationships between sections exemplified. An interpretation of each discourse is also given, although these interpretations are necessarily brief and do not attempt to be total like the commentarial literature. This chapter is necessarily long because the hypothesis cannot be tested and proved without showing the detailed working of the structuring in practice.

Chapter Three builds on the previous chapter and analyses Book One as a whole. It does so by examining the relationship between the twelve discourses and finds that they too are organised by parallelism and chiasmus. This analysis reveals the rationale of Book One, which is an exposition of the development of the *nafs* or selfhood, and the various stages of the *sulūk* or Sufi journey. In Book One the twelve discourses are treated as three blocks of four discourses, one block dealing with the *nafs-i ammārah*, the selfhood that tends to evil, one block with the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the selfhood that blames itself, and one block dealing with the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, the selfhood that is at peace. In the second half of this chapter, there is a preliminary examination of the relationship between Book One and Book Six. Although this relationship must await the full analysis of Book Six there is sufficient evidence to propose that the two books also stand to one another in a parallel and chiasmic relationship and that the entire *Mathnawī* is so organised macro-compositionally.

The Conclusion draws all the finding of this investigation together, and argues that the *Mathnawī*, far from lacking structure, is, in fact, so highly structured that it must have been pre-planned in considerable detail. Examination is made of how Maulānā brilliantly exploits the two types of structuring within the work, the sequential and the synoptic, to exemplify his understanding and experience of reality. The rhetorical structure of the *Mathnawī* is therefore, it is argued, far more sophisticated and total than has hitherto been realised. There is some discussion as to why this has not been seen before, but it is on this thesis that the dissertation rests.



### *On a Personal Note*

The *Mathnawī* is a work of great richness, with many aspects yet to be fully explored. It might have been thought that the present author, after many years of theological training in Qom, would have addressed a more theological question than the one chosen: for example, an examination of how the Holy *Qur'ān* is foundational to both the style and the content of the *Mathnawī*, both as a model and as a source of inspiration, quotation and resonance. After all, one of the five functions that Maulānā claims for the *Mathnawī* in the preface to Book One is as an 'expounder of the *Qur'ān*', much as in the case of Maulānā's predecessor and exemplar, Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, of whose masterpiece, the *Mantiq al-Tayr*, - itself a *Qur'ānic* reference - it has been said that 'in fact, virtually every story is meant to paraphrase or illuminate specific *Qur'ānic* themes or canonical sayings attributed to Muḥammad'.<sup>18</sup> This is an important and fundamental issue, but it must be left to others to investigate. After Qom came degrees in the Philosophy Department of the University of Teheran and there, possibly as the result of contact with Continental philosophy, the chosen topic became 'Alienation from God in the *Mathnawī*', in preparation for which a card-index of over three thousand separate lines taken from the *Mathnawī* was lovingly assembled. However, when the card-index and its author presented themselves in London, they encountered characteristic British empiricism. "You cannot take lines out of their contexts. First we shall have to establish how Maulānā has organised his contexts, then you can do your alienation." It was a situation similar to the story of the foreigner lost in the beautiful Irish countryside who asked a passer-by how to get to Dublin. After a long pause, came the answer: "If I was going to Dublin, I wouldn't start from here." So the focus of research became the quest for the rhetorical structure of the *Mathnawī*, in large measure how its contexts are organised, the outcome of which is this thesis.

The word 'structure' in the title should not be taken to imply this work is structuralist. While Levi-Strauss was undoubtedly a brilliant man, and possibly, as some would argue, ahead of his time, unfortunately the excesses of some of his would-be imitators, by imposing quite inappropriate alien and subjective structures on well-loved

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<sup>18</sup> Morris, J.W., "Reading the Conference of the Birds" in DeBary, W.T. (ed) *Approaches to Oriental Classics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1989

works, succeeded in offending most and enlightening none. In this study, nothing is imposed on the *Mathnawī*, and nothing is added. Indeed, the reader of Chapter Two might well initially conclude that an excessive amount of this thesis is occupied by summaries of the text of the *Mathnawī*, although, in fact, statistically, it amounts to little over twenty percent of the total, but this was unavoidable for two reasons. The first reason was because this is the only way available to demonstrate that the rhetorical structure identified is actually there in Maulānā's own words and poetry and is not a projection on to it of an analyst's theoretical construct. The second reason is more practical: readers are entitled to expect that when they read a book they are not required to have beside them a second book to which they have constantly to refer. The format adopted, therefore, is to ensure validity and to avoid irritation.

It is not to be thought that what is discovered here is the last word on the subject of the structure of the *Mathnawī*; rather, given the scholarly consensus denying any structure, it might better be thought of as the first word. Not only does this thesis only deal in appropriate detail with the first of the six books of the work, even in that book the discoveries have opened more questions than they have closed. All the implications and entailments of the discoveries made have not been fully explored, some scarcely explored at all, and the question of interpretations alone requires another thesis worth of text, although an attempt has been made to point out the most salient issues that the recovered rhetorical structure clarifies. But this is scarcely the place to emphasise the limitations of what has been accomplished in this thesis. The outcome of these years of study is that a veil has been lifted, and, though others still remain in place, it is hoped the revelation will have the same effect on the reader as it has had on the author, namely, in Maulānā's words:

“How many times will they say, when the veil is lifted,  
Things are not as we thought they were.”

THE END OF THE INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER ONE

### METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESIS

#### *The Mathnawī as given*

The *Mathnawī* consists of six books. Each of these six books contains a short introduction. The introductions to Books I, III and IV are in Arabic; those to Books II, V and VI are in Persian. Following the introduction in each book is a proem, a sequence of verses that acts as a preface to that book. These proems are of varying lengths: Book I, 35 verses; Book II, 111 verses; Book III, 68 verses; Book IV, 39 verses; Book V, 30 verses; and Book VI, 128 verses. The total number of verses in each book, that is, including the proem, again varies. In the Nicholson edition of the text, Book I has 4,002 verses; Book II has 3,810; Book III has 4,810; Book IV has 3,855; Book V has 4,238; and Book VI has 4,916. This gives a grand total for the entire work of 25,631 verses.

The verses of each book are broken up by headings (*'unwān*), such as “The story of the king’s falling in love with a handmaiden and buying her” (after line 35, Book I), or “The first to bring analogical reasoning to bear against the Revealed Text was Iblīs” (after line 3395, Book I). While it is not uncommon for editors and scribes to add headings of their own to works of this kind, or to omit existing headings, in this case there are good reasons to assume that these headings were the work of the author himself. The first reason is that the transmission of the text is good, and the headings as found in Nicholson’s edition correspond, for the most part, with those of the earliest manuscript, dated 1278 CE, which is almost contemporary with the finishing of the work.<sup>1</sup> The second reason is that some of these

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<sup>1</sup> The fact that a manuscript is the earliest extant, however, does not necessarily mean it is the most authentic, since it could belong to a variant tradition of the text. It might be, in that case, that the most authentic belongs to a tradition represented by later manuscripts. Nicholson was well aware of this and writes in the introduction to his edition of Books One and Two: “.. for the maxim *seniores priores* is one which no editor ought to believe till he has verified it.” Nicholson did not have access to the oldest Qonya manuscript when he edited Book One, but he has noted its variants from his own text in an appendix to the translation of Books Three and Four. He notes that the Qonya manuscript omits five of the headings he established in his edition of Book One, three from the first story – at verses 78, 101 and 222 – and two later headings at verses 1427 and 3077. The fact that three are omitted in the first story suggest that the scribe did not attach much importance to the headings and had begun to leave them out until a supervisor of some kind told him to keep them all in. Later analysis in this thesis identifies the design of Book One which suggests that the first and the last story have the same number of sections, that is nine, so the rhetorical symmetry prefers Nicholson text, which is largely based on the manuscript British Museum, Or.6438, to the early Qonya manuscript in this regard. The other two headings omitted seem to be simply carelessness since the surrounding text clearly mark these points as transitions where a heading would be expected.

headings could never have been inserted by anyone other than the author, since they are either too bizarre, unconnected with what follows, or in some way or another improbable. The argument here follows by analogy and entailment the editorial doctrine of *lectio difficilior*. The third and final reason is that these headings effectively divide the books up into sections, and each section is almost invariably foreshadowed in the verses that immediately precede the heading, thereby giving that heading, at least as a section marker, validity from the text itself. Because of their importance, the word 'section' will henceforth be used in this study as the technical word for those verses which are contained between two headings, and which constitute a discrete portion of text marked and identified by the author as such.

Sections vary considerably as to their length, the shortest being only two verses long, the longest well over a hundred verses. In Book I there are 173 sections; in Book II, 104 sections; in Book III, 220 sections; in Book IV, 137 sections; in Book V, 174 sections; and in Book VI, 140 sections. This gives a grand total for the work as a whole of 948 sections. The work then has 25,631 verses, divided into 948 sections, divided into six books, which together constitute the *Mathnawī*. The text as given therefore may be said to have four levels of organisation marked by the author: the level of the **verse**; the level of the **section**; the level of the **book**; and the level of the **work**.

### *The Question of Structure*

The *Mathnawī* is an acclaimed masterpiece, and has been for most of the seven hundred years of its existence. It has been very thoroughly studied and, across the centuries, the subject of many commentaries, analyses and appreciations by scholars, devotees and men of letters from East and West. It is widely known and is often quoted and many people know lines or even longer segments of its text by heart. That most fundamental method of literary analysis, the close reading, has often been applied to it by people of great erudition and literary and spiritual experience, but so far it has failed to yield a structure, a principle of organisation that determined why one particular passage should appear where it does.

As has been mentioned above, there does seem to be an overall plan at the level of the work, with the six books each having as its primary subject one of the six themes exemplified by the six sons in the *Ilāhī-Nāmeḥ* of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. These are respectively: the *nafs* (the self-hood, lower self or fleshy soul), Iblīs (Satan), 'aql (intelligence), 'ilm (knowledge), *faqr* (spiritual poverty) and *tauḥīd* (unity or unicity). While this is helpful in supplying the overall subject of each book, it does not help to disclose their structure. On the subject of structure

the commentaries are silent; their preoccupation is to explain the meaning of words and lines, to identify the sources of the various anecdotes and quotations, and to offer an explanation of the author's spiritual symbolism, all of which have been very thoroughly accomplished. An account has already been given of how various scholars have described the *Mathnawī* as random and lacking in structure, and certainly that is how it appears when it is read sequentially having regard to the four levels of organisation that are given, the verse, the section, the book and the work. Some of those who deny structure to the *Mathnawī*, see in its apparent randomness the working of inspiration. If they are right, and it must be initially accepted that they could be, then the only principle of organisation is the outpouring of the creative process. That is not satisfactory for many reasons, the most cogent of which is that the work itself constantly emphasises that creation is highly intelligent and, could the reader but see it, wonderfully ordered. It would be a most curious irony if Maulānā were to have denied to his masterpiece the very intelligence and order he urges his readers to find in themselves and in the universe. As has already been mentioned, Nicholson, who knew the work intimately, probably as no other Westerner, sensed there was an organising structure but could not quite pinpoint what it was; he hoped to write about it but never did. This provides some encouragement that the present investigation will not necessarily have to conclude that the only organising principle was the randomness of spontaneous inspiration.

Given these four levels of verse, section, book, work, which is the level that lacks structure ? It is not at the level of the verse, nor in the way the verses are grouped to form sections. People love the lines of Maulānā's poetry, they appreciate the high flights of mystical outpouring, the earthy anecdotes, the amusing stories, the ironies and the insights, but they really cannot see where it is going. In fact, by lack of structure, people usually mean that they cannot see any level of organisation at what is here called the level of the book. Often there is no apparent reason why one section should come where it does; the sections at times appear to be almost random in their order. A story will start in one section; then come two sections of teaching; then comes the start of a second story in the following section; then another section of teaching; then a return to the first story; then more sections of teaching, then the second story is continued and so on. It is the apparent lack of any rationale for the way the sections follow one another that has led to the accusations of a lack of structure at the level of the book. This is the problem this thesis addresses. The quality of the poetry, the high level of spiritual and moral insight and the mystical flights, in most people's eyes, more than compensates for this structural deficiency, but in reinforcing the highly questionable proposition that inspiration and the mystical are necessarily irrational, the present situation is more than unsatisfactory.

### *Some Methodological Considerations*

If close reading, sequentially, following the given levels of verse, section, book and work, has failed to reveal an organising principle and structure, then, on the assumption it is present but that Maulānā has deliberately hidden it, the work must be read differently. The method applied here is to concentrate on two unmarked intermediate levels: thematically united passages within sections and on groupings of sections. The first, in English prose, would be described as a paragraph, and, for want of a better word or technical term, the word ‘**paragraph**’ is used in this study as a technical term to refer to a passage of thematically linked verses. The level of the paragraph is intermediate between the verses and the sections. The second intermediate level is between the sections and the book. In English prose, this could be thought of as a chapter, but since in English prose the whole work would be thought of as a book, and the *Mathnawī*’s books as chapters, another word seems to be required. It has been decided for the purposes of this study to use the word ‘**discourse**’ as the technical word to designate a group of sections. Story would not be a particularly satisfactory word, in that it would suggest that the sections are united narratively, which is only sometimes the case, so ‘discourse’ is here preferred since it encompasses both narrative and teaching sections. In fact, ‘discourse’ is particularly apt because it reflects the Arabic word *maqālah*, often used in works in precisely the sense which is intended by the word ‘discourse’ here. Maulānā could easily have divided his sections up into *maqālāt* by grouping the sections together into marked identifiable units and called such a grouping of sections a *maqālah*, a discourse, as other writers have done; he could even have given each *maqālah* a name such as “The Third Discourse: On not Seeing Reality”, for example. But he chose not to. Why he so chose will be looked at later. Now it is necessary to examine the units of these two intermediate levels.

It is one of the contentions of this thesis that Maulānā’s poetry is so rich, the verses so seductive, that the reader is drawn to the level of the line almost to the exclusion of other levels. A ‘close’ reading, under these circumstances, such as that made by commentators, will only detract further from the clues and linkages that might constitute an organising principle and structure. To find such a structure it is necessary, at least initially, to stand away from the actual lines, their language and imagery. To find structure, what is needed is not a ‘close’ reading but a ‘distant’ or ‘detached’ reading. It is very fortunate that Nicholson’s translation

is so accurate and literal. Working from Nicholson's English translation, in fact, permits one to identify and summarise paragraphs, that is the units of thematically related verses that constitute the building blocks or bricks of the thematic structure, without being drawn into the level of the line by the attractive power of Maulānā's Persian poetry. This procedure of summarising the paragraphs is one of the main methodological procedures used in this analysis and it has been found to be of considerable heuristic power. With translation, it has been said, what you lose is the poetry, which is precisely why it is used here initially. No reference will be made to the rich poetic features of the work, nor the many changes of voice and tempo; all that might detract from the single-minded search for the underlying structure and organising principles, has been deliberately excluded.

There is a famous section of 18 verses in Book I (lines 2835-2852), entitled "The Story of what passed between the Grammarian and the Boatman.", which can serve as an example of what constitutes a paragraph. This section has three paragraphs, according to this analysis, each of six lines. The first tells the story of the exchange between the grammarian and the boatman; the second puns *maḥw* (self-effacement) and *naḥw* (grammar) in the first line and again in the last line and draws a conclusion from the story; while the third returns to the story of the Bedouin and foreshadows the section to follow. A full summary of this section will be given later in Chapter Two at the appropriate place. It has to be said that not all paragraphs are as clear as these three, and it is fully recognised that 'paragraphs' are subjective analytical constructs. Nonetheless, they have proved crucial in arriving at an understanding of the thematic and rhetorical structure of the work and they constitute a major part of this analysis.

If the paragraph is the thematic building block, the section is the room and the discourse is the building. In Book I it is fairly straightforward to identify a discourse from its narrative unity, which was clearly Maulānā's intention, but later in the work it is made more difficult, with fewer clues. The first nine sections of the work, for example, clearly constitute one discourse, that of the King and the Handmaiden, while verses 900 to 1389 in Book I, form another discourse, that of the Lion and the Beasts. There is no doubt that the decision of the author not to tell his readers which sections to take together as a given unity but to require them to find out for themselves, has been one of the major factors contributing to the accusations of randomness and lack of structure. When the unity of the sections in a discourse has a narrative basis, it is easy enough to see where one discourse ends and another begins. When, however, the unity of a discourse is thematic rather than narrative, only an appreciation of the themes under examination by the author enable one to identify which

sections belong to which discourse. Sometimes the unity is narrative, sometimes thematic, often both together. Readers are therefore required to be both active and intelligent, entirely in keeping with Maulānā's overall purpose. One of the major tasks of the analysis here undertaken is the identification of the discourses and an examination of their structure.

A discourse is made up of a number of sections. The number of sections varies with each discourse, the shortest being five sections, the longest over forty sections. What, however, emerges surprisingly from this research into Book One is that, in fact, the discourses, and the sections they organise, have to be read **synoptically** and **not sequentially**. Perhaps the major discovery of this thesis, confirmed by this analysis, is that the organisation of the sections in a discourse is not sequential; the primary relationships between sections in a discourse are organised by **parallelism** and **chiasmus**. Of course, sections follow one another in sequence, but which section comes where is determined by the higher order organisation of the discourse, just as where a particular discourse comes is determined by the even higher organisation of the book, as will be shown later in the thesis. The realisation that Maulānā was using parallelism and chiasmus to organise the higher levels of his work has been a major surprise and took about six months to absorb and adjust to, since nothing in a long and arduous education and wide reading had ever suggested such a possibility or prepared one for it. But the realisation permits the resolution of many of the problems which people have had regarding the lack of structure. In fact, by lack of structure, people mean that they cannot see any level of organisation at what is here called the level of the discourse, as has been suggested above. The recognition that the organisation of the sections is non-sequential and based on parallelism and chiasmus, reveals discourse structures that are elegant, symmetrical and beautifully balanced, of great variety and intricacy: in short, fitting testimony to an inspired master architect. But these discourse structures are not just aesthetically satisfying, they reveal patterns of significances as well as disclosing the distribution of emphases. The methodology used here to analyse the structure of the discourse, is to apply the principles of parallelism and chiasmus to the sections as wholes using their thematic and narrative contents as summarised by the paragraph analysis to detect the parallels. Sometimes it is only the parallelism that permits identification of the discourse's beginning and end. Before these assertions can be formulated as a hypothesis and tested and, it is hoped, demonstrated by analysis, however, there is considerable preliminary ground to prepare. First, it is necessary to look at recent work on synoptic reading, and the two literary principles of parallelism and chiasmus.



## *Synoptic Reading and the Principles of Parallelism and Chiasmus*

Synoptic, from the Greek, means seeing together, seeing as a whole. To read synoptically is to be aware of the organisation of the whole as one reads. It is to read consciously, since 'consciously' is the Latin equivalent of the Greek 'synoptically'. The familiar way of reading is sequential: the attention is split between the unfolding sequence of new material, on the one hand, and the larger developing contexts of structure, plot or argument on the other. Each new discrete element successively encountered is briefly allowed its own self-identity before surrendering it as the element itself become part of the enlarged context for the next element. In a number of pre-modern works, however, additional and particular significance, sometimes the rationale of the work itself, was embodied in the macro-compositional structure, that is, they were designed and composed synoptically, as organic, organised wholes. This higher organisation is not usually sequential; it makes use of various types of non-linear relatedness, and it requires a synoptic reading. Recent studies have begun to reveal that works so designed were far more common than had hitherto been suspected<sup>2</sup>.

A recent study of the Old Testament book of *Leviticus* by the prolific anthropologist Mary Douglas, who had for many years struggled to understand the answers to certain questions raised by this book, has shown convincingly that the macro-compositional structure of the book is modelled on the shape of the Tabernacle, which in turn is considered to be modelled on the holy Mount Sinai<sup>3</sup>. The Tabernacle has a large area open to the public, then a much smaller priestly area, and finally the Holy of Holies which belongs to God, just as the summit of Mount Sinai was the abode of God, the cloudy region below only Moses could enter, and below that on the lower slopes the people awaited. Further, the description of the various bodily parts of sacrificial animals follows the same analogy, and certain parts are assigned to the public, certain to the priests and certain to God. The analogous spatial areas of

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<sup>2</sup> Some examples are: Stanley, K., *The Shield of Homer: Narrative Structure in the Iliad*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993; Beck, I., *Die Ringkomposition bei Herodot* (= Spudasmata 25 Hildesheim 1971; Katičič, R., "Die Ringkomposition im ersten Buche des Thukydideischen Geschichtswerkes," *Wiener Studien* 70, 1957; Tatum, J., *Xenophon's Imperial Fiction*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1985; Craven, T., *Artistry and Faith in the Book of Judith*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 70, Chico, California, 1983; Damon, P., "The Middle of Things: Narrative Patterns in the Iliad, Roland, and Beowulf", in Niles, J.D., (ed) *Old English Literature in Context*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980; McMahon, R., *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 1989; Weightman, S.C.R., "Symbolism and Symmetry: Shaykh Manjhan's *Madhumālatī* Revisited" in Lewisohn and Morgan (eds) *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol III, One World, Oxford, 1999; Duckworth, G.G., *Structural Patterns and Proportions in Virgil's Aeneid: A Study in Mathematical Composition*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1962.

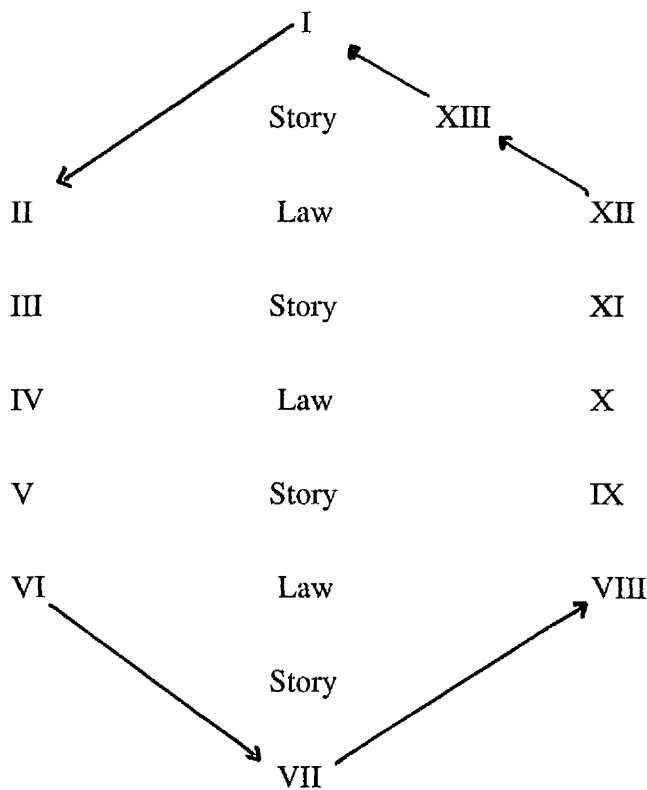
<sup>3</sup> Douglas, M., *Leviticus as Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999.

the sacrificial body, the Tabernacle and Mount Sinai provide the model for the proportionality and segmentation of the text of the book of *Leviticus* and determine the content of each segment, with a large open section, a smaller priestly section and the holiest section for God. Mary Douglas had read this book many times over several decades; Hebrew scholars and Rabbis had studied it for centuries and written learned commentaries; countless others had perused it as part of the Bible; yet until now nobody had realised the design of its compilers, why it is structured as it is. The reason nobody saw it before is because it is not obvious from sequential reading, nor was it expected; only Mary Douglas's persistent synoptic interrogation, together with certain clues others had provided, finally brought it to light. But to read *Leviticus* now, knowing its design and rationale, is to read it quite differently. The meanings do not change, but they become that much more significant from the reader knowing where he or she is, where the emphases lie, and the full extent and implications of the contexts, enriched and sanctified by the multiple layering of the analogies. This is to read synoptically.

A previous study by Mary Douglas produced a synoptic reading of another major book of the Old Testament, the book of *Numbers*<sup>4</sup>. While it is neither possible nor necessary to give a full account of this complex study here, it can be used to introduce the literary principles that are of present concern. First, the book of *Numbers*, which is a significant work in Judaism because it is part of the Pentateuch, has been regarded by many as lacking in unity or coherence. One commentator writes: "From the point of view of its contents, the book lacks unity, and it is difficult to see any pattern in its construction. Seen as a whole it is a piece of narrative, but this narrative is interrupted again and again by the communication of more or less comprehensive regulations and lists which are only loosely linked to the narrative thread.. there are long stretches where the thread fades into the background so that it is almost lost from view."<sup>5</sup> This is a judgement not dissimilar to Arberry's assessment of the *Mathnawī*. Douglas's study shows that *Numbers* is in fact highly structured but that it requires a synoptic reading and the recovery of a lost genre. The first feature of this macro-compositional genre is alternation, in this case the alternation of narrative and law. The transitions between the two mark thirteen sections of the text overall. There are seven sections of narrative alternating with six law sections. These sections are arranged in a ring as is shown in the diagram:

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<sup>4</sup> Douglas, M., *In the Wilderness*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 158, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1993.

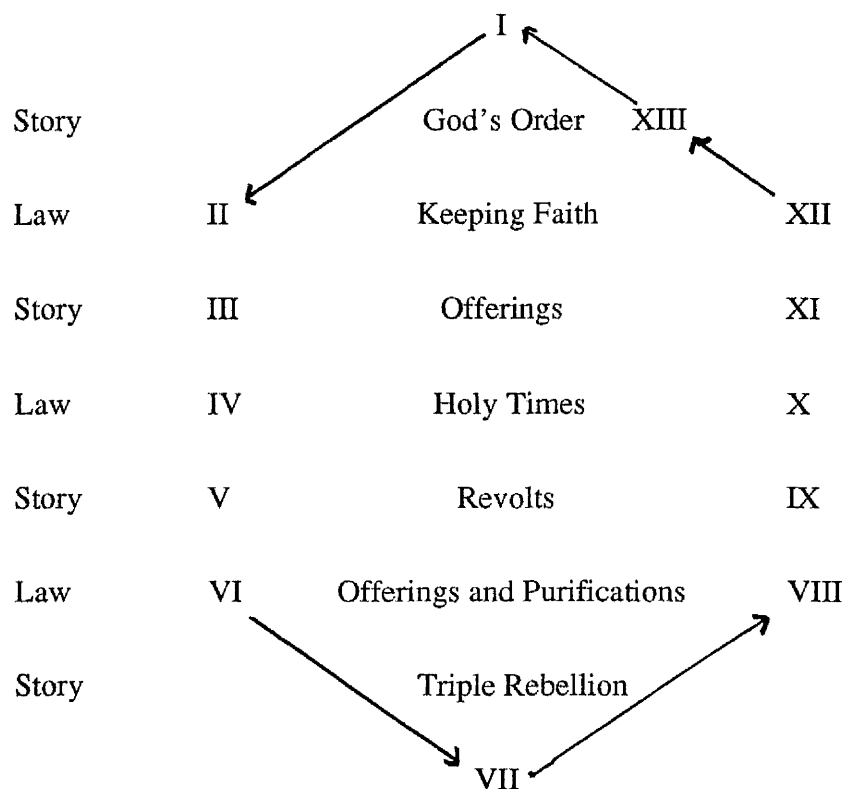


This type of arrangement is known as annular or ring composition, of which there are different forms found. In this twelve-section model, I and VII are in parallel, II and XII, III and XI, IV and X, V and IX, and VI and VIII. Section XIII acts as a latch connecting the end of the ring to its beginning. This structure is apparently similar to literary forms well-known in the Mediterranean region from the eighth to the fifth centuries, which explains why annular structuring is so prevalent in the *Iliad* of Homer, for example, which probably received its present textual form in the sixth century. Another very beautiful example of a twelve/thirteen ring composition, although without the alternation, is the well-known story of Noah in Genesis.<sup>6</sup> In both *Numbers* and Noah the crisis comes at VII which has a vertical link with I. In *Numbers* it is a triple rebellion, in Noah, the flood. Douglas identifies in detail the correspondences between the sections which are in parallel one with another and sets out, in the diagram below, headings which, as she puts it, “are chosen to indicate approximately a community of ideas across a rung”<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Douglas, *ibid*, p. 84, from Noth, M., *Numbers: A Commentary*, SCM Press, London, 1968

<sup>6</sup> See Cassuto, U., *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (original Hebrew 1947) part 2: *From Noah to Abraham*, English translation Israel Abrahams, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1964. Cassuto also confirms this to be a well-known early genre.

<sup>7</sup> Douglas, M., *In the Wilderness*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 158, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1993, p.119



Once one has recovered the genre, it is possible to see *Numbers* as a beautifully integrated and structured work of considerable sophistication and elegance, but that is only synoptically. When read sequentially, ring composition and parallelism and the abrupt transitions required to mark the sections off from one another, can produce the very effect of disorder, repetition, randomness and incoherence about which its detractors complain. The message from this is that whenever a work of some significance is universally criticised for being badly constructed, it is probably because it is being read wrongly and its genre is not understood. Once Douglas has established the genre and the rhetorical structure, she is able then to lay bare, with characteristic enthusiasm, the rationale of the whole book. This does not add to the meaning of the words, but it recaptures the significance of the meanings through the provision of context and relatedness, thereby greatly enriching the reading and interpretation of the work.

The structure revealed above depends upon clearly marked discrete sections, whether identified by alternation of subject matter or by other means, which are organised by two types of relationship, the linear relationship of the ring sequence, and the non-linear relationship of parallelism. Commenting on the diagram, Douglas writes: "The first merit of

the scheme that is here adopted is that it is an admirable device for including extraneous items. So it is well adapted to the editorial problems of an anthologist collecting very ancient pieces and putting them into a bundle with modern ones. Another of its merits is to account for the many repetitions as well as for the interruptions which have dismayed some commentators. Maintaining the parallels in each rung would have to be a prime concern of the editor. Sometimes a theme has to be interrupted in order to be spread across to the other half of the book, sometimes the signal is given simply by repetition. We shall come across many examples of both techniques. The result is not a crazy patchwork but a formal pattern divided down the middle, in which one half folds across the other. The two corresponding halves of the book match each other, but each has its own mood and message.’<sup>8</sup> Since the eighth to fifth centuries were particularly times when literatures that had hitherto been oral and memorised by both bards and priests were ‘textualised’, it is not difficult to see why this genre in its many varieties proved to be so valuable. Further possibilities in the genre were also exploited. In the story of Noah in Genesis, God is at I, and at 7 there is Noah and the animals, literally in deep water. The turning point comes with the words “But God remembered Noah” thereby establishing the link between I and VII. At VI the waters rise and at VIII the water subside. At V Noah marches the animals etc. into the Ark, and at IX he marches them out again. At II God makes a covenant with Noah that he should make the Ark and get into it along with his family and the animals, birds etc., and at XII God makes another covenant that He will never again destroy all flesh and the earth, and marks it with the rainbow. The journey out, or down, the crisis or turning point, and the journey back to the start following the same stages but at a transformed or higher level, is ideally suited to this pattern. It was therefore very well suited to works belonging to or influenced by Neo-Platonism at whatever remove, and a variety of this scheme was used in the four extant Sufi romances written in Eastern Hindi between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. In *Madhumālātī*, for example, which is organised round a circle divided into twelve proportionally equal sections, the rungs represent the ontological levels of a Sufi cosmology and the soul comes from God at the top of the circle and passes down one side through these levels until the crisis at the bottom, after which it rises up the other side through the same levels, but transformed. A beautiful visual affirmation of “From God we come, and to God we shall return”.<sup>9</sup>

The non-linear relationship of correspondence between two segments of text in the genre just discussed is termed parallelism. It was first named thus in the eighteenth century

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p. 119

and for long was regarded as a feature solely of Hebrew poetry, but it is now recognised as being almost universal in literatures throughout the world.<sup>10</sup> Parallelism is not a literary doctrine, simply the literary exploitation of correspondence, and, since there are many ways that literary elements can correspond, - phonologically, lexically, semantically and thematically for example, - the range of usage covered by the term is exceptionally wide. Thematic parallelism, sometimes aptly referred to as 'thought rhyme'<sup>11</sup>, in its ideal form in Classical Hebrew poetry used to be described as the relationship between two elements of the kind: given X.. ..how much the more Y. Nowadays it is recognised that even in Classical Hebrew literature the second element can repeat, complete, affirm, contradict, develop, echo, mimic, pun and so on, the first element, and that, in some cases parallelism means little more than 'and'. It all depends on the case in point and the genre that it is used in. In a genre like the one discussed above, where the second half of a ring is at a higher level than the first as a result of some transforming crisis at the crux, then certainly it is often found that the second element has the sense of 'how much the more..'. Countless examples of parallelism will be encountered from now on in this study, so it is not necessary to attempt to characterise its wide range of techniques at this juncture. More fruitful will be to consider the example of Psalm 67 in the Bible, which is given below.

#### Psalm 67

- 1      May God be gracious to us and bless us  
          And make his face to shine upon us,
  
- 2      That thy way may be known upon earth  
          Thy saving power among all nations.
  
- 3      Let the peoples praise thee, O God;  
          Let all the peoples praise thee.
  
- 4      Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,  
          For thou dost judge the peoples with equity  
          And guide the nations upon earth.

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<sup>9</sup> See Weightman, S.C.R., "Symbolism and Symmetry: Shaykh Manjhan's *Madhumālātī* Revisited" in Lewisohn and Morgan (eds) *The Heritage of Sufism*, Vol III, One World, Oxford, 1999.

<sup>10</sup> See Fox, J.J., "Roman Jakobson and the Comparative Study of Parallelism", in *Roman Jakobson: Echoes of his Scholarship*, Peter de Ridder Press, Lisse, 1977 pp. 59-90.

<sup>11</sup> See Anderson, G.W., "Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry" in *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, pp. 1523-28.

- 5     Let the peoples praise thee, O God;  
        Let all the peoples praise thee.
- 6     The earth has yielded its increase;  
        God, our God, has blessed us.
- 7     God has blessed us;  
        Let all the ends of the earth fear him.

In this well-known psalm from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, verse 1 is in parallel with verse 7, in that the first line of 1 is fulfilled in the first line of 7, and the second lines of each verse are respectively how we ask God to be toward us, and how we should be toward God. Verse 2 is in parallel with verse 6 in that both are about the state of the earth, in the first how we pray it could be, in the second how it has become through God's blessing. Verses 3 and 5 are clearly in parallel by virtue of the repetition, but it moves from the earth to how the peoples should behave. Verse 4 is not in parallel with anything. This psalm not only illustrates parallelism, it also demonstrates the second literary feature being discussed here, chiasmus. Chiasmus is a replaying of a sequence but in reverse order, as for example, A, B, C, C\*, B\*, A\*. The last three are the mirror image of the first three, but often at a higher level. In the psalm above, the sequence is A, B, C, D, C\*, B\*, A\*. This type of arrangement happens whenever there is an odd number of verses or elements in the sequence, and the tradition or convention is that, it is the middle element that contains the real inner content of the whole, the central message, which, in a sense, the other chiasmic and parallel elements simply frame and protect. In psalm 67 above, the two outermost verses are about God, the next two in are about the earth, and the next two in are about the peoples of the earth. In the middle verse 4, these three, God, the earth and the peoples, are brought together in the central message that God is the totally fair judge who guides the peoples on the earth, for which they should be glad, but whom they should also fear. It is the central verse which introduces the main information, sums up what has gone before, and foreshadows and explains what is to come.

Chiasmus is a rhetorical scheme named after the Greek letter Chi, written X, which it resembles. There are many varieties and, as yet, the technical vocabulary for the different types has not become settled. Accordingly, throughout this thesis the terms 'chiasmus' and 'chiasmic' will be used to include all arrangements of this general nature without making

further differentiations. Jacob Milgrom in his commentary on the book of *Numbers* insists that 'chiasm', which he prefers to 'chiasmus' used here, refers only to a pair of items that reverses itself, like the 'ut tu' – that you – which occurs so frequently in Augustine's *Confessions*. When the series has more than two members he uses the term introversion. He argues that the two types must be distinguished because chiasm, with two members, is purely an aesthetic device, whereas introversion, with more than two members, can have didactic implications. He gives the example A, B, X, B\*, A\*, and points out, as has been seen above, "that the central member frequently contains the main point of the author, climaxing what precedes and anticipating what follows.."<sup>12</sup> Another usage, at odds with Milgrom's, reserves 'chiasmus' for only a particularly sophisticated chiasmic type. This type occurs when, in the diagram given for the book of *Numbers*, for instance, there is 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, down one side, and 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 up the other side, but the parallelism of 4, say, is not with 10, with which it is level, but with 9, and the parallelism of 5 is not with 9, with which it is level, but with 10. This forms a chiasmic cross in the structural scheme itself, examples of which will be given later. These two usages for the term 'chiasmus' illustrate the unsettled state of the terminology in what is, astonishingly after two and a half thousand years, a relatively new field of enquiry for most, and justifies the simplification proposed here.

This concludes the brief but necessary introduction to synoptic reading and the two literary conventions of parallelism and chiasmus. Examples have been given of both parallelism and chiasmus in action, and of a macro-compositional genre involving annular or ring composition. Ring composition, which is essentially no more than the outcome of the application of chiasmus and parallelism within certain conventions, has been avoided as a term because it has acquired associations largely with oral literature, whereas what has been considered here is too cultivated, developed and sophisticated to have arisen from either a bardic or a priestly need to have aids to memorisation, or from the need in performance to mark the opening and the closure of digressions. On the contrary, what has been suggested here is that it was the transition from bardic and priestly repertoires, from which selections were made to suit the occasions of performance, to established and authorised versions of works, that is to say, the process of textualisation, which led to the cultivation and development of these macro-compositional genres and conventions. Whatever their motivation, editors and compilers rather than authors and poets were responsible for the shape of many works which exist today. They brought together the ancient materials, doubtless adding some more that was new, and they organised it all in such a way that the text could be

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Douglas, M., *In the Wilderness*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 158, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1993, p.106 from Milgrom, J., *Numbers, The JPS Torah*



read sequentially quite innocently and meaningfully, if at times somewhat awkwardly, while synoptically, at the macro-compositional level, they embodied in the overall structuring the rationale of the work through the non-linear patterning of significances. The rationale and patterning of significance was rarely ever neutral, since it was, in a sense, a commentary on the sequential material, and this provided the scope for a stance to be embodied, be it political, philosophical, moral or religious. It was quite possible, for example, when textualising an ancient epic about a war, to appear quite jingoistic at the sequential textual level, but to have, at a macro-compositional level, embodied within it a stance that proclaimed the futility of war and the irresponsibility of the gods and goddesses of the pantheon. Although an oversimplification, this probably, in fact, happened with regard to both the *Iliad* in Greece and the *Mahābhārata* in India, although much more work needs to be done for these hypotheses to be conclusive. But this is why it is appropriate to call the synoptic macro-compositional design of a work, its rhetorical structure.

### ***Rhetorical Latency and The Confessions of Augustine (354-430 CE.)***

There is a problem which all who work in this field have to confront. In a short work, such as a psalm, it is not difficult to recognise its structure as one reads. In larger works, and especially very long works like epics, even though they are divided into separate books, it is not possible to grasp a macro-compositional structure of the kind described here through sequential reading, no matter how impressive one's memory span. The reason is that parallelism is non-linear and requires the attention to be in two, often widely separated, places at the same time. The only way such a structure can be uncovered is by constant re-reading or by mapping the whole work thematically, and then, by examining the map, to discern the patterns. The evidence of this is that these works have been read for sometimes as long as two thousand years and only today are the structures being uncovered. If rhetoric is about persuasion, what is persuasive about an unseen and undetected structure? McMahon faces this question at the end of his study of the complex rhetorical structure of the *Confessions* of Augustine: "But what persuasive force can an unperceived literary structure have? Some might argue "little or none," locating the most powerful influence of the work in its explicit meanings. Others would argue that subliminal informing patterns prove rhetorically powerful, even though the explicit 'verbal action' of the work remains primary. The rhetorical effectiveness of modern advertising might suggest that rousing subliminal feelings and associations conveys a message quite effectively...Late antique rhetoric itself recognised a similar principal. Longinus, treating of the persuasive force of rhetorical figures, argues that a

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*Commentary*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1990, p.xxii.7

concealed figure proves more effective than an apparent one: "The unconscionable use of figures is peculiarly subject to suspicion, and engenders impressions of hidden traps and plots and fallacies. . . Thus a rhetorical figure would appear to be most effective when the fact that it is a figure is not apparent. . . Sublimity and the expression of strong feelings are, therefore, a wonderfully helpful antidote against the suspicion that attends the use of figures. The cunning artifice remains one out of sight, associated from now on with beauty and sublimity, and all suspicion is put to flight."<sup>13</sup> . . . Longinus is articulating a particular application of a principle widely held in ancient times, if much debated: that the greatest art disguises its artificiality to appear 'as nature'. *Ars latet sua arte.*"<sup>14</sup>

McMahon was writing at the end of his perceptive and convincing examination of the complex structure of the *Confessions*, a work again which has been much criticised for being 'badly constructed'. Augustine, in addition to being a Christian Bishop and a highly intelligent man, had also at one stage in his life been a professor of rhetoric. The notion that he would write a 'bad book' for his spiritual autobiography is therefore absurd. The *Confessions* differs from the other works that have been discussed in that, first, it was written centuries after they were, and, second, it was designed by a single author, not put into its present form by editors or compilers like the Homeric epics or the books of the Pentateuch. The *Confessions* has thirteen books, the first nine of which constitute Augustine's autobiography, the next three are an exposition of the first chapter of Genesis, and the thirteenth is also an exposition of Genesis 1 but it has a new certainty and is quite different, in intensity, style, tone and outcome. As a Trinitarian Christian, the number three had great significance for Augustine: so three times three for the books of the autobiography, three for the first exposition of Genesis, and three in one for the final book. That the proportionality of the whole resembles that of the book of *Leviticus*, with a large area of text, a smaller area and the final Holy of Holies at the summit, must be considered accidental, but, as McMahon points out, the leit-motif of the whole work is 'Return to the Origin' and this Platonic keynote is reflected in McMahon's title, "Augustine's Prayerful Ascent". The spiritual autobiography contained in the first nine books, is chiasmic, with a progressive decline till book five when there is the crux and turning point, whereafter, as McMahon writes: ". . . the spiritual regress traced through books 1-4 is reversed, book by book and theme by theme, in the young man's spiritual progress through books 6-9. The young man progresses spiritually by returning to origins: to the Church of his mother, to the Christ whose sign marks him at

<sup>13</sup> Longinus, *On the Sublime*, translated by Dorsch, T.S., in *Classical Literary Criticism*, Penguin Books, London, 1965, p.127.

<sup>14</sup> McMahon, R., *Augustine's Prayerful Ascent*, University of Georgia Press, Athens and London, 1989, pp. 153-154

birth, to an experience of God in the vision at Ostia. And the text of Augustine's autobiography concludes with the death of his mother Monica: the return of his origin to her origin."<sup>15</sup> These nine books, then, are strongly marked by parallelism, and the way in which books 10-12 and 13 connect with the first nine and with one another is also by correspondences and analogies, as McMahon's study shows. His argument that the work is coherently planned is demonstrated fully by his analysis.

On the question of plan, McMahon is particularly interesting: "However, I do not deny the experience of 'planlessness' which readers so often feel in studying the *Confessions*. Rather, I argue that such planlessness proves part of Augustine's plan.. The word 'plan' suggests an architect's drawing, the delineation of a structure subsequently to be built, while 'form' points to an experience of order that may emerge through time and not simply in space. In the first chapter, I discuss the temporal unfolding of the *Confessions* as the fundamental principle of its self-presentation. I argue that the text presents itself as the written record of an *oral* prayer, unfolding in an ongoing present which our reading recreates. The *Confessions*, thus is not so much a written text as a speaking text, not so much a product as the record of a process: the speaker's dynamic encounter with God recreated in our present reading. The speaker's *inquisitio veritatis* presents itself as unrehearsed, and so it moves circuitously and sometimes wanders into digressions. As a prayer, however, it proves equally responsive to the spur of grace, hence its sudden leaps of thought and resolution of perplexing difficulties. For all its planlessness, its speaker-writer repeatedly avers that God is guiding his prayer. These principles in the self-presentation of the *Confessions* are fundamental to its literary *form* in a way that the word 'plan' does not adequately suggest."<sup>16</sup> One can agree with this to a large extent, and the difference between the 'speaker' and the 'writer' is important in this work. As part of the rhetorical process, Augustine has used the 'speaker' brilliantly to bring the reader, as intimate witness, into the work to be carried upward in the ascent. At the same time, the medium of prayer disguises, even makes a virtue of, the sudden transitions, the digressions and general 'planlessness'. But what of the writer's plan ? It is surely clear that the coherence of the work derives from parallels, correspondences and analogies which begin to emerge after several readings and with reflection. Significant works were not, as today, read sequentially once, then finished with. Those who could read, would read and re-read, study and reflect and maybe meditate on such works, especially one by an author of prestige and spiritual authority such as Augustine. More and more of the parallels and correspondences would become apparent at every reading, and the analogies would have their effect, since

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p.114.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* pp. xii-xiii.

analogies have implicit power to awaken the understanding and charge the microcosm with significance. These rhetorical structures can have power, not from the persuasiveness of the entailments of their logic, but from the potentially explosive implications of their analogies.

But there is another way to reach the rhetorical structure of a work of this kind: that is to know its style and genre, which would then inform the reader's expectations and awareness. If works such as the Homeric epics and the books of the Pentateuch were being structured by parallelism and chiasmus at a macro-compositional level, that is because there was, at the time, a prestigious and well-known genre and style within which the compilers were working. If it was known to them, it would be known to others who might read or listen to the works. All works have some kind of a plan, and the editors charged with the awesome responsibility of putting together the text of a Homeric epic or a sacred book of Hebrew scripture would plan it to the very highest standard possible, using the most appropriate and most prestigious style and genre available to them and to their contemporaries. The readers of Augustine's *Confessions* also belonged to, and were familiar with, the Christian-Platonist antique literary culture within which Augustine wrote. Those who recognised the genre and style would know the sort of thing to look for, but equally they would know they would not find it in a first sequential reading; rather, they would have to re-read, reflect and ponder to reach the full depths and potency of the work.

### *Two Iranian Exemplars*

Two Iranian works, at least two thousand years apart, have now to receive attention. The first is a collection of 17 poems, called *Gāthās* or hymns, by the poet-priest Zarathushtra (Greek, Zoroaster), who, in addition to being the eponymous founder of the Zoroastrian religion, must also be considered the earliest Iranian poet whose works are extant. Dating Zarathushtra is fraught with difficulty, but scholars currently consider around 1,000 BCE to be the most plausible. But the problems do not end with dating, there are difficulties with the meaning of a number of words and therefore with the interpretation of some of the verses. But enough is understood with certainty for present purposes, and two scholars in particular have been responsible for discoveries that are of interest here, Hanns-Peter Schmidt and Martin Schwartz.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Schmidt's publications relevant here are: "Die Komposition von Yasna 49", in Heesterman et al (eds) *Pratidānam: Studies presented to F.B.J.Kuiper*, Mouton, The Hague, 1968, pps. 170-192; "Associative Technique and Symmetrical Structure in the Composition of Yasna 47", in Frye, R.N., (ed), *Neue Methodologie in der Iranistik* (Festschrift für Wolfgang Lentz), Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1974, pps.306-352; and, with contributions from W.Lentz and S.Insler, "Form and Meaning of Yasna 33" in *American Oriental Society Essay Number 10*, American Oriental Society, New Haven, 1985. Schwartz's relevant

It is thought that the Iranian peoples to whom Zarathushtra belonged were probably located somewhere in southern Central Asia. They had an established mature culture, part of which dated back to the even older Indo-Iranian culture which existed before the Indo-Aryans moved south into India. There were families of hereditary poet-priests who retained in their memories a corpus of hymns to a variety of deities which were performed, probably in a 'recreated' form, in connection with the sacrificial fire cult. These cultic gatherings, it is known from Indian materials, included an agonistic element. The poet-priests had to compete one with another, certainly in poetry or hymn competitions, probably in theological and philosophical debates, and maybe in other ways too. What the poet-priests were competing for was essentially patronage. The princes and leaders, who were the potential patrons, looked for priests who could ensure them divine favours and poets who could make their names immortal. Zarathushtra was clearly a winner in this agonistic culture, but one cannot separate the priest from the poet. This was a pre-literate society and the literary culture was oral, but it must not be thought primitive. It was mature, long-established and highly sophisticated, to the point that Schwartz refers in the title of one of his articles to the 'outer limit of orality', so far had it been cultivated. In this very elaborate oral literature, Zarathushtra was a master, and he certainly made his patron's name immortal. As a priest, he attacked the reigning polytheism and introduced the Dualism for which he has become famous. What matter here, however, is that, thanks to the labours of these two scholars, it is now realised that the organising principles of the *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra were parallelism, ring-composition and chiasmus.

Unfortunately, there are only 17 hymns extant in the corpus of the *Gāthās*, but of these only one is not organised by ring-composition. Since the hymns are not very long, it is impossible to see how larger works might have been structured. Further, since the convention was of performance and the parallelisms had to be heard, many of them were phonological and lexical, although there was semantic parallelism as well. Despite these limitations, the principles of their structuring is clear. Here is an illustration, from Schwartz, of the parallelism in Y.50.<sup>18</sup>

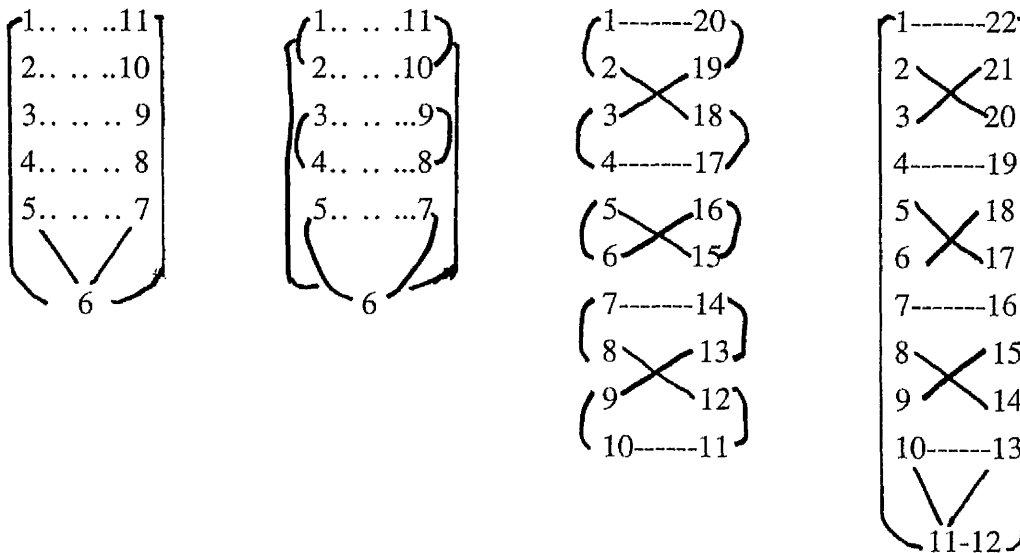
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publications are: "Sound, Sense and Seeing in Zoroaster: The Outer Reaches of Orality" in *International Indo-Iranian Congress Proceedings*, K.R.Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1991, pp. 127-163; and "The Ties that Bind: On the Form and Content of Zarathushtra's Mysticism", *Proceedings of the First Gāthā Colloquium*, W.Z.O., Croydon, 1998, pps. 127-197.

<sup>18</sup> Schwartz, M., "Sound, Sense and Seeing in Zoroaster: The Outer Reaches of Orality" in *International Indo-Iranian Congress Proceedings*, K.R.Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1991, p 131.

50. 1            īsai  
 50. 2            h(u)war-  
 50. 3            xšathrā (xšā(y)).. .. artaiš  
 50. 4            at wāh.. .ardranh.. .sraušānai (√ sr(a)u)  
 50. 5            yušmākāi.. .. awahā  
           50. 5            manthrānai.. .. .dāyāt  
           50. 6            manthra-ā .. .. dātā  
           50. 6            stai (√ah) - -- mahya  
           50. 7            mahmāi hyāta (√ah)  
 50. 7            yušmākahya.. .. awahai  
 50. 8            frasrutā (√sr(a)u).. .āt wāh ardrahyaca  
 50. 9            artaiš.. .. xšayāh (√xšā(y))  
 50. 10            huwanh  
 50. 11            īsāi

Fortunately, it is not necessary to know Avestan to recognise these phonological and morphological parallelisms and patterns. In all of the hymns, the central stanzas are the most significant and contain the main points. Schwartz also gives in diagrammatic form the Gathic types of symmetrical compositions he discovered, examples of some of which are reproduced below<sup>19</sup>:



<sup>19</sup> Schwartz, M., "The Ties that Bind: On the Form and Content of Zarathushtra's Mysticism", *Proceedings of the First Gāthā Colloquium*, W.Z.O., Croydon, 1998, p.197.

Two of these structures illustrate that type of chiasmus, discussed briefly above, where two sets of stanzas are in parallel diagonally and not horizontally, thereby forming a cross. To register such patterns while listening to an oral performance would require a wide attention span, and considerable experience of the genre. But the demands that Zarathushtra makes on his hearers did not stop there. Schwartz writes: "As I have tried to prove from attention to recurrences of lexic, semantic and phonic clusters, his poetry features not only ambiguous syntax, elaborate and subtle word-play, words within words, anagrammatic scrambles and symbolic alliteration, but even features, in connection with the word for 'bliss', a preliterate acrostic and an elaborate theological symbolism of sound combination."<sup>20</sup>

So far attention has only been directed at the parallelism and chiasmic structure of these hymns individually, but Schwartz demonstrates that there are similar correspondences and relationships between hymns, so that there is inter-textual parallelism and chiasmus. He writes of "... the striking technique of composition based on a stanza-by-stanza recasting of material of an earlier of the poet's hymns *remembered backwards*, whereby the bulk of hymn Y.32 derives from Y.46, and Y.32 in its own turn produces, again through reversed recollection, the basis of Y.48."<sup>21</sup> This technique foreshadows a similar situation with regard to some of the books of the Pentateuch, where one book can be a guide to reading another. Douglas demonstrates this with regard to the book of *Genesis* and the book of *Numbers*:<sup>22</sup>

### *The Plan of Numbers and the Plan of Genesis*

#### *Genesis*

- A The land promised to Abraham
- B Noah's curse on Canaan
- C Origins of Moab and Ammon by Lot seduced by his daughters
- D Esau, the founding of Edom's kingdom
- E Joseph confirms the promises of land
- F Joseph confirms the promises of land  
to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

<sup>20</sup> Schwartz, M., "Sound, Sense and Seeing in Zoroaster: The Outer Reaches of Orality" in *International Indo-Iranian Congress Proceedings*, K.R.Cama Oriental Institute, Bombay, 1991, p 160.

<sup>21</sup> Schwartz, M., "The Ties that Bind: On the Form and Content of Zarathushtra's Mysticism", *Proceedings of the First Gāthā Colloquium*, W.Z.O., Croydon, 1998, p.128.

<sup>22</sup> Douglas, M., *In the Wilderness*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 158, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1993, p. 101

- F Census of Jacob's inheritors
- E Jacob's twelve sons placed around the tabernacle
- D Moses encounter with Edom
- C Israel seduced by women of Moab
- B Canaanites destroyed by Israel
- A Promised land partitioned among the twelve tribes

This pattern of parallel promises and curses made and fulfilled is a consistent guide to the reading of the latter book.”

A recent scholarly study by Almut Hintze of the literary structure of the *Older Avesta* is persuasive that the entire *Older Avesta* is structured by ring-composition, that is, by parallelism and chiasmus.<sup>23</sup> She demonstrates its structural design and unity, and argues that the totality might well, therefore, be the work of a single person, namely Zarathushtra. This is interesting, because it moves the situation away from oral hymn competitions, the context in which Zarathushtra no doubt won his spurs and attracted his patrons, to a more settled courtly environment in which he was, say, the chief priest and was able to develop his work, through a process not dissimilar to that of textualisation, by establishing a unified liturgical corpus for worship. When, in later times, more texts were added, they retained, at the exact central point of the enlarged *Yasna*, the self-same text which Zarathushtra had placed at the centre of the liturgical corpus of the *Older Avesta*, and which he had most probably composed. What matters here, however, is that the various scholarship just reviewed has demonstrated that the literary styles and conventions of ring-composition, of parallelism and of chiasmus, were not simply present in the poetry of Zarathushtra, the first Iranian poet whose works are extant, to a large extent they constituted it.

The second Iranian exemplar is the *Haft Paykar*, a work by Nizāmī Ganjawī (1140-1202 CE), which was completed about four years before his death. Since this work also exemplifies ring-composition and the two principles of parallelism and chiasmus, the question naturally arises as to what happened to these features in Iranian and Persian literature in the two thousand years between the *Older Avesta* and the *Haft Paykar*. The answer is that no-one knows, quite simply because, as far as one can tell, nobody has looked. As has been shown again and again above, works so structured do not announce it to the world; the rhetorical



structure remains latent, unperceived. It requires an eye experienced in these texts, that knows what clues to look for, and a persistence amounting to obsession. It also, crucially, requires edited texts that are faithful to their authors' original versions. Given all this, the Pahlavi books in Middle Persian are an obvious first place to look, and then the Mirrors for Princes in Classical Persian, since they have always operated by analogy. But these questions are for other to solve; in the case of the *Haft Paykar* the identification of the structural principles has already been made by Meisami in her excellent study of Persian court poetry.<sup>24</sup> In the chapter on romance as mirror, she provides the diagram shown below of the rhetorical structure of the work.<sup>25</sup>

This diagram shows alternation as the means of marking the parallel segments, just as in the book of *Numbers*, although here the alternation is between Kingship (K) and Adventure (A) whereas, there, it was between Law and Story. The alternation over-rides the section divisions: some alternate segments contain several sections, and Section 52 contains two alternating segments. There is further alternation in the tales, although here it is between “..the contrasting yet complementary moral faculties of concupiscence and irascibility as dominant motivating impulses for the action.”<sup>26</sup> As in the usage in Hebrew texts, the convention has no regard to proportionality, in that a short segment of text can alternate, or be in parallel with, a very long one. Meisami writes: “Three distinct but interrelated structural patterns provide complementary ways of organising events in the poem, in both narrative and tales... Constituting different dispositions of space and time, these interacting patterns represent contrasting but mutually interdependent ways of perceiving the meaning of events. The first of these is the linear pattern of Bahrām’s biographical movement through time, paralleled by his spiritual progress from ignorance to wisdom, and from the stage of kingship by will (temporal kingship) to that of kinship by law (spiritual kingship); it is mirrored by the progress from spiritual darkness to illumination, represented in the sequence of the seven tales.”<sup>27</sup> The second structural pattern is that of the alternation, which has just been considered. “The third ordering arrangement is the spatial pattern of the circle, which links a series of four analogical adventure episodes.. identified by the repetition of a cluster of specific motifs whose constituent elements, while remaining functionally identical, undergo

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<sup>23</sup> Hintze, A., “On the Literary Structure of the Older Avesta”, in *BSOAS*, 65, 1, London, 2002, pp. 31-51

<sup>24</sup> Meisami, J.S., *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987. Meisami has also translated the whole of the *Haft Paykar* into English in the Oxford World Classics series published by the Oxford University Press.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.* p. 208.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p. 206.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.* p. 205.

significant contextual variations. These four episodes represent increasingly more advanced stages in Bahrām's progress towards perfect kingship.<sup>28</sup>

Prologue (sections 1-8)

- K (1) Bahrām's birth and childhood (9); building of Khavarnaq and disappearance of Nu'mān (10-11); Bahrām's education and hunting (12-13)
- A (1) Bahrām kills the dragon and finds the treasure in the cave (14); Bahrām sees the portraits of the Seven Princesses (15)
- K (2) Death of Yazdigird (16); Bahrām's accession and reign (17-23); famine averted (24)
- A (2) Bahrām and Fitnah (25-26)
- K (3) First war with China and Bahrām's victory (27-8); Bahrām weds the Seven Princesses (29); Bahrām feasts in winter, building of the Seven Domes (30-31)

Bahrām sits in the Seven Domes and hears the tales told by the Princesses

- I. Saturday/Saturn/Black (32)
- II. Sunday/Sun/Yellow (33)
- III. Monday/Moon/Green (34)
- IV. Tuesday/Mars/Red (35)
- V. Wednesday/Mercury/Blue (36)
- VI. Thursday/Jupiter/Sandal (37)
- VII. Friday/Venus/White (38)

- K (3\*) Spring: Bahrām celebrates the New Year and learns of the second war with China (39-40)
- A (2\*) Bahrām and the shepherd (41)
- K (2\*) Trial and punishment of the minister (42-50); apology of the Chinese ruler; Bahrām's wedding to Justice (51)
- A (1\*) Bahrām's disappearance into the cave (52)
- K (1\*) Homily on the transience of the world (52)
- Epilogue (53)

No more need be said here about the *Haft Paykar* because Meisami's excellent analysis and appreciation of the poem, which is so detailed and perceptive, is readily accessible. There is, however, one larger matter which does need to be discussed. Both

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p. 207

Meisami, in the context of medieval Persian court poetry, and Douglas, in the context of *Leviticus*, address the question of analogical thinking. Douglas devotes an entire chapter to the subject, differentiating between the rational ordering deriving from Aristotelian logic, with which the West is familiar, and the 'correlative', 'aesthetic' or analogical ordering, such as, for example, is found in Han cosmology in China, which is not based on dialectical principles of non-contradiction nor on the linear sequence of the syllogism, but rather on analogical association. Both authors refer to the microcosm/macrocosm as the primary exemplar of analogical thought, and both argue that it was the analogical mode of thinking which led to the development of the rhetoric and poetics of analogy, with its extensive use of parallelism and correspondence. Both authors are replete with examples and rich references for readers who wish to pursue this topic. Meisami's entire study is based on the proposition that medieval court literature in Persian was through and through founded on the poetics of analogy, and her various chapters illustrate this within the different genres.

### *Hypothesis*

From all that has been said so far, a hypothesis, outlined below, has been formulated which will be tested in detail in the next chapter. Before that, it will be helpful to review progress so far to establish the foundations on which this hypothesis stands. Scholarly attitudes towards the *Mathnawī* have been surveyed in the Introduction. At the beginning of this chapter, the *Mathnawī* as given was examined and the marked levels of organisation identified as the verse, the section, the book and the work. It was argued that the sense of rambling disorder and lack of organisation to which critics objected, lay in the way that sections were arranged within a book, made worse by the fact that Maulānā had declined to show how the sections were to be grouped together into larger separate discourses (*maqālāt*), which might have revealed an organisation at the level of the book. It was proposed that attention should be given, therefore, to two unmarked intermediate levels, that of the paragraph, a group of verses united thematically, in order to map the thematic patterning of the work, and that of the discourse, in order to see how the sections are organised. Later analysis would then be able to ascertain how the discourses relate one to another within the organisation of the book, and, finally, how the books relate one to another. An initial sample was analysed with regard to these two intermediate levels, (not shown here), and it emerged that when a discourse was identified, the sections within it were organised not sequentially but synoptically, using the two literary techniques of parallelism and chiasmus. This, for the *Mathnawī*, is the major discovery, which the next chapter sets out to demonstrate and confirm.

In order to situate the full analysis of Book One within relevant scholarship, a review of some recent studies of works similarly organised has been conducted, which served also to illustrate synoptic reading, parallelism, chiasmus and ring-composition. First, Douglas's study of *Leviticus* revealed a spatial structuring of the text on the model of the Tabernacle, Mount Sinai and the analogous part of the sacrificial animal, with three ring-compositions, a large one for the public, a smaller one for the priests, and the smallest but holiest for God. The recognition of the design of the work revealed its rationale and permitted it to be read synoptically with an awareness at every place of the contexts and analogies that pertained. A second study by Douglas of the book of *Numbers* revealed an ancient genre which used ring composition with twelve points, and a thirteenth link section which joined the end to the beginning. The sections were marked one from another by alternation. Parallelism and chiasmus were explained and further illustrated by Psalm 67. It was shown how, when a chiasmic series has an odd number of members, the role of the central element is first, to contain the main point; second, to sum up what has gone before; and third, to foreshadow what is to come. Augustine's *Confessions* provided the opportunity to examine the question of how a rhetorical structure can be persuasive or effective when it is hidden. It was decided that readers would be familiar with the genre, that they would have expectations, therefore, of what might be going on, and they would not read a work just once sequentially, but would study and re-read it, so that the patterns would have an effect even if not fully mapped consciously. Finally, two Iranian exemplars were examined. First, the *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra, which in addition to confirming ring-composition, parallelism and chiasmus at the very beginning of Iranian literature, also showed the new feature of inter-textual parallelism and chiasmus. Second, the *Haft Paykar* of Nizāmī Ganjawī showed ring-composition, parallelism and chiasmus, as well as alternation. The review concluded with a short discussion of analogical thinking and how it gave birth to the poetics and rhetoric of analogy, both in ancient and medieval times. The poetics of analogy was the dominant mode found in medieval Persian court literature.

Combining the initial examination of the *Mathnawī*, the results of a preliminary analysis, and the review of recent scholarship regarding ring-composition, parallelism and chiasmus and the rhetorical structure of ancient and medieval works, the following hypothesis is formulated:

- 1 The *Mathnawī*, like most of the works reviewed above, is considered by critics to be badly constructed. Since Maulānā was a master of the poetic craft, this is improbable. The more likely explanation is that the way to read it has, like an

ancient genre, become lost. The work needs to be read not sequentially but synoptically in order to appreciate the structuring, in accordance with Maulānā's instruction to love the whole and not the part.

- 2 Maulānā was very fond of the poetry of Nizāmī and urged his pupils to study it. Nizāmī made use of ring-composition, parallelism and chiasmus, - the poetics of analogy, - at least in the *Haft Paykar* with which Maulānā would have been familiar. Maulānā's mode of thought was also essentially analogical, so it is quite possible that Maulānā followed Nizāmī's example in organising the *Mathnawī*.
- 3 Maulānā, in declining to give any guidance about which sections should be taken together as a discourse, when the conventions allowed for it, has clearly made a conscious choice that the higher level organisation of the work should remain hidden. This would embody the important Sufi distinction between *zāhir*, manifest, and *bāṭin*, hidden, within his poetic masterpiece. Since Maulānā constantly asserts that the world of appearance is not the real world, which is hidden beyond it, it is to be expected that the rationale of the work will be found not in the sequential order of the verses but in the hidden higher organisation of sections within discourses, discourses within books, and books within the work as a totality.
- 4 Following an analysis of an initial sampling of part of Book One, it does appear that Maulānā has used parallelism and chiasmus to organise the sections within a discourse. This would explain the awkwardness and apparent randomness of the sequential ordering of sections, as it did in some of the other works reviewed above. Since it is unlikely that this sample is the only occurrence of this mode of organisation, it is probable that the whole of Book One is similarly organised.
- 5 If the sections in Book One are organised within discourses by parallelism and chiasmus, then further investigation will be needed to see if there are similar relationships between discourses in Book One. Further, the organisation of a discourse should reveal the rationale of that discourse, and the organisation of the discourses should reveal the rationale of Book One.

- 6 The fact that a story of love starts in Book Three and is completed in Book Four, strongly suggests that the books of the work as a whole are also organised by parallelism and chiasmus. This is because that position is the precise middle of the *Mathnawī*. Since Love is, in a sense, the main inner theme of the work, it would be expected that it would be found at the very centre of the work, if the work was structured by chiasmus and parallelism. The love story is at the very centre, where functionally it acts as a hinge between the first three books and the last three. If this is not accidental, it is possible that there is an inter-textual chiasmic parallelism between the discourses of Book One and the discourses of Book Six.

### *The Procedure followed*

Part of the above hypothesis, proposals 1, 3 and 4, will be tested in Chapter Two and, it is hoped, convincingly demonstrated. Proposals 5 and 6 will be examined in Chapter Three. Proposal 2 will not be further addressed in this thesis; it serves to provide at least a temporary answer to the question of origins.

Chapter Two consists of a complete summary of Book One, as well as a detailed structural analysis and interpretation. Each section of verses has been divided up into paragraphs, - groups of thematically linked verses, - and summarised in English. A paragraph is not a formal unit but a subjective analytical construct which permits a thematic mapping of each section. It is possible that another person would have established different paragraphs, but this does not matter provided that the thematic mapping is more or less the same. Each verse has been read in both Persian and in Nicholson's English translation, sometimes many times. Commentaries have been consulted to ensure the meaning and references have been understood.

The sections are grouped into what is believed to be Maulānā's own discourse divisions. These divisions are arrived at by combining narrative and thematic unity with a new criterion of structural unity, since it soon became clear that Maulānā had given his discourses distinctive spatial and architectural configurations which can be recognised. These are structures of sections, varying in shape and form, each producing its own internal relationships between sections, always using parallelism and chiasmus, but in many different ways. Sometimes Maulānā uses blocks of sections, for instance, with parallelism and chiasmus internal to a block but not across blocks; at other times he runs the parallelism and

chiasmus across blocks of sections. In this spatial and structural organisation Maulānā shows great versatility and variety, producing structures of great beauty, elaboration and symmetry. Whether a discourse was identified through its narrative or thematic unity first, or by its structural unity, is immaterial; what matters is that they should coincide. The combination provides a double check on the validity of the discourse divisions. The analysis identifies twelve discrete discourses. There are three link sections: one after the first discourse, one after the sixth discourse at the very centre of the book, and one after discourse seven, that is, there is a link section after the first discourse of the second half of the book just as there is one after the first discourse of the first half.

After the summary of the sections in a discourse, there is an analysis of the structure of the discourse in which all of the parallelisms between sections are identified and discussed. As with the spatial shapes of the discourses, Maulānā shows great variety in his use of parallelism: sometimes the second section completes the first, sometimes it shows an analogous situation, sometimes it produces the opposite of the first, sometimes the parallelism is that both sections are in the form of question and answer, sometimes it is verbal or the same person is being spoken about. In one instance, there is a verbal pun paralleling *khar-gūsh*, a hare, and *khar gūsh kon*, 'listen, oh donkey'. While not at odds with the high-seriousness of the work, there is about the parallelism a lighter note, as if, in this hidden realm which he rightly anticipated few would penetrate, he was able to give free rein to his creativity and enjoy himself unseen. Sometimes, alongside the primary parallelisms of the main structure, there are secondary parallelisms, which have been noted where they are recognised. Tertiary parallelisms, such as images that recur in several sections, are more stylistic than structural and have not been recorded. The analysis also discusses the use of blocks of sections within the overall structure of a discourse, and the way in which chiasmus is utilised.

After the analysis, which is largely structural and thematic, there comes what is perhaps over-ambitiously called an interpretation. Space does not permit giving a full interpretation of every discourse, even if such a thing were possible for any one person, given the open-ended nature of analogy. Like symbolism, analogy is multivalent, evoking responses from as many levels of understanding and being as there are within the reader. No one interpretation can conceivably be sufficient. But what these rhetorical structures do, is to define significances and to distribute emphases. Each discourse has its own rationale, often apparent in the design of the discourse. It is hoped that the so-called interpretations will give at least the salient points of the discourse's rationale as revealed by the analysis. It must be for others of greater spiritual awareness and erudition, freed from restrictions of space and

word counts, to give a full account of the implications of these extraordinary discourse structures. What is given here are no more than preliminary pointers to what such an interpretation might contain. As they stand, the interpretations included here in all too brief a form are themselves condensations of many pages in which the views of various commentators are recorded and attempts are made to match these to the newly emerged rhetorical design. . .

Either just before or just after the interpretation, comes a diagrammatic representation of the discourse in question. Great importance is attached to these visual representations since they really do permit a synoptic view of the whole discourse, showing the total rhetorical and thematic structure, the relationships that pertain and the processes at work. They are like the map of the London underground railway, and they bear as little relationship to the sequential reading of the poetry as that map does to the actual terrain of London. But they do tell you where the train stops, what the connections are, and, most importantly, where you are at any given moment. Underground station names are redolent with associations, historical and personal, and can trigger a subjective stream of associated memories and feelings, just as single lines of Maulānā's poetry can. But the *Mathnawī* is not about single lines and subjective reactions, it is about organised wholes integrated into a single total unity through which one can journey. To read the *Mathnawī* is *sulūk* about *Sulūk*. For *sulūk* a traveller needs a map to see where he is, especially with regard to the total geography of the area. Such is provided by these synoptic diagrammatic representations of the discourses. For the Sufi *Sulūk*, the *sālik* has the *Mathnawī* itself. For both *sulūk*, Maulānā is the guide, provided, of course, one follows his instructions to love the whole and not the part, and is able to keep up with him.

THE END OF CHAPTER ONE



## CHAPTER TWO

### The Narrative and Thematic Structure of Book One of the *Mathnawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī

#### The Preface

##### *Summary*

The *Mathnawī* is the roots of the roots of the roots of the Religion in respect of unveiling Truth and certainty which is the greatest science of God. Its light is brighter than the dawn and the travellers on the Path consider it as a Paradise for hearts and those possessed of mystical stations and Divine graces regard it as the best way-station and spiritual resting place wherein the righteous draw sustenance and become happy and joyful and those who endure patiently can drink. But it is a grief to the people of Pharaoh and unbelievers. It is a cure for souls, a reliever of sorrows, an expounder of the *Qur'ān*, a grantor of abundant gifts and a purifier of dispositions. Because God observes it and watches over it, falsehood cannot approach it. This little is an index to the much.

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusain of Balkh states that: I have struggled to give length to the Poem in rhymed couplets, which comprises strange tales and rare sayings and excellent discourses and precious indications, and the path of ascetics and the garden of devotees, brief in expression but manifold in meaning, at the request of my master, the inestimable Shaikh Ḥusām al-Dīn, Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, whose lineage is of great spiritual excellence. May it ever be thus. Amen. Glory be to God and blessings on Muḥammad and his pure and noble kin.

##### *Comment*

The very first sentence is much discussed in the various commentaries, and the consensus view is that the last of the roots, that is, the ones least deep, refer to *kalām*, *fiqh*, *tafsīr* etc., the sciences of Islām, and that this level, the literal level, broadly represents the *Ṣarī'a*, a clear broad path to a watering place, which is used to refer to the canon law of Islām. The second level, the intermediate roots, are taken to refer to the *bāṭin* or inner level representing the *Ṭarīqa*, the level of Sufism, the narrower path of the *sālik*, the spiritual traveller. Finally the deepest roots are the level of *Ḥaqīqa*, Reality, the watering place itself. Nicholson, perhaps influenced by his observation that in one key manuscript, one of the 'roots', the least deep, is added by another

hand, in his commentary treats only of two levels, the outer, 'theological' level and the inner Sufi mystical level. This is unfortunate because, while Nicholson's commentary on this Preface is both perceptive and illuminating, particularly on the relationship with the *Qur'ān*, it leads him to equate Ḥusām al-Dīn, who has to be taken as representing the highest station on the Sufi path, with Šams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, who is represented much more as belonging to the deepest level of *Ḥaqīqa*, Reality. The evidence for this comes very early on in the *Mathnawī*, in a conversation between Maulānā and Ḥusām al-Dīn on the subject of Šams al-Dīn (Book 1, verses 125-143), in which it is clear that they are on two quite different levels; indeed, the difference is almost portrayed as that between the Sufi and the Friend. Although Nicholson conflates the three levels into two in his commentary, his edition of the text and his translation both have three levels of roots. Ḥusām al-Dīn, as the inspiration for Maulānā's writing the work, is praised as an excellent Sufi shaikh, but in relatively modest terms for the genre. Apart from this, there is nothing to add to Nicholson's notes on this Preface.

### Proem (35 lines)

#### *Summary*

Listen to the reed (*ney*) as it tells its story, complaining of separation, saying: "Ever since I was taken from the reed-bed my lament has caused men and women to moan. I need a heart torn by separation to whom I can unfold the pain of love. Everyone taken from their source wishes back the time of their unity, so everyone to whom I uttered my lament, happy and unhappy, became my friend but for their own reasons, not for my secret, which is not far from my lament, in fact, but is still un-apprehended, like the soul. The noise of the reed is fire, the fire of love, for the reed is the comrade of all parted lovers; it is both poison and antidote, both sympathiser and longing lover. It tells of the Way, full of blood, and of the passion of Majnūn but only the senseless can apprehend; the tongue has no customer save the ear. Our days have passed in burning sorrow; but let them go. Only Thou remain who alone art holy, but whoever is not a fish becomes sated with Thy Water. None that is raw understands the ripe, so I shall be brief. Farewell.

Oh son, how long will you be in bondage to gold and silver ? The eye of the covetous is never satisfied. Only he who is rent by a mighty love is purged from covetousness and all defects.

Hail, O Love that bringest us good gain – thou that art the physician of all our ills,  
The remedy of our pride and vainglory, our Plato and our Galen !

Through Love the earthly body soars aloft, the mountain began to dance and Mount Sinai became drunken. Were I not parted from one who speaks my language, I could tell all. The Beloved is all, the lover a veil; the Beloved living, the lover dead. When Love has no care for him he is helpless. Love wills the Word should be known, but the mirror of the soul does not reflect it because the rust is not cleared from its face. Hear then this story which is the marrow of our inner state.

### *Commentary*

These 35 verses are much commented on; and deservedly so, because they must be one of the most beautiful and striking openings to any mystical or spiritual homiletic treatise in world literature. Indeed, Jāmī, who interprets them in terms of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s systematisation, comments only on these verses out of the entire *Mathnawī*. Technically this proem, or at least the first 18 verses, both resembles and functions as a *nasīb*, the exordium of a *qaṣīda* which sets the tone or “establishes the value system relative to which the poem as a whole must be interpreted.”<sup>1</sup> While not wishing to push the analogy too far, in the *nasīb* the poet often “complains of the force of his passion, the pain of separation, and the excessiveness of his longing and desire, so as to incline hearts towards him and attract interest, and gain an attentive hearing.”<sup>2</sup> While it perhaps goes too far to suggest, as some have, that the *nasīb* ‘generates’ the meaning of the whole poem, certainly it usually foreshadows what is to come, and is often linked to the poem that follows by thematic parallelism. A similar usage is illustrated here by the verse quoted above about Love as the physician of all our ills, which foreshadows the first discourse in which a Divine doctor appears who solves the problem presented. As for setting the tone, certainly the proem establishes the two main perspectives from which it is written, that is, first, like the *rūḥ*, descending ‘*az bālā*’, from above, *sub specie aeternitatis*, from the viewpoint of eternity, and, second, that of a Sufi Shaikh who is himself both an adept and an experienced spiritual director addressing a novice who seeks to re-ascend on the Sufi path. The proem also establishes the peculiar spiritual situation that human-kind finds itself in, and, above all else, the centrality of Love, which further serves to identify and define the particular way of the Mawlawī Order. The proem, then, acts as a *nasīb*, which might have been a suggestive model.

The principal issue for commentators has been what or who is symbolised by the ‘*ney*’, most accepting that it symbolises a *rūḥ*, spirit, sent down through the various level of being into

<sup>1</sup> Meisami, J.S., *Medieval Persian Court Poetry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1987, p. 50. Meisami deals with the *nasīb* extensively but *seriatim* so there has to be recourse to the index to locate all the references.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.49. Meisami here is quoting from Ibn Qutaybah’s classic description of the genre.

a human person, which longs to return to its pre-existent state and close relationship with God, the Beloved, and whose plaintive notes are expressive of this yearning and the pain of love in separation. As to the question of whose spirit is intended, the change found in manuscripts of the second word of the text from 'īn' in the earliest manuscript to 'az' in later manuscripts, which avoids a specific identification presumably with the author and leaves the identity non-specified, assuming it was made by Maulānā himself, means it was deliberately left open. Accordingly it could be the *rūḥ* of a *walī*, a saint or friend of God, of a shaikh, the Perfect Man, Ḥusām al-Dīn, or Maulānā himself: that is, any *rūḥ* which fits for the readers or hearers in question, *including their own*, since the implication must be that if people could but see it consciously, every *rūḥ* is lamenting its separation and is yearning to return to its origin in God. At another level, however, what it is the hearers are requested to listen to is the *Mathnawī* itself, composed by Maulānā, which stand in analogical relationship with the *ney* and its lament. If the *ney* is taken as being Maulānā, half of the analogy collapses.

Nicholson's comments clarify most of the references or points of difficulty, so it important here to point out what none of the commentators have mentioned, namely, that these verses are able to be read synoptically as well as sequentially. There are strong reasons for claiming this. The first reason is that Maulānā has made a clear break after verse 18, approximately the mid point, at which point there is a change of addressee, perspective and voice. Hence the Proem is in two nearly equal halves. The number 18 has a special significance for Maulānā and the Mawlawī Order, so the number of verses in the second part had to be less than this in order not to challenge the sacred completeness of the first eighteen verses. The second reason is that lines 1 and 35, the first and the last verses, are in parallel in that they both contain the words 'listen' and 'story'. The third reason is what happens in the middle. The four lines either side of the mid point form two sets of four verses in contrastive parallelism. The set that completes the first half describes the problem of the adept, the '*pokhtah*' (cooked, mature, transformed), which is permanent grief and burning longing, whereas the set that begins the second half is addressed to 'son', the raw, inexperienced, undeveloped novice, whose problem is enslavement to wealth and covetousness. The image of water and the sea further relates both sets, since the adept always wants more of the water of God's grace, while the eye of the covetous is never satisfied since it is like a pitcher into which the sea is poured but can only hold so much. To the adept, Love is the cause of grief; to the novice Love is the solution to his covetousness. The fourth reason is that, to these very clear, almost formal, parallelisms, can be added lines 10 and 27, both nine verses from the mid point in their respective halves. In verse 10 '*ishq*, Love, the main theme of the second half, appears for the first time as the fire that is in the *ney*, while in parallel verse 27, Maulānā as '*āshiq*, lover, would reveal all, like the *ney*, the main theme of the first half, if only

there were someone who could understand him. The fifth reason requires a diagrammatic representation to demonstrate. Below, the two halves are represented by two vertical parallel lines, with verse 1 at the top left and verse 35 top right. As has been shown, these two verses are linked by formal lexical parallelism as well being the beginning and the end of the poem respectively. The bottom four verses of each lines are similarly formally joined in parallel, and now there are verses 10 and 27 which interconnect both halves with one another at the middle. To these parallelisms, it is now necessary to add two more, between the set of three verses 2-4 and the set 30-32, and between the set 5-7 and the set 33-35. The reason for doing this is because, after the first line of the Proem, the next six, 2-7 are the reed's own complaint, three verses, 2-4, about wishing to return to its origin from which it was torn, and three verses, 5-7, about the lack of interest, in whatever company, in seeking the reed's secret. On the other side, the poem ends with six verses which also constitute two sets of three. The first set, verses 30-32 introduce, for the first time, the Beloved, beside whom and without whom the lover is nothing. The final set of three, 33-35 speak of Love willing that this word be made known, but the mirror of the addressee (novice/ hearer/ representative human-being) is rusty and cannot reflect. There are two parallelisms here, the first is that the origin of the *ney*, for which it yearns, is the Beloved; the second that this word which Love wills to be made known is the unsought secret of the *ney*. These two sets of three verses on either side are in diagonal parallelism and form a chiasmic cross. In this way the parallels across the divide answer the questions raised: **What is the origin of the *ney* ? The Beloved. Why don't people seek the *ney's* secrets ? Because their hearts are like rusty mirrors. To read the poem again knowing Maulānā's rhetorical structure is to add greatly to the significance of what is said. But that one can do for oneself.**

### The Rhetorical Structure of the Proem

Listen to Reed	1	-----	35	Listen to story
Origin	2-4	-----	33-35	Mirror dirty
Secret unsought	5-7	-----	30-32	Beloved
Fire of Love	10	-----	27	Lover
Separation				Love
Grief	15	-----	22	Covetousness
Adept	18	-----	19	Novice

The synoptic reading of the proem just given, revealing clear use of parallelism and chiasmus of the most sophisticated kind within a beautifully integrated ring-composition, lends great support to the hypothesis being tested here. It was to have been expected, *ex hypothesi*, that Maulānā would somehow indirectly indicate how the *Mathnawī* was to be read at the outset of the poem, and now it has been found that he did. The proem reads well sequentially so the rhetorical structure remains latent, hidden yet potent. The technical brilliance of Maulānā lies in his integration of the sequential and the synoptic to give the total effect. There is an obvious analogy between the *hikāyat* (story) of the *ney* and the writing of the *Mathnawī*, and the *ney* has a secret which is in fact 'not far from its lament'. Is this a hint given by Maulānā that the *Mathnawī* too has secrets which are also not far from the text? Hearing the proem and reflecting on its shape and analogical structure must have made clear to alert and responsive hearers and readers alike just what Maulānā was likely to do in the main body of the poem itself.

### Discourse One. The Story of the King and the Handmaiden

#### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section 1** 36-54 (19) *The Story of a king falling in love with a handmaiden and buying her* a) [4] There was a king, of both temporal and spiritual power, out hunting who saw and fell in love with a handmaiden whom he bought. b) [12] Through Destiny or bad luck (*qaḍā*) she fell ill; if things can go wrong they will. The desperate king turned to doctors who said they would use their intelligence ('*aql*) but, in their arrogance, they didn't say: "If God Wills" - not that just saying it is any use if your heart is not in it, - and so their cures didn't work. c) [4] Through bad luck or Destiny she gets worse.

**Section 2** 55-77 (23) *How it became manifest to the king that the physicians were unable to cure the handmaiden, and how he turned his face to God and dreamed of a holy man.* a) [6] The king, seeing they were useless, went to the mosque and wept copiously. Coming out of *fanā*, he prayed to God for help. b) [5] He cried out from the bottom of his soul and while weeping he fell asleep and in a dream was told his prayers were answered and a Divine physician would come next day from God whose remedy was absolute magic. c) [12] The stranger arrived next day, as a phantasm (*khiyāl*), and the king himself went to meet him and greet his guest from the Invisible. Their souls swam together and the king told him that he, not the girl, was his

beloved in reality although in this world deed issued from deed; he was to the king as Muḥammad and the king pledged to serve him as did 'Umar.

**Section 3** 78-92 (15) *Beseaching the Lord who is our Helper to help us to observe self-control in all circumstances, and explaining the harmful and pernicious consequences of indiscipline* a) [2] Prayer to God to help us to exercise self-control (*adab* = seemliness) since there is danger to all from one who is without *adab*. b) [8] A table of food came down from heaven without its recipients' efforts, but the people of Moses demanded garlic and lentils as well, so it was withdrawn. Then Jesus made intercession and God again sent sustenance, which again was withdrawn because of irreverence and greed and insolence. Showing suspicion, greed and ingratitude at the Lord's table closed their gate to Divine mercy. c) [5] Withholding the poor-tax produces drought; fornication, the plague; whatever grief befalls is the consequence of irreverence and insolence, and he who shows irreverence in the path of the Friend is a robber and no man. Through *adab* heaven filled with light and the angels became holy, but through irreverence Iblīs was turned back at the door.

**Section 4** 93-100 (8) *The meeting of the king with the divine physician whose coming had been announced to him in a dream.* a) [8] The king received him, like love, into his heart and questioned him about his home and the journey. The king said he had obtained a treasure by being patient, hailing him as a gift from God, and the meaning of Patience is the Key to Joy. His face is the answer to every question and problems are solved without discussion. He can interpret what is in the heart and helps all sufferers. He welcomed him as the chosen one, the approved one, who is the protector of people, and those who do not seek him go to perdition.

**Section 5** 101-143 (43) *How the king led the physician to the bedside of the sick girl to see her condition.* a) [9] The king took him to the girl whom he examined and said the remedies prescribed would not have worked but were themselves destructive. He saw her pain was because she was heart-sick from being in love, but he did not tell the king. b) [6] Love's ailment is separate from other ailments, since Love is the astrolabe of God's mysteries. Love human and Divine, both lead us yonder. Any explanation is inadequate; intelligence is helpless; only Love itself can explain love and lover-hood. c) [8] The sun is proof of the sun; but what of the spiritual Sun. It is peerless, beyond imagination; when Šams al-Dīn was heard of, the sun of the 4th heaven hid its face. d) [20] This is a conversation, seemingly between Maulānā and his soul, Ḥusām al-Dīn, who asks Maulānā to tell him of the ecstasies he enjoyed with Šams. Maulānā says he is still out of himself and they are indescribable; so please leave it for now. Ḥusām al-Dīn says: "I am hungry, feed me now; Sufis do not say tomorrow." Maulānā replies it

is better the secrets of the Friend are not divulged but disguised and told, as in this story, through the words of others. Ḥusām al-Dīn says: “No, tell it openly.” Maulānā says if God revealed Himself ‘openly’ to him, that would be the end of him. If the Sun gets too near the earth, all will be consumed. Do not seek trouble and turmoil and bloodshed; say no more of Šams al-Dīn. Let's return to the story.

**Section 6** 144-181 (38) *How the saint demanded of the king to be alone with her to discover her malady.* a) [2] The physician makes sure the house is empty of all but he and the girl. b) [12] He puts his hand on her pulse and gently questions her. If a thorn in the foot is hard to find a thorn in the heart is harder. When a thorn is stuck into a donkey, it jumps. The physician, thorn-remover, was an expert. c) [12] In his questioning about home and friends, he came to Samarcand and she jumped, from which eventually he learnt that she had been parted from a goldsmith there and that was the cause of her grief and woe. d) [12] He told her he knew her secret and would perform magic, but she was not to tell, since you attain your desire more quickly through not speaking of it. His promises and soothing words set her free from worry. There are true promises and false promises, one is sterling coin, the other leads to anguish.

**Section 7** 182-184 (3) *How the saint told the king the diagnosis* a) [3] The physician advises the King to bring the goldsmith there as a cure, and to beguile him with gold and robes of honour.

**Section 8** 185-221 (37) *How the king sent messengers to Samarcand to fetch the goldsmith* a) [12] Two messengers lured the goldsmith with gold and robes of honour and greed brought him, little realising what lay in store for him, to the King. b) [5] The King honoured him and on the advice of the physician wedded him to the handmaiden who was fully restored to health after six months. c) [14] Then the goldsmith was gradually poisoned so that he began to lose his beauty, then became ugly and little by little she ceased to like him. The peacock's plumage is its enemy. He called out that he was a victim who was killed for something other than himself and his blood would be avenged. d) [6] He dies and the girl was purged of pain and love, because love for the dead does not endure. Choose the love of the Living One and approach the King. Do not say, “We have no admission to that King.” Dealings with the generous are not difficult.

**Section 9** 222-246 (25) *How the slaying and poisoning of the goldsmith was at Divine suggestion not from sensual desire and wicked thinking* a) [25] This man was slain not for hope or fear but the physician waited till the Divine command came. If one who gives spiritual life should slay it is allowed. It was not a crime. The king was a good king and elect of God.



He takes half a life and gives a hundred. Do not give judgement by analogy with yourself. Consider well.

### *Analysis of Discourse One*

This story occupies the first nine sections of Book I, which form a unity both narratively and thematically. Only Section 3 on the subject of seemliness and unseemliness (*adab* and *bī-adabī*) is purely homiletic; the other sections in some way either advance the narrative or, in the case of Section 9, justify it. Because the narrative develops sequentially there is no need at the end of a section for specific foreshadowing of the next, although each section has been narratively prepared for. The entire story, however, has been foreshadowed in the Proem, particularly in last seventeen verses of the Proem, and specifically in verses 22-24 where Love is hailed as the true physician.

Analysis of the story shows both chiasmus and thematic parallelism. The overall structure is in the form ABCDEDCBA, with the inner emphasis being given to E, that is, Section 5, which is also the longest. The parallelism between Section 1 and Section 9 lie, first, in that Section 1 provides the setting which begins the story and Section 9 the conclusion that completes the story; second, Section 1 begins with the king and the last section, Section 9, ends with the king, although the king here could be God or *Insān-i kāmīl*, so this parallelism could be considered developmental; third, the contrastive use of *qaḍā* in 1 where it just means bad luck or chance, with, in 9, action brought about by Divine inspiration and command; finally, there is a contrastive parallelism between the doctors who fail, symbolic of '*aql-i juzī*', with the doctor who succeeds, symbolic of '*aql-i kull*'. The parallelism between Sections 2 and 8 is that of fulfilment, because in 2 the Divine physician is described as one whose remedy is magic and in whom there was the Might of God and in Section 8 we find this promise being fulfilled. Additionally, the first lines of Section 2 are about the king turning to God for help with tears and the last lines of 8 are about choosing to love the Living One and "Do not say we have no admission to that King. Dealings with the generous are not difficult". The parallelism between Section 3 and Section 7 is that 3 introduces the need for self control, *adab*, especially over greed, and the dangers of *bī-adabī*, and warns that awful things are due to irreverence and ingratitude. In Section 7 it is precisely greed which the physician relies upon to lure the goldsmith from Samarcand, but even his trap is polite. The parallelism between Sections 4 and 6 is that, in Section 4, the Divine physician is described as the knower of secrets and the solver of problems, and, in Section 6, he exercises both of these faculties in his discovering the girl's secret. There are therefore four parallel and chiasmically arranged sections, framing Section 5 which is clearly

the most significant in that it introduces Love and the Perfect Man, and Šams and Ḥusām al-Dīn. It also makes clear that on matters of Love and the highest spiritual states one must speak in parables and through the words of others, thus explaining Maulānā's methodology in the work. It should also be noted that whereas the story proceeds sequentially from 1 to 9, the inner 'protected' purport is in Section 5 which looks both ways: it speaks of ordinary human love first, looking back to the problem of the king and the handmaiden, then it speaks of spiritual love, looking forward to the second half.

It is possible to detect additional parallelisms which do not detract from nor add to the primary chiasmic structure but which rather strengthen and integrate it further. These could be termed secondary parallelisms. Between Sections 1 and 3 there is a parallelism of *bī-adabī* in the example given in line 48 of the doctors: "In their arrogance they did not say "If God will", therefore God showed unto them the weakness of man." This case of irreverence receiving a fuller more general explanation in Section 3. Sections 2 and 4 are parallel in that they are both part of the initial meeting between the king and the Divine physician. Sections 6 and 8 have the secondary parallelism of the promises given between the girl and the Divine physician in 6 and their being kept in 8. Finally there is a delicate parallelism between Sections 7 and 9. In Section 7 the Divine physician proposes the arrangement that the goldsmith be beguiled with gold and robes of honour which is taken by any reader, and by the goldsmith as understood from his dying words, to be a trap to murder him unjustly. But the parallelism here connects the arrangement with verses 242-243, where he is led 'to fortune and the best estate', entirely to his real advantage. It should be noted that Section 7 is the shortest section in the entire work. The three verses could have been equally well have been added to Sections 6 or 8 without in any way weakening the narrative. It is here argued that the need to have a separate section was structural and not narrative and lends further support to the hypothesis advanced in Chapter One.

### The Structure of Discourse One

Section 1	King falls in love and buys girl who falls ill and doctors fail to cure
Section 2	King therefore prays to God and in dream is told of Divine doctor's coming
Section 3	May God help us behave in a seemly way and avert unseemliness
Section 4	King greets Divine doctor who knows our secrets and solves problems
Section 5	Doctor diagnoses love; human and Divine love, Šams, Ḥusāmuddīn
Section 6	Doctor examines girl and finds her secret and promises to help her
Section 7	Doctor tells King to beguile goldsmith with gold and robes of honour
Section 8	Girl wedded to goldsmith who is then poisoned and girl freed from him
Section 9	The man is slain by Divine Command, not from greed. No crime. Analogy.

### *Interpretation of Discourse One*

As the very first story in the Mathnawī, and one which Maulānā announces as ‘the very essence of our inner state’, this story is necessarily of great importance. At the literal level, the story is clearly told, without too many interruptions, and need not be repeated here, since the summary is above. At the allegorical level, while the commentators disagree over certain points of detail, the general structure of the allegory is agreed. As Nicholson, after Anqirawī, says, the king represents the *rūḥ* (spirit) and the handmaiden the *nafs* (soul or selfhood) with whom the *rūḥ* falls in love. The *nafs* is secretly in love with a goldsmith who represents either the world, *dunyā*, or worldly pleasures, *ladhā’idh-i duniyawī*. Either by bad luck or through fate, *qaḍā*, she falls ill but the doctors, representing ‘*aql-i juzī*, personal intelligence, fail to cure her, because they are too arrogant to say ‘If God Wills’. This, then, is the human dilemma. The spirit has come from God and is destined to return but has formed an attachment to the selfhood with which it is necessarily associated and the selfhood is attached to the world. The king is out hunting, symbolic of being in search of spiritual realities, and this strains the selfhood which falls ill through being pulled in two directions. This is a realistic spiritual diagnosis of humanity, a condition in which one is subject to the laws of fate and which one’s own arrogant intelligence cannot solve. It is also the condition of the *sālik*, the Sufi traveller, at the very beginning of his Path.

The next stage for the king, the *rūḥ*, and for the *sālik*, is to turn to God in prayer and weeping and to ask for help. To receive a dream, as did the king, is of great significance in Sufism and indicates communication from the Unseen world. The Divine physician is variously identified by the commentators, as the Perfect Guide, *murshid-i kāmil* or Universal Intelligence, ‘*aql-i kullī*. Equally he could be the Perfect Man, *insān-i kāmil*, which, if the story is read as autobiography, would mean Šams al-Dīn Tabrīzī. If the story is read as an allegory of the Sufi path he could be the Shaikh, and, if read with regard to the Proem, he could be Love itself, there described as the physician of all our ills. Any or all are possible and intended to be possible. Maulānā himself later refers to him by the general term *walī*, saint or friend of God, thereby indicating the status but leaving the identification open. When they meet the next day, the physician, like a *khiyāl*, - indicative of the ‘*ālam-i mithāl*, the imaginal world of similitudes, - displays the Divine attribute of Divine Beauty, *jamāl*, which leads the king to say: “Thou wert my Beloved not she.” The *rūḥ* and the saint can be united because they are both spirit and that is why the king asks about the physician’s home and journey, which is his own destination and his path back.

The following section, the homily on *adab* and *bī-adabī*, seemliness and unseemliness, is about how one should receive God's gifts with reverence and gratitude or everyone suffers. Whatever awful happens to one is due to irreverence and ingratitude. Nicholson in his commentary explains *adab* and suggests that this subject, which is so important for novices in Sufism, was suggested by the way the king treated the physician. Another property besides *adab* which is highlighted at this stage in section 4 is *ṣabr*, patience, self-control, self-discipline. In addition, the properties of the Divine physician, to be able to answer every question without discussion and to interpret what is in the heart, are reminiscent of the qualities one hopes to find in one's Shaikh.

The structural analysis above disclosed that it is in Section 5 where the major inner significance of the story is to be found. This section is primarily about Love. Human love, '*ishq-i majāzī*, metaphorical love, is contrasted with Divine Love, '*ishq-i haqīqī*, real Love, but 'both lead us yonder'. It is a clear affirmation that Mawlawī Sufism is the path of Love, '*ishq*, not the path of asceticism, *zuhd*. After discussing the sun and the spiritual Sun, Maulānā comes to Šams and appears to be about to speak of him when he is interrupted by, presumably, Ḥusām al-Dīn, formally his Shaikh and the named inspiration of the *Mathnawī*, who asks him to speak of the ecstasies he enjoyed with Šams. There follows an extraordinary conversation between the two. On the face of it, Ḥusām al-Dīn emerges not so much as a Perfect man, *insān-i kāmil*, more as the spiritual inferior of both Maulānā and Šams, whose secrets he can never share. He is shown as being unaware of Maulānā's state through asking him to speak when he had not fully returned to sensible consciousness; as being importunate and impatient; of wanting to be told directly of matters that should only be conveyed indirectly through the words of others; and of wanting to experience what was beyond his capacity to endure. Although Ḥusām al-Dīn is not named, - the two words *nafs-i jān* are used, - the commentators all consider this to be Ḥusām al-Dīn. Of course, there is a well-established literary convention that when you address a work to someone you praise them in the most extravagant terms and portray them in the most idealised form, but it is not usual then to put them down, let alone so early in a work. There is little doubt that this dialogue, indeed the whole story, reflects Maulānā's own spiritual biography and, by putting it as he has, he is reassuring the reader that what he writes is fully authentic, deriving from his own personal spiritual experience. Not only does Maulānā thereby establish his own authority and credentials to write about these matters, but he, at the same time, explains why he has to write as he does through parables, and why there are limits to what can be said. Why then does Ḥusām al-Dīn appear as he does ? It could be that it was never Maulānā's intention that he should, and that it should not be read this way. It could be that Maulānā simply needed another character with whom to have the dialogue to make his points. It could also be read, however, as referring

back to the three levels in the Preface, the literal external level, the inner Sufi esoteric level, and finally the level of reality, *ḥaqīqa*. If that is the context in which the dialogue is to be taken then Ḥusām al-Dīn is assigned a high place on the Sufi level, and Šams is assigned a place on the level of reality, a level so awesome that Ḥusām al-Dīn is advised to keep away from it. In symbolic writing, especially from the hand of a master, no single response is sufficient to exhaust all its potentiality.

In the following sections the symbolism continues the Sufi path. The house, *jasm* (body), is made empty, producing *khalwat*, seclusion, in which the physician makes an examination of the *nafs*, *muḥāsibat*. From the pulse he learns her secret which leads to the importance of keeping secrets, *rāzdārī*, and the giving of promises. The cure is to lure the goldsmith by means of *māl o jāh*, wealth and rank. The *nafs* is re-united with the *ladhā' idh-i duniyawī* and recovers, thereupon the goldsmith is given poison, perhaps *'irfān*, and loses his attraction to the *nafs* and dies cursing that he has been killed for something other than himself. Love of the dead does not endure, so love the Living One. The physician only killed him on Divine command, the king was upright and elect. One benefits from being slain by such a king, that is, the *rūḥ*, but king here could equally be the physician or God. In this way the *nafs-i ammārah* is transformed into *the nafs-i muṭma'innah*, and all the promises given, even those to the goldsmith, are fulfilled.

Discourse One is both a general introduction to the work, and to Book One. It delineates the human condition, having a *rūḥ* in association with a *nafs*, and provides a general introduction to the Sufi path, setting out the various procedures and methods of the Way of Love. It is also clearly autobiographical, introducing the author and his credentials. It gives particular emphasis to the two major themes of the *Mathnawī*, the Saint or Perfect Man, and Love, but here Love seen in its relation to the *nafs*. The discourse fully illustrates the line of the Proem which foreshadows it: "He (alone) whose garment is rent by a (mighty) love is purged of covetousness and all defect." [22]

### Link Story of The Greengrocer and the Parrot

#### *Summary of Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 247-323 (77) *The Story of the greengrocer and the parrot and the parrot's spilling the oil in the shop.* a) [16] A greengrocer had a talking parrot which spilt a bottle of oil on a bench its master then sat on. Furious the greengrocer hit the parrot which then became bald and refused to speak. The greengrocer was repentant because he had damaged his own

livelihood. Three nights later a bald-headed darwish passed by and the parrot cried out: "Hey, bald-pate, what happened ? Did you spill oil too ?" Everybody laughed because it thought the darwish was like itself. b) [14] Do not measure the actions of holy men by analogy with yourself. It is for this reason that saints and prophets are not recognised; people say they are men like themselves whereas there is an infinite difference which they do not see in their blindness. From one species comes a sting, from another honey; from one deer comes dung, from another musk; one reed is empty, another full of sweetness. There are thousands of similar examples: one eats and produces only filth, another eats and becomes entirely the Light of God; one eats and produces avarice and envy, another eats and produces only love for God; this soil is fertile, that brackish; this one an angel, that one a devil. They resemble each other externally but only someone with inner discernment knows the difference. Find such a person. c) [23] The ignorant think that magic and the miracles of prophets are both founded on deceit, but the rod of the magicians was followed by God's curse while the rod of Moses was followed by God's mercy. The infidels aped the prophets thinking no one could tell the difference in their action, but the prophets act by the command of God and the apish imitators from quarrelsome rivalry. In religious matters the hypocrites practice competitive observance but in the end the believers triumph. Each goes to his proper destination according to the name; hypocrite has the taste of hell, not because of the letters, but because of their meaning. d) [12] You cannot tell the difference from your own judgement but only if God has put the touchstone in your soul. When someone alive eats rubbish, he ejects it. The worldly sense is this world's ladder; the spiritual sense, the ladder to heaven. Well-being depends on the doctor for the first, the Beloved for the second. The first depends on a flourishing body; the latter on the body's ruin. Spiritually one ruins the body and then restores it to prosperity; ruin the house for the treasure, then with the treasure, re-build it; cut off the water and cleanse the river bed then let drinking water flow. e) [12] Who can describe the action of God ? Sometimes it is like this, sometimes not; it is bewildering. Not bewildered through not looking at God, rather through drowning in God and being drunk with the Beloved. The face of the spiritual looks to God, the worldly at himself. Look long at every face so that by serving Sufis you will come to know the face of a saint. Since many devils wear the face of Adam, don't give your hand to everyone, for the vile steal the language of Sufis to deceive the simple. The work of the holy is light and heat, that of the vile is trickery and shamelessness.

### *Comment*

This section is here considered a link section because it comes between two discourses and its function is to link them thematically. This it does by telling the parrot anecdote, the gist of

which is that we should not judge others by analogy with ourselves, especially holy men, since there is a world of difference between them and ourselves, and then, through several phases, coming to vile deceivers in order to foreshadow the next story. Analysis suggests that there are three such link sections in Book One. Since this section is mainly homily there are no problems with its overall interpretation.

## **Discourse Two The King who liked to kill Christians and his Vizier**

### **Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content**

**Section 1** 324-337, (14) *Story of the Jewish king who for bigotry's sake used to slay the Christians.* a) [3] There was a Jewish king who destroyed Christians. Although it was Jesus's turn and Jesus and Moses were one soul, the king was squint-eyed and saw them as separate. b) [6] A master tells a squint-eyed pupil to fetch a bottle and he sees two. The master tells him to stop squinting and then says break one. He breaks one and there are none left. c) [3] Anger and lust, self-interest and bribery in a Qadi produce squint-eyedness. d) [2] The Jewish king became so squint-eyed he killed thousands of Christians claiming to be the protector of the religion of Moses.

**Section 2** 338-347, (10) *How the vizier instructed the King to plot.* a) [4] The King had a vizier who was guileful and a deceiver who told the king that killing Christians was useless because they simply hid their religion deeper, outwardly agreeing, inwardly disagreeing. b) [2] The King said what is the best plan so that no Christians remain either openly or in secret. c) [4] The vizier said cut off my ears, nose and hands and bring me to the gallows so someone can intercede. Do this in public, then banish me to a distant land where I can cause confusion amongst them.

**Section 3** 348-362, (15) *How the vizier brought the Christians into doubt and perplexity.* a) [7] The vizier continues.. I will say I am secretly a Christian and the king learnt of it and sought to kill me not believing my pretence and had it not been for the spirit of Jesus he would have torn me apart. b) [6] I would have given my life for Jesus but I know his religion well and it seemed a pity it should perish amongst those ignorant of it. I am a true guide who has escaped from Jews and Judaism. It is the time of Jesus, listen to his mysteries. c) [2] The King had him mutilated in public and drove him away to the Christians where he began to proselytise.

**Section 4** 363-370, (8) *How the Christians let themselves be duped by the vizier.* a) [3] Christians gathered around the vizier and outwardly he preached but inwardly he was a snare. b) [5] The Companions of Muhammad, because it is difficult to distinguish the true from the false, asked him about the deceitfulness of the ghoulish soul (*nafs*) and how it mixed self-interest into worship and piety. They became adept at recognising the deceitfulness of the fleshy soul.

**Section 5** 371-406, (36) *How the Christians followed the vizier.* a) [3] The Christians in blind conformity gave their hearts to him and regarded him as the vicar of Jesus when he was really the Anti-Christ. b) [13] Oh God, how many are the snares and bait and we are greedy foolish birds. Every moment a new snare which every moment You free us from. We put corn in our barn but a deceitful mouse has made a hole and eats the corn. Oh soul, avert the mischief of the mouse, then help garner the corn. A ḥadīth says “No prayer is complete without presence”. If there is no mouse, where is the corn of forty years’ devotion? Many stars are born of merit but a hidden thief puts them out. c) [10] In spite of the many snares all is well when Thou art with us. Every night You set the spirits free from the cage and snares of the body so there is no thought or imagination of profit or loss. This is the state of the ‘*ārif* day and night, asleep to the world, a pen in the Lord’s hand. All share this state to some degree through the sleep of the senses. d) [6] Then He leads them back on a tether to the body at dawn and makes it pregnant again with thoughts and actions. e) [4] Would that God guarded the spirit as He did Noah and saved the mind and ear and eye from the flood of wakefulness and consciousness. There is an ‘*ārif* beside you, in converse with the Friend, but your eyes and ears are sealed.

**Section 6** 407-436, (30) *Story of the Caliph’s seeing Layla.* a) [2] The Caliph asks Layla if it is she whom Majnūn is distraught for, since she seems so ordinary. She says: “You are not Majnūn.” b) [8] To be awake to the material world is to be asleep to the spiritual. When not awake to God, wakefulness is like closing the door on God. To be preoccupied with the world closes the soul from journeying heavenward. Asleep to spiritual things, one has hope of fantasies and talks with them. c) [12] The bird is flying on high, its shadow speeds on earth and a fool exhausts himself chasing the shadow. He doesn’t know it is a reflection, nor its origin, but fires arrows at it till the quiver of his life is empty. When the shadow of God is his nurse then he is freed from fantasy and shadows. The shadow of God is he who is dead to this world and alive in God. Cling to him, the saint; obtain a sun not a shadow. Cling to Šams-i Tabrīzī, and if you don’t know how, ask Ḥusām al-Dīn. d) [8] But if you are seized by envy, that is a characteristic of Iblīs, since envy is at war with felicity. Envy is a real obstacle and the body is the house of envy, though God made it pure. If you practice envy and deceit you stain your heart black. Be hard on envy like the men of God.



**Section 7** 437-445, (9) *Explanation of the envy of the vizier.* a) [2] The vizier was born of envy and cut off his ears and nose from vanity so that his envy could reach the Christians' souls. b) [5] Anyone who cuts off their nose is unable to apprehend spiritual things. Someone who does catch a spiritual scent should give thanks or ingratitude will devour his nose. Give thanks and be a slave to those who give thanks. c) [2] Do not be like the vizier and lead people from ritual prayer. He appeared as a guide but had craftily put garlic in the almond cake.

**Section 8** 446-454, (9) *How the sagacious among the Christians perceived the guile of the vizier.* a) [3] The spiritually discerning Christians tasted his sweet words mixed with bitterness. He seemed to say be diligent but actually said be slack. b) [3] What on the surface is white can still blacken your hand. Lightning is luminous but it can blind. c) [3] Those unwary Christians were captive of his words and, over six years, surrendered their souls and religion to him.

**Section 9** 455-457, (3) *How the King sent messages in secret to the vizier.* a) [3] Messages passed in secret between the King and the vizier: the King said the time has come, and the vizier replied that he was preparing to cast discords into the religion of Jesus.

**Section 10** 458-462, (5) *Explanation of the twelve tribes of the Christians.* a) [5] The Christians had twelve emirs in authority over them and each party was devoted to their own emir out of desire (for worldly gain). They and the emirs were slaves of that vizier and would have given their lives for him.

**Section 11** 463-499, (37) *How the vizier confused the ordinances of the Gospel.* a) [2] He prepared a scroll for each emir, each scroll contradicting the others. b) [32] One urged asceticism and hunger, one generosity. One urged trust and submission, one outer acts of worship and service. One urged that Divine commands were to show our weakness so we recognise the power of God, one said that weakness is ingratitude and we should regard our power for it is from God. One said whatever is contained in sight is a sign of dualism and *sirk*, one said do not do not put out the candle of sight for it is a guide to concentration. One said put out the candle of sight so that the candle of the spirit is increased. One said we should accept everything God has given us gladly; one that it is wrong and bad to comply with one's nature since religion is meant to be hard. In one he said only spiritual food should be the life of the heart. One said seek a teacher, one be a man and your own master. One said all this multiplicity is one, another that it is madness to say a hundred is one. c) [3] How should all these contradictory doctrines be one, they are as poison and sugar. Only when you pass beyond the

duality of poison and sugar will you reach unity and oneness. Twelve books in this style were drawn up by that enemy of the religion of Jesus.

**Section 12** 500-520, (21) *Showing how this difference lies in the form of the doctrine, not in the real nature of the Way.* a) [12] He had no perception of the unicolority of Jesus, nor was he died in the vat of Jesus which would make a hundred colours as simple and one-coloured as light. It is like fishes and clear water: though there are many colours on dry land, fishes are at war with dryness. Where is God in this simile? Myriad seas and fishes in the world of existence bow down before that Bounty. How many rains have produced pearls in the sea, how much sunshine has taught the sea to be generous. The sunbeams of wisdom have struck the earth so that it becomes receptive of seed. The earth derives its faithfulness from God and the soil shows its secrets only in the spring. b) [5] The Bounteous One informs the inanimate, but His wrath makes men blind. Who can understand? Wherever there is an ear his alchemy transforms it to an eye, a stone to a jasper. He is an alchemist and giver of miracles, what is magic compared to this. c) [4] My praise is really the absence of praise, since in the presence of His Being we should be not-being.

**Section 13** 521-548, (28) *Setting forth how the vizier incurred perdition (by engaging) in this plot.* a) [12] The vizier was ignorant and heedless like the king and didn't realise he was up against the eternal and inevitable. God is so mighty he can bring hundreds of worlds to existence from non-existence. This world is vast, but to Him only an atom. This world is the prison of your soul, go forth yonder. This world is finite, that one infinite; image and form are the barrier to Reality. Moses's staff versus Pharaoh's lances; Galen's arts versus Jesus's breath; books versus Muhammad's illiteracy; with a God like this how can you not die to self. He uproots minds, so sharpening the intelligence is not required but being broken in spirit is. God turned the wicked woman into Venus, so turning yourself into clay isn't much. Your spirit was moving heavenward but you went to earth. c) [9] You sought the (material) stars not the heavens and though a son of Adam you did not recognise he was the manifestation of God. You want to conquer a world and fill it with yourself, but God could with one spark lift the sin of a thousand viziers, turn that false imagination into wisdom, make that poison a drink, turn doubt into certainty and hatred into love.

**Section 14** 549-564, (16) *How the vizier started another plan to mislead the (Christian) folk.* a) [8] The vizier hatched another plot and went into seclusion and the people became desperate and pleaded that he was their nurse and they needed his protection. He said his soul was near those that loved him but he was not allowed to come out. b) [8] The emirs and disciples came

and pleaded that they were orphaned, that they were in distress while he was pretending, and they missed his sweet discourse. They asked him to come to their aid.

**Section 15** 565-577, (13) *How the vizier refused the request of the disciples.* a) [13] You are enslaved with words, says the vizier, block the senses so you can hear within for our journey is interior. Cultivate silence.

**Section 16** 578-590, (13) *How the disciple repeated their request that he should interrupt his seclusion.* a) [7] This is too much for us since we are young birds not yet ready to fly and liable to be caught by a cat. b) [6] When you speak we are filled with intelligence, with thee earth is better than heaven. Compared to you what is this heaven, since you are the essence of sublimity.

**Section 17** 591-594, (4) *The refusal of the vizier to interrupt his seclusion.* a) [4] The vizier tells them to be quiet and heed his advice. If he is trustworthy and perfect why is he being so molested. He will not leave seclusion because he is engaged with inner experiences.

**Section 18** 595-642, (48) *How the disciples raised objections against the vizier's secluding himself.* a) [16] We are not being quarrelsome, but weeping like a babe for its nurse. You are the mover and we are the moved. You are the painter and we the picture; how could the picture quarrel with the painter ? Do not look at us, look at your own generosity. We did not exist, but your grace called us into existence. b) [10] Before Omnipotence people are helpless; He makes the picture, now the Devil, now Adam, now grief, now joy. Thou did not throw when thou throweth. We are the bow, God is the archer. That is not *jabr* (compulsion) it is *jabbārī* (Almightiness). Humility is evidence of necessity, our guilt evidence of free-will. If there was not free-will, why this shame and confusion ? Why this argument between master and pupils. Why this changing of the mind from plans already made ? c) [9] If you say God's compulsion is ignored when free-will is asserted, the answer is the humility and remorse when falling ill, for illness is a time of consciousness of one's sins when one prays to God for forgiveness. That illness has given you wakefulness, the more wakeful, the more full of suffering; the more aware of God, the paler the countenance. d) [7] If you are aware of His *jabr*, where is your humility ? How can a captive act like one free ? If you consider you are shackled do not act the tyrant to the helpless. Since you do not feel His compulsion, do not say you are compelled. What you want to do, you feel able to perform. When you don't want to do it, you are a necessitarian, saying this is from God. e) [6] Prophets are necessitarians to this world, infidels to the next. Free-will for prophets belongs to the next world, but for infidels, to this. Every bird flies to its own congener, it follows its spirit, the prophets to heaven, the infidels to Hell. Return to the story.

**Section 19** 643-649, (7) *How the vizier made the disciples lose hope of his abandoning seclusion.* a) [7] The vizier cried out Jesus had given him a message to be in seclusion and to have nothing to do with talk. I am dead so that I may sit with Jesus at the top of the fourth heaven

**Section 20** 650-662, (13) *How the vizier appointed each one of the emirs separately as his successor.* a) [13] He summoned all the emirs one by one and told them separately that he was the Vizier's successor and no one else was. He was not to tell anyone while the vizier lived, and to each he gave one of the contradictory scrolls.

**Section 21** 663-667, (5) *How the vizier killed himself in seclusion.* a) [5] The vizier then shut the door for another forty days then killed himself, and there was mourning for a month.

**Section 22** 668-695, (28) *How the people of Jesus - on him be peace! -asked the emirs, "Which one of you is the successor?"* a) [6] In as much as God is out of sight, prophets are His vicars. b) [12] No, it is wrong to think of God and the prophets as two, they are one if you escape from form. Ten lamps in one place differ in their form but their light is indistinguishable. In matters spiritual there is no division and no number. Sweet is the oneness of the Friend and His friends, form is headstrong. Do away with form or God will do it for you since He shows Himself to our hearts and unites Himself with the mystic. c) [10] We were one substance once like the Sun. When that Light took form, it became many in number like the shadows of a battlement. Raise the battlement that difference disappears. I would have explained more strongly but weak minds might stumble, so I sheathed the sword. Now to complete the tale.

**Section 23** 696-726, (31) *The quarrel of the emirs concerning the succession.* a) [10] Each emir advanced with his scroll and sword and claimed the succession. They fell to fighting and hundreds of thousands of Christians were slain and there were mounds of severed heads. The plan of the vizier had worked. b) [11] The walnuts of the bodies were broken, those that had the kernel had fair spirits. On death those that had reality were manifest, those that were rotten were put to shame. Strive after reality Oh worshipper of form for reality is the wing on the body of form. Be with followers of reality, the spirit devoid of reality is like a wooden sword in the sheath, it seems valuable until taken out, then is fit only for burning. Don't go into battle with a wooden sword. The sword of reality is the weapon of the saints, associate with them. c) [10] The 'arīf is a mercy; when you buy a pomegranate, buy it when it is laughing so that you know its seeds. Unblest is the red anemone from whose laughter (openness) you see the black heart. The

laughing pomegranate makes the garden gay like the company of saints. Rock becomes a jewel when you reach the heart of a saint. Give your heart to the love of those whose hearts are glad. Don't go to despair, there are hopes; don't go to darkness, there is light. The heart leads to the saint, the body to the prison of earth. Feed your heart with talk from those in accord with it and seek advancement from the advanced.

**Section 24** 727-738, (12) *How honour was paid to the description of Mustafa ( Mohammed), on whom be peace, which was mentioned in the Gospel.* a) [12] The name of Muṣṭafā was in the gospels with descriptions and a party of Christians kissed the name when they saw it. They were secure from the plotting of the vizier and had the protection of the name of Aḥmad so they multiplied. The others held the name of Aḥmad in contempt and they became contemptible from their dissension and their religion was corrupted. If the name of Aḥmad was such a protection, what then of his essence.

### *Analysis.*

The story has twenty four sections, and the totality is framed and held together by Providential History, that is the history of God's interventions into human life by means of the prophets. The first section,1, introduces Mūsā, and is in parallel with the final section, 24, which introduces Muṣṭafā. Sections 2 and 23 are also in parallel as conception and conclusion, and deal with Christians and 'Īsā, as do most of the others sections. In the Providential History of the time, Mūsā stood for *kathrat*, multiplicity, and this world. He was followed by 'Īsā who stood for *wahdat*, unity and the next world. He was followed by Muḥammad who stood for *jām'īyat*, multiplicity in unity and unity in multiplicity and for *'ālamain*, the two worlds.

The structure is first exemplified in four blocks of six sections each. Block 1-6 can be characterised as the conception in which the initial situation is introduced together with the three main characters: the squint-eyed King, the vizier and the Christians; block 7-12 can be characterised as preparation; block 13-18 as implementation and block 19-24 as conclusion. Each block reveals a further development of the vizier's plotting. In the first block he pretends to be a Christian, in the second he introduces multiplicity of doctrine, in the third he resorts to seclusion and silence and in the fourth he relies on his different successors to effect the destruction of the Christians. Each block is connected to the next block, the first to the second by the idea of envy; the second to the third through the Might and Power of God; the third to the

fourth through *jabr* which is dealt with explicitly in section 18 and is used by the vizier when he claims he was acting under instruction.

In terms of parallelism there are three divisions over which it is operative. The first twelve sections, that is, the first half of the story, forms the first division; blocks three and four each are the second and third divisions. Sections 1 and 12 are in parallel through the contrast between multiplicity in 1 and unity in 12. Sections 2 and 11 through the idea of confusion being announced by the vizier in 2 and his putting confusion into effect in 11 through producing a multiplicity of doctrines. Sections 3 and 10 are in parallel in that in 3 he announces how he will win over the Christians and in 10 he has made all twelve tribes his slaves. Sections 4 and 9 are in parallel in that in 4 the vizier as deceitfulness had duped the Christians, the spiritual powers or the *sālikān*, and in 9 he tells the king, the *nafs*, he has done this and all is ready. Section 5 and 8 are in parallel in that in 5 snares are discussed and how the spiritual powers or *sālikān* are taken in except for the '*arīf*' who is in contact with God, which is demonstrated again in 8 but with the similar exception of those who are spiritually discerning. Section 6 and 7 are in parallel through the concept of envy, but also in the contrastive parallelism of Perfect Man in 6 and the opposite, the vizier, in 7. The second division for parallelism is block three, that is sections 13-18. Sections 13 and 18 are in parallel in that in 13 the vizier is described as wrestling with the Eternal and Inevitable and in 18 there is the discussion of *jabr* and *jabbārī*. Sections 14 and 17 are in parallel through the concept of seclusion. Sections 15 and 16 are parallel through the notions of silence and discourse. The third division is formed by block four, Sections 19-24. Sections 19 and 24 are in parallel through the two prophets, Jesus and Muḥammad. Sections 20 and 23 are in parallel through the appointment of the successors in 20 and their quarrel in 23. Sections 21 and 22 are in parallel through the death of the vizier and the succession.

### ***Interpretation***

While the narrative element of this discourse is clear, there is disagreement amongst commentators as to the salient points this story makes. For example, Foruzanfar sees its central point to be that the prophets are one with one another and with God. Hamid Dabashi, in a perceptive and thoughtful essay on these twenty four sections, which he rightly identifies as a discrete *maqālah*, finds the moral discourse to be theological and concerned with theodicy – the origin of evil – and free will and predestination.<sup>3</sup> Nicholson, following Anqirawī, finds it to be concerned with the nature of the *nafs*. If the hypothesis being tested here is correct, then,

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<sup>3</sup> Dabashi, H., "Rūmī and the problems of theodicy", in Banani, Houanisian and Sabagh (eds.) *Poetry and Mysticism in Islam: The Heritage of Rūmī*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994

without anticipating too much from Chapter Three, it would be expected that everything in this book is to be seen from the perspective of the *nafs*; that this discourse would be particularly about the *nafs-i ammārah*, the selfhood which commands to evil; that the condition of seeing double, being *aḥwal*, would be especially emphasised; that multiplicity and division, - the opposite of *jam‘īyat*, togetherness, - would have a central role;

### The Structure of Discourse Two

- Section I Jewish King; squint-eyed; didn't see Moses and Jesus as one; killed Christians
- Section II His guileful vizier had a plot; mutilate me as a Christian and I'll confuse them
- Section III I'll say I'm a secret Christian and true guide; the King obliged, expelling him
- Section IV He deceitfully won them over; hard to tell true from false; self-interested piety
- Section V Many snares; destroy devotion; God puts senses to sleep at night; saint awake
- Section VI Layla awake to spirit; cling to the Perfect Man; beware of envy like the saint  
[*ḥasad* (envy)]
- Section VII Vizier was born of envy and had no spiritual sense; only outwardly a guide
- Section VIII The spiritually discerning saw his guile but the unwary became his slaves
- Section IX Messages between King and vizier; the time now to sow discord among them
- Section X There were twelve tribes of Christians and twelve emirs all slaves of the vizier
- Section XI The vizier wrote twelve scrolls one for each emir all contradicting one another
- Section XII The vizier could not see the Unity of Jesus; God is Bountiful and Miraculous  
[*wahdat* (Unity), *kathrat* (Multiplicity) and the Might of God]
- Section XIII The vizier did not see he was up against the Inevitable; God is All Powerful
- Section XIV The vizier tried a new plot, secluding himself; all pleaded with him to stop
- Section XV He refused; enslaved by words they should retreat within and cultivate silence
- Section XVI They are not ready; his words are their life; to be with him better than Heaven
- Section XVII He says not to bother him since he is engaged with inner experiences; stays
- Section XVIII His seclusion is not *jabr* because it is without humility; don't say it is *jabr*  
[*jabr* (compulsion)]
- Section XIX He says Jesus had told him to go into seclusion and they should eschew talk
- Section XX He then gave each of the emirs a scroll and secretly made each his successor
- Section XXI He shut himself up for forty days then killed himself; a month of mourning
- Section XXII Prophets are vicars of God but one with God; give up form or God will do it
- Section XXIII The emirs with their scrolls claimed the succession and many killed in war
- Section XXIV Some were saved by the name of Aḥmad; if name so great what of the man

that the three prophets would figure prominently but in a framing rather than an active capacity; that there would be a strong autobiographical element; that it would also have the property of being a training module in the early stages of a course for Sufi novices. As will

be seen, all of this could be predicted from the higher level organisation and parallelisms of the work as a whole, even to the point that it could have been anticipated that the 'villain' would probably end up killing himself somehow. In this way the synoptic reading of the *Mathnawī* permits the assigning of the contexts within which this and other discourses can be disambiguated.

Starting with the Jewish king, symbolically he is generally accepted as being the *nafs*, and quickly Maulānā makes clear that he is not just the *nafs* in general but a particular variety of the *nafs-i ammārah* known as the *nafs-i sabū'ī*, the 'wild-animal soul', which is driven by *khaṣm*, anger, *ḥiqd*, rancour and hatred, and *ḥasad*, jealousy and envy, even to the point of killing people. These properties, together with other properties of the *nafs* such as greed, desire etc., lead a person to lose the potential for seeing reality and unity so that they become *aḥwal*, squint-eyed, seeing double. This had happened to the king, who became a tyrannical zealot in consequence. Since the time was that of Jesus in the prophetic cycle of providential history, his targets were the Christians. The vizier represents an instrumental crystallisation of part of the *nafs-i ammārah* which was formed out of *ḥasad*, jealousy or envy. He is very cunning and a master of deceit, *makr*. His mutilation meant he was devoid of any spiritual awareness or spirituality. The Christians represent the spiritual powers or faculties, at one level, and the Sufi *sālikān* or travellers on another. The various types and varieties of the *nafs* and its properties as understood in Islam, and particularly the accumulated Sufi wisdom on the subject, was all brought together by Al-Ghazzālī in his *Iḥyā Ulūm al-Dīn* which may well have been a source known to and referred to by Maulānā.

This discourse is foreshadowed at the end of the Link Section, which warns about being taken in by clever but evil impostors. In the first three sections the vizier proposes his hypocritical impersonation (*naḥāq*), and the king implements his mutilation and banishment. In the fourth section, the Christians are duped by the vizier, which also means the spiritual powers were taken in by the *nafs*, as is confirmed by the attached explanation of how the Companions, concerned about the mingling of self-interest in their worship, were taught by the Prophet to recognise the *makr-i nafs-i ghoul*, the deceitfulness of the ghoul-like selfhood. In the following section the Christians took him to their hearts, which is followed by a passage addressed to the novice about how presence is needed in prayer or the *nafs* will erode the benefit, and how, only in sleep is there freedom from snares. Section 6, the final section of the first block, starts from being asleep to the material world and to the spiritual world respectively, moves on to the need for a refuge and guide like Šams or Ḥusām al-Dīn, and culminates with a warning about jealousy. The use of the word jealousy so soon after these



two names makes clear there is a strong autobiographical element intended here. It was jealousy from the disciples of Maulānā which drove Šams away, and may even have killed him, and the vizier was born of jealousy. Precisely what happened will probably never be known, but it is not unlikely that jealousy split the group of disciples into factions and that they lost their collective togetherness outwardly and their inner collected-ness also, in consequence of which they deteriorated spiritually. The appearance of the names of Šams and Husām al-Dīn in the final section of the first block, must be taken as indicating that, when there is a block of six sections, it is the sixth which has a special emphasis. This is further confirmed by the high tone and content of Sections 12, 18 and 24. This first block, then, is concerned with being deceived and taken in by false impostors: narratively, by the vizier, outwardly, by false Shaikhs and 'leaders', inwardly, by the *nafs*, the arch-impostor.

The importance of envy and jealousy is not solely autobiographical, as Maulānā emphasises in verses 429-30, where he points out that envy is particularly associated with Iblīs, so that it is not simply a primary destructive source of evil, it is also the most Devilish. Section 7, which begins the second block, is presumably addressed to the *sālikān*, since it deals with envy eroding the spiritual sense, a sense for which one should be grateful and give thanks. The reference to not turning people away from ritual prayer, could refer to an actual situation that took place amongst the *murīds* of Maulānā, as well as indicating in general a particularly heinous spiritual crime that must be avoided. Section 8 explains how the vizier was able to say one thing outwardly but produce exactly the opposite effect inwardly, so that all but the wary and discerning fell under his spell. Section 9 actually demonstrates the king, the *nafs-i ammārah*, commanding to evil, in this case the spreading of confusion. Section 10 explains there were twelve main divisions of the Christians, each with a leader under the influence of the vizier. In Section 11, the twelve scrolls - sixteen, in fact, - which the vizier wrote to produce confusion, are detailed. Dabashi is interesting here: "Rūmī's purpose here, according to Furūzānfar, is to enumerate conflicting doctrines that can be persuasively expounded. What is also sub-textually evident in Rūmī's presentation is the inaccessibility of 'truth' to reason. If reason, that is, the rational discourse, can be applied to achieve equally persuasive and yet contradictory positions, so the argument would hold, then there is something quintessentially wrong with the rational attainment of the 'truth'. 'Truth', then, has a reality for Rūmī independent of its possible rational attainment.. .By producing multiple and contradictory narratives, Rūmī parodies not only the mystical but also the juridical, theological, and philosophical doctrines and discourses in search of the truth."<sup>4</sup> But Maulānā

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<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, pps. 124, 126.

purport is perhaps made evident by the important Section 12, the final and most significant section of the second block, in which he states the vizier could do this only because he was unaware of the 'unicolority' of Jesus, whereby a 'hundred colours would become as simple and one-coloured as light. This is followed by a further compelling example, that of God's Bounty, which, though multiple in manifestation in the phenomenal world, is a unity in the real spiritual world. In answer to Dabashi's sub-text, it should be said that rationality is not under question here, since 'aql is of two kinds: the 'aql-i ma'ās and the 'aql-i ma'ād, and can accommodate both multiplicity and unity. This discourse is written from the perspective of the *nafs*, for whom the divergence of views represents an opportunity to exploit differences. What the vizier was relying on to cause confusion was multiplicity, division and contradiction. The second block, and its final section, ends with a foreshadowing of the next section on the subject of the Might of God.

The third block opens with a statement that the vizier, in his ignorance, was 'wrestling with the eternal and inevitable', after which there is much about the Might of God, about wondering how the addressees, the *sālikān*, had chosen to go down instead of up and yonder, and about the Omnipotence of God. In Section 14, the vizier begins a new plot: having lured the Christians, won them over, and made them seemingly totally dependent on himself, he goes into seclusion. There is an interesting contrastive parallelism between blocks two and three. Although not fully implemented until the fourth block, in the second, the vizier prepares to confuse the Christians externally through doctrinal contradictions, whereas, in the third block, by his act of seclusion, the vizier seeks to confuse them internally through dependence then deprivation. In the second block, when he seduced them with his speech, they were passive and fully trusting; in the third block, when he went into seclusion, they reacted and accused him of pretence and of making excuses. In both cases, the vizier sought to destroy *jam'īyat*, togetherness, but in the second block it is the collective togetherness, and in the third block the internal collected-ness of individuals. Through having the vizier act as he does in the third block, Maulānā demonstrates to the *sālikān* that even the most venerable Sufi disciplines, such as seclusion, silence and awareness of spiritual states and experiences, can be used by the *nafs* for its own selfish purposes.

There is one major theological or metaphysical question raised in the third block and touched on at the beginning of the fourth, that of predestination, *jabr*, and free-will, *ikhtiyār*. This is a subject to which Maulānā returned again and again. Apart from this discourse, Nicholson lists twelve other places in the *Mathnawī* where the issue is brought up and discussed, sometimes at length, so that it appears in every book except Book Two. It comes up first in

verses 470-3 where it appears as two of the contradictory doctrines the vizier incorporated in his scrolls and again in Section 18, where it seems, at least initially, to be put in the mouths of the distraught Christians but very soon Maulānā's own voice takes over. In full flow, Maulānā comes very close to being a necessitarian, but quickly says: "This is not *jabr*; it is the meaning of Almightyness, *jabbārī*: the mention of Almightyness is for the sake of inspiring humility within us. Our humility is evidence of necessity, but our sense of guilt is evidence of free-will." In this way Maulānā retreats back to what Nicholson calls the orthodox *via media* between *jabr* and *qadar*. But the vizier, in addition to using the issue in his scrolls, claims it was a Divine Command, or, at least, a Prophetic command, that required him to enter seclusion. In Section 19, his claims to a high spiritual level are extreme, but it is obvious, in view of the foregoing discussion, that his lack of humility gives the lie to any claim to be acting under Divine compulsion.

Having given the scrolls to the twelve Christian emirs, the vizier kills himself. Narratively, this is to precipitate the confusion and killing that will follow over his succession, but spiritually it is because jealousy is so potent a source of evil that it even kills the soul, the *nafs*. The request to the emirs to appoint the successor occupies the first six verses in Section 22, but this is followed by an exposition of one of the major themes of this discourse, the Prophets are one with God, and only the worshipper of form sees the Prophet and God as two. "In things spiritual there is no division and no numbers; in things spiritual there is no partition and no individual." Block four, therefore, answers back to block one in parallelism. It completes the plot there conceived narratively and it answers the *aḥwal* king. In Section 23, after the battle of the Christians, Maulānā urges the *sālik* to 'consort with the followers of reality and plant love of the holy ones within the spirit' in contrastive parallelism with the undiscerning Christians and the vizier. Finally, Section 24 brings in the Prophet Muḥammad to complete the symmetry with Moses in the first block, to give the exemplar of the holy for the *sālikān* to plant in their spirit as advised in the preceding section, and whose very name acted as a refuge for a party of Christians who were saved from the disaster described in the story. At the very end of this section those who held the name of Aḥmad in contempt became themselves reviled, but this is a foreshadowing of the next discourse.

## Discourse Three: Story of the Second Jewish King who sought to destroy the religion of Jesus

### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 739-768, (30) *The story of another Jewish king who endeavoured to destroy the religion of Jesus.* a] (4) A second Jewish king followed the evil ways of the first. b] (8) The evil turn to the evil (congener), but the righteous inherit the sweet water of the *Qur'ān*. The mystic's longings are rays deriving ultimately from the Light of Muhammad and go towards it. c] (8) A person's affinities are to the planets at his birth, but beyond these material stars are spiritual stars moving in another heaven, born under which a soul burns the infidels in driving them off. d] (4) God gives his light to all but only the saints catch it in their skirt of love. e] (6) The particular is set towards the universal. Everything is going whence it came. Our souls leave the body their motion mingled with love

**Section Two** 769-782, (14) *How the Jewish King made a fire and placed an idol beside it saying, "Whoever bows down before this idol shall escape the fire."* a] The second king set up the idol and required those who would not bow down to it to sit in the fire. He set up the idol because he had not controlled the idol of his *nafs*. b] (7) The idol of the self is far worse than an actual idol. It is a fountain whereas an actual idol is the black water. It's easy to break an idol, but never the self. c] (4) The self is Hell, always sowing trouble; seek refuge in God and Ahmad, flee the body.

**Section Three** 783-811, (29) *How a child began to speak amidst the fire and urged the people to throw themselves into the fire.* a] (8) The king took a child from its mother and threw it into the fire. The mother having lost faith was about to bow down when the child cried out he wasn't dead but was happy because the fire was only fire in appearance to hide the truth, it really had the quality of water and was evidence of God and the delight of His elect. b] (5) When he left the womb it seemed like death but afterwards the womb seemed like a prison and the world was pleasant, Now the world seems a prison since in that fire all is the breath of Jesus, a world seemingly non-existent beside our own existent one but the real situation is just the opposite. c] (7) Come in Mother and all true believers, do not miss the chance. d] (4) The people were all entering the fire out of love for the Friend till the king's servants had to hold them back. e] (5)

The king was disgraced and the people became more ardent and firm in *fanā*. The devil's plot had caught him, and the Devil himself was disgraced. All the shame he sought to rub into the faces of the people accumulated in his face, while they were untouched.

**Section Four** 812-822, (11) *How the mouth remained awry of a man who pronounced the name of Mohammed, on whom be peace, derisively.* a] (5) A man mocked the name of Aḥmad and his mouth stayed awry. He asked for forgiveness saying he was stupid to ridicule, and it was he who was ridiculous. When God wishes to shame someone he causes them to ridicule the holy and when he wishes to hide someone's blame he causes them not to blame the blameworthy. b] (6) When God wishes to help somebody he causes them to weep. Blessed the eye and heart that weep for Him for the outcome is laughter. Where water, there greenery; where tears, there Divine Mercy. If you desire tears, have mercy on the weeper; if mercy, show mercy to the weak.

**Section Five** 823-853, (31) *How the fire reproached the Jewish king.* a] (6) The King asked the fire why it was not burning and whether it had changed its nature. b] (5) The fire replied it was still the same fire but was in fact the sword of God. c] (6) If the fire of your nature gives pain or joy, that is from God. The elements are His slaves, fire ever waiting to do His Will. d] (15) Stone and iron produce fire, they are causes. But beyond them are higher causes which the prophets know of and which they can make operative or not. Do not mistake the two types of cause. God commands the elements. From Him is the water of mercy and the fire of wrath. He informed the soul of the wind which distinguished believer from non-believer in the people of 'Ad.

**Section Six** 854-868, (15) *The story of the wind which destroyed the people of 'Ad in the time of (the prophet) Hud, on whom be peace.* a] (6) Hud drew a line around the believers and the wind destroyed all but those. Shayban a shepherd drew a line round his sheep when he went to pray and kept the wolf out. The concupience of sheep and wolf were barred by the circle of the man of God. b] (9) Examples: Men who know God fear not the wind of death; fire did not burn Abraham, and the religious were not burnt from the fire of lust etc. Your praise of God comes from water and clay and becomes a bird of paradise through your sincerity. Mount Sinai seeing Moses became a Sufi and began to dance.

**Section Seven** 869-899, (31) *How the Jewish king scoffed and denied and would not accept the counsel of his intimates.* a] (8) The king ignored his advisers and bound them and behaved even worse until the fire blazed up and consumed those Jews. Fire was their origin and to fire they returned as particulars towards the universal. b] (10) The mother seeks the child as

the fundamentals pursue the derivatives. Thus our breath and good words rise up to God and His mercy descends. c] (6) The attraction comes from whence comes our delight and the delight comes from our own kind (congener) and certainly the part is drawn to the universal. Water and bread are not our congeners but are from the outcome and come to resemble the congener. d] (7) If we delight in what is not homogenous, it will resemble the congener, but as a loan which has a time limit. Do not be taken in by impostors or vain imagining will cast you into the well as in the next story.

### *Analysis*

The rhetorical structure of this discourse is almost paradigmatic. If further confirmation of the hypothesis were needed, this discourse supplies it, since it has the same form as Psalm 67, that is, ABCDCBA, with special emphasis therefore given to Section 4, which stands alone, but, because it has the name of Aḥmad in its title and deals *inter alia* with ridicule, it also connects with the foreshadowing final section of Discourse 2, in which those who held the name of Aḥmad in contempt, themselves became contemptible. Section 1 states that the particular returns to the universal and everyone is drawn to their own kind, their congeners. Section 7, in parallel with 1, shows how those whose origin was of fire perished in fire and further elaborates on congeners. Sections 2 and 6 are in parallel because both of them are concerned with the differentiation and division of different types of people. In Section 2 the king sets up the idol of selfhood and says those who do not worship the self will perish in the fire, while, in section 6, the prophet Hud sets up a line dividing the believers, who will not be destroyed by wind, from the non-believers, who will; and the shepherd draws a line to protect the sheep from the wolf. Sections 3 and 5 are in parallel because both are concerned with the fire. Section 3 shows that the child in fact achieved *fanā* and not destruction in the fire, and Section 5 explains that the fire remains the same, but is ever ready to do the Will of God. These parallel sections move from the universal law of return to one's congener, to the division between people, to the instrument of God's action, the fire which effects the division. This all leads to the inner protected Section 4. Section 4 begins with five verses which show how ridicule to a man of God returns to its producer and makes them ridiculous. The remaining six verses explain how, to attract the mercy of God, one must weep, but in order to be able to weep, one must be merciful to the weepy and the weak. Section 4 is the inner 'meaning' of the story, Section 7 the external climax.

## The Structure of Discourse Three

- Section I Second evil Jewish king; evil to evil, good to good; part returns to its whole
- Section II He set up idol of self to which all must bow or sit in fire; self is hell; flee body
- Section III A child cast into the fire told all to come in; fire beats world; King shamed
- Section IV Man mocked Aḥmad but he was ridiculous; weeping attracts Divine Mercy
- Section V Fire still fire but the sword of God who commands the elements; higher cause
- Section VI Hud and shepherd protected believers; know God and fear not fire of lust
- Section VII King got worse; fire blazed killing Jews; of fire to fire; each to his own kind

### Interpretation

This discourse also deals with a king who kills, and Maulānā indicates he is of the same kind as the previous king, whose path of evil he followed. This means that he too must be regarded primarily as that extreme kind of *nafs-i ammārah* referred to as *nafs-i sabū'ī*. As with the vizier in Discourse 2, the king is killed by his own excesses. Here, though, it is not envy and jealousy but rather anger and hatred which seem the primary characteristics of this king, whose nature was obviously fiery because he returned to fire in his destruction. Verse 809 twice refers to him as devil: once as *saiṭān*, and once as *dev*. It is impossible to tell whether this is to be taken as 'the Devil' or as 'a devil'. Either would fit, but perhaps the latter reading is to be preferred, since Maulānā locates the source of evil in the *nafs*. Indeed, in verse 779 he equates the *nafs* with Hell. Maulānā is careful always to associate Iblīs with the *nafs*, never allowing the Devil to be considered as an independent principle of evil in creation like Ahriman in dualistic Zoroastrianism. The fire is both the natural element and a force within one's nature, which can, on the one hand, fire anger, but, on the other hand, it is also what in India is called *tapas*, the intense inner heat engendered by asceticism. The idol is one's selfhood, the *nafs*. It is tempting to think of egoism in this connection, but that is not quite sufficient because what the king was seeking to elicit from people was not so much *khud-parastī* as *nafs-parastī* in its widest sense, contrasting with the worship of God. It is more like total self-indulgence, of which egoism is a significant part.

The first section connects this king back to the previous king through their evil natures, thus demonstrating the universal law that every nature is drawn to its own congener, *jins*. The righteous have inherited the *Qur'ān* and their vibrations are drawn to the 'substance of prophethood'. Evil is drawn to evil, good to good, each to his own congener. God and the men of God

can direct the forces of nature, because above natural causation there is spiritual causation, just as there are spiritual planets beyond the actual planets which determine men's character. God has scattered his Light - possibly the Light of Muḥammad - over all spirits, but only the fortunate receive it, whereafter they turn their faces away from all but God. The second universal principle is that the particular is returning to the whole. The question then is what is the nature of the particular in question. The spirits of the righteous are returning to God; no destination is given for the spirits of the wicked. This, then, is the universal situation the novice Sufi must confront and understand according to Maulānā. In Section 2 he sets up the criterion which distinguishes one kind of nature from another, the idol of the *nafs*, before which one must bow or be thrown into the fire. An idol is nothing a little iconoclasm can't remove: the real problem is the *nafs*, whose horrors and hellish nature are detailed. The child in Section 3, who was thrown into the fire by the king to be destroyed, cries out that it is alive, that is, that *fanā* is not death and that self-mortification is only fire in appearance, being in fact the gateway to a freer, richer and happier world. For the king as the *nafs-i ammārah*, however, self-mortification would be death, so his mistake, which leads to his being shamed by the very shame he sought to inflict on others, was, at least, understandable.

Section 4 does precisely what the hypothesis would predict: it sums up what has gone before, with the example of ridicule towards a man of God being reflected back on to its producer; it introduces something entirely of its own, the great importance of weeping; and it foreshadows what is to come, namely examples of the Mercy of God. The messages to the novice Sufi accumulate: do not ridicule the Shaikh or it will rebound on you; be merciful to the weak and those that weep; learn to weep yourself, since that will attract the Mercy of God.

Section 5 sees the fire explaining to the complaining king that its nature is still the same, but that it and the other elements are the servants of God, ready to do His Will, as moved by the spiritual causation that lies beyond natural causation. For the *sālik* there are some memorable verses on pain (834-837) as well as the prediction that, when he is fully awake, he will see that 'from God too are the water of clemency and the fire of anger' (852). This leads in Section 6 to several examples being given of God's Mercy in protecting the believers, and of His anger in destroying the unbelievers, the agents of God being wind, fire, water and earth, together with the prophets, Hūd, Abraham, Jesus and Moses etc., who effected the discrimination between the two categories of people. In the final Section there is the external climax when the Mercy of God, or his Anger if the two are to be separated, causes the fire to swallow up the king and his fellow Jews. 'The fire was their origin, to which they returned in the end. That company was born of fire: the way of particulars is to the universal.' (874-5) But at this point Maulānā adds a further



principle: 'The mother of the child is always seeking it: the fundamentals pursue the derivatives.' (878) This means that God actively draws the soul to Himself and there is a continual ascent of prayer and descent of Mercy. There then follows a short discussion on attachments to what is not homogenous, before a short foreshadowing of the next discourse. This discussion does not seem to go anywhere in particular, that is until the parallel discourse on the Mouse and the Frog towards the end of Book Six which deals with precisely this situation.

## **Discourse Four: The Story of the Lion and the Beasts**

### ***Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content***

**Section One** 900-903, (4) *Setting forth how the beasts of chase told the lion to trust in God and cease from exerting himself.* a] (4) Some beasts were being harassed by a lion who ambushed them and carried them off and this made their valley unpleasant. They plotted to make their valley pleasant again and said to the lion that they would give him a fixed allowance to keep him fed but he should not hunt.

**Section Two** 904-907 (4) *How the lion answered the beasts and explained the advantage of exertion.* a] (4) The lion agreed provided they were not frauds. He was fed up with fraud and spite, but worse than that was the *nafs* within waiting to attack. He had taken to heart the Prophet's saying: "The believer is not bitten twice".

**Section Three** 908-911, (4) *How the beasts asserted the superiority of trust in God to exertion and acquisition.* a] (4) The beasts said forget precaution, it is no use against Divine Decree. Trust in God is better. Don't quarrel with Destiny or it will quarrel with you. Be dead in the presence of the Decree of God.

**Section Four** 912-914, (3) *How the lion upheld the superiority of exertion and acquisition to trust in God and resignation.* a] (3) The lion said all right, but the Prophet said trust in God but tie up the knee of your camel. Remember the earner is beloved of God and do not neglect the ways and means.

**Section Five** 915-928, (14) *How the beasts preferred trust in God to exertion.* a] (6) The beasts dismissed acquisition (work) saying there was no better than trust in God. We run from trouble into more trouble. Man devises something which then becomes his own trap and locks the door when the foe is in the house. Pharaoh slew babies when the baby he sought was in his own house. b] (8) Our foresight is defective, so let it go and follow the sight of God. Children are safe when they make no efforts; it's when they do later they get into trouble. Our spirit flew free before they had bodies, then they were trapped in anger and desire. We are the children of the Lord. Who gives rain can also give bread.

**Section Six** 929-947, (19) *How the lion again pronounced exertion to be superior to trust in God.* a] (9) The Lord set up a ladder and we must climb it; to be a necessitarian here is foolish. You have hands and feet so why pretend you don't? When a master puts a spade in a servant's hand this is a sign. Follow the sign and you will fulfil His will. Follow His commands and you will see mysteries, burdens will be lifted and He will give you authority and favour until you will attain union. b] (10) Freewill is to thank God for his beneficence, necessitarianism to deny it. Necessitarianism is to sleep on the road amid highwaymen. If you reject His signs you will lose what understanding you have. Ingratitude is a sin which leads to Hell, so trust in God and sow.

**Section Seven** 948-955, (8) *How the beasts once more asserted the superiority of trust in God to exertion.* a] (8) Millions have schemed and acted but apart from what was predestined they got nothing. Their plans failed and only the decree of God remains. Exertion is only vain fancy.

**Section Eight** 956-970, (15) *How 'Azrael (Azrael) looked at a certain man, and how that man fled to the palace of Solomon; and setting forth the superiority of trust in God to exertion and the uselessness of the latter.* a] (5) A man ran to Solomon saying he had been looked at by Azrael the angel of death in such a way that he wanted Solomon to get the wind to take him to India so his life might be saved. b] (10) People flee from poverty and become prey for covetousness and striving which are like India in this story. Solomon did what he wanted and then met Azrael and asked him why he had looked so angrily at the man. "That was not anger", said Azrael, "it was surprise because God had asked me to take his spirit in India and I couldn't see how". From whom should we flee? From ourselves? Oh absurdity! From God? Oh crime.

**Section Nine** 971-991, (21) *How the lion again declared exertion to be superior to trust in God and expounded the advantages of exertion.* a] (8) Yes but consider the exertions of the prophets

and believers, they were all excellent and no one has suffered through following them. Work is not against Destiny but according to it. b] (8) Plots for things of this world are useless, for the next, inspired by God. The best plot is for the prisoner to dig a hole out of prison. The world is a prison and we are prisoners; dig a hole and let yourself out. What is this world ? To be forgetful of God; not money and women. Wealth for religion is good, like water that can sink a boat when inside, but a support when underneath. Since Solomon had cast out desire for wealth from his heart, he called himself 'poor'. c] (5) The stoppered jar floats because its wind-filled heart is empty; so does the heart filled with poverty. Seal your heart and fill from within. Exertion is real.

**Section Ten** 992-997, (6) *How the superiority of exertion to trust in God was established.* a] (6) The lion went on producing proofs like this till the beasts gave up and made the agreement whereby he got his daily ration without further demands. Each day the one on whom the lot fell would run to the lion until it came to the hare who cried out: "How long shall we suffer this injustice ?"

**Section Eleven** 998-999, (2) *How the beasts of chase blamed the hare for his delay in going to the lion.* a] (2) We have sacrificed our lives in troth and loyalty so don't give us a bad name. Lest he be angry go quickly. Thus replied the beasts.

**Section Twelve** 1000-1004 (5) *How the hare answered the beasts.* a] (5) The hare said: "Friends grant me a respite so my cunning can save you and safety be the heritage for your children." Thus spoke every prophet who had seen from Heaven the way of escape. Though in their sight he was small as a pupil of the eye, how great was the real size of that pupil.

**Section Thirteen** 1005-1007 (3) *How the beasts objected to the proposal of the hare.* a] (3) The beasts said: "Oh Donkey, keep yourself within the measure of a hare. What a boast is this your betters have not thought of. You are self-conceited or else Destiny pursues us.

**Section Fourteen** 1008-1027 (19) *How the hare again answered the beasts.* a] (4) The hare said: "Friends, God gave this weakling wise counsel. Lions and elephants do not know what the bee and silkworm were taught by God. b] (6) Adam learned knowledge from God and taught the angels to the confusion of Iblis for whom God created a muzzle so he had no access to the knowledge of religion. The intellectual sciences are a muzzle for man of the senses but into the heart God gave a jewel which he gave to nothing else. c] (9) How long will you worship form ? Hasn't your soul yet escaped from form. The form may be fine but it lacks the spirit, that rare jewel.

**Section Fifteen** 1028-1040 (13) *An account of the knowledge of the hare and an explanation of the excellence and advantages of knowledge.* a] (7) Listen to the story of the hare, not with your asinine ear but with a different one. How he made a plot to catch the lion. Knowledge is the spirit and the whole world is form; by virtue of knowledge all creatures are helpless before man. b] (6) Man has many secret enemies which strike him every instant. Wash in a river and there is a hidden thorn you will come to know because it will prick you. Likewise the pricks of Satan and angels and many others can only be known when your senses are transmuted and then you can see who is prompting you.

**Section Sixteen** 1041-1044 (4) *How the beasts requested the hare to tell the secret of his thought.* a] (4) They said: "Hare, tell us your plan. The mind is helped by other minds and counsel gives understanding, as the Prophet said: O Adviser, take counsel with the trustworthy, for he whose counsel is sought is trusted."

**Section Seventeen** 1045-1054(10) *How the hare withheld the secret from them.* a] (5) You should not tell forth every secret; if you breathe words on a mirror it becomes dim for us. Do not speak of your death, your gold or your religion for there are enemies in wait if you do. Anyway, tell one or two people and you might as well have published it. b] (5) A wise man gains his object without betraying himself, like the Prophet who took counsel cryptically and his companions would answer without knowing his true meaning. He would express himself in a parable and get the answer without anyone knowing the question.

**Section Eighteen** 1055-1081 (27) *The story of the hare's stratagem.* a] (4) He waited and arrived late so the lion was very angry. He cried "I knew their promise was in vain and their talk has duped me. How long will this world deceive me." b] (9) The road is smooth but under it are pitfalls, no meaning in the words. Seek real wisdom, so that the guarding tablet of your heart which preserves the lessons of wisdom can become a Guarded Tablet, an inviolable source of Divine knowledge. When the understanding is transformed by the spirit it becomes the pupil of the soul and knows it cannot go further. c] (7) Whoever through heedlessness is without thanksgiving and patience has to resort to *jabr*. But to plead necessity is to feign illness and pretended illness leads to death as the Prophet has said. *jabr* is to bind up a broken foot; you have not broken yours but one who does through effort on the path is the acceptor of Divine commands and is accepted. d] (7) Until now he follows the King's command, now he delivers them to the people; he was ruled by the stars, now he rules them. Refresh faith you who have secretly refreshed your desire. While desire is refreshed faith cannot be, since desire locks the

gate of faith against you. You have interpreted the word of the *Qur'ān*; interpret yourself not the Book. You have interpreted the *Qur'ān* according to your desire and degraded its sublime meaning.

**Section Nineteen** 1082-1090 (9) *The baseness of the foul interpretation given by the fly.* a] (6) A fly on a straw on a pool of ass's urine interpreted the urine as the sea, the straw as a ship and himself as the pilot. b] (3) The false interpreter of the *Qur'ān* is like the fly, who, if he left off interpreting following opinion, would be transformed. One who receives Divine indications is not a fly, his spirit is not analogous to his form.

**Section Twenty** 1091-1106 (16) *How the lion roared wrathfully because the hare was late in coming.* a] (5) The hare is an example of one whose spirit is not analogous to his form. The Lion was furious saying that his ear had blinded him. Their tricks had tied him up and he would never again listen to their palaver which was designed to deceive like the cry of demons. He would tear them to pieces and rend their skins for they were nothing but skin. b] (3) Skin is specious words lacking continuance. Words are skin and meaning the kernel; words are form and meaning the spirit. The skin hides a bad kernel and also guards the secrets of the good kernel. c] (8) When the pen is of wind and the scroll water, it quickly perishes. The wind in men is vanity and desire; when they go, there will be a message from God which will not perish. Kings and empires change, only the insignia of the prophets endure. The pomp of kings is from vanity, the prophets are from God. The names of kings is removed from coinage, the name of Ahmad, which is the name of all the prophets, is stamped forever.

**Section Twenty One** 1107-1149 (43) *Further setting forth the stratagem of the hare.* a] (2) The hare delayed while thinking about his plots. b] (5) How wide is the ocean of intelligence, on which our forms move fast like cups on the surface which float until they are full, then sink. Intelligence is hidden and only the phenomenal world is visible; our forms are its waves or its spray. Whatever the means our form makes to approach Intelligence, the ocean uses the same means to cast us away. c] (7) The heart does not see the giver of conscience, the arrow does not see the Archer just as a man thinks his horse is lost though he be speeding along the road on it. He should come to himself. The spirit is lost to view because it is so manifest and near. d] (13) How can you see colours if you don't first see light? But since the mind is absorbed in the colour it doesn't see light. The colours act as a veil of the light. There is no seeing colour without external light, equally with the colour of inner fantasy – outer from the sun, inner from the reflection of beams of glory. It is the light of the heart that give light to the eye, and the Light of God which gives light to the heart. At night it is dark and there is no colour. Light is made

manifest by its opposite and pain created so happiness may be known. So are hidden things known, and since God has no opposite, He is hidden and cannot be made manifest, so our eyes do not perceive Him. e] (6) Form springs from spirit and voice and speech from thought but you don't know where the sea of thought is, only that it is noble. When the waves of thought sped from the ocean of wisdom they were given the form of voice and speech. The form was born of the Word and died, withdrawing back to the sea. The form came from Formlessness and returned for "Verily unto Him we are returning". f] (8) You are dying and returning every moment, every moment being renewed and life arriving anew, but in the body it seems continuous. The continuity comes from its swiftness; the swift motion caused by the action of God appears as duration. Even if you are learned and seek this mystery, ask Ḥusāmu'ddīn who is a sublime book.

**Section Twenty Two** 1150-1156 (7) *The hare's coming to the lion and the lion's anger with him.*

a] (7) The furious lion saw the hare coming along boldly and confidently since he thought it would be less suspicious if he was bold rather than humble. When he was near the lion shouted: Villain, I have destroyed oxen and vanquished fierce elephants, what is a half-witted hare to disregard my behest." Give up the hare's heedlessness and slumber, give ear, O donkey, to the roaring of this lion.

**Section Twenty Three** 1157-1181(25) *The hare's apology.* a] (5) When the hare asked

for mercy and sought permission to excuse himself the lion replied that fools were short-sighted and their excuse worse than the crime. Was he ass enough to give ear to an excuse devoid of wisdom ? b] (5) The hare replied that it would not diminish his bounty to listen to one oppressed. The lion said he would give bounty where it was due. c] (14) The hare then told his story of how he and another hare had set out after breakfast to come to the lion when another lion attacked them. He told that lion that they were slaves of the King of Kings but that lion had dismissed his king as a loony and forbade their going on. The hare asked to take the news to his king but had to leave his friend as a pledge of his return. The road is blocked, our agreement ended, and if you want the allowance, clear the way and repel that irreverent one.

**Section Twenty Four** 1182-1201(20) *How the lion answered the hare and set off with him.* a]

(7) The lion said come on let's find him. Go in front if you speak truly that I may punish him, or you if you don't. The hare was the guide to the deep well he had made a snare for the lion. The hare was like water under straw; water carries away straw, can straw carry away a mountain. His guile was a noose for the lion. What a hare with a lion as his prey. b] (6) Moses draws Pharaoh into the Nile, a gnat cleaves Nimrod's skull, just look at the state of those who listened to the

enemy Satan. The enemy speaks in a friendly way as a snare. Regard his candy as poison and if he is kind to your body, it is cruelty. c] (8) When divine destiny comes you see only appearances and don't distinguish friends from enemies. Because of this begin supplication, lamenting, fasting and praise now. Ask God who knows the hidden not to crush us beneath contrivance. May the creator of the lion not set the lion on us if we behave badly, may he not make sweet water fire. When God makes us drunken with the wine of his wrath it is to pervert our senses so we cannot see reality.

**Section Twenty Five** 1202-1220 (19) *Story of the hoopoe and Solomon, showing that when the Divine destiny comes to pass , clear eyes are sealed.* a] (12) The birds came to Solomon who spoke their language and when they stopped twittering they became clear and articulate. To speak the same tongue is kinship and affinity, not to is to be in prison. Many Turks who speak the same language are strangers, others, who don't, do so in fact because the tongue of mutual understanding is different, and to be one in heart is even better. The birds were telling Solomon their respective talents to gain access to him as a slave gives a good account of himself if he wants to be bought, but a bad one if he doesn't. b] (7) The Hoopoe said he had only one talent. When he was at the zenith he could see water at the bottom of the earth so it would be useful when the army needed to camp. Solomon accepted him as a good companion in waterless places.

**Section Twenty Six** 1221-1226 (6) *How the crow impugned the claim of the hoopoe.* a] (6) The crow said out of envy that the hoopoe lied about his keen sight otherwise he would have seen the snare beneath the earth and would not have gone into the cage. Solomon asked the Hoopoe if he had been lying and bragging.

**Section Twenty Seven** 1227-1233 (7) *The hoopoe's answer to the attack of the crow.* a] (The hoopoe said that Solomon should kill him if he lied but urged him not to listen to his enemy who does not believe in Divine Destiny and is really an unbeliever. He can see the snare unless Divine Destiny muffles his intelligence and puts wisdom to sleep. It is not strange to be deceived by Divine Destiny, indeed, it is Destiny that an unbeliever does not believe in it.

**Section Twenty Eight** 1234-1262 (29) *The story of Adam, on whom be peace, and how the divine destiny sealed up his sight so that he failed to observe the plain meaning of the prohibition and to refrain from interpreting it.* a] (4) Adam was given knowledge of the names of the real nature of everything for all time. Nothing he named changed its nature for all time. b] (8) Hear about the name of everything and its mysteries from the knower: with us the name is the outer appearance, with God the inner nature, so for God Moses staff was a dragon, the idolater

'Umar, a believer, and seed was you beside me. The seed was a form in non-existence with God and was exactly how it turns out to be, so what we are is our name with God. That name is our final state, not the state He calls a 'loan'. c] (3) As Adam saw with Pure Light the soul and innermost sense of the names were obvious to him and the angels bowed down in worship. I cannot praise this Adam enough. d] (6) All this Adam knew but when Divine Destiny came he was at fault on a single prohibition not knowing whether it was to be obeyed or was open to interpretation. He veered towards the latter but his nature went towards the forbidden fruit. As he slipped Satan carried off the goods from the shop. He cried I have sinned and Divine Destiny became the cloud which covered the sun. e] (8) If the hoopoe did not see the snare when Divine Destiny came he was not alone. Divine Destiny knocks you in various ways in order to stand you up. It is God's loving mercy that first He terrifies you but only in order to make you more secure. The subject has no end: return to the story of the hare and the lion.

**Section Twenty Nine** 1263-1296 (34) *How the hare drew back from the lion when he approached the well.* a] (4) Coming near the well the hare hang back and when the lion asked why, he replied that he was terrified as his pale colour showed. b] (6) The eye of the gnostic is on the signs, since God called the signs informative. Colour, smell and sound all give knowledge. The colour of the face gives knowledge of the heart: a red complexion thankfulness, a pale one patience and need. c] (3) I am affected by that which takes away my physical strength, my colour and all outward signs; that destroys everything it reaches; that defeats the material, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. d] (13) These are only parts, wholes too are subject to Destiny: the world is now patient, now thankful; the garden now green, now bare; the sun now red, now pale; stars burn up and the moon diminishes; the earth is agitated by earthquakes and mountains become grains of sand; the air conjoined with spirit becomes foul and water the sister of spirit turns yellow when Destiny comes; the sea is in constant agitation and the heavens ever whirling containing stars now fortunate, now unlucky. e] (8) You are a part made up of wholes so why should you be not afflicted when wholes suffer grief and pain, especially when you are made up of contraries, earth, water, fire and air. Life is the peace of contraries, death when they are at war. Since the world is sick and a prisoner, it's not surprising that I am passing away and hang back.

**Section Thirty** 1297-1303 (7) *How the lion asked the reason of the hare's drawing back.* a] (7) Yes, said the lion, but what is the particular cause of your malady since that is my object. The hare told him it was the lion who lived in the well. Those wise ones live in wells because spiritual joys are attained in solitude, and the darkness of the well is better than the dark shades



of the world. My blow will subdue, let's see if he is in, said the lion. The hare replied I am afraid of his fieriness so come beside me so I dare open my eyes.

**Section Thirty One** 1304-1338(34) *How the lion looked into the well and saw the reflection of himself and the hare in the water.* a] (4) Side by side they looked into the well and the lion saw his own reflection with a plump hare beside him. Seeing his adversary he jumped into the well. b] (9) The lion fell into the well which he had dug and his iniquity was coming back on his own head. The iniquity of evil-doers is a dark well, the more iniquitous the deeper. If you are digging a well for others you are making a snare for yourself so don't make it too deep. Do not consider the weak to be without a champion, remember *When the help of God shall come*. The weak attract help and you will suffer. c] (14) The lion saw himself in the well and thought his own reflection was his enemy. Many iniquity you see in others is your own nature reflected and when you hit them you are hitting yourself. If you could see the evil in yourself you would hate yourself. When you reach the bottom of your own nature you see the vileness is from you, just as the lion saw at the bottom of the well the enemy was his own image. Do not run away from yourself, the faithful are mirrors to one another. d] (10) You held a blue glass to your eye and the world turned blue, but the blueness came from yourself. To the true believer things appear plainly but if you see through the Fire of God you cannot tell good from evil. Bit by bit put water on your fire. O Lord put water on the world-fire that it may become light. Everything is under Your control and deliverance from evil is Your gift.

**Section Thirty Two** 1339-1356 (18) *How the hare brought to the beasts of chase the news that the lion had fallen into the well.* a] (10) The hare delighted to be delivered from the lion ran happily along to the other beasts. The boughs and leaves were singing thanks to God like spirits who had escaped from clay and dance in the air of Divine Love. b] (8) The hare put the lion in prison. Shame on the lion for being beaten by a hare. O lion at the bottom of the well your hare-like *nafs* has shed your blood. The hare ran crying: "Rejoice, the enemy of your lives – his teeth have been torn out by the vengeance of the Creator. The Hell-hound has gone back to Hell. He who smote many heads with his claws – him too the broom of death has swept away."

**Section Thirty Three** 1357-1372 (16) *How the beasts gathered round the hare and spoke in praise of him.* a] (8) The joyful animals gathered round the hare and praised him as the Azrael of fierce lions. They asked him to explain how he had used guile to wipe out the ruffian so that the tale could be a cure and salve for their souls since the iniquity of that tyrant had inflicted many wounds on their souls. b] (8) The hare replied that it was God's help since he was just a hare. God had given him power and light in his heart. God raises up and also brings low in due course

and turn to doubters and seers alike. Do not exult in a kingdom given in turns; you are a bondsman to vicissitude do not act as if you were free. There is a kingdom beyond vicissitude where the kings are everlasting. Cease from drinking worldly pleasure for a brief lifetime and you will sip the drink of Paradise.

**Section Thirty Four** 1373-1389 (17) *Commentary on ( the Tradition) "We have returned from the lesser Jihad to the greater Jihad."* a] (13) O Kings we have slain an outward enemy but within there is a worse enemy. The inward lion is not overcome by a hare, reason and intelligence. The *nafs* is Hell and Hell is a dragon not subdued by oceans of water. However much food it is unappeased until God asks if it was filled and it said no, there is still burning. It swallowed a whole world and asked for more until God puts his foot on it and it subsides. This *nafs* of ours is part of Hell and parts have the nature of the whole. Only God has the power to kill it. Be a straight arrow and escape from the bow, for the arrows of the *nafs* are bent and crooked. b] (4) I turned from outer warfare to inner warfare, returning with the Prophet from to lesser *jihād* to engage in the greater *jihād*. I pray God will grant me strength and aid and success. Think little of the lion who breaks the ranks of the enemy, the true lion is he who conquers himself.

### ***Analysis***

The structure of this story, which has 34 sections, is constituted by four blocks of sections arranged 10, 7, 7, 10. The first ten treat of the beasts and the lion and their argument over effort versus trust in God. The first section gives the beasts' offer of a fixed allowance and the tenth rounds off the block by having them all agree the arrangement. The next block of seven sections is the conversation between the beasts and the hare about his plan which he refuses to divulge. The third block of seven sections is between the lion and the hare and ends with them setting off together. The final block begins with four section showing how Divine Destiny can blind us as it did the hoopoe and Adam. The rest finish off the story with the destruction of the lion and the hare telling the beasts it is over. The final section points out that the lion is only the outer enemy, the inner enemy, the *nafs*, only God can destroy. The story also has two equal halves, the first seventeen sections create the situation and the second seventeen resolve it.

Just as the blocks are arranged chiasmically, so is the entire story, with the first seventeen sections sequentially, parallel with the second seventeen sections in reverse order. Section 1 is parallel with Section 34 through the discussion of the lion as outer enemy and *nafs*. Section 2 is parallel with section 33 through the notion of *makr*, fraud, guile, plotting. In the first section the

lion says he is fed up with being cheated by cunning and fraud, *makr*, although the *nafs* is worse, and in the parallel section the hare is praised as the Azrael of lions who used his cunning, *makr*, although the hare denies it saying his light and power came from God. Section 3 warns the lion not to grapple with Destiny lest Destiny pick a quarrel with him and Section 32 parallels this with the hare's announcement that their enemy had had his teeth pulled out by the vengeance of his Creator and this fulfils Section 3. Section 4 is parallel to Section 31 in that in Section 4 the lion is urging the importance of action and effort and in 31 he acts only to destroy himself in so doing. Section 5, in parallel with Section 30, has the beasts stating that when man devises something his device becomes the snare which traps him. In Section 30, the lion says come on to the hare so he can find the lion to destroy him with his blow thus demonstrating Section 5. Section 6 and Section 29 are strongly parallel in that both deal with the signs of God. Section 7 and Section 28 are parallel in that in the first section the beasts declare that, despite man's scheming, only that which is predestined comes to pass, whereas in the second it is Divine Destiny which determines that Adam falters. Section 8, which gives the story of the man who saw the angel of death and fled to India only to be taken there by Divine Destiny, is in parallel with Section 27, where the hoopoe discusses Divine Destiny causing him not to see the snare, and the need to believe in Divine Destiny. Section 9 has the lion further expounding the need for efforts and endeavour in parallel with section 26 in which the crow, addressing the hoopoe although illustrative too of the lion, says if he was so sharp how did he not see the snare and end up in the cage. Section 10 has the beasts making their covenants with the lion when it comes to the hare's turn, in parallel with Section 25 in which the birds are in conversation with Solomon and then it comes to the hoopoe's turn. The section by section parallelism of these last eight sections, 7-10 and 25-28 is less convincing individually than as two blocks taken together. The first block overall stating that in spite of one's efforts one cannot escape Divine Destiny and the second block illustrating how it is Divine Destiny that blinds us, however worthy we might be, for its own purpose.

The middle sections begin with Section 11 and Section 24 in parallel in that in both the hare is urged to set off; in the first by the beasts so that he can be killed by the lion, in the second by the lion so that he can kill the second lion, but really so that the hare can kill him. Section 12 is in parallel with Section 23 in that in the first section the hare pleads with the beasts to let him explain his plan and in the second section the hare pleads with the lion to let him tell his story. Sections 13 and 22 are in parallel in that in both the same pun is used giving "O donkey, listen" out of the word for a hare. Sections 14 and 21 are strongly thematically parallel in that both deal with intelligence and spirit hidden in form. Sections 15 and 20 are in parallel in three ways, the first the need to listen to the hare with the inner ear and the lion complaining his ear had blinded

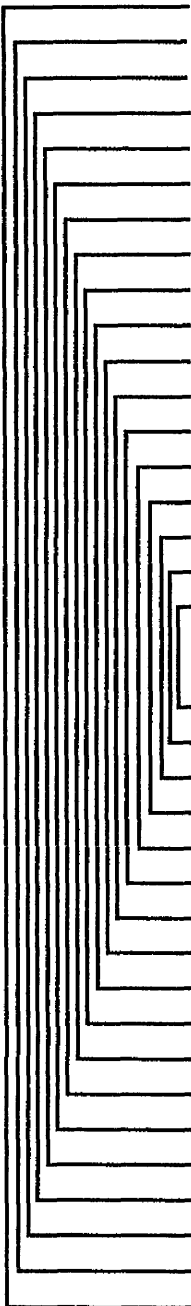
him; the second is the notion of knowledge as spirit and the world as form repeated as 'words are skin and the spirit meaning'; and finally the idea of secret hidden enemies. Section 16 is in parallel with Section 19 in that in the first the hare is urged to "seek counsel from the trustworthy" and in the second this is clarified showing that only Divine inspiration is trustworthy and that to follow opinion in interpretation is to be like the fly on the pool of ass's urine who thought it was the sea. Sections 17 and 18 are parallel in that in the first there is a warning about sharing secrets and how the wise gain their ends without revealing their purpose, just like three birds tied up together, who look defeated but are in secret consultation. This is reflected in Section 18 in which the lion is furious at being deceived especially by words and names that are devoid of meaning. It is of course the beasts, in captivity to him like the three birds, who have been in secret discussion with the hare.

This sequence of seventeen different parallelisms shows a wide range from the verbal pun of "Listen, O donkey", through situational parallelism to full thematic parallelism where the second illustrates, develops or fulfils the first. Some sections are demonstrably more parallel than others. The first and the last sections and the middle fourteen are particularly tightly parallel while in some of the others it seems a looser parallelism was felt to be acceptable.

### ***Interpretation***

Almost certainly, the lion in this story symbolises the *nafs-i ammārah*, of which, in this particular instance, the predominant characteristics are pride, *kibr*, anger, and a large ego. The beasts are generally taken to be the various spiritual powers and faculties, and the hare is understood to be 'aql, intelligence, certainly 'aql-i ma'ās, but on occasions able to access 'aql-i ma'ād, transcendental intelligence or Universal Reason. The *nafs* is causing serious interruptions to the spiritual powers' peaceful grazing, so they devise a scheme to provide it with a regular supply of sustenance, which means the spiritual powers would become severely weakened. It is to this scheme that the hare, 'aql, objects, and in response to which he devises the plan to destroy the lion. The story comes from the Indian *nīti* tradition, works of advice and instruction to kings, often in parable form, to enable them to stay on top.

## The Structure of Discourse Four

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- Section I** Lion harassing beasts; they offer him a fixed allowance instead of his hunting  
**Section II** Lion agrees provided no fraud; he is fed up with fraud; *nafs* worse than fraud  
**Section III** Forget precaution, they say; trust in God better; don't quarrel with Destiny  
**Section IV** Lion quotes Prophet: trust in God but tie up camel; earner is beloved of God  
**Section V** Beasts dismiss effort for trust; we make matters worse because of bad vision  
**Section VI** Hands and feet are signs from God; free will is gratitude, *jabr* ingratitude  
**Section VII** Many have schemed and failed; only Decree of God remains; effort is fancy  
**Section VIII** Man saw Azrael and asked Solomon to send him to India where he died  
**Section IX** The prophets worked but for next world; wealth for religion good; effort real  
**Section X** Lion kept on arguing till the beasts agreed the deal; the hare reluctant to go  
  
**Section XI** Beasts told the hare to go quickly or the Lion would be angry at the default  
**Section XII** The hare said to beasts: "give me respite so my cunning can save you all"  
**Section XIII** They said: Listen donkey, stay hare-sized; what boast is this; self-conceit  
**Section XIV** God gives special knowledge to each; don't worship form, ignoring spirit  
**Section XV** Hear hare with inner ear; his plot; knowledge spirit, world form; leave form  
**Section XVI** Tell us the plan so we can comment; good to take counsel with trustworthy  
**Section XVII** Don't tell secrets; not safe; wise man gains end without revealing himself  
  
**Section XVIII** Hare late; Lion angry; tricked by words; seek real wisdom; lose desire  
**Section XIX** Divine help needed not opinion; opinion like fly seeing urine as the sea  
**Section XX** Lion's ear tricked him; words skin which hides meaning; meaning spirit  
**Section XXI** Intelligence hidden form visible; spirit invisible because it is near; renewal  
**Section XXII** Lion angry at hare's delay; says: Listen, donkey, to the roaring of this lion  
**Section XXIII** The hare apologises to furious lion and tells his story of the other lion  
**Section XXIV** Set off, says Lion to the hare who was lion's snare; Destiny can blind us  
  
**Section XXV** The hoopoe told Solomon he could see, from on high, water underground  
**Section XXVI** The crow said he lied as he should have seen the snare that caught him  
**Section XXVII** Hoopoe says it is no lie but Divine Destiny had put wisdom to sleep  
**Section XXVIII** Divine Destiny caused Adam to slip so the Hoopoe in good company  
**Section XXIX** Hare turns pale which is a sign of God that he is terrified; agitation  
**Section XXX** The Lion asks why and the hare says because of the lion in the well  
**Section XXXI** Side by side they see a lion and a hare; lion jumps in the well he had dug  
**Section XXXII** Happy hare told the other beasts the hell-hound was back in hell  
**Section XXXIII** Beasts praised him and asked how; it was God's help; he's only hare  
**Section XXXIV** Lion only outer enemy; inner the *nafs* which only God can destroy

In the first ten sections, the beasts and the lion debate the issue of *tawakkul*, trust in God, versus effort and action, bringing in a range of arguments to support their respective stances. The spiritual powers, of course, urge *tawakkul*, their natural predisposition, and the lion, action and

effort, for which the *nafs* is designed to be the instrument. Nicholson's commentary on these sections is full and clear, so rather than repeat its points, it will be useful to consider this passage as instruction for the *sālik* and as a characterisation of his situation. The Sufi novice will be given tasks and exercises and disciplines to develop his spiritual faculties, but pride, belief in his own efforts and the like all contrive to erode his spiritual powers. He is still the prey of his own selfhood and ego, which is rightly suspicious it is under attack. In the early months, maybe years, of his training, all of the arguments and attitudes expressed in these first ten sections will have at one stage or another been entertained for a while, only to be replaced by a counter argument or attitude, until out of sheer exhaustion the novice will come to some accommodation with the *nafs* of the sort symbolised here. It is perhaps more fruitful to see this as a brilliant analysis of the spiritual psychology of the novice than as a theological debate, although it is, of course, both. In terms of the argument, as Nicholson remarks on Section 9, Maulānā sums up in favour of the lion; in terms of the spiritual situation of the novice, however, this is only the beginning of the story, for the tyranny of the *nafs* remains.

Into this situation, from Section 11, '*aql*, intervenes, to the initial exasperation of the spiritual faculties, who regard his claim to be able to see a way to escape from the tyranny of the *nafs* as conceit. The hare asserts that God had given him inspiration, whatever his size and form. In Section 14, according to Nicholson's inverted commas, that is all the hare says; the rest is Maulānā. God has given special knowledge to every part of creation, particularly to Adam, to whom was given the knowledge of religion which was kept from Iblīs. But to Adam and his descendants God gave something he gave to no other, the spiritual heart. It is spirit and the spiritual essences within that are crucial, not the outer form. The whole world is form, knowledge is the spirit.<sup>1</sup> But the spiritual heart is prompted in secret from many different sources, and it will only be when one's nature is transmuted that one is able to recognise where each prompting comes from. The spiritual faculties wanted to share the hare's plan but he refused. Here, at Section 17, at the very centre of discourse, the place to seek its real inner message, is the affirmation of one of the most firmly established principles of Sufism, that of *rāz-dārī*, the keeping of secrets, *even from oneself*, given the context. That the hare was eventually successful was because he kept to this fundamental principle, and the message to the Sufi novice is clear.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholson's comment on verse 1030 is excellent here: "The phenomenal world is the outward form of Universal Reason; its essence is the Divine Knowledge that animates and rules it as the spirit animates and rules the body. Man is potentially capable of attaining this knowledge, which may be likened to the magic seal whereby Solomon exercised dominion over men and jinn and beasts and birds."

The second half of the discourse begins with Section 18. The hare is deliberately late in reaching the lion, thus successfully ensuring that the lion is very angry, and hence less inwardly perceptive as to what is about to happen. The lion cries out that the beasts promises were empty and their talk had deceived him, but then Maulānā's voice takes over. Words and names are too often empty of meaning and reality yet they absorb much of one's life. The seeker after wisdom can become a fountain of wisdom. His intelligence and understanding can be enriched by the spirit so that it becomes a source of Divine knowledge, after which his understanding which was his teacher becomes his pupil; or like the Prophet who went from being the commanded to become the Commander. This possible transformation from *'aql-i ma'ās* to *'aql-i ma'ād* is held out to the Sufi novice but at the price of asceticism, prayer and thanksgiving, with no excuses. To interpret the *Qur'ān*, whose origin is from Divine knowledge, by means of opinion and the *'aql-i ma'ās* is to act like the fly in Maulānā's parable, although, as Nicholson notes, Section 19 was probably referring specifically to the expression "The moon was cloven asunder". The parallelism between section 16 and Section 19 is that in both cases discursive reason and opinion sought inappropriately to comment on wisdom derived from the *'aql-i ma'ād*. Section 20 again shows the furious lion, still waiting and even angrier at being deceived, anxious to 'rend their skins for that is all they are'. Then Maulānā's voice takes up the subject of skin, since words are skin, and meaning the kernel; words are as form and meaning as spirit; the skin hides the defects of a bad kernel and the secrets of a good one. The written word perishes swiftly; only when desire, self-will and vanity have been abandoned, will one receive messages from the *'aql-i ma'ād* which will endure, like those of the prophets. Section 21, after two verses on the hare only now just beginning to set off for the lion, then gives itself fully to *'aql* as Universal Intelligence or Universal Reason, rightly appreciated and commented on by Nicholson for this is a fine sustained passage of mystical vision. It concludes with the name of Ḥusām al-Dīn, further indicating that it has a special significance. In fact, this section is the climax of a block of eight sections, four either side of the very centre of the discourse, that deal in detail with *'aql*, both particular and universal, the central subject of this discourse, as love was for the first discourse. There is much in Section 21, but one side issue worth noticing is that verse 1130-1 gives Maulānā's view of theodicy: "God created pain and sorrow for the purpose that happiness might be made manifest by means of this opposite. Hidden things are manifested by means of their opposite; since God has no opposite, He is hidden." This confirms what has been said before, that there is no independent principle of evil in creation. The lion and the hare are kept waiting until this treatment of *'aql-i ma'ād* is completed, but their story resumes in Section 22 when the hare finally reaches the enraged and roaring lion. In section 23 he makes his excuses and explains about the other lion and hare. In Section 24 the lion sets off behind the hare who leads him towards his snare, with comments on snares and enemies in Maulānā's voice. From verse

1194, there is a foreshadowing of the next block of four sections, with the warning that when Divine Destiny comes to pass, one sees only the outer appearance, and cannot tell friend from foe.

Sections 25-28 tell the story of Solomon and the hoopoe, and how he was made unseeing of the snare by Divine Destiny. Just to prove that this can happen to the best of us, the hoopoe cites the parallel example of Adam. The positive aspect of Divine Destiny is emphasised in the penultimate five verses of Section 28. Section 29 is largely about the different 'signs' which are 'informative' and should be given attention, beginning with the pale and trembling hare as indicative of terror, or, at least, of feigned terror. Towards the end there is a discussion of the contraries contained within a person: sheep and wolf, lion and onager, which are usually taken as referring to the *rūh* and the *nafs*. Life, says the hare in giving counsel, is the harmony of contraries; death, war between them, thereby highlighting the choice the lion has. Section 30 has the hare telling the lion that the other lion lives in the well, safe from harm's way. Maulānā then adds that everyone who is wise should chose the bottom a well, because spiritual joys are best attained in solitude, and there is no salvation in following on the world. In Section 31, the lion duly does his leap into the well to destroy the lion he saw reflected in the water, and Maulānā draws the inevitable moral required in animal fables, that the lion jumped into a well of his own making etc., and that one should never assume the weak are without a champion. But having honoured the ethical requirements of the *nīti* genre, Maulānā then produces a spiritually and psychologically penetrating seventeen verse passage, - addressed to the reader, and to the man of sorrow - in which he points out that the evil seen in others is really the evil of one's own nature, just as the lion realised at the bottom of the well that the lion he thought he saw, was in fact his own image. The section concludes with a prayer addressed to God. Section 32 is unashamedly triumphalist about the victory of the hare over the lion, and in Section 33 the animals gather round to praise him and to ask how he did it. "It was with God's help, for I am only a hare," he explained, "God gave me power, and light in my heart, and the light in my heart gave strength to hand and foot." Then comes Maulānā's voice warning not to put one trust in the changeable and cyclical but only in the kingdom beyond change. The final section, Section 34, compares the war against the *nafs* to the greater *jihād*, a war not winnable by hare, reason or intelligence. Since the *nafs* has the nature of Hell, only God has the power to conquer it. The true lion is he that conquers himself.

Reflecting on this discourse as a whole, it resembles more the first discourse rather than the second or the third. In the first, it is the goldsmith not the handmaiden who is killed, the *nafs* is redeemable with the help of the Divine Doctor and Love. In the second and third discourses,



there is naked evil, and the *nafs* is beyond redemption. Certainly in this discourse the lion is slain, but by God's giving the hare an inspiration, that is, by enabling the '*aql-i ma'ās* to access the wisdom of the '*aql-i ma'ād*. What was the inspiration ? It was so to arrange things that the *nafs-i ammārah* sees itself and does not like what it sees. Maulānā has made the lion a far more loveable and sympathetic character than either the evil vizier or the evil Jewish king. He wins the argument in the first ten sections, and piously not hypocritically; though angry at the delay, he doesn't just eat the hare but listens to its obsequious deceit; he is the victim of trickery. Of course, his own pride and egoism rather than the hare's cunning cause his demise, but to the reader, and to the *sālik*, he feels redeemable. But more than that, he feels well worth redeeming, well worth transforming into a faithful instrument of action, different from, but in harmony with, the spirit. And Maulānā explains how it can be done: through cleansing the eye of the heart so that it can receive from the '*aql-i ma'ād*, from which perspective there can be nothing but dissatisfaction with the picture shown of one's self. This dissatisfaction is the real beginning of the path. It would be possible to interpret the self-induced death of the lion in the well as *fanā*, but to do so is arguably premature, it would be to set *fanā* too low, and certainly would be out of sequence within Maulānā's careful unfolding of the Sufi *sulūk*.

### Discourse Five: The Story of the Ambassador of Rūm and the Caliph 'Umar

#### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 1390-1414 (25) *How the ambassador of Rum came to the Commander of the faithful, 'Umar, may God be well-pleased with him, and witnessed the gifts of grace with which 'Umar was endowed.* a] (6) The ambassador of Rum went to see the Caliph 'Umar and asked where his palace was. He was told 'Umar had no palace except an illumined spirit which he could not see because he had hair grown over the eye of his heart which first needed to be purged. b] (12) A spirit purged of desire will see the Divine Presence and Porch, like Muḥammad who saw everywhere the Face of God, which you cannot, being subject to Satan's promptings. God is as manifest as the sun or moon to every open heart. Put fingers on your eyes and you see nothing yet the world is still there, so the fault lies with the fingers of your evil self. Take off the finger and see what you wish. Man is eye, the rest is skin; sight is seeing the Beloved, otherwise the eye is better blind. The ordinary beloved is better out of sight. c] (7) The Ambassador became more full of longing hearing this and sought him everywhere having become a seeker. He was told 'Umar was asleep under a tree.

**Section Two** 1415-1426 (12) *How the ambassador of Rum found the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar sleeping under the palm tree.* a] (12) He saw 'Umar asleep and felt in his heart the contraries of love and awe. He had a question and answer session within himself. Why do I, a hero, feel such awe for one unarmed and asleep ? This is awe of God not of a darwish. Everyone, man and jinn, are afraid of one who is afraid of God and made that his religion. He waited reverently till 'Umar woke up.

**Section Three** 1427-1445 (19) *How the ambassador of Rum saluted the Commander of the Faithful.* a] (6) 'Umar returned the ambassador's salaams and removed his fear and put him at ease. b] (7) He spoke then of the Friend, of His loving kindness, and of *hāl* and *maqām*. *Hāl* is the unveiling of a beautiful bride which all nobles may witness, *maqām* is when the king is alone with the bride in the bridal chamber. *Hāl* was common for sufis but *maqām* rare. And he spoke of the stations on the way and the journeys of the spirit. c] (7) He spoke of the time before creation when the simurgh of the spirit enjoyed the bounty of Divine grace, and found the ambassador eager for mysteries. 'Umar as the Shaikh found him adept and that he had the capacity to receive good guidance so he sowed the good seed in good soil.

**Section Four** 1446-1479 (34) *How the ambassador of Rum questioned the Commander of the Faithful.* a] (5) He asked 'Umar how the spirit came to the earth, how the infinite bird got into the cage. 'Umar replied God recited spells over the non-existences and they danced joyously into existence and then he recited another spell and they rushed back into non-existence. b] (5) God spoke to the rose that it should laugh; to the stone that it be a cornelian; to the body that it be spirit; to the sun first to be radiant and then to eclipse; to the cloud that it should weep and to the earth to remain regardful and silent. c] (8) To man's ear God has spoken a riddle so that he is perplexed: should he do what God commands or the opposite. God determines for each the most likely choice he will make. If you seek not to be in this perplexity use the spiritual ear and eye which can receive *wahy*, inspiration, other than through sense-perception, reason and opinion. d] (17) I am fed up with *jabr*, compulsion, this is not compulsion but union with God. They alone know its true meaning whose spiritual eyes are open because their freewill and compulsion is quite different since they transform a drop into a pearl. For you freewill and compulsion are simply *khiyāl*, fancy, for them it becomes the light of Majesty.

**Section Five** 1480-1508 (29) *How Adam imputed that fault ( which he had committed) to himself, saying, "Oh Lord we have done wrong" and how Iblis imputed his own sin to God, saying, "Because Thou has Seduced me".* a] (8) There are our manifest actions and the actions of

God which brings our actions into existence. Reason cannot see both at the same time, only God comprehends both. b] (8) Satan hid his own act by blaming God; Adam knew of God's action but blamed himself. After his repentance God said was it not my Fore-ordainment so why take the blame ? Adam said I was afraid, so I maintained respect. God said, as I have to you, for reverence begets reverence. c] (12) A hand may tremble involuntarily and one shakes because you knock it, but even though God creates both actions, they are incomparable. You are sorry for having knocked his hand but he too is sorry for his tremor. This is an intellectual quest, the spiritual quest is quite different. In the first, the intellect and senses deal with effects and secondary causes, the spiritual comes from illumination and has no concern for premise, conclusion, argument or proof.

**Section Six**            1509-1514 (6) *Commentary on " And He is with you wheresoever ye be "*  
a] (6) If we come to ignorance, that is His prison; to knowledge, His Palace; to sleep, His intoxication; to wakefulness, His protection. Weeping is His bounty; laughter His lightning; war, His might; peace, His love. What are we in this complicated world where nothing is single but He ? Nothing at all.

**Section Seven**            1515-1528(14) *How the ambassador asked Umar, concerning the cause of the tribulation suffered by spirits in these bodies of clay.* a] (2) The ambassador asked what was the wisdom in imprisoning the spirit in this dirty place, binding spirit to bodies ? b] (12) 'Umar said your profound question traps meaning in a word for a benefit, but you don't see the benefit of God. He is the Author of benefit so He must see the benefit for us. You are a part whose act of speaking is beneficial so why do you deny benefit to the Whole ? If speech is not beneficial, be silent; if it is, give thanks, which is a duty for all. The meaning in poetry has no direction; it is like a sling, not under control.

**Section Eight**            1529-1546 (18) *On the inner sense of " Let him who desires to sit with the God sit with the Sufis.* a] (6) The ambassador became beside himself and distraught at the power of God. He arrived at this *ḥāl* and it became a *maqām*. When the torrent reached the sea, it became the sea; he became alive, endowed with knowledge, filled with light and knowledge. b] (6) Happy the man freed from himself who unites with one alive, and alas for those who consort with the dead. Flee to the *Qur'ān* of God and mingle with the prophets who are the fishes in God's holy sea. Accept it and read of the prophets and the bird, your soul, will be distressed in its cage. c] (6) If the bird in the cage does not seek to escape, it is from ignorance. Prophets are those who have escaped and tell us how to do it. They tell us the way to escape so that you

should not be wretched to be let out of the cage of worldly reputation, which is like a chain of iron.

### *Analysis*

The structure of this story is of eight sections in parallel arranged chiasmically. Section I tells of the ambassador who becomes a yearning seeker on hearing about 'Umar, the Perfect Man, who has no palace but an illumined spirit, and Section VIII has this *ḥāl* become *maqām* in a permanent transformation of his nature. Also parallel is the expectation of the ambassador that someone as famous as 'Umar must have a palace and the final part of Section VIII about the 'cage of reputation' which both parallels Section I and also foreshadows the next story. Having become a seeker in Section I, in Section II the ambassador is full of questions seeing 'Umar asleep and has a question and answer session with himself. In the parallel Section VII 'Umar is awake and the question and answer session continues with 'Umar answering and using the question itself as an illustration of the answer about trapping meaning in the form of words for benefit as souls are imprisoned in bodies. Sections III and VI are parallel in that III introduces the topic of the spirit's journey before becoming embodied, and this is developed in VI, since this is the 'tale' to which VI explicitly states it returns. In III the ambassador is 'eager for mysteries' and in VI there is given one of the greatest mysteries of all for a human being. Finally IV and V are in parallel through the theme of *jabr* and free will and the two levels of causation.

### **The Structure of Discourse Five**

- Section I Ambassador finds 'Umar has no palace, only spirit; heart needs purging to see
- Section II As a seeker finds 'Umar asleep; feels love and awe; self-questioning; he waits
- Section III 'Umar relaxes him; speaks of stages of spirit; time pre-creation; seeker eager
- Section IV God sent spirits to earth; gave man riddle; *jabr* and free-will *khiyāl*; *jabbārī*
- Section V Our acts caused by God's acts; only God sees both; Adam; intellect and spirit
- Section VI Knowledge, ignorance, sleep, waking etc. God's; only He single; we nothing
- Section VII Why spirit trapped like meaning in word; for benefit; don't deny God benefit
- Section VIII Ambassador's *ḥāl* became *maqām*; alive, free; follow Prophets; escape cage

## *Interpretation*

The first thing to note about this discourse is that it is totally different from the first four in both tone and subject matter; the *nafs-i ammārah* is no longer the predominant theme. In their undetermined time frames, the first four all apparently belonged to the pre-Islamic period, the *jāhiliyya*, the pre-Muslim period of ignorance, which is appropriate in that they dealt with the *nafs-i ammārah*. This discourse belongs to the early Muslim period of ‘Umar, and its literal surface subject is about a distinguished *kāfir* meeting the Caliph. Its symbolic subject, as a number of commentators suggest, is the first encounter of a potential spiritual seeker with his future spiritual guide and teacher, his Shaikh, a *walī*, saint, or the Perfect Man. This is foreshadowed in the last verse of the previous discourse when it says: “The true lion is he who conquers himself.”

Section 1 starts from the ambassador’s arrival in Medina with his horse and baggage, looking for the Caliph ‘Umar’s palace; it ends with horse and baggage forgotten, with the ambassador full of yearning, *sauq*, set only on finding ‘Umar. The change was produced by hearing that ‘Umar had no physical palace, only an illumined spirit, graces that he would not be able to see because the eye of his heart had first to be purged of the desires and defects of his *nafs*. Were that to be done, he would see the Beloved everywhere, for he would become an eye only for seeing God, and the rest of him would just be worthless skin. He wonders how there could be a man of such graces in the world, yet hidden like spirit from the world. This awareness of one’s own defects and yearning to find a true friend of God, as exemplified in the ambassador, is the prior condition for a potential seeker to find his Sufi Shaikh.

When he finds ‘Umar asleep he stands quietly at a distance. Sleep here could well symbolise that ‘Umar was asleep to the world but awake to God. The ambassador experiences the contraries of love and awe, and wonders why he, a hardened warrior and familiar of kings, should be trembling in the presence of one asleep. He decides that it is awe, not for this dervish, but of God, since everyone fears someone who is afraid of God and makes that fear his practice. In Section 3, ‘Umar takes away this fear and then gives spiritual instruction: about God, the Friend, and His loving kindness; about *ḥāl* and the rarer *maqām*; the stages of the soul and the journeys of the spirit; and of the time before existence. Maulānā says: “The Shaikh was adept and the disciple eager.” The Shaikh has found in the potential *sālik* the capacity to receive guidance. Section 4 sees the ambassador ask ‘Umar how the spirit came into the world from above. In a wide-ranging answer, ‘Umar tells how God cast spells to bring everything from non-existence into existence; how to a perplexed person He presented the choice, to do what He says, or not;

but how He also gave each such person an inclination to do one of the two; how those who have cleared their spiritual ear to apprehend God's mysteries and Will, can receive *wahy*, inspiration, which is beyond sense perception, discursive reason and opinion; how to follow the Will of God in this way is not compulsion but union; how those in whose hearts God has opened the spiritual eye have different qualities, vision and perspectives; how for them free will and compulsion are the dawning of God's light but for others it is only an intellectual matter; and how great is the Power of God. In all of this the Shaikh is awakening the new pupil to what inner possibilities are open to him.

In Section 5 there is an opening passage, on which Nicholson comments, concerning how God's act brings our actions into existence and how Adam and Satan handled the situation differently. After a parable demonstrating the difference between free will and compulsion, the Shaikh, or Maulānā, dismisses this as just an intellectual quest, quite different from the spiritual quest. The intellectual quest is concerned with proofs, premises and entailments but deals only with secondary causes, whereas the spiritual quest seeks illumination and what is beyond wonder. In this way Maulānā places the Power and Almightyness of God at the end of Section 4 and the beginning of Section 5; then, in both sections, he moves back through the intellectual understanding of free will and compulsion, to the spiritual quest and perspective and the dawning of God's Light in the heart. Within these two sections, then, there is quite an elaborate chiasmus at the very heart of the discourse. Section 6, which is significantly six verses - an important number for Maulānā - has a heading from the *Qur'ān*. As Nicholson writes: "... the world itself and the soul's experience in the world are nothing but epiphanies (*tajalliyāt*) of the all-encompassing Divine Knowledge and Power, through and in which we live and move and have our being." [commentary on verse 1509] But while that is so, what function does this play in the initial instruction to a Sufi novice? It is how he can and should view everything he experiences: everywhere the Face of God, and himself as nothing. This the novice can begin at once to try, if only to provide a future ideal to aim for. Nicholson suggest the opening reference to the 'story' refers back to Section 4, which, in a way, it does, but equally it follows the heading taken from the *Qur'ān*, from which Maulānā would wish to claim he never had departed. The parallelism, however, requires this section to complete, exemplify, or fulfil Section 3 and the subtle discourses 'Umar addressed to the ambassador, and it is possible to see how it does in a number of possible matters: the holy attributes of God, His loving kindness, *ḥāl* and *maqām*, and the journeys of the spirit, for instance.

Section 7 has the ambassador asking 'Umar to explain why the spirits have to suffer in bodies of clay. 'Umar answers in terms of benefit, using the analogy of confining meaning in words to

good purpose. Just because the ambassador was blind to God's good purpose in so arranging things, why should he, a part, deny benefit to the whole, especially as He is the origin of all benefit. 'Umar's final line (verse 1524) is a characteristic Shaikh's way of concluding his discourse: "If there is no benefit in speech, do not speak; if there is, leave off making objections and give thanks." The first thing to note is the importance attached by Sufis to being aware of and carefully controlling one's speech. The second point is that objecting to the tribulations of the spirits is to deny Divine Providence and Wisdom, as Nicholson comments. The third point is the need to give thanks, not just to God for so arranging things, but also to 'Umar for a wonderful exposition and preparation of the ambassador novice. It is the first lesson in *adab*, seemliness to God and all of creation. Maulānā's voice then joins in on the subject of giving thanks and not disputing, and concludes with a final verse amounting to: poetry can not fully express this; live it to find the meaning. The parallelism of this section is with section 2. As proposed in the analysis, both are in the question and answer mode, which examples elsewhere in the Mathnawī suggest constitutes an accepted mode of parallelism. There is contrastive parallelism also, in that in the first section the ambassador was questioning silently to himself, whereas in this section the interlocutor is 'Umar and the questions and answers are, appropriately, in speech. Finally in the first section, the ambassador feels awe at seeing this great spirit in a sleeping body, so, when he objects to this arrangement, he is rightly told to be grateful. Section 8 says so much just in its heading to confirm that this discourse is about the first meeting with a Shaikh. The ambassador had certainly taken in all that had been said about the Power of God, but, as Maulānā foreshadowed in the final line of the previous section, he lived it too in experience to the point that he became beside himself and experienced a spiritual mystical state which is not infrequent at the first meeting with one Shaikh or afterwards, say, in a dream. Whether the analysis is right to suggest that the initial state, *ḥāl*, experienced by the ambassador in Section 1 had been transformed in Section 8 into a *maqām* in Section 8, is impossible to verify and remains no more than a speculative possibility. Verses 1535-6 conclude this discourse strongly and lead on to the foreshadowing of the next discourse. The *Qur'ān* contains the states of the prophets, the spirits who have escaped from their cages, who tell of the way to escape. Reading it will make the bird of one's soul distressed in its cage. The way to escape from the cage of reputation is to make oneself ill and wretched. In this it is both a looking back to 'Umar, who in the first section had clearly escaped from reputation through his inner and outer poverty, and a looking forward to the parrot in the next discourse.

## Discourse Six: The Story of the Merchant and the Parrot

### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 1547-1574 (28) *The story of the merchant to whom the parrot gave a message for the parrots of India on the occasion of his going (thither) to trade.* a] (8) A merchant had a parrot whom he asked what present he wanted the merchant to bring him from India. The parrot said please tell the parrots there about my plight, that a parrot here is in prison by Divine destiny and yearns for you. She greets you and asks for justice and guidance. b] (8) She says is it right that I should be die in grief in separation from you; that I should be imprisoned while you are in the rose-garden? Remember this poor bird and drink a cup in my memory. c] (8) What of the covenant and promises? If you have forsaken your servant because of inadequate service, your cruelty is in fact sweet. I am in love with the contraries violence and gentleness. d] (4) If I escape from this thorn and enter the garden of joy, I shall moan like the nightingale. What a nightingale that eats thorns and roses together; it must be a dragon since it make unsweet things sweet because of its Love. He is a lover of the Universal and Himself the Universal; in love with Himself, and seeking His own Love.

**Section Two** 1575-1586 (12) *Description of the wings of the birds that are Divine Intelligences.* a] (12=3x4) Such is the parrot of the soul, but where is the confidant of the spiritual birds ? When he moans, without thanksgiving or complaint, and says: "Oh My Lord." then from God comes a hundred cries of "Here am I." To God his backsliding is better than obedience; his infidelity better than all faiths. Every moment he has an ascension to God. His form is on earth and his spirit is in 'No-place' beyond all imaginings. He has control over place and No-place. But stop explanation – God knows best – return to the bird and India and the merchant who accepted the message to her congeners.

**Section Three** 1587-1602 (16) *How the merchant saw the parrots of India in the plain and delivered the parrot's message.* a] (3) In India, the merchant saw some parrots on a plain and gave voice, delivering the message, whereupon one of the parrots fell over and died. b] (3) The merchant repented and said he had killed the parrot who must have been a relative to his, two bodies and one spirit. Why had he killed this parrot with his speech? c] (5) The tongue is like a stone which produces fire so don't strike iron against it to tell a story or boast. You can't see the cotton ready to burn but a single word can set a whole world on fire. Wicked are those



who speak blind to the consequences. d] (5) Spirits have the breath of Jesus, but in bodies one breath is a wound, another a plaster. If the bodies were removed every breath would be like the Messiah's. If you wish to utter sweet words, refrain from desire, do not eat this sweetmeat. The intelligent seek patience and self-control, not the sweetmeat children crave, so that they may reach Heaven.

**Section Four**            1603-1614 (12) *Commentary on the saying of Faridu'ddin 'Attar, - "Thou art a Sensualist, O heedless one , drink blood (mortify thyself) amidst the dust ( of thy bodily existence). For if the spiritualist drink a poison, it will be (to him as ) an antidote."* a] (12=3x4) A saint can drink poison because he has spiritual health so that he doesn't need abstinence but the seeker is still in a fever. The Prophet said: "O Seeker, beware of contending with just anyone." You are in part a Nimrod, only contend with fire when you are an Abraham. If you can't swim don't dive into the sea boastfully. The saint fetches pearls from the bottom of the sea; he turns earth into gold. The imperfect turns gold into ashes. The saint is hand-in-hand with God, the imperfect with the Devil. The saint turns ignorance into knowledge; the imperfect knowledge into ignorance. Whatever an ill man takes becomes illness but for the saint infidelity becomes religion. If you are on foot don't contend with a horseman or you will lose your head.

**Section Five**            1615-1648 (34) *How the magicians paid respect to Moses, on whom be peace, saying, "What dost thou command? Wilt thou cast down thy rod first , or shall we?"* a] ( 6) The magicians contended with Moses but let Moses go first. He said they should cast down their tricks first and in doing so won them to the religion. b] (11) To the saint every mouthful, every saying, is lawful but if you are not perfect do not eat or speak. You are an ear and God told ears to be silent. A new-born baby is silent, it is all ear, until it learns to speak. In order to speak one must first hear, since there is no speech independent of hearing except for that of the Creator who is the Originator and needs no master. The rest need a master and a pattern. c] (6) If you can hear this discourse become a Seeker and shed tears because by means of tears Adam escaped from blame and tears are the speech of the penitent. He came to earth to weep so if you are from him then seek forgiveness. The garden blooms from the heat of grief and the water of tears. d] (11) But what do you know of tears you bread-lover. Empty of bread you will fill with jewels. Wean your soul from the Devil's milk and consort with the Angel. If you are gloomy it is from the Devil; light comes from what is lawful. From the lawful morsel comes wisdom and love, from the unlawful envy and ignorance. The morsel is seed whose fruit is thoughts; the morsel is sea, thoughts are its pearls. From the lawful morsel is the inclination to serve God and go yonder.

**Section Six** 1649-1690 (42) *How the merchant related to the parrot what he had witnessed on the part of the parrots of India.* a] (9) The merchant returned from India and gave out his presents but the parrot wanted to know what had happened. The merchant said he was full of remorse for delivering such an inconsiderate message since on hearing its pain one parrot trembled and died, and he was sorry he had said it but what was the use in repenting afterwards. b] (11) A word from the tongue is like an arrow from a bow, unrecoverable. It leaves its source which should have been stopped and lays waste the whole world. Our actions bring forth unseen results which are in fact from God though they are attributed to us. Zayd shot 'Amr and he was in pain for a year before he died. God created the pain but call Zayd a murderer and impute the pain to him. It is like this with sowing and speaking and laying snares and sexual intercourse; their results are determined by the will of God. c] (12) . But the saints can turn back an arrow that has been fired with power from God. When a saint repents he can make what has been said forgotten as in the *Qur'ān*: "They made you forget." The miraculous actions depend on their mystical seeing and understanding, so Man is nothing but the pupil of the eye. But I must not say more, the Perfect Man prevents me. d] (10) Recollection and forgetting depend on that Perfect One and every night he empties hearts of good and evil thoughts while by day he fills the heart with pearls. All skills and thoughts return next day to their owners, good to good and evil to evil just as on the day of Resurrection. At dawn the skills and thoughts return to their owners bringing useful things from other cities to their own.

**Section Seven** 1691-1762 (72) *How the parrot heard what those parrots had done , and died in the cage , and how the merchant made lament for her.* a] (3) When the parrot heard what the Indian parrot had done it trembled and fell over cold. The merchant sprang up and beat his breast. b] (23) O alas for my sweet-voiced friend and confidant who I gained so cheaply and quickly turned away from. O tongue you have done me great damage, you are both a treasure and a disease without remedy. You have made my bird fly away. These cries of alas are caused by the idea of the Beloved and my state of separation. It was the jealousy of God against which there is no device. Where is there a heart not shattered by God's Love ? Alas for my clever bird who interpreted my thoughts and consciousness and told me what should come to me so I might remember. c] (10) That parrot is hidden within you whose voice is inspired and was before creation. She takes joy and gives joy. You were burning the soul for the sake of the body but I am burning with love. How can such a moon be hidden beneath the clouds. I am burning with separation which is like a lion too great for the meadow. d] (8) I am thinking of rhymes but my Beloved says think only of me. Words I will throw into confusion to speak with you. I will tell you the word I did not tell Adam or Abraham, which Gabriel did not know nor Jesus spoke. e] (7) I found individuality in non-individuality. All kings are enslaved to their slaves, all loved

ones to their lovers. Water seeks the thirsty as the thirsty seek water. f] (9) He is your lover so be silent. Dam the flood of ecstasy. He who is drowned in God wish to be more so, but it is wrong to distinguish joy and woe. It is lawful for Him to slay the whole world. We gained the price and the blood-price and hastened to gamble our soul away. g] (12) The life of lovers consists in death. I sought to win His heart but he put me off saying I held Him in disdain because I had bought Him so cheaply and he that buys cheaply gives cheaply. I am drowned in love but have told it briefly otherwise you and my tongue would be consumed. I am sour-faced out of sweetness, silent out of fullness of speech and I have told but one of a hundred mysteries.

**Section Eight**      1763-1813 ( 51) *Commentary on the saying of the Hakim ( Sana'i): "Any thing that causes thee to be left behind on the Way, what matter whether it be infidelity or faith? Any form that causes thee to fall from the Beloved, what matter if it be ugly or beautiful?" - and (a discourse) on the meaning of the words of the Prophet : "Verily , Sa'd is jealous and I am more jealous than Sa'd, and Allah is more jealous than I; and because of His jealousy He hath forbidden foul actions both outward and inward."* a] (10) The whole world is jealous because God is superior to the world in jealousy. The king is jealous of anyone who having seen His face, prefers the mere scent. The root of all jealousies is in God; ours is but a mere shadow. b] (10) I will now complain of the cruelty of that fickle Beauty. I wail because He wants the two worlds to wail and I am in love with my pain. People think it is tears they shed for Him but they are pearls. My heart is not really complaining, nor is it really tormented, this is its poor pretence. c] (10) You are the dais and I am the threshold, but not really, for where the Beloved is there is no We or I. You contrived this I and We so that you might play the game of worship with Yourself, that we should become one soul and at last be submerged in the Beloved. Do Thou come, O Lord of the Creative Word, Thou who transcends 'Come' and all speech. The body can only imagine You as a body and invents sadness and joy, nor can the heart see You relying on these two borrowed concepts. d] (10) In the garden of Love there are many fruits other than these two; Love is greater than these. Tell the tale of the soul rent in pieces; leave the tale of the rose, tell of the nightingale that is parted from the rose. e] (5) Our state is not caused by grief and joy, nor from fancy and imagination but it is rare. It does not come from wrong-doing nor from well-doing for these like grief and joy come into existence and everything that exists also dies. God is their heir. f] (7) It is Dawn, O Supporter of the dawn, ask pardon for me from Ḥusām al-Dīn. By Thy light we drink the wine of Manşūr; what other wine could produce rapture ? Wine became drunk with us not we with it. We are as bees and the body is as wax; we have made the body cell by cell.

**Section Nine**            1814-1824 (11) *Reverting to the tale of the merchant who went to trade (in India).* a] (11) What happened to the merchant ? He was on fire with grief and was thrashing about like a drowning man. The Friend loves this agitation, since it is better to struggle than to lie still. The King of all is never idle so exert yourself to the utmost since the King sees into the soul.

**Section Ten**            1825-1844 (20) *How the merchant cast the parrot out of the cage and how the dead parrot flew away.* a] (5) The merchant threw out the parrot and it suddenly flew to a lofty bough. The merchant was amazed and asked it what it had learnt from the Indian parrot. b] (3) The parrot said that by her act she implied that I should abandon my voice and love for my master because my voice had put me into this cage and I should be as dead in order to obtain release. c] (12) A grain the birds will eat, a flower the children pluck so hide the grain and the flower. A hundred fates await anyone who gives his beauty to auction; plots, envies, foes and even friends take his life. Take shelter in God who will shelter the spirit so that fire and water and stone will become your army as they did for Moses and Noah, Abraham and John the Baptist.

**Section Eleven**            1845-1848 (4) *How the parrot bade farewell to the merchant and flew away.* a] (4) The parrot gave him some advice and then bade farewell. The merchant said God protect you, you have shown me a new way. This new way I will take, he said to himself, for it is towards the light and my soul is no less than that of the parrot

**Section Twelve**            1849-1877 (29) *The harmfulness of being honoured by the people and of becoming conspicuous.* a] (29) The body is cage-like and when it is affected by those who come and go it is a thorn to the soul. If you are praised it becomes the source of arrogance; if blamed, your heart will burn. Both praise and blame will last for many days and will deceive the soul. Be lowly of spirit through meekness, never domineer. Otherwise when the beauty has gone your companions will treat you like a ghost and even the devil will not approach you because you are worse than a devil. Then they clung to you, now you are like this, they fled.

### ***Analysis***

This discourse is foreshadowed by the last seven verses in the Discourse Five, which address themselves first to the *Qur'ān*, saying that, reading the stories of the prophets, the bird of your soul should seek to escape from its cage by following the prophets' way. Their way to escape from this narrow cage was to make themselves ill and very wretched in order to escape from

reputation. "Worldly reputation is a strong chain; in the Way how is this less than a chain of iron?" (1546)

The discourse has twelve sections and is organised by chiasmus and parallelism. It completes the first half of Book One. The next discourse, which begins the second half, also has twelve sections. In between comes a separate section explaining "Whatever God Wills comes to pass." This section not only links the two discourses, but it is the central point of Book One and thereby connects Discourse One with Discourse Twelve which, in their own ways, both concern the Will of God. It is interesting that this linking section has exactly the same number of verses as the opening proem of the *Mathnawī*.

In this discourse, Section 1 and Section 12 are in parallel and accord with the foreshadowing. Section 1 introduces the parrot of the soul in the cage sending a message to the parrots of India lamenting its captivity and its separation from the free spirits, followed by twelve verses in Maulānā's voice including "If I escape from this thorn and enter the garden, I shall moan like a nightingale." The thorn here is unspecified, but Section 12, whose heading itself accords with the foreshadowing, reads: "The body is cage-like: the body, amidst the cajoleries of those who come in and go out, became a thorn to the soul." It then goes on to elaborate on how praise and blame create this thorn and deceive the soul. Lowliness of spirit and meekness is recommended as the remedy. Section 2 speaks of the other parrots, the free spirits or Divine Intelligences, and their relationship with God. It is in parallel with Section 11 in which the parrot, now free from its cage, gives spiritual advice and then flies off to freedom, as a Divine Intelligence. Section 3 is closely parallel with Section 10. The first parallelism is that the behaviour of the Indian parrot in acting dead in Section 3 is explained in Section 10 as telling the parrot to abandon his voice, which had put him in the cage, and to be as dead in order to obtain release. The second parallelism is that the merchant's tongue apparently had killed the parrot and there is a warning in Section 3 never to be blind to the consequences of what you say or you may set the world on fire. If you want to utter sweet words refrain from desire and practice self-control and patience so you can reach Heaven. This parallels Section 10 in that the parrot is in the cage because of its uttering sweet words and on account of its voice.

Section 4 parallels Section 9 in that the first says only a saint can do without abstinence and self-control, while the seeker needs it since he is still in a fever. As such he should not contend with the sea or fire etc. In the second, the merchant appears as a seeker on fire with grief and thrashing about like a drowning man, with the comment that the Friend loves this agitation. It further urges effort and struggle. Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 form a chiasmic block of four longer

sections, teaching story, story teaching, climaxing with the name of Ḥusām al-Dīn. Section 5 is parallel with Section 8. Section 5 says unless you are perfect be silent and a hearer because only God's Word does not need a master and a pattern. Become a seeker and shed tears, eat only the lawful. Section 8 lifts to a different level, to the level of the Lord of the Creative Word who transcends all speech, where what seem to be tears are in fact pearls, where Love transcends the lawful and unlawful and all contraries and where there is the master and pattern, the Perfect Man. It is the pattern from this level by which we make our bodies cell by cell. Section 6 is parallel with Section 7 in the most obvious sense that in 6 the merchant tells what the Indian parrot did, and in 7 his own parrot did exactly the same. In 6 the word is fired from the tongue like an arrow, unrecoverable except by the Perfect Man who can correct and cause to forget. In 7 the merchant again blames his tongue, but thereafter the section lifts to a higher level and there is further treatment of words in that Maulānā's voice says he is thinking of rhymes but the Beloved says think only of Him since He will throw words into confusion to speak with him and will tell him the word he did not even tell Adam or Abraham or Gabriel. Thus the discourse makes use of parallelism and chiasmus, with the second half operating mostly at a higher level of application than the first. It can also be read as three blocks of four sections.

### The Structure of Discourse Six

- Section One Parrot's message to Indian Parrots seeking help and guidance
- Section Two Indian parrots as free spirits and Divine Intelligences
- Section Three Indian parrot dies; dangers of the tongue; speak without desire
- Section Four Only saints can do without abstinence; seekers should be careful
- Section Five Be silent; listen; have a master; weep; deal only with the lawful
- Section Six Merchant tells what happened; remorse for tongue; saints can correct
- Section Seven Parrot also falls dead; merchant laments; separation; God transcends
- Section Eight God is jealous and transcends all speech and contraries; Perfect Man
- Section Nine The merchant on fire; thrashing like drowning man; exert yourself
- Section Ten Dead parrot flew off; message was to act dead; captivity from voice
- Section Eleven Parrot gives advice; flies off as free spirit; merchant converted
- Section Twelve Body is cage; through praise and blame deceives soul; be meek

## *Interpretation*

The commentators agree that the parrot is the spirit or soul; the Indian parrots are free spirits, the Divine Intelligences or the Prophets. The merchant symbolises both a seeker and the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the self which blames itself. The cage is both the body, embodied-ness, but also what Maulānā says it is, the cage of reputation, being imprisoned by what people say about one, whether praise or blame. The real difficulty with this discourse for the reader is how to situate it, especially as Maulānā in a number of long passages soars aloft in flights of wonderful mystical imagination, vision and explanation. In the sequence of discourses so far, four have dealt with the *nafs-i ammārah*, and Discourse Five has a noble and sensitive soul meet ‘Umar, as Perfect Man, also representing a responsive Sufi novice meeting his Shaikh for the first time, and ending in a spiritual experience of the Power of Almighty God. The context of this discourse is therefore, on the one hand, that of a Sufi novice at an early stage of his training; on the other, that of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the self that blames itself. Both are fully compatible one with another.

Nicholson’s commentary on this discourse is extensive, full of valuable information on particular points and passages, but it never treats it as a whole; as always, it is necessary but never sufficient. Looking at the discourse from the orientation just suggested, in Section 1, the scene is set narratively and spiritually, the *sālik* being given a view of the situation of his own *rūh*, spirit, suffering in prison, lamenting its isolation from the spiritual world, and like a separated lover complaining of infidelity and cruelty on the part of the Beloved, who really loves only Himself. Section 2 continues from this viewpoint of the *rūh*, but here it seems to be more about the spirits of saints and Shaikhs, prophets and the Perfect Man, whose form is on earth but whose spirit is in “no-place” beyond all imaginings. These are the Divine Intelligences, the parrots of India, the real congeners of the *sālik’s rūh*. Section 3 sees the Indian parrot fall as if dead and the merchant repenting, blaming himself for the tragedy because of what he said. This is the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, coupled with instruction about the real damage the tongue can do when it speaks without regard to the consequences. The instruction to the *sālik* about guarding the tongue leads to the subject of the need for self-control and to refrain from self-indulgence. This leads on in Section 4 to a clear differentiation between what is possible for a saint and what a *sālik* can do. The *sālik* needs abstinence, and is warned not to try going beyond his limitations out of self-conceit, because he is still the imperfect man not the Perfect Man. This section is twelve verses, six of admonitions for the *sālik* and six about the Perfect Man.

The second block of four sections begins with Section 5 in which the magicians contend with Moses, the Perfect Man, and have to acknowledge defeat. This is an example of going beyond

one's limitations, and failing. In the Perfect Man's mouth every mouthful and every saying is lawful, but since the *sālik* is imperfect, he should remain silent, and through silence learn how to speak. Only God follows no master, but the *sālik* should, for he has need of a pattern. He should don the darwish frock and follow Adam, weeping in a private place. He should eat only lawful food, for from that comes knowledge, wisdom, love and tenderness, as well as the inclination to serve God and ascend. Section 6 has the merchant telling the parrot what happened in India and how much he regrets what he said. Then Maulānā's voice instructs the *sālik*, again about the damage the tongue can do, but how only the saint can correct such mistakes because he is able to control what people remember and what they forget. This completes the first half of the discourse.

The second half of the discourse begins with Section 7 in which the merchant's parrot falls down dead. The merchant is totally distraught; to self-blame for his tongue, is now added loss and great pain. His speech from verse 1694 to 1716, ranges from his sadness at losing his bosom confidant, to heaping blame on his tongue, - a treasure and a disease without remedy, - to the recognition that his 'alas' was really for the Beloved and that it was the jealousy of God that has broken his heart, since His Love will not allow any rival. His intelligent parrot had been the interpreter of his thought and inmost consciousness. From verse 1717 to verse 1762, the voice is Maulānā's addressed to the *sālik*, apart from some verses attributed to God addressed to Maulānā. The *sālik* is told he too has a parrot hidden within, which he is burning to satisfy the body and the *nafs*. Maulānā also is burning but from love of God in separation. He wanted to produce poetry but then God told him to think of nothing but God, for words are thorns in the hedge of the vineyard. Maulānā is selfless and negated; he has found individuality in non-individuality. God loves his slaves, those ready to die for Him, those who prostrate themselves before Him and those intoxicated with love for Him. Maulānā speaks of ecstasies of love, of how he who is drowned in God wishes to be more drowned, but there is a price, since the life of lovers consists of death, the only way to win the Beloved's heart. Maulānā speaks of his transactions with the Beloved and that he is drowned in love. The *sālik* has been initiated into the way of love which dying to selfhood permits. The instruction and initiation continue in Section 8, when after an initial passage on God's jealousy, verses 1763-1772, Maulānā produces an outpouring of mystical love poetry that continues until dawn and verse 1813. Towards the end of this section, which completes the second block, comes the name of Ḥusām al-Dīn, supposedly his amanuensis, to whom he apologises for the lateness of the hour.

The final block returns to the merchant, with Section 9 devoted to his burning grief and anguish and his terrible agitation; it is a wonderful portrayal of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*. Section 10 has the



merchant throwing out the dead parrot, only to be amazed when it flies up to a branch and has a conversation. It explains that the Indian parrot had sent a message: “Your voice and affection for your master keep you in the cage, become dead like me to obtain your release.” Maulānā’s voice continues the explanation: if someone offers a skill or his beauty at auction, a hundred evil fates will overtake him, from enemies and even friends, so his lifetime will be taken up. Therefore flee to the shelter of God’s Grace which will, in contrast, grant only blessings. Section 11 has the parrot and the merchant saying goodbye to one another, and the merchant saying the parrot had taught him a new way which he will follow. The final section, Section 12, contains a wonderful analysis of the corrosive nature of both praise and blame and how they damage the soul, all in Maulānā’s voice. This section draws the moral from the animal fable, but not the discourse as a whole, at a spiritual and psychological level.

Finally, to consider the rhetorical structure of this discourse synoptically, it can be said that Maulānā has woven together three threads: an animal fable warning of the dangers of reputation and how to escape from the trap it creates; the nature of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*; and the training of a fairly new *sālik*. Although all three strands are interwoven, the narrative framework of the animal fable is found predominantly in the first three sections, the last three sections, and at the beginning of the two crucial central sections. The parrot is in the cage because of its voice. The message sent by the example of the Indian parrot is to pretend to be dead to obtain release. It works, and the moral is to remain inconspicuous and meek to avoid being put into the cage of reputation. The positioning of the sections make clear that the animal fable is the outer framing of the discourse. The *nafs-i lawwāmah* thread begins in the first half with the merchant in Sections 3 and 6 expressing great regret and remorse for having spoken as he did with its tragic consequence. But it is the second half of the discourse, in Sections 7 and 9, that the self-blame reaches fever-pitch, when he thinks he has killed his own parrot: that is, he becomes aware that he might have destroyed his own soul. The third thread is that of the training of a fairly new *sālik*. Here again there is a significant difference between the first and second half. In the first half, the training is very sober. Taking up the voice theme which connects all three threads, the *sālik* is urged to prefer silence and to watch his speech very carefully. Of him, abstinence is required and the avoidance of self-indulgence. He requires a master and needs a pattern to follow: to wear the darwish frock, to weep in private, to eat and follow only what is lawful, to recognise that he is imperfect and not to strive beyond his limitations out of conceit. This is his training in the first half of the discourse, but, in the second half, the training consists of the awakening of love for God within the *sālik* by means, here, of flights of wonderful mystical love poetry and the example of Maulānā, no doubt also augmented by the striking Maulawī use of *samā’*. Sobriety in the first half, ecstasy in the second: two aspects of the training connected or

made possible by the central point of the discourse, where the two parrots pretend to be dead. What does this mean for the *sālik*? Here there is no need to speculate, since Maulānā explains in verse 1909: “The meaning of dying (as conveyed) by the parrot was supplication (*niyāz*, self-abasement): make yourself dead in supplication and poverty of spirit (*faqr*).”

### Link Passage and the Centre of Book One

**Section One**      1878-1912 (35) *Explanation of (the Tradition )* “*Whatsoever God wills cometh to pass.*” a] (5) We are nothing without the Favours of God; without these Favours and those of the elect, even an angel is nothing. “O God, Thy Bounty fulfils every need and Thy guidance is that no one should be mentioned but Thee. Thou hast covered up many of our faults until now. May the drop of knowledge Thou gavest us, be united with Thy seas. b] (5) Save the drop of knowledge in my soul from carnality and the body’s clay, before clay and wind sweep it away. Even then Thou can retrieve it since a drop that vanishes into non-existence will flee back at Thy Call. c] (8) Thy Decree is drawing forth the many opposites locked in mutual destruction and caravans constantly speed from non-existence to existence. At night, all thoughts and understanding are naught, and plunge in the deep Sea, only to surface at dawn. In autumn, leaves and boughs plunge into the sea of Death and the black crow mourns their passing, but then Thy Edict requires death to give back what it devoured.” d] (13) In you there is constant autumn and spring. Look at the garden full of fresh green flowers: their scent is these words from Universal Intelligence which guides your way and will deliver you. The scent of Joseph cures blindness and opened the eye of Jacob. You are no Joseph, so be a Jacob and grieve and weep. In the presence of Joseph don’t pretend to beauty, offer nothing but the sighs and supplication (*niyāz*) of Jacob. e] (4) The meaning of the death of the parrot was *niyāz*, supplication, self-abasement, so make yourself dead in self-abasement and poverty, *faqr*, of spirit so that the Breath of Jesus may revive you and make you fair and blessed. How can a rock be covered with spring flower ? Become earth so multi-coloured flowers may bloom. You have been rock long enough: just for a try, be earth!

### Comment

This is a wonderful sustained passage in praise of the Greatness and Majesty of God and all His Bounty. From God’s Edict everything is constantly re-born. Universal Intelligence, ‘*aql-i kullī*, cures spiritual blindness and revives the spirit. The way to access it is to make oneself dead

through self-abasement, *niyāz*, - the meaning of the death of the parrot - and spiritual poverty and humility. These are the preconditions for the Breath of Jesus to revive and produce spiritual resurrection. This section, at the very centre of Book One, fulfils several functions: it links Discourse 6 to Discourse 7; it connects the beginning of the book to the end of the book; it acts as the gateway to the second half of the book. The link between the two discourses is made by looking back to the parrot and forward to the state of the Harper. In both discourses, the subject, at one level, is the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the self which blames itself, and the theme of *niyāz*. This theme, *niyāz*, together with *faqr*, spiritual poverty, is also the gateway to the second half of Book One. Another central theme of this section is spiritual resurrection, which foreshadows at least Discourse 7, and maybe the whole of the second half. It is interesting too that Discourse 6 ends with verses about the Devil's work, and Discourse 7 begins with a section on God's Work. In between comes this section with the title: "Whatever God Wills Comes to Pass." This title, coming as it does at the very centre of the book, connects Discourse 1 with Discourse 12, through the major theme of the Will of God and killing. It is astonishing how meticulous Maulānā has been in his planning of this section so that it can fulfil all three functions at the same time. Needless to say, the commentators do not refer to the central position of this section and the role that it plays, but it offers even more evidence of the correctness of the hypothesis.

### **Discourse Seven: The Story of the old Harper in the times of 'Umar**

#### **Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content**

**Section One**            1913-1950 (38) *The story of the old Harper who in the time of 'Umar, may God be well-pleased with him, on a day when he was starving played his harp for God's sake in the graveyard.* a] (6) There was a Harper whose breath was an ornament and whose voice was so beautiful he was like Isrāfīl whose voice and song bring the souls of the dead into their bodies. b] (6) The prophets have a note, unheard by the sensual ear, which brings life to the seeker. The peri has a note man cannot hear, but both the notes of man and peri are of this world; higher than both is the note of the heart. c] (12) The notes of the saints say: O particles of not-being rise up from vain imaginings; your everlasting soul was not born nor grew in this world of generation and corruption. At the slightest note the souls will lift their heads up from their tombs. Listen closely for that note since it is not far off. The saints are the Isrāfīl of now who bring to life dead souls in the body's grave. They recognise this voice as different, the work of the voice of God, calling them who were dead and decayed to arise. The voice of the Friend, which calls those rotten with death inside to return from non-existence, is from God even if from the saint's throat. d] (6) God becomes the saint's tongue, his eye, his pleasure and his wrath and God says

sometimes it is you and sometimes it is I, but whichever, God is the illuminating Sun whose Breath removes difficulties and darkness. e] (8) To Adam he showed the Names, and Adam showed the Names to others; it doesn't matter whether you get them from Adam or from Himself. If a lamp is lit from a candle, its light derives from the candle and from the lamp and all the lamps that have been lit from that lamp. Either derive the light from the present saints or from those who have gone before.

**Section Two**      1951-2011 (61) *Explanation of the Tradition, "Verily your Lord hath, during the days of your time, certain breathings: oh, address yourselves to receive them."* a] (9) The prophet said the Breathings of God come in these times and bring life to whom they will. Be careful not to miss them for they bring life to the dead and extinguish a burning soul. This infinite Breath is awesome and the *Qur'ān* says: "They refused to bear it." and "They shrank from it." b] (12) Last night a breathing came but a morsel barred the way. Luqman is the soul barred by *luqmah* a morsel, pull out the thorn from Luqman's sole for his spirit is the rose-garden of God. c] (12) Muḥammad came to make harmony. The word for spirit is feminine but spirit is above gender. Spirit produces inner sweetness. When the lover of God is fed wine from within, reason will remain lost. d] (4) Partial reason is the denier of Love and is naught because it did not become naught. e] (20) The Spirit is perfection and its call is perfection as in the singing of Bilāl who breathed the breath by which the heavens are made witless. Muḥammad was beside himself at that voice and missed his prayer on the night he kissed hands in the presence of the Bride. Love and Spirit are veiled so do not fault me for calling God the Bride. Fault is relative. The body of saints is pure as their spirit. The salt of Muḥammad is extremely refined and his heirs are with you, so seek them. f] (6) Don't seek the spiritual heir before or after, these are attributes of the body. Open your vision with the pure light of God and don't be short-sighted and think you are living bodily in grief and joy. It is a day of rain; journey on, but sped by the rain of the Lord.

**Section Three**      2012-2034 (23) *The story of 'Ā'isha, how she asked Muṣṭafā (Muḥammad), saying, "It rained today: since thou wentest to the graveyard, how is it that thy clothes are not wet?"* a] (2) Muḥammad went to the graveyard with the bier of a friend and he made the earth fill the grave and quickened his seed under the earth. b] (6) Trees are like the interred; they have lifted their hand from the earth and give a message about the earth's heart. God imprisons them in winter and revives them by means of spring and gives them leaves. c] (7) God causes roses to grow in the hearts of His friends, each telling of the Universal. Their scent confuses the sceptics who shrink from the scent and pretend to look elsewhere but they have no eye. d] (8) When Muḥammad returned from the graveyard 'Ā'isha said it rained today; how wonderful

your clothes are dry. Muḥammad said what is on your head. She replied: your old plaid. That is why God showed to your pure eye the rain of the Unseen. It did not rain from your clouds today but from other clouds and another sky.

**Section Four** 2035-2045 (11) *Commentary on the verse of Hakim ( Sanai): "In the realm of the soul are the skies lording over the skies of this world. In the Way of the spirit there are lowlands and highlands, there are lofty mountains and seas."* a] (7) The Unseen world has other clouds and other sun and sky which only the elect see. There is vernal rain for nurture and autumnal rain for decay. Similarly with sun cold and wind. Even so in the Unseen world there is loss and gain, benefit and damage. b] (4) The breath of the saints is from that spiritual springtime from which grows a green garden. Their breath is like spring rain on a tree. If there is a dry tree, don't blame their life-quickenning breath. The wind did its work and blew on; he that had a soul preferred it to his own soul.

**Section Five** 2046-2059 (14) *On the meaning of the tradition, "Take advantage of the coolness of the spring season, etc."* a] (3) The Prophet told his friends not to cover their bodies from the cold of spring since it is like spring to a tree, but to flee from autumn cold which damages the garden and vine. b] (5) Traditionalists treat this externally but in the sight of God autumn is the *nafs* and desire, reason and the spirit is the spring and everlasting life. You have partial reason hidden in you; seek one who can make it whole so that Universal reason can defeat the *nafs*. c] (6) The tradition means holy breaths are like spring. Do not cover your bodies against the sayings of the saints whether he speak hot or cold. The garden of spirits is living through him.

**Section Six** 2060-2071 (12) *How the Siddiqa ('Ā'isha), may God be well pleased with her, asked Muṣṭafā (Muḥammad), saying, "What was the inner meaning of today's rain?"* a] (6) She asked was it the rain of mercy or the rain of menace. Was it vernal or autumnal ? The Prophet replied it was to allay the grief on the race of Adam since if man had to burn with such grief the world would become desolate. b] (6) Forgetfulness of God sustains this world and intelligence is a bane. Intelligence is of the other world and can overthrow this world. Intelligence is the sun, cupidity the ice; intelligence the water, this world the dirt. A trickle of intelligence is coming to restrain cupidity and envy; if the trickle grew stronger neither vice nor virtue would remain in the world. Let us go back to the tale of the minstrel.

**Section Seven** 2072-2103 (32) *The remainder of the story of the old Harper and the explanation of its issue (moral).* a] (6) That minstrel with the wonderful voice grew old and his soul-refreshing voice became useless. b] (4) The only thing that does not grow foul is the voice

and the breath of the saint. c] (6) When he grew old and feeble he said: "O God, you have greatly favoured this vile wretch who has sinned for seventy years but yet You have never withheld Your bounty. I can't earn so today I am Your guest and I will play my harp for You." He went to the graveyard of Medina in search of God craving from God who accepted adulterated coin the price of silk. d] (8) He played a long time, then lay down and went to sleep. His soul freed from his body sang in the spiritual world: would that I could stay here in this garden and springtime. e] (8) While his soul was in the huge magnitude of the spiritual world and God's munificence, which if it were manifest would empty the material world, the divine command was coming to the minstrel: Be not covetous; the thorn is out of your foot, depart.

**Section Eight** 2104-2112 (9) *How the heavenly voice spoke to 'Umar while he was asleep, saying, "Give a certain sum of gold from the treasury to the man who is sleeping in the graveyard."* a] (9) God sent 'Umar a slumber which he recognised as having a purpose and went to sleep and dreamt that a voice came from God and his spirit heard. That voice is the origin of every sound and not just people of every race have understood it, even wood and stone as well. Every moment the call comes from God "Am I not your Lord" and if they are inarticulate, still their coming from non-existence to existence is equivalent to "Yea". Listen to a story showing the awareness of wood and stone.

**Section Nine** 2113-2153 (41) *How the moaning pillar complained when they made a pulpit for the prophet - for the multitude had become great, and said, "We do not see thy blessed face when thou art exhorting us" - and how the prophet and his Companions heard that complaint, and how Muṣṭafā conversed with the pillar in a clear language.* a] (12) The moaning pillar complained to the Prophet that he used to support the Prophet but now he used another support. He told the prophet he wanted to endure forever, so the Prophet buried the pillar in the earth so that it might be raised like humanity on the day of Resurrection. This is to show that those called to God disengage from the work of this world. Only those who know the spiritual mysteries can truly understand the complaining of inanimate creation. b] (15) The conformists and externalists rely on opinion and are easily swayed by a single doubt raised by the vile Devil. The logician's leg is made of wood and is infirm, unlike the steadfastness of the supreme saint, who is possessed of spiritual wisdom. The blind man's leg is a staff with which they see the way but only under the protection of the spiritually clear-sighted without whom they would be dead. The blind produce nothing and if God did not bestow mercy the wood of logical deduction and inference would break. God gave you the staff but it has become a weapon of attack and quarrel even against God, so break it; bring a seer between yourself and God, lay hold of the skirt of Him who gave the staff. c] (5) Consider Moses whose staff became a serpent and the Prophet

whose pillar moaned, each proclaiming the truth of Religion five times a day. These miracles would not have been necessary if this spiritual perception were not non-intellectual since the intellect would have agreed. The un-trodden Way is unintelligible but accepted by the hearts of the elect. d] (8) In fear of the miracles of the Prophets the sceptics have slunk away, Muslims only in name. The philosopher has not the courage to breath a word or the true Religion will confound him.

**Section Ten** 2154-2160 (7) *How the Prophet manifested a miracle by the speaking of the gravel in the hand of Abū Jahl and by the gravel bearing witness to the truth of Muḥammad.* a]

(7) Abū Jahl hid some pebbles in his hand and asked the prophet to say what they were, if he was really the Messenger from God. The prophet said wouldn't you rather they declare I am truthful and Abū Jahl said yes. Then the pebbles recited the Muslim proclamation of faith and Abū Jahl flung them to the ground.

**Section Eleven** 2161-2198 (38) *The rest of the story of the minstrel, and how the Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar, conveyed to him the message spoken by the heavenly voice.*

a] (6) Hear now of the minstrel who had become desperate from waiting. The voice of God said to 'Umar: " 'Umar, redeem our servant from want. A favourite servant is in the graveyard; take him seven hundred dinars from the treasury and tell him it is for the silk and to come back for more." b] (8) 'Umar in awe of that voice went round the graveyard but it was empty but for that old man. c] (9) Finally he sat next to him and the old Harper woke up and was terrified. 'Umar told him God had praised him and greeted him and asked how he was in his distress and sent this gold for the silk. He said spend them and come back for more. d] (11) The old man wept long in gratitude and shame, then took his harp and broke it, accusing it of being a curtain between him and God for seventy years and bringing him disgrace before Divine perfection. Then he asked God for mercy on a life of iniquity, a life spent breath by breath in treble and bass so that in this preoccupation with the 24 melodies the caravan passed and the day grew late. e] (4) God help me against this self of mine which is seeking help from Thee; I seek justice from this justice seeking self. I shall only get justice from Him who is nearer to me than myself. This I-hood comes to me every moment from Him; when it fails I see only Him, as when you are with someone who is counting out gold to you, you look at him, not at oneself.

**Section Twelve** 2199-2222 (24) *How 'Umar bade him ( the Harper) turn his gaze from the stage of weeping , which is (self-) existence to the stage of absorption (in God) which is non-existence (of self).* a] (9) 'Umar said to him : "Your wailing is a sign of self-consciousness (sobriety). For one passed beyond self-consciousness sobriety is a sin. Sobriety arises from

recollection of the past; past and future separate you from God. So abandon past and future. When you are seeking God that is still self-consciousness, when you come home you are still with yourself. Your repentance is worse than your sin, when will you repent of your repentance ? Once you were in love with music, now you are in love with weeping and wailing. b] (6) 'Umar was the reflector of mysteries and the old man's soul was awakened. Like his soul he became without grief or laughter, and his other soul came to life. Then a state came upon him which took him beyond heaven and earth; a seeking beyond all seeking. Beyond words and feelings and drowned in the beauty of Divine majesty; drowned beyond deliverance or recognition except by the Divine Ocean. c] (9) Partial reason would not tell of the mysteries of Universal reason were there not constant impulses requiring their manifestation. Since there are such demands Universal reason reaches partial reason. The old man and his spiritual experiences have passed beyond the veil; he is beyond speech and half his tale is untold. To reach such enjoyment we must gamble away a thousand souls like the falcon and the sun of this world. The sun is life diffusing, every moment becoming empty and refilling again. O Sun of Reality diffuse spiritual life, bring newness to the old world. Soul and spirit are coming from the Unseen into human existence like running water.

### *Analysis*

This discourse is foreshadowed in the preceding Link Section, not only in the last few lines where the foreshadowing is specific and speaks of *niyāz*, self-abasement, and *faqr*, spiritual poverty, as being the precondition for receiving the breath of Jesus, but in the whole import of being nothing without the Favours and Bounty of God. This discourse begins the second half of Book One, so it would be expected *ex hypothesi* that this discourse would mark the beginning of a shift to a level in some way higher than the first. This it does with its overwhelming emphasis on the spiritual world and the Mercy and Bountifulness of Almighty God. The structure of this discourse is so intricate that it has required two diagrams to show its complex organisation. Like the previous discourse, it has twelve sections, and the most noticeable division is between the two halves. Unlike the previous discourse, where there was a movement from *riyādat* and self-control in the first half, to the way of Love in the second half, by way of *niyāz* at the centre, the two halves here are differentiated by the first being concerned with the universal, and the second half with the particular. The previous discourse was from below to above, this is from above to below, in a manner of speaking. The Harper holds the whole together by beginning Section 1 and ending Section 6 in the first half, and beginning Section 7 and ending Section 12, but transformed, in the second. Each section is clearly linked to the next, and various themes and imagery run throughout which gives continuity and integration to the totality, but the formal



structure is two blocks of six sections, the first block in the form A, B, C, A\*, B\*, C\*, and the second block A, B, C, C\*, B\*, A\*.

What is particularly interesting about this discourse is the relationship between the sections in each of the two blocks to one another. This is because, of course, it reflects the relationship between the universal spiritual world, and the particular phenomenal one of empirical existence. The parallelism and correspondences and connections between these two blocks, these two worlds, is both complex and sophisticated, so it is better to deal first with the intra-block relations first, and then examine the inter-block ones.

Starting with the first block, Sections 1-6, the first parallelism that proclaims itself is that between Section 3 and Section 6, in that they are two parts of the same episode between Muḥammad and 'Ā'isha. The second parallelism is between Section 2, about the Breathings of God, which people find hard to bear because of the *nafs* within them, and Section 5, on exposing oneself to the coolness of the spring season, for that will effect revival and spiritual wholeness, as opposed to the cold of autumn which will encourage the *nafs* and its desires. The final parallelism is between Section 1 and Section 4. In 1, there is a description of the spiritual world and its various classes, each with their own note. Section 4 is also about the unseen spiritual world, but this time in terms of its own sun and sky, clouds and rains, each with a different characteristic and effect. These parallelisms together produce a structure that has not been encountered before here, but the structure of the second block returns to the familiar. It must have been important to Maulānā to distinguish the two worlds in their structures. In block two, then, again there is a parallelism which proclaims itself, that between Section 8 and Section 11, since, in 8 'Umar receives God's instructions, and in 11 he carries them out. Sections 9 and 10 also are clearly in parallel, both being about Muḥammad and the spiritual awareness of even inanimate objects. Finally Sections 7 and 12 are in parallel because 7 begins the tale of the old Harper and 12 completes it. These six parallelisms are shown below as Structure 1.

Structure 2 shows the parallelisms that link the two blocks. The first and most obvious parallelism is between Section 3 and Section 9: both are concerned with Muḥammad burying somebody or some thing in such a way that they will then attain everlasting life on the Day of Resurrection; both also deal with sceptics. This is such an important subject, placed at the significant central position, and the parallelism is so clear, that it must be assumed that Maulānā intended the parallelism to be horizontal and not diagonal. This suggests that the rhetorical structure of this discourse is as in the diagram below, with two sets of descending sections, with various parallelisms between them, designed to be read in parallel. Such a reading will be

attempted in the Interpretation below. If the structure had been a ring-composition, then Section 7 would have been at the bottom of the second sequence and Section 12 at the top, and the parallelism between 3 and 9 would have been diagonal. There are diagonal parallelisms in this discourse, many of them, the most striking of which are shown in the diagram, but these have to be regarded as secondary parallelism. The primary parallelisms here are the six horizontal parallelisms, and this appropriately results in the structure of the whole discourse reflecting the non-chiasmic structure of the first half which deals with the universal spiritual world. This is further corroboration that the diagram below corresponds to Maulānā's design.

Section 1 has several parallelisms: its primary parallelism is that it is horizontally in parallel with Section 7, in that both begin their respective halves and contain reference to the Harper, as well as the Harper praying to God - situated in 1, - and God speaking to the Harper in a dream in 7. Section 1 is also diagonally parallel with Section 8, in that God speaks to 'Umar in a dream. There is also a parallelism, - not shown in the diagram, - between Section 1 and Section 12, as the beginning and the end of the discourse, both dealing with the Harper, but also, significantly, because in 12 the Harper enters a spiritual state that brings him into the spiritual world depicted in 1. Section 2 is horizontally parallel with Section 8, in that Section 2 requires that one seeks out one of the spiritual heirs to Muḥammad, and Section 8 is about 'Umar, who is just such an heir. Section 2 is also diagonally in parallel with Section 7 through the image of the thorn, which is explained in Section 2 and whose removal from the Harper God confirms at the end of Section 7. Sections 3 and 9 have been dealt with above, but Section 3 is also diagonally parallel with Section 10 through Muḥammad and the Declaration of Faith. Section 4 affirms that the Unseen world has its mountains and seas and clouds and rain etc and Section 10, with which it is horizontally in parallel, demonstrates this with spiritual pebbles hidden in the hand of Abu Jahl. It is also diagonally parallel with Section 12 because the last four lines of 4 exactly predict what happened to the Harper as the result of the presence and advice of 'Umar in 12. Section 5 is horizontally parallel with Section 11, in that the spiritual revival and rejection of the *nafs* through contact with '*aql-i kullī*' and the speech of saints spoken of in 5, happens to the Harper in 11 when he meets 'Umar. There is horizontal parallelism between Section 6, which ends the first half by Maulānā telling himself to go back to the tale of the minstrel, and Section 12, in which Maulānā admits that now the old man 'has shaken his skirt free from talk and speech, half of the tale remains untold in his mouth'. Section 6 is about the spiritual rain that takes away the soul's grief and burning by making it forgetful of God. This makes diagonal parallelisms with Section 10, since Abu Jahl was manifestly forgetful of God, and with Section 7, because the Harper in fact did remember God and was burning in his repentance, hence he, like the Prophet, did not get wet from this rain.

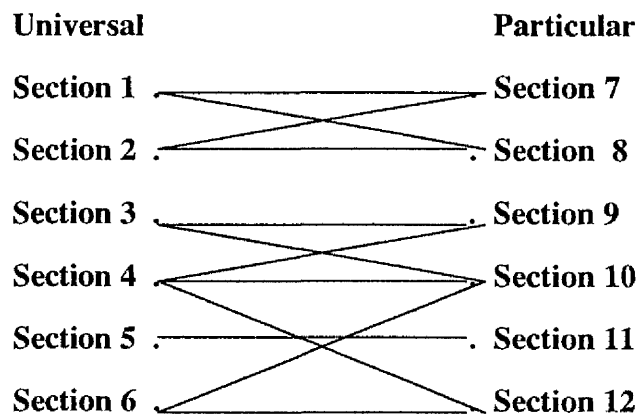
These parallelisms, as shown in the diagram of Structure 2 below, produce a beautiful rhetorical structure, of great elegance and elaboration, demonstrating the intimate complexity of the relationship between the universal, united, unseen spiritual world and the world of the part, the phenomenal human world. Because it was Maulānā's purpose to demonstrate the trade and commerce between the two worlds, there are countless resonances and echoes across the divide which are more stylistic than structural, so they have not been noted here.

### The Double Structure of Discourse Seven

#### Structure 1

- Section One Harper; voice like Israfil; God's voice; saints bring dead to life
- Section Two Breathings of God; hard to bear; thorn in sole; Prophet and harmony
- Section Three Prophet and friend; trees like interred; God in winter and spring; rain
- Section Four The clouds of Unseen world; vernal and autumnal rain; breath of saints
- Section Five Tradition means holy breaths are like spring; don't cover up against them
- Section Six Rain of mercy or menace; to allay man's grief; trickle against cupidity; Harp
- Section Seven Harper old, little voice; sings to God repentant; soul sings, God's command
- Section Eight God's voice to 'Umar; God's call to even the inarticulate wood and stone
- Section Nine Prophet buries the moaning pillar; externalists and logic; miracles
- Section Ten Abu Jahl's pebbles proclaim the declaration of faith
- Section Eleven 'Umar gives God's message; Harper breaks harp and repents of voice
- Section Twelve Harper's wailing sign of self-consciousness; goes beyond, soul awakes

#### Structure 2



## *Interpretation*

This discourse is commented on valuably at the level of detail by Nicholson, but, drawn to the part, he has not seen the whole. Nor has Gustav Richter, whose essay was cited in the Introduction. He attempts to identify Maulānā's style with reference to parts of this discourse, and usefully draws attention to the same rich interconnectedness at the micro-compositional level which has been identified here at the macro-compositional. The discourse must clearly be read and understood first sequentially; then read synoptically as will be done here; finally being read again sequentially with the synoptic reading in view in order to complete the hermeneutic circle. Before the synoptic reading, however, it is necessary to contextualize Discourse Seven. The previous discourse dealt with the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the soul or self which blamed itself, within the parrot fable and together with two types of training for the *sālik*, discipline and self control in the first half, and the awakening of the heart to God by means of mystical love poetry and Maulānā's example in the second. The crucial state to pass from one type of training to the other was *niyāz*, self abasement, supplication, spiritual poverty and emptiness. This state, Maulānā explains in the Link Section, is what the pretended deaths of the two parrots symbolised. The state of *niyāz* was dealt with in the Link Section at the very centre of Book One, so it is also the key to the door into the second half of the book, which treats of the spiritual world and higher stages of the *nafs*. It is the given state of the old decrepit Harper, who is also symbolic of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*. In this discourse the mode of training for the *sālik* differs from the often explicit instruction given heretofore, it is more by hint and example, by induction into spiritual perspectives, by the shape and form of situations, by feeling the spiritual realities behind the passing seasons, the clouds, rain and the sky etc., and re-enchanting the empirical world. Nor should the abundant references to and quotations from the *Qur'ān* and the traditions be overlooked as part of the *sālik's* training. But, in this discourse, Maulānā uses the rhetorical structure itself and its synoptic reading to reinforce the spiritual understanding of the *sālik*, so the diagrams above should be re-visited as the reading begins.

Section 1 is necessarily the starting place; it begins with the Harper, then, quickly, through the simile with Isrāfīl, the Angel of the Resurrection, it speaks of the spiritual note, *naghmah*, of prophets and of saints and others, who like Isrāfīl can bring the dead to life at God's Command. The theme of resurrection, the Resurrection itself in the spiritual world, the spiritual awakening of people in this world, and the analogy between the two, is sustained as a motif throughout the discourse. The saints and prophets have become one with God so they can pass on God's light, as in the Sufi *silsilah*, so it does not matter whether this Light is received from someone past or present. From the notes and Light of God, the metaphor moves to the Breathings of God in

Section 2, which should be read next. People shrink from these Breathings because of the *nafs*, the thorn in their sole. This is a long section with too much material to summarise, but central to it is Muṣṭafā, Muḥammad, the Prophet, and his spiritual heirs. From the universal spiritual world, Section 7 should be read next, crossing the divide to the world of the part, where the Harper, the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, had become old and had lost his powers. Maulānā writes: “What fair thing is there that does not become foul.. except the voices of holy men in their breasts, from the repercussion of whose breath is the blast of the trumpet of Resurrection.” These verses and two more on the spiritual power and blessings of the saints, make a strong parallel connection with Section 1. But the commerce between the two worlds does not end there. The desperately poor Harper in three verses, 2083-5, expresses the most beautiful prayer of gratitude for God’s Favours, repentance for a lifetime of sin, and dedication of himself and his playing to God. Here are enough hints and examples for the *sālik*: the poverty, *faqr*, both actual and spiritual; repentance, *tawbah*; dedication of oneself to God; gratitude; and, above all, *niyāz*. He then goes to the graveyard at Medina in search of God. Praying in graveyards is another Sufi practice recommended for the *sālik*, since to face the inevitability of one’s own death and the certainty of the coming Day of Judgement, is a powerful corrective for an indulgent and recalcitrant self-hood, as well as the graveyard being considered an environment particularly conducive for contact with the spiritual world. The Harper asks God for the price of silk for his harp strings, plays for a long while, weeps and falls asleep. Weeping, and dreams as one of the means of communication between the spiritual world and the human world, are further indications to the *sālik*. In his dream the Harper’s soul roamed the spiritual world until the Divine Command came that he should not be covetous, since the thorn was out of his soul, and that he should return. The subject of communication with the spiritual world in dreams comes again in Section 8, which should be read next. Here it is ‘Umar, symbolic of the saint or spiritual heir of Muḥammad, and also of the Sufi Shaikh, to whom God communicates His instructions.

The next four sections to be read are, in order, 3,4, 9 and 10. These are the central sections of the rhetorical structure and are thereby given a special emphasis. The reason is clear enough: they are about the Prophet Muḥammad, burial, choosing eternal life, the Day of Resurrection, the Muslim Affirmation of Faith, the *sahādah*, the disbelief of the sceptics who rely on partial intelligence, ‘*Aql-i juzī*, rather than receive the wisdom of the Universal Intelligence, the ‘*Aql-i kullī*, and the miracle of Muḥammad, made possible because behind the natural phenomena of the empirical world, mountains, sky, sea, rain etc, there are spiritual counterparts which obey the commands of the Friends of God in the spiritual world. In terms of communication from the spiritual world to the human world, there could be nothing more important for Maulānā and the

*sālik* than the Prophet and the revelation he received from God, *rabb al-'ālamain*, Lord of both the worlds. It is further to be noticed that the Prophet Muḥammad plays a leading role in sections on both sides of the divide, both in the spiritual world and in the human world.

The final set of sections, which should be read in the order 5,11,6,12, brings both sides to their conclusions, each with a twist of its own. Section 5 likens spiritual reawakening and everlasting life to the spring season and autumn to the *nafs* and its desires. The *sālik* is told he has only partial intelligence, so he should seek someone living whose intelligence is whole, since Universal Intelligence is the sure cure for the *nafs*. In parallel Section 11, 'Umar tracks down the old Harper and tells him God's message and offers him the money for harp strings. The Harper is overwhelmed and wept from shame crying: "O God who has no like." In uncontrollable grief he smashes the harp and accuses it and his music of keeping him from God over his many years. He ask God for mercy. It would be difficult to find a clearer depiction of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*. Maulānā concludes the section with a four verse prayer in which he foreshadows Section 12. The final section on the universal side, Section 6, resumes the episode of Muḥammad and 'Ā'isha in which the Prophet did not get wet from the spiritual rain. The twist given in this section is that the rain is a special rain to allay the grief of humanity which would be caused if it truly saw its own spiritual situation. It does so by making them forgetful of God, and restricting the flow of Divine Intelligence to a trickle, because without selfishness the human world would not function. No wonder the Prophet remained dry. This section precedes and foreshadows Section 7, in which the old Harper as the *nafs-i lawwāmah* experiences just that grief the rain is designed to allay. In Section 11 the last trace of covetousness, - for the harp strings - has been removed and the grief and the self-blaming is even more extreme. The twist in this last section of the discourse is that 'Umar tells the Harper to stop his wailing, because it contains the very self-consciousness that keeps man from God. Through the advice and spiritual presence of 'Umar, the Harper has an experience of the Divine Ocean, at least in a temporary *ḥāl*, but maybe a more permanent transformation, *maqām*, is here indicated also, of the *nafs-i lawwāmah* to the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, the self or soul at peace. The twist here is that weeping and wailing, one of the most marked characteristics of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, is the very self indulgence which prevents its further development.

## Link section

2223-2243 (21) *Commentary on the prayer of the two angels who daily make proclamation in every market, saying, " O God , bestow on every prodigal some boon in exchange ! O God , bestow on every niggard some bane (in return)" ; and an explanation that the prodigal is he that strives earnestly in the Way of God, not he that squanders his wealth in the way of spirituality.*

a] (6) The Prophet said there are two angels who, by way of warning, proclaim: "O God, keep the prodigals fully satisfied by recompensing them a hundred-thousandfold for what they spend, but reward the niggards with nothing but loss." Many acts of niggardliness are better than prodigality, such as not bestowing that which belongs God except by God's Command. b] (6) Find out the Command of God from one who is united with Him, since not every heart understands the Command, and the *Qur'ān* warns the heedless that their spending will be a bitter grief to them. c] (9) The generous man should give money, and the lover should surrender his soul. If you give bread for God's sake, you will get bread in return, if life, you get life. If liberality empties your pocket, the Bounty of God will not leave you short, since when someone sows, there is no seed left, but goodliness in the field. If he doesn't sow mice etc will devour the seed. This world is the negation of reality; seek reality in affirmation of God. Your body is empty of reality, seek it in your essence. Put the *nafs* to the sword and buy the soul like a great sweet river. If you can't reach that threshold, at least listen to this tale.

### *Comment*

The meaning of this section is clear enough; its function is to act as a link between Discourse 7 and Discourse 8. It does so by looking back to the Bounty of God in the previous discourse, and forward to the next with its reference to beating the *nafs* and speaking of a great sweet river, beside, of course, telling the reader to listen to it. Structurally, this link section between the first and second discourses in the second half of the book, exactly balances the link section in the first half of the book between the first discourse and the second.

## **Discourse Eight: The Story of the Caliph, the Arab of the Desert and his Wife**

### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 2244-2251 (8) *The story of the Caliph who in his time surpassed Hatim of Tayyi' in generosity and had no rival.* a] (8) There was a most munificent Caliph whose liberality had removed poverty from the world. He was the Water of life and the Ocean of Bounty; by him Arabs and foreigners were revived.

**Section Two** 2253-2263 (11) *Story of the poor Arab of the desert and his wife's altercation with him because of (their) penury and poverty.* a] (6) A Bedouin woman said to her husband that they were poor and unhappy, that they had no bread, no water, only tears. Even the poorest are ashamed of our poverty and our anxiety about food. b] (6) Kin and stranger flee from us. Arabs are proud of fighting and giving; we are killed without fighting and have nothing to give. If a guest arrived I would go for his coat while he slept.

**Section Three** 2264-2282 (19) *How disciples (novices in Sufism) are beguiled in their need by false impostors and imagine them to be Shaykhs and venerable personages and (saints) united (with God) and do not know the difference between fact (naqd) and fiction (naql) and between what is tied on (artificially) and what has grown up (naturally).* a] (5) Only be the guest of one who gives benefit; you are the disciple and guest of one who robs you of what you have. He is weak and can't make you strong. He makes you dark because he has no light. b] (10) We his disciples are really poor, outwardly like the impostor's inner, dark-hearted and plausible of tongue; no trace of God, just all pretension. He uses Sufi expressions in his pretence but has no spiritual food and you get nothing from his table although he claims to be the Vicar of God. c] (4) Some people wait for years before they see he is naught but by then it is too late.

**Section Four** 2283-2287 (5) *Explaining how it may happen, (though) rarely, that a disciple sincerely puts his faith in a false impostor (and believes) that he is a holy personage, and by means of this faith attains unto a (spiritual) degree which his Shaykh has never (even) dreamed of, and (then) fire and water do him no hurt, though they hurt his Shaykh, but this occurs very seldom.* a] (5) Exceptionally a disciple because of his illumination finds benefit from an impostor. He reaches a high degree of soul even if what he thinks is soul is in fact only body. The impostor has a dearth of soul within; we have a dearth of bread without. Why should we conceal our poverty like the impostor and suffer agony for the sake of false reputation.

**Section Five** 2288-2314 (27) *How the Bedouin bade his wife be patient and declared to her the excellence of patience and poverty.* a] (8) Her husband said to her that our life is nearly past so don't look for increase and deficiency. Whether life is untroubled or troubled is not important because it does not endure. Animals live happily without these ups and downs and anxiety. The dove the nightingale, the falcon and all the animals from gnat to elephant are dependent on God for their nourishment. b] (8) All of these griefs arise from our existence and desire and are a temptation. Every pain is a piece of death, to be expelled. If you can't you will die, if you can bear the pain God will make all sweet. Pains come from death as his messenger; do not avert



your face. Whoever lives sweetly dies bitterly; whoever serves his body does not save his soul. c] (4) It is dawn, how long my soul will you talk of gold ? You were gold once then became a seeker of gold. You were a fruitful vine but have become rotten as your fruit ripened when you should have become sweeter. d] (7) You are my wife, but a married pair should match like shoes. I march to contentment with a bold heart why are you resorting to revilement ?

**Section Six** 2315-2341 (27) *How the wife counselled her husband saying, "Don't talk any more about thy merit and ( spiritual) rank – "why say ye that which ye do not? - for although these words are true, yet thou hast not obtained to the degree of trust in God, and to speak thus above thy station and devotional practice is harmful and 'exceedingly hateful in the sight of God.'"* a] (3) What pretentious nonsense, she cried, you make reputation your religion. You speak from pride and arrogance, but look at your own acts and feelings and be ashamed. b] (5) Pride is especially ugly in beggars. How long all this pretence and palaver ? Illuminated by contentment ? You hardly know the name. Contentment is a treasure but you can't tell gain from pain. Do not boast of contentment, bane of my life. c] (4) You call me mate, but I am not the mate of fraud. You talk of grand things and then contend with dogs for a bone. Don't view me with contempt or I'll reveal your hidden faults. d] (4) Your understanding is a shackle for mankind, a snake and a scorpion. May it not destroy us. e] (11) You are the snake catcher and the snake; both cast spells on one another. The charmer from greed in making his spell is not aware of the snake's spell. You used the name of God to beguile me and to trap me, but now the name of God will take vengeance on my behalf since I commit my soul and body to the name of God not to your trap. Thus spoke the woman roughly.

**Section Seven** 2342-2364 (23) *How the man counselled his wife, saying "Do not look with contempt upon the poor but regard the work of God as perfect, and do not let thy vain thought and opinion of thine own penury cause thee to sneer at poverty and revile the poor."* a] (4) O woman, poverty is my pride, do not reproach me. Wealth and gold are like a cap which only a bald man hides in because the man with hair is happier with no cap. The man of God is like the eye, better when unveiled. b] (6) The slave dealer strips the slave to uncover the defects he might be hiding. The merchant is full of vice but his money hides it because the covetous cannot see it because of cupidity. If a beggar speaks words like gold nobody hears them. c] (5) Spiritual poverty is beyond your apprehension, do not be contemptuous of it. The darwish is beyond property but has a good portion from God. God is just; how should he tyrannise the poor, giving good fortune to one and setting another on fire. The fire is caused by having evil thoughts about God. d] (6) You have abused me in your anger calling me a catcher of snakes. But I extract the fangs to save the snake which are an enemy to its life. I make an enemy my friend

with this skill and never act from cupidity. e] (2) You see things from your stance; change it. If you turn round you become giddy and the world is spinning but really it is you that are spinning.

**Section Eight**      2365-2393 (29) *Explaining how everyone's movement (action ) proceeds from the place where he is, (so that ) he sees everyone else from the circle of his own self-existence: a blue glass shows the sun as blue , a red glass as red , (but) when the glass escapes from (the sphere of ) colour, it becomes white, ( and then ) it is more truthful than all other glasses and is the Imam (exemplar to them all).* a] (6) Abu Jahl said to the Prophet that he was ugly and the Prophet replied he was impertinent but right. Abu Bakr said to the Prophet he was a sun beyond East and West and was beautiful and the Prophet said he was right. People asked how two such contradictory things could be both right and the Prophet said: I am a mirror polished by the Divine hand and people see in me what there is in themselves. b] ( 6) If you think me covetous rise above womanly cares since what resembles cupidity is really mercy and a blessing. Try poverty so you can find in it riches and the Light of God. Do not look sour and you will see thousand of souls through contentment plunged in an ocean of honey. c] (6) If you were able to understand I could unfold the story of my heart because it requires an avid and sympathetic hearer to become eloquent. d] (11) Everything beautiful is made for those who can see it.. Music is not produced for the deaf nor musk for those who cannot smell. God made earth for those of clay and heaven for the celestials. There is no point in me producing pearls of wisdom if you are not able to receive them. If you can't stop quarrelling, then go. If you can't keep silent then I shall go.

**Section Nine**      2394-2432 (39) *How the wife paid regard to her husband and begged God to forgive her for what she had said.* a] (13) The wife resorted to tears saying she little thought he would speak like that. She abased herself saying she was his dust and unworthy to be his wife. Poverty alone had made her lose patience, and it was only on his account she was upset. She would die for him and was weary of body and soul since he thought so little of her. She renounced gold and silver and if he wished to divorce her then he must but she pleaded against it. b] (3) Remember when I was beautiful as an idol and you adoring as an idolater. I matched you in ardour. No matter how you treat me I am devoted to you. c] (8) I submit myself to you and repent. I give up opposition and lay my head on the block for you to cut it off. Do anything but divorce me since your conscience is a pleader on my behalf. I took advantage of your noble nature but now have mercy on me. d] (7) So she spoke winningly and then began to weep. She touched his lonely heart. When she whose beauty enslaves us, whose haughtiness makes us tremble, whose disdain makes our hearts bleed and whose tyranny ensnares us, resorts to pleading and entreaty, how shall we fare then ? e] (4) God so arranged it, so we cannot escape.

How could Adam be parted from Eve ? Rustam the great warrior was a slave to his wife, and the Prophet also. f] (4) Fire can make water boil and water put out fire. Outwardly you may dominate your wife but inwardly you are dominated in seeking her love. This is characteristic of man alone; animals lack in love and that lack arises from their inferiority to man.

**Section Ten** 2433-2437 (5) *Explanation of the Tradition, "Verily, they (women) prevail over the wise man, and the ignorant man prevails over them.* a] (5) The Prophet said that woman prevails exceedingly over the wise and the intelligent but the ignorant prevail over woman because of their animality. They lack tenderness and kindness and affection which are human qualities because anger and lust which are animal qualities predominate. Woman is a ray of God not just an earthly beloved. She is creative, you might say not created.

**Section Eleven** 2438-2446 (9) *How the man yielded to his wife's request that he should seek the means of livelihood, and regarded her opposition (to him) as a divine indication. (Verse.): To the mind of every knowing man it is a fact that with the revolving object there is one that causes it to revolve.* a] (9) The husband regretted his speech and could not understand why he had kicked his own soul. When destiny comes it dulls the intellect but after it has gone it devours itself with grief. He said to his wife that he repented and asked for her mercy; the infidel had now become a Muslim. When an infidel repents he becomes a Muslim when he asks for pardon of God who is merciful and bountiful. Existence and non-existence are in love with Him as are infidelity and faith. Copper and silver are in love with that Elixir.

**Section Twelve** 2447-2481 (35) *Explaining that both Moses and Pharaoh are subject to the Divine Will , like antidote and poison and darkness and light , and how Pharaoh conversed in solitude with God, praying that He would not destroy his good reputation.* a] (5) Pharaoh and Moses were both worshippers of reality although outwardly one kept the way and the other didn't. In daytime Moses lamented to God and at midnight Pharaoh began saying what a shackle I have on my neck; it is the same will that made Moses illumined and me darkened, that made Moses' face like the moon but the moon of my soul eclipsed. b] (4) I am Pharaoh but the acclamation of people was in fact proclaiming my eclipse. c] (4) Moses and I are fellow servants of God, but His axe cultivates the one and ignores the other. May Thy axe make my crooked actions straight. d] (7) All night I pray and in secret I am becoming humble and harmonious, how then do I become so different when with Moses ? I am whatever colour He makes me; now a moon, now black. How could the action of God be otherwise; since the decree "Be and it was" we are running in Space and beyond. e] (6) Colourlessness became the captive of colour: return to your colourlessness and Pharaoh and Moses are at peace. What is strange is that since colour

derives from colourlessness how come that colour wars with it; the rose is from the thorn and the thorn from the rose yet they are at war. f] (9) Is it war or an artifice or is it bewilderment to cause you to search ? Non-existence expelled existence; the rebelliousness of Pharaoh was really caused by Moses.

**Section Thirteen** 2482-2508 (25) *The reason why the Unblest are disappointed of both worlds, ( according to the text ) “ he has lost this life and the life to come.”* a] (7) A philosopher thought the earth was like an egg suspended in the sky and was attracted by the sky in each direction and thus held its position. In fact the sky does not attract the earth but repels it in all directions. b] (7) Likewise the hearts of the saints repulse Pharaohs so that they remain fixed in perdition. Rejected by this world and that, they lose both, because the saints can reject you if you turn from them. As animals are subject to man so are men subject to the saints. c] (5) The saints are the intellect of intellects; one guide and a hundred thousand souls. What is your intellect, a camel driver, and the guide. You need an eye that can look on the sun. d] (4) The world is dependent on the sun; yet with the guide you have a hidden sun of whom you should have no doubt. e] (4) Each prophet came to the world alone yet within he had thousands of worlds and the power to enchant the universe. The foolish thought him weak but how could he be who is the King’s companion ? Woe to the man who says: “He is a man and nothing more.”

**Section Fourteen** 2509-2568 (60) *How the eyes of (external) sense regarded Salih and his she-camel as despicable and without a champion; (for) when God is about to destroy an army He makes their adversaries appear despicable and few in their sight , even though the adversary be superior in strength: “and He was making you few in their eyes, that God might bring to pass a thing that was to be done.”* a] (6) Salih’s she-camel was outwardly a camel which the wicked tribe slaughtered for the water she shared with them since they were ungrateful for the blessings of God. Inwardly she was God’s and they rejected God so that the blood price was an entire town. b] (8) The saints and prophets’ spirit is like Salih and the body the she-camel. The camel took the knocks but the spirit was with God and unable to be hurt. God attached the spirit to the body so that the infidels would hurt it and then be punished, and so that the saint or prophet could be a refuge for the world. Be a slave to the saint’s body that you may be a fellow-servant of Salih’s spirit. c] (18) Salih said to the tribe of the town that punishment would come in three days on the first of which their faces would turn yellow, on the second, red, and on the third, black. As a sign from him the foal of the she-camel had run to the mountains and if they caught it there would be help. None caught it. What is the foal ? It is the saint’s heart which can be won back. The prophecy was fulfilled and the town destroyed. d] (17) Salih went to the town and hearing the lamentations he wept for them. And he talked to them and he talked to God and

concluded they were not worth the mourning. e] (11) Again he felt compassion but his intellect was saying why do you waste your tears on the perverse. They conformed to their traditions and trampled on the camel of Reason, the Guide. God brought the worshippers from Paradise that he might show them the nurselings of Hell.

**Section Fifteen** 2569-2602 (34) *On the meaning of "He let the two seas go to meet one another: between them is a barrier which they do not seek (to cross)." a] (4) He mixed the people of Fire with the people of Light like gold and earth in a mine but between them was Mt. Qaf. b] (8) One half sweet and one half bitter, they appear to dash against one another, the waves of peace removing hatreds, the waves of war bringing confusion. Love draws the bitter to the sweet, and wrath the sweet to the bitter. c] (9) Bitter and sweet are not visible except to the eye that sees the end. Many sweet as sugar conceal poison which the wise knows by its smell or when it touches the lips though the Devil shouts 'eat'. To another the throat knows, or the body, or the anus when evacuating will show what has been swallowed. To one it will be apparent in weeks or days, to another in the grave while to a third on the Day of Resurrection. d] (6) Every desirable thing has a period granted to it: years to a ruby, two months a vegetable, a year to the rose. God has spoken of an appointed term but this is not discourse it is the Water of Life. e] (6) Hear now another saying clear to mystics but not the rest. Through Divine decree depending on spiritual degree even the poison of sensuality and worldliness are digestible. In one place injurious, in another a remedy like the grape which can produce unlawful wine or vinegar, a fine seasoning.*

**Section Sixteen** 2603-2615 (13) *Concerning the impropriety of the disciple's (murid) presuming to do the same things as are done by the saint (wali), inasmuch as sweetmeat does no harm to the physician, but is harmful to the sick, and frost and snow do no harm to the ripe grape, but are injurious to the young fruit; for he (the disciple) is still on the way, for he has not (yet) become (the saint to whom are applicable the words in the Qur'ān): "That God may forgive thee thy former and latter sins." a] (13) If the saint drinks poison it becomes an antidote, if a seeker, a cause of darkness. Solomon said give me a kingdom it behoves not anyone after me to obtain. This was not envy from Solomon but his realisation of the dangers of this worldly kingdom with all its enticements. Even with his strength he was nearly sunk so he had compassion on all kings of the world. Hence his intercession to God to give the kingdom together with Solomon's strength so that such a person became Solomon. But to return to the tale.*

**Section Seventeen** 2616-2642 (27) *The moral of the altercation of the Arab and his wife.* a] (7) The altercation between man and wife is a parable between your own self, *nafs*, and reason, *'aql*. Both are necessary for the manifestation of good and evil and in this house of the world they are engaged in strife day and night. The wife wants the requisites of the house: reputation, bread, and rank, just as the flesh wishes to gratify its desires, sometimes using humility, sometimes domination, while reason is unconscious of these worldly thoughts having nothing but the love of God in its brain. b] (6) This is the inner meaning, the temptation of reason by the flesh, but hear the full outward tale because if the inner meaning was sufficient, the creation would have been pointless. If love were only spiritual then your prayer and fasting would be non-existent but lovers' gifts which are only forms do bear testimony to hidden feelings of love and kindness. c] (5) Sometimes we make a show of bearing witness ecstatically, sometimes in assiduous prayer and fasting so that the outer act which is meant to show our inner feelings bears false witness. Grant O Lord the discernment to tell the true from the false. d] (5) How does sense perception become discerning ? By seeing with the light of God you will not even need the outer signs because the spark of love will enter and set one free from outward effect. Then there is no need of the signs of love since love will encompass the heart. e] (4) I could go on to details but enough. The outer form is both near and far from the meaning; like sap and tree they are near but essentially they are very separate. Let's leave essentials and return to the couple.

**Section Eighteen** 2643-2683 (41) *How the Arab set his heart on (complying with) his beloved's request and swore that in thus submitting (to her) he had no (idea of) trickery and making trial (of her).* a] (3) The man said he would do whatever she said irrespective of its potential result because he was her lover and love makes one blind. b] (7) When the wife asked whether he was bent on discovering her secret by trickery he replied No, by God, who created Adam in whom was displayed everything in the world of the spirits and at whose first instructions the angels were amazed and they gained from it more than was contained in the seven heavens so great was the range of his pure spirit. c] (3) The prophet said he was not contained in heaven or earth but in the hearts of true believers which is where he should be sought. d] (12) God also said "Enter into my servants and you shall find a paradise consisting of a vision of Me" The vast empyrean was in awe when it saw Adam because form is nothing when confronted with reality. The angels said to Adam before this time we knew thee on earth. We were amazed that we should have this connection with dust since our nature is in heaven. But our friendship with dust was because of the scent of you whose body was fashioned from dust but whose pure light shone from the dust. We were heedless of you and argued with God who sent us to earth. e] (10) God replied that they should speak whatever they wished because His Mercy preceded his wrath and in order to show this he would put into them a tendency to

doubt and would not take offence so that any who denied his Clemency would not dare to speak. Within His mercy there is the mercy of hundreds of mothers and fathers which are as foam on the sea of His mercy. f] (6) By His mercy I swear my words are true and inspired by love and not to make trial of you. But put it to the test; reveal what is in your heart and tell me what to do and I will do what is in my power. See the plight I am in.

**Section Nineteen** 2684-2702 (19) *How the wife specified to her husband the way to earn daily bread and how he accepted (her proposal).* a] (5) The wife said that a sun has shone forth giving light to the whole world in the form of the Vicar of God from whom all are happy. Gain access to that King and you will become a king. Companionship with the fortunate is like the Elixir. b] (14) They discussed with what pretext he should go to the King and the wife said when in the presence of the King every inability became an ability. The heart of the matter lay in lack of means and non-existence. The husband, however, said he needed to demonstrate his lack of means so that the King take pity since just talk would not do. She must come up with some idea since the King needed truth.

**Section Twenty** 2703-2719 (17) *How the Arab carried a jug of rain water from the midst of the desert as a gift to the Commander of the Faithful at Bagdad, in the belief that in that town also there was a scarcity of water.* a] (5) The wife said that when people are entirely purged of self-existence that is truth. There is rainwater in the jug, take it to the King saying this is our capital and make it a gift since he may have gold but in the desert water is a treasure. b] (7) The jug is our confined body with the briny water of our senses. May God accept this jug. The jug has the five spouts of the senses, keep them pure that there may be a passage from it to the sea and it may become of the nature of the sea, so that when you present your gift the King may find it pure and purchase it after which its water will become without end and a hundred worlds filled from my jug. Stop up its spouts and fill the jug with reality. c] (5) The husband was full of pride thinking who else could have a gift like this fit for a King. They did not know that in Bagdad there was a river full of sweet water flowing through on which there were boats. Go to the Sultan and see those rivers beside which our senses and perceptions are as nothing.

**Section Twenty One** 2720-2743 (24) *How the Arab's wife sewed the jug of rain water in a felt cloth and put a seal on it because of the Arab's utter conviction (that it was a precious gift for the king).* a] (9) The husband told her to sew up the jug in felt for there was no water purer than this in the world. When people are used to briny water like this how should they know of sweet water like the Euphrates etc ? If you have not escaped from the material world, what can you know of self-extinction, intoxication and expansion except as words passed down the

generations whose real meaning is hard to reach. b](15) He took the jug and set off carefully and his wife prayed that their water be kept safe from scoundrels. With his care and her prayers he brought it safely to the Caliph's palace. He found a bountiful court where both good and bad petitioners carried off donations and robes of honour. High and low, followers of form and followers of reality, those with aspiration and those without, all were quickened with life like the world at the final trumpet blast on the day of Resurrection.

**Section Twenty Two**        2744-2751 (8) *Showing that, as the beggar is in love with bounty and in love with the bountiful giver, so the bounty of the bountiful giver is in love with the beggar: if the beggar have the greater patience, the bountiful giver will come to his door; and if the bountiful giver have the greater patience, the beggar will come to his door ; but the beggar's patience is a virtue in the beggar , while the patience of the bountiful giver is a defect.* a] (8) A loud call was coming: Come O Seekers, Bounty is in need of beggars. Bounty seeks the beggars as the fair a mirror since Beneficence is made visible by a mirror. God said, O Muḥammad do not drive away the beggars. Take care as the beggar is the mirror of Bounty and breath is harmful to the mirror. On the one hand Bounty makes the beggar beg, on the other Bounty bestows more than they sought. Beggars are the mirror of God's Bounty and united with Absolute Bounty. Every one except these two beggars is as dead.

**Section Twenty Three**        2752-2772 (21) *The difference between one that is poor for (desirous of ) God and thirsting for Him and one that is poor of (destitute of) God and thirsting for what is other than He.* a] (5) He that seeks other than God is a mere picture of a dervish not worthy of bread. Do not set food before a lifeless picture for he loves God only for the sake of gain not for excellence and beauty. b] (6) If he thinks he is in love with the essence of God, his conception of the names and attributes is not the essence since conception is begotten and God is not. How can one in love with his own imagination be in love with God yet if he is sincere it can lead to him to reality. I would explain but am afraid of feeble minds who bring a thousand fancies with their thoughts. c] (6) Not everyone can hear rightly; a fig is no use to a dead bird, someone blind filled with vain fancy. What difference between sea and land to a picture of a fish. If you draw someone sad, the picture knows nothing of joy or sorrow since it is free from both. But this worldly joy and sorrow are just like a picture compared with spiritual joy and sorrow. d] (4) The picture's smile is only so that you may understand. The pictures in the world's hamams are like clothes when seen from outside the undressing room From outside you see only the phenomena, undress and enter the bath of reality. With your clothes you cannot enter since the body is ignorant of the soul, as the clothes are ignorant of the body.



**Section Twenty Four**      2773-2800 (28) *How the Caliph's officers and chamberlains came forward to pay their respects to the Bedouin and to receive his gift.* a] (12) The Arab arrived and the court officers greeted him with honour knowing what he wanted before he spoke since they usually gave before being asked, their vision being transformed by the light of God. He greeted them humbly and said he had come from the desert to seek the grace of the Sultan. But although he had come for money since he had arrived he had become drunken with contemplation. b] (11) Examples of Moses, Jesus, a desert Arab, a falcon, a child and 'Abbas who all set out to do one thing and were then transformed and became something else. c] (5) He said he had come for money and become a chief; he had been freed like the angels from material need and moved around the court now without any worldly object of desire. Nothing in the world is disinterested except the bodies and souls of God's lovers.

**Section Twenty Five**      2801-2804 (4) *Showing that the lover of this world is like the lover of a wall on which the sunbeams strike, who makes no effort and exertion to perceive that the radiance and splendour do not proceed from the wall but from the orb of the sun in the Fourth heaven; consequently he sets his whole heart on the wall, and when the sunbeams rejoin the sun (at sunset), he is left for ever in despair: "and a bar is placed between them and that which they desire."* a] (4) The lover of the whole is not the lover of the part. Love the part and you miss the whole. When a part falls in love with a part the object of love soon returns to its whole. The lover of the part became the laughing stock of another's slave, a drowning man hanging on to a powerless support. How could the loved one care for him when he has to do his master's business.

**Section Twenty Six**      2805-2814 (10) *The Arabic proverb, "If you commit fornication, commit it with a free woman, and if you steal, steal a pearl."* a] (6) The meaning above refers to these two proverbs. The slave went back to its master and the lover was in misery. The scent of the rose returned to the rose and the lover was left only with the thorn, far from the object of his desire like a hunter who grabbed the shadow of a bird while the bird itself sat on a branch amazed thinking the fellow was mad. b] (4) If you think the part is connected with the whole then eat thorns since the thorn is connected with the rose. But the part is not connected to the whole really, otherwise the mission of the prophets would be pointless since they came to connect the part to the whole and that they could not do if they were in fact one body. But let's return to the story.

**Section Twenty Seven**      2815-2834 (20) *How the Arab delivered the gift, that is the jug, to the Caliph's servants.* a] (6) The Arab handed over the jug saying take this gift to the Sultan and

relieve our poverty. It is sweet water and a new jug. The officials smiled and accepted the gift because the disposition of the King had become implanted in his courtiers. b] (4) Think of the King as a reservoir with pipes leading in all directions. When the water is sweet and pleasant to drink, all enjoy it. But if it is brackish and dirty every pipe delivers dirt. Think on this and dive deep. c] (10) Consider how the Spirit produces effects in the whole body; reason brings the whole body to discipline, love turns the whole body to madness. The purity of the sea makes all its pebbles pearls. Whatever the master is endowed with his pupils become the same; a theologian endows them with theology, a lawyer with law, a grammarian with grammar, a Sufi with God. Of all these sciences on the day of death the most useful is the knowledge of spiritual poverty.

**Section Twenty Eight** 2835-2852 (18) *The story of what happened between the grammarian and the boatman.* a] (6) A conceited grammarian got on a boat and when the boatman said he didn't know any grammar he told him he had wasted half of his life which upset the boatman. Then there was a storm and the boatman asked the grammarian if he could swim and the grammarian said he couldn't to which the boatman replied that he had wasted the whole of his life since the boat was about to sink. b] (6) Know that self-effacement (*maḥw*) is needed not grammar (*naḥw*). If you are dead to self then plunge into the sea. The sea causes the dead to float but the living die. The Sea is Divine Consciousness which will raise you to the surface while those who call others asses will flounder and the greatest scholar will behold the passing away of time and the world. This has been inserted to teach the grammar of self effacement. c] (6) Self-loss is the essence of law, grammar and accidence and the jug an emblem of a different kind of knowledge. Sure we are asses to carry a jug to the Tigris but the Arab did not know of the Tigris. If he had he would have broken the jug with a stone.

**Section Twenty Nine** 2853-2933 (81) *How the Caliph accepted the gift and bestowed largesse, notwithstanding that he was entirely without need of the gift (the water) and the jug.* a] (7) When the Caliph saw the jug and heard the story he instructed that the jug was to be filled with gold and he gave other donations. He said the Arab was to be taken home by way of the Tigris. When the Arab saw the Tigris he was filled with shame and wondered how the King could have accepted water from him. b] (4) Know that everything is a jug brimming with beauty and wisdom, it is a drop of the Tigris of His Beauty which cannot be contained under the skin. It was a hidden treasure which burst forth and made the earth more shining than the heavens like a Sultan robed in satin. c] (6) If the man had seen even a branch of the Divine Tigris he would have destroyed the jug of his self-existence. The jug is more perfect from being shattered and no water is spilled but every piece is in dance and ecstasy though reason would reject this. In the

state of ecstasy neither jug nor water is manifest and God knows what is best. d] (8) Knock on the door of Reality and it will open but restrain your thought which has become earth-bound through eating material impressions and devoid of understanding. You need this food because your animal soul requires it but feed it seldom. Want of food took the Arab to the court where he found fortune. e] (17) When the man in love with God speaks the scent of love springs from his mouth so that theology turns into spiritual poverty, infidelity turns into belief, falsehood into truth. If a true believer finds a golden idol he destroys its unreal form because form waylays. You are an idol-worshipper if you worship form; leave form and turn to reality. f] (5) This discourse is confused like the doings of lovers; it has no head since it pre-existed and no foot since it is everlasting. It is like water each drop both head and foot but yet without either. It is not a story but my state and yours. g] (3) We are both the Arab and the jug and the King; the husband is reason and the wife greed and cupidity which opposes reason. Their quarrel arose because the Whole has various parts. h] (4) The parts of the Whole are not parts in relation to the Whole as the scent is to the rose. The beauty of all plants is a part of the rose's beauty and the song of a bird is a part of that bird. If I discourse on this I will not be useful so be patient. i] (5) Abstain from distracting thoughts for abstinence is the first principle of medicine; abstain and behold the strength of spirit. Hear. j] (3) The diverse created things are spiritually different; from one aspect they are opposites, from another unified; one aspect in jest, another in earnest. k] (8) The day of Resurrection is the time of supreme inspection; then the fraudulent Hindu will be exposed since he has not a face like the sun and needs night as a veil. The thorn has no leaf so Spring is its enemy whereas for leafy plants the Spring is welcome. The thorn likes Autumn when its shame and lack of beauty will be hidden so Autumn is its Spring when you cannot tell the pebble from the pearl. l] (9) The Gardener knows the difference even in Autumn but his sight is the very best and he sees everything. All fair form cries out Here comes the Spring. Blossom is the good news, the fruit is the bounty. When the blossom is shed the fruit increases, when the body is broken the spirit lifts its head. How can bread give strength until it is broken, or grapes their wine ?

**Section Thirty**      2934-2958 (25) *Concerning the qualities of the Pir (Spiritual Guide) and the duty of obedience.* a] (12) Ḥusām al-Dīn, add something to describe the Pir, for though slight we cannot see without you. Tell us what appertains to the Pir who knows the Way, for the Pir is the essence of the Way. The Pir is like summer and others like autumn. My Pir is young yet I call him Pir for he has no beginning, nor rival, and old wine is more potent. Choose a Pir, for without this journey is full of dangers. Without an escort you will be bewildered. Travel not alone nor turn your head from the Pir. b] (13) If his protection is not around you then the cry of the ghouls will confuse you and entice you from the Way as Iblis did to wayfarers in the *Qur'ān*. Seize the

neck of your ass and lead it to the Way for he loves where there are green herbs and will stray from the Way if you let him. The ass is the enemy of the Way, so if you don't know the Way do the opposite of what the ass desires for that will be the right way, just as the Prophet said we should consult women and then do the opposite. Do not befriend passion since it leads you astray from God; nothing mortifies passion more than the protection of a fellow-traveller.

**Section Thirty One** 2959-2980 (22) *How the Prophet, on whom be peace, enjoined 'Ali saying, "When everyone seeks to draw nigh to God by means of some kind of devotional act, do thou seek the favour of God by associating with His wise and chosen servant, that thou mayst be the first of all to arrive (to gain access to Him)."* a] (10) The Prophet said to 'Ali that he was the lion of God but he should not rely on lion-heartedness but seek the protection of the Sage who would keep him on the Way. His shadow is beyond all description. Of all devotional acts take refuge in the shadow of the servant of God. b] (5) When a Pir has accepted you surrender yourself to him and bear what he does without speaking though he kill a child since his hand is the hand of God. God can kill and bring to life. What of life? He makes the spirit everlasting. c] (7) If one has traversed the Way without a Pir it is through the help of the heart of the Pir, since their hand is not withdrawn from those not under their authority. But if they give such bounty to the absent what must they give to the present. When you have chosen the Pir be not faint-hearted or as weak as water since if you are enraged by every blow how will you become a clear mirror without being polished?

**Section Thirty Two** 2981-3012 (32) *How the man of Qazwin was tattooing the figure of a lion in a blue on his shoulders, and (then) repenting because of the (pain of the) needle-pricks.* a] (21) The people of Qazvin tattoo themselves in blue on the shoulders. A man asked a barber to tattoo a lion on his shoulders. At the prick of his needle the man wailed and asked him to leave out the tail and then likewise with the ears and the belly. The barber was bewildered and finally flung down the needle saying that God Himself never created a lion without a tail belly or head. b] (6) Endure the pain of the lancet that you may escape the poison of your *nafs*. Sun and moon worship one who has died to self-existence and since his heart has learnt to light the candle of love, the sun cannot burn him and the thorn becomes beautiful like the rose in the sight of the particular going towards the universal. c] (5) To exalt and glorify God is to deem yourself despicable; to know of God's Unity is to consume yourself in the presence of the One. If you wish to shine like day burn up your night-like self-existence. Melt your existence like copper in the elixir into God's Being. You however are determined to hang on to 'I' and 'We' although this spiritual ruin is caused by dualism.

## Analysis

The story contains 32 sections arranged into four blocks of eight sections each. There is a clear progression from one block to another at the literal sequential level. The first block of eight sections deal with the altercation between an Arab and his wife over their poverty. The second block has them making peace with one another. The third block has them working together to prepare, as a gift, a jug of rainwater which the husband then takes carefully to the court of the Caliph as part of his petition to the Caliph to relieve their terrible poverty. The fourth block has the husband's gift being accepted by the Caliph who then fills it with gold to relieve their poverty completely.

Rhetorically, each block is internally organised by chiasmus and parallelism, and this intra-block rhetorical non-sequential level is where the primary symbolism and parallelism is located, with the wife symbolising the *nafs* and the husband the *'aql*. The wife in the first block is the *nafs-i ammārah*, at war with the *'aql* which is enforcing an ascetic regime. Here the poverty is deprivation. The second block of eight sections shows the *nafs* and the *'aql* reconciled, the *nafs* here being the *nafs-i lawwāmah*. The third block of eight sections shows them working in harmony together, preparing the jug of rainwater which the husband takes carefully to the court of Bounty. The *nafs* here is possibly the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, but could also be the *nafs-i lawwāmah* prior to its final transformation, and it is she who sews up the jug of the body and who prays. The final block has the jug being delivered and filled with gold by the Caliph, God, followed by three sections on the need for a Pir and the need to be obedient and endure what he puts you through. This effectively gives a further division into two sets of four sections within each block. There is another division that can be made at half-way, that is after Section 16, which divides the totality into two halves. The first half deals primarily with the *nafs* and shows its transformation from *ammārah* to *lawwāmah*; the second half deals primarily with the *'aql*, initially in harmony with the *nafs*, which, having further transformed to *muṭma'innah*, sends the *'aql* to the court where his purpose for riches is transformed into pure contemplation. The need for self-effacement and the need, above all, to have a Pir or Shaikh are strongly emphasised.

This, however, does not end either the rhetorical structure nor the symbolism, since there is yet another level of organisation in this extraordinarily complex discourse: the parallelism between sections in one block with sections in another block, the sectional inter-block parallelisms. In this level of organisation the parallelisms are not chiasmic. They take the form A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H in block one in parallel with A\*,B\*,C\*,D\*,E\*,F\*,G\*,H\* in block four. The same arrangements holds between the sections of block two and block three. Although people must judge for themselves, it certainly seems as if these parallelisms are more subtle than the

intra-block ones, which sometimes have the obviousness of allegory, where wife = *nafs*, etc, whereas these inter block parallelisms seem, on balance, to be more concerned with the spiritual world, the Real world of *ḥaqīqat*. What is quite astonishing about this discourse, quite apart from the high spiritual understanding, is the level of sheer intelligence and technical control and skill that is displayed to produce this outcome. In identifying the parallelisms, the intra-block ones are taken first, then the inter-block ones.

### The Structure of Discourse Eight

- Section I There was a Caliph, Munificent and Bountiful, who relieved the poverty of all
  - Section II An Arab's wife (*nafs*) complains to her husband of their wretched poverty
  - Section III False Shaikhs are all pretence; give no sustenance; you realise too late
  - Section IV Rarely a good disciple succeeds in spite of the impostor; admit our poverty
  - Section V The husband (*'aql*) tells her to be patient for her grief arises from desire
  - Section VI She says he is all pretence and not to use the Name of God as a trap
  - Section VII He says don't sneer at poverty which is his pride; she can't understand
  - Section VIII Try poverty; find riches; if you could understand I'd tell; be quiet or else
- 
- Section IX The wife cries and apologises and wins his lonely heart
  - Section X Women prevail over the wise but the ignorant prevail over women
  - Section XI The husband regrets his anger and asks her forgiveness
  - Section XII Pharaoh is only Pharaoh here; his rebelliousness is really due to Moses
  - Section XIII He was rejected by the saints, guides of men, and lost this life and next
  - Section XIV The killers of Salih's camel (spirit) were punished and shown to the blessed
  - Section XV Everything seems mixed but each has its own term to fruit and be revealed
  - Section XVI It requires the strength of a saint like Solomon to deal with the worldly realm
- 
- Section XVII *nafs* and *'aql* in constant strife; both needed; seeing with the light of God
  - Section XVIII Arab says he will do whatever she advises out of love; not testing her
  - Section XIX Wife says he should go to the King and demonstrate his need
  - Section XX She tells him to take a jug of rainwater as his gift; jug is our body
  - Section XXI She sews up jug and prays; he takes it with care to Bounteous court
  - Section XXII How the Bounteous Giver seeks the beggar as the beggar seeks His Bounty
  - Section XXIII The lover of God and the lover of other than God who is as a dead picture
  - Section XXIV Courtiers saw him with light of God; he came for money now free as angel
- 
- Section XXV Love the Whole and not the part
  - Section XXVI The part returns to the Whole like scent to rose leaving you with thorns
  - Section XXVII Arab delivers jug; God as a reservoir; spirit of teacher endues pupil
  - Section XXVIII Grammarian and boatman; self-effacement not grammar
  - Section XXIX Caliph fills jug with gold and sends him back via Tigris; Arab ashamed
  - Section XXX Ḥusām al-Dīn asked to explain the need for a Pir and his qualities
  - Section XXXI 'Ali told to take protection with a saint as devotional act; endurance
  - Section XXXII The Qazwin man whose tattoo was incomplete through fear of needle

The first block of eight, after introducing the Munificent Caliph, is concerned with the altercation between the wife (*nafs*) and the husband (*'aql*) over their poverty. Sections 2, 3 and 4 are the wife's complaint, implying he is about as useful as a false Shaikh and he might as well listen to her. Sections 5 to 8 complete their altercation. Section 1, about the Munificent Caliph, is paralleled in Section 8, when the husband tells her to try poverty in order to find real riches. Section 2 is the wife's lament over their poverty in parallel with the husband's response in Section 7 when he tells her not to sneer at poverty since poverty is his pride. Section 3 introduces the false Shaikh, who is all pretence and produces nothing, in parallel with her accusation that her husband, *'aql*, is also all pretence, and that he too uses the Name of God as a trap. Section 4 is the final part of the wife's complaint about their poverty, in parallel with Section 5 in which the husband tells her to be patient with regard to the poverty since her pain comes from her own desire.

The second block, has Section 9 in parallel with Section 16, with the wife, *nafs*, crying for forgiveness and winning dominion over the husband in the ninth section and the wry comment that only a saint with the strength of Solomon can really handle the kingdom of this world in Section 16. Section 10 has two types of men, the wise who have the human qualities of tenderness and affection and the ignorant who have the animal qualities of anger and lust. This is in parallel with Section 15, which describes how the people of fire are mixed with the people of light, each to be revealed in their own season. Section 11 has the husband repenting after destiny had dulled his intelligence and asking for mercy, an infidel becoming a believer, in parallel with Section 14 where the killers of Salih's camel also had their intelligence dulled but did not repent nor become believers and hence were punished. Finally Section 12 is in parallel with Section 13 through the common theme of Pharaoh and his rejection.

The third block has Section 17 in parallel with Section 24 through the theme of seeing with the light of God. Section 18 shows the *'aql* no longer in opposition to the *nafs*, which has now become transformed, and putting itself in the hands of the *nafs* out of love, in parallel with Section 23 on those in love with God and those in love with that which is other than God. Section 19 has the wife telling the husband to go to the King and demonstrate his need, in parallel with 22 on how Bounty in fact needs the beggar just as the beggar needs bounty. Finally Sections 20 and 21 are in parallel because both deal with the jug, which is introduced in the first section and which the wife sews up in the second section.

The fourth block, has Section 25 dealing with loving the whole and not the part, in parallel with the delightfully humorous Section 32 in which the man from Qazwin loved his own parts so

much he could not stand the pain of the needle and as a result the whole lion was never completed. Section 26 deals with the part returning to the whole, in parallel with 'Ali being advised to return to the whole by putting himself under the protection of the shadow of God, in Section 31. Section 27 has the Arab handing over the jug of his body sewn up with the briny water in it to the Caliph's servants, followed by a description of God as a reservoir and then how the spirit of a teacher endues the disciple. This is closely in parallel with Section 30 on the need for and qualities of a Pir. Finally, Sections 28 and 29 are in parallel in that the themes of self-effacement; the Tigris and the breaking of the jug are introduced in one and developed in the next.

The next level of organisation is given by inter-block parallelism, which is not chiasmic. These have previously been considered as secondary parallelisms, since the ones which form the actual rhetorical structure, and determine what comes where, have been regarded as the primary parallelisms. It maybe that this view will have to be revised in the light of this discourse, since the inter-block parallelisms are no less a part of the rhetorical structure than the intra-block ones. They bind together blocks one and four, so that Section 1 can be the starting point. Section 1 is about the Caliph, best taken as God. Section 25 distinguishes lovers of the Whole from lovers of the part. It is clear that the Caliph is to be considered the Whole, - maybe God, maybe Universal Intelligence, '*aql-i kullī*' - since on Section 25 Nicholson writes: "All created things and objects of worldly desire belong to God and return to Him; the existence and actions of His creatures are entirely dependent on His pleasure." Sections 2 and 26 are in parallel in that in the first, the *nafs* is being deprived of its satisfactions, especially its *ḥubb-i dunyā*, love of the world, by a regime of self control imposed by the '*aql-i juzī*'. In the second, the folly of *ḥubb-i dunyā* is the central theme. Sections 3 and 27 are in parallel in that, the first is about false Shaikhs, which is how the *nafs* regards the '*aql-i juzī*', and the second about God as a great reservoir feeding in all directions, and the '*aql-i kullī*', Universal Intelligence, which brings all parts of the body into discipline. Further, it says that when a Master is absorbed in the Way, the soul of the pupil is absorbed in God. Sections 4 and 28 are in parallel in that, in the first it is possible to interpret the assertion that a disciple can, but rarely does, achieve a high spiritual state under a false Shaikh, as meaning that the '*aql-i juzī*' can but rarely does succeed in disciplining the *nafs*. In Section 28 the grammarian, who represents the '*aql-i juzī*', drowns because he cannot swim. What is needed is the '*aql-i kullī*', and the transition is made by *maḥw*, self-effacement. The *nafs*, therefore, was, in a sense, right to consider the '*aql-i juzī*' to be a false Shaikh, since the real Shaikh is the '*aql-i kullī*'. Sections 5, at its most obvious, is in parallel with Section 29 through the theme of gold. Lines 2304-5 are about the tale of gold and how the wife became a gold-seeker, when before she was gold itself. In 29 the Caliph fills the jug with gold, thereby



restoring her to her former state. Section 6 has the wife, even in the heading, telling her husband not to speak above his station, and in Section 30 Maulānā asks Ḥusām al-Dīn to describe the merits of a real Shaikh or Pīr. Section 30 also has the advice of the Prophet to consult women and then do the opposite. Section 7 is in parallel with 31 situationally: in 7, the 'aql sings the praises of deprivation to the *nafs*, who should accept it just as a disciple must accept whatever a Pīr does for his spiritual benefit in 31. Even 'Alī was advised to seek the protection of a Pīr. Sections 8 and 32 are similarly parallel to the preceding in that the first urges the *nafs* to accept poverty as the way to riches, and the second urges the *sālik* to accept the pain given by a Pīr for the sake of spiritual gain, using the analogy of the tattooist's needle and the complete tattoo.

Sections 9 and 17 are in parallel in that in 9, the wife has suddenly changed her mode of operation and become humble, and in 17 there is a full explanation and discussion of this tactic and of the relationship between the *nafs* and the 'aql. Sections 10 and 18 are also clearly parallel, with the theme of women prevailing over the wise common to both. Sections 11 and 19 are in parallel in that in the first the husband yields to the wife and in the second she tells him what to do. Sections 12 and 20 are in parallel in a more subtle and interesting way. In 12 Pharaoh and Moses are seen to be both equally servants and creatures of God, but the contrast in their natures arises only from the existential relationship they have *vis-à-vis* one another. The section needs to be read taking into account the analogy of Pharaoh and Moses to the *nafs* and the 'aql. Similarly, in 20, the *nafs*, who had previously suggested approaching the Caliph, now suggests the present of the jug, which Maulānā quickly explains is no other than the body and the senses, that is, for the most part, the *nafs*. The *nafs* is shown having its own relationship to the Creator, quite distinct from its existential warring relationship with the 'aql. But should this put too kind a light on Pharaoh and his like, Section 13 corrects this by pointing out that Pharaoh and his kind remain in perdition because of the repulsion exerted by the hearts of the perfect saints. But the parallelism with Section 21 is not the repulsion of the saints, but their attraction, which is in parallel with the Caliph's court which draws the Arab to itself. Section 14 has both those who killed Ṣāliḥ camel and who rejected God, and the spirit of the prophet and saint which can be a refuge for the whole world. This is in parallel with Section 22 on how Bounty needs beggars. The correspondence between the two is in the heading of 14, about how God makes his own side appear despicable and few, if he wants them to defeat the enemies, just like Ṣāliḥ's camel, and God similarly requires beggars for His Bounty. Sections 15 and 23 are much more clearly in parallel in that both distinguish between two types of people, between the people of Fire and the people of Light in 15, and between those that are poor for God and those that are poor of God and thirsting for something other than God in 23. Sections 16 and 24 are complementary in that the first deals with the kingdom of this world, which only someone like Solomon can cope with,

and that with difficulty, and the second with the caliph's court, the spiritual world, where the husband was set free from material desire and turned towards contemplation of God. The heading to Section 16 is a warning to a *murīd*, a *sālik*, not to try to do things which can be done by a saint or friend of God. Then follows the example of Solomon, to demonstrate how difficult this world is to rule. At the Caliph's court the transformation just happened through the Grace of God.

### *Interpretation*

This discourse completes the set of discourses dealing with the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, and prepares the way for the next state of the *nafs*, *nafs-i muṭma'innah*. The commentators agree that the wife is the *nafs* and the husband is the '*aql*. The Caliph is either God, the '*aql-i kullī*, the Perfect Man or the Pīr. The development of the story is that the *nafs-i ammārah* is complaining to the '*aql* about its deprivations, the result of abstinence or some ascetic practice. The complaint includes the accusation that the '*aql* is like a false shaikh, full of pretence and using God as a trap. The '*aql* urges patience but knows the *nafs* cannot understand so he has to be severe and tell her to be quiet or he will go. It is difficult to decide precisely when the transformation to the *nafs-i lawwāmah* takes place and the two come into harmony. Although they make up and the *nafs* becomes repentant and humble in block two, in his explanation of the symbolism in Section 17, Maulānā suggests this is a typical alternative tactic of the *nafs*, and certainly the husband, the '*aql*, seems to give in to this new approach and to succumb to worldly ambition. This occupies the first half of the story.

The second half begins with an explanation of the allegory and then takes up the development of the '*aql* in harmony with what has now become at least the *nafs-i lawwāmah*. The jug is explained as the body and the briny water as worldliness. It is the *nafs* who sews it up and who prays it is delivered safely. The husband takes it to the court and although he came for riches is soon lost in contemplation, so there is a further transformation. The Caliph accepts the jug and fills it with gold, clearly indicative of spiritual riches. Whereas poverty in the first half could be taken as deliberate deprivation arising from spiritual discipline, it is clear that spiritual poverty is the major feature of the second half of the story with its constant emphasis on self-effacement. Since the second half deals with matters primarily from the point of view of the '*aql*, it is never possible to say that the *nafs* has been further transformed to become the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, the soul at peace. What the reader is told is that the '*aql* is cleansed of its worldliness, which opens the way for the contact of the '*aql-i juzī* which is the husband with the '*aql-i kullī* which is the

Universal Intelligence. Crucial to the transformation of the *'aql* is *faqr*, spiritual poverty, so poverty in its various forms runs throughout the discourse as a leit-motif.

Also running throughout the discourse is the need for a Shaikh or Pīr. This is addressed to the *sālik* for whom there are various pieces of advice. First, a warning about false Shaikhs. Then a warning that it is rare that the use of the *'aql-i juzī* can accomplish the control of the *nafs*, with the clear example in the story of the *'aql* being taken in by the *nafs* and being infected with worldliness. Then a warning to the *murīd* not to try things that are beyond his powers such as acting like a Pīr or a saint. Then an entire section is devoted to the Pīr in which Ḥusām al-Dīn is invited to add further lines as the exemplary authority. Then the penultimate section in which Maulānā points out that even 'Alī was advised by the Prophet to seek the protection of a Pīr. The final section adds the further instruction to the *sālik*: to take and endure whatever rough treatment the Pīr prescribes, because it is only for his spiritual benefit.

At the very centre of the discourse, one looks for the main import of the discourse, and that is where the harmony of the *nafs* and *'aql* is brought about. Section 17, set at the beginning of the second half, gives a very clear explanation of the purport of the discourse, so further explanation here would be otiose.

### **Discourse Nine: The Story of the Lion, the Wolf and the Fox**

#### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 3013-3041 (29) *How the wolf and fox went to hunt in attendance on the lion.* a] (9) A lion, wolf and fox went hunting together so that together they might capture great prey. The lion was ashamed of the other two, but he did them the honour of his company for unity's sake just as the Prophet was told by God: "Consult them" even if his own understanding was beyond theirs. The spirit had become the body's fellow-traveller. b] (4) Their hunting went well as one would expect with a lion in the lead and they brought down their prey. c] (14) The wolf and the fox both hoped the division of the prey would be made generously by the lion to their advantage but the lion knew what they were thinking and just kept going on smiling though he was thinking I will show them later since they are ungrateful for the lot they have been assigned by God and want more. How they must despise me and God. Outwardly the lion smiled but don't trust that smile. Worldly wealth is like the smile of God; it has made us drunk. Poverty and distress are better for us because then that smile removes the lure of the world.

**Section Two** 3042-3055 (14) *How the lion made trial of the wolf and said "Come forward O wolf, and divide the prey amongst us."* a] (14) The lion told the wolf to divide the prey. The wolf said the ox is yours since it is the largest, the goat is mine because it is intermediate in size and the hare is for the fox because it is the smallest. The lion said to the wolf: "How can you speak of 'I' and 'You' in my presence ? Since you are not passing away in my presence it is necessary that you die miserably." And the lion killed the wolf because anyone uttering I and We at the door of the Divine Court is turning back from the door and returning to 'non-entity'.

**Section Three** 3056-3076 (21) *The story of the person who knocked at a friend's door: his friend from within asked who he was: he said, " 'Tis I" and the friend answered, "Since thou art thou, I will not open the door: I know not any friend that is 'I'".* a] (9) A man knocked on a friend's door. The friend asked who it was, and on the answer "I" said: "Go, this is no place for the raw." Only absence and separation can cook the raw, so after a year of travel and separation the man returned and knocked again. "Who is it ?" asked the friend. "It is Thou" replied the man. "Come in." said the friend, "for there is no room here for two "Is". The double end of the thread is not for the needle; since you are single, pass through the eye of the needle." b] (12) A camel cannot pass through the eye of the needle except when fined down by asceticism and works. For that the Hand of God is necessary which makes all possible even bringing the dead to life, and bringing non-existence into being.

**Section Four** 3077-3101 (25) *Description of Unification.* a] (9) You are entirely myself, come in since you are now single. Don't mistake K and N as two, they are a single entity and only appear to be in opposition. b] (16) Each prophet has a separate way that leads to God, but they are really all one. If their waters of their words are not listened to then they are diverted back to their original stream from which they have been diverted solely for teaching. They have their own channel and may God grant the pure soul to see the place where speech is growing without letters so that it may fly to the ample space of non-existence from which our being and phantasies are fed. The realm of actuality is narrower than the realm of phantasy; the realm of sense and colour is a narrow prison. The cause of narrowness is compoundedness and plurality to which the senses are drawn. The world of Unification lies beyond the realm of sense; go there if you want Unity. The Divine Command Kun was a single act; the two different letters occurring only in speech. Let us return to the wolf and the lion since this discourse has no end.

**Section Five** 3102-3123 (22) *How the lion punished the wolf who had shown disrespect in dividing (the prey).* a] (6) The lion tore off the wolf's head so that duality might not remain, for the wolf was not dead in the presence of the Emir. Then he asked the fox to divide the prey. The fox said the King should have the ox for breakfast, the goat for lunch and the hare for supper. b] (7) The lion asked the fox where he had learnt to divide like that and the fox replied it was from the fate of the wolf. Then the lion said since he had become the lion's he should himself have all the prey for there was no difference. From henceforth he was not a fox but a lion. The wise take warning from the death of friends. c] (9) The fox was greatly relieved that the lion had not asked him first or he too would have been dead. Thanks be to God that He had us born now after past generations whom He had chastised so that we may learn from the fate of those ancient wolves the better to watch over ourselves. The wise man lays aside this self-existence and wind since he heard what had happened to Pharaoh and the like. If he doesn't then others can take his fate as a warning.

**Section Six** 3124-3149 (26) *How Noah, on whom be peace, threatened his people saying, "Do not struggle with me, for I am (only) a veil : ye are really struggling with God (who is ) within this (veil), O God-forsaken men!"* a] (3) Noah said I am dead to the animal soul, I am living through the Soul of Souls. Since I am dead to the senses, God has become my hearing and perception and sight. Since I am not I, this breath (of mine) is from Him. b] (8) Within the fox there is a lion, do not be over-bold in his presence. In Noah there were thousands of lions and he was like fire to an ungrateful world. Whoever is disrespectful to this hidden lion will have his head torn off like the wolf. c] (9) Would that the blows had fallen only on the body so that faith and the heart would be safe. Make little of your bellies, lay the whole of "I" and "We" before Him whose Kingdom it is. When you become selfless the lion and the lion's prey are yours since He has no need of anything. d] (6) In the presence of His Glory watch over your hearts because He sees our innermost thoughts. If the heart has become clear of images it can be a mirror for the Invisible and He become aware because the true believer is the mirror of the true believer. When he examines our spiritual poverty He knows the difference between the true and the hypocrite.

### ***Analysis***

The discourse has six sections arranged chiasmically with parallelism. Thus Section 1 is in parallel with Section 6 through the recurrence of the lion, fox and wolf and by the fact that Section 6 sums up the situation opened in section 1. Section 2 and Section 5 are both concerned with the fate of the wolf and the conclusions to be drawn from it. Sections 3 and 4

are in parallel in that they are both parts of the same story of the man knocking on the door, and, since they are at the central position, they indicate that the main point of the discourse is the need to lose self-consciousness before one can enter the Divine Presence.

### *The Structure of Discourse Nine*

- Section I Lion, wolf and fox go hunting together and win prey; lion has outward smile
- Section II The wolf divides prey up, one animal each; lion kills wolf for saying I and You
- Section III The man who knocked on the door and when asked said "It is I"
- Section IV Everything is really united in spiritual realm but only here appears to be plural
- Section V The lion killed the wolf for unity's sake; the fox learns from the fate of the wolf
- Section VI There is a lion within the fox and thousands in Noah; be respectful and selfless

### *Interpretation*

The commentators agree that in this discourse the lion is the *rūh*, spirit; the wolf is the *nafs*, selfhood; and the fox is *'aql*, intelligence. Nicholson's commentary deals with most of the points of difficulty. From the rhetorical structure of Book One, it is possible to see this discourse as the first of four that deal with the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, the soul at peace. The issue of the sense of 'I', of self-consciousness, is one of the problems that arises for this stage in the development of the *nafs*, just as anger and desire, or excessive wailing, are the self indulgencies of earlier stages.

### **Discourse Ten: The story of Joseph and the Mirror**

#### *Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content*

**Section One** 3150-3156 (7) *How kings seat in front of them the Sufis who know God, in order that their eyes may be illumined by (seeing) them.* a] (7) It is the custom of kings to have champions on their left, since that is the place of the heart which is endowed with courage, and on their right to have secretaries and book-keepers, since one writes with the right hand. In front of them they put the Sufis for they are a mirror of the soul. But better than a mirror because they have polished their breasts so it is able to receive the virgin image. Whoever is born beautiful from the loins of creation should have a mirror placed before him. The beautiful face is in love with the mirror; such a face is the polisher of the soul and the kindler of the fear of God in men's hearts.

**Section Two** 3157-3191 (35) *How the guest came to Joseph and how Joseph demanded of him a gift and present on his return from abroad.* a] (12) The loving friend, an acquaintance from childhood, was the guest of Joseph and was telling him of the injustice and envy of his brethren. Joseph said he had not complained because he was like a lion with a chain round its neck. The lion is not disgraced by the chain. In the well and prison of the world he was like the new moon, bent double, which at last becomes a full moon. Or like a grain of wheat, first buried then raising ears of corn. Then again the corn is crushed only to become bread. Again the bread is crushed when eaten. It became mind and spirit which then became lost in love and grateful for the sowing. b] (6) Joseph asked what traveller's gift he had brought, since God will ask where is your present for the Day of Resurrection ? Or did you have no hope of returning ? c] (16) Do you believe you will be His guest ? Because, if you do, go not empty-handed. Refrain from sleep and food a little and bring that as a gift. Make an effort to win the senses which see the Light and go to the vast expanse the saints have entered. Now you are burdened from the senses and exhausted but in sleep you are born aloft. Regard that as the state of the saints whom God draws without their act or consciousness to good deeds on the right and the affairs of the body on the left.

**Section Three** 3192-3227 (36) *How the guest said to Joseph, "I have brought thee the gift of a mirror, so that whenever thou lookest in it thou wilt see thine own fair face and remember me."* a] (8) "Come show your gift", said Joseph. The friend said he had tried everything but had found the only thing fitting, a mirror, in which he could view his beautiful face and think of him. b] (12) The mirror of Being is non-being. The poor are the mirror of the rich, the hungry man, of bread, tinder, of flint, defect, of excellence. The tailor needs unstitched garments, the woodcutter, unhewn trees, the doctor, a patient, the elixir, vileness and baseness. Defects are the mirror of perfection; each contrary manifest by its opposite. c] (16) Whoever has seen his own deficiency rushes to perfect himself. The only reason not to run to the Lord is supposing oneself to be perfect. There is no worse sickness than the conceit of perfection. Blood must flow to purge self-complacency, which was Iblis's fault, but found in all. When Iblis tests you your water becomes muddy because though your stream seems pure, there is mud at the bottom. Only a Pir can drain off the mud of the flesh and body, you can't do it yourself. Entrust the wound to a surgeon. Flies gather on every would like evil thoughts on your darkened state. If a Pir puts a plaster on the wound the pain goes at once. The ray of the plaster shone on the wound, it did not heal by itself.

**Section Four** 3228-3297 (70) *How the writer of the (Qur'anic) revelation fell into apostasy because (when ) the ray of the Revelation shot upon him, he recited the (revealed) verse before the Prophet, (had dictated it to him ); then he said, "So I too am one upon whom Revelation has descended."* a] (12) A scribe used to write down the revelation from the Prophet but a small part of the wisdom fell on him and he thought he was illumined as the Prophet and stopped being as scribe and became the enemy of both Prophet and the religion. The Prophet was furious and said if the light had been in him how could he have sinned. His heart was darkened and he could not repent as his head was cut off. b] (12) God created pride and reputation to be a barrier and a chain. The chain is worse than iron since iron can be cut. When stung by a wasp you can remove the sting. This sting is caused by your own self-existence so the pain continues. c] (15) Do not despair, call on God who has a cure. The reflection of Wisdom led the scribe astray; don't be conceited because the wisdom in you comes from the saints and is borrowed, as the light in your heart is borrowed. Be thankful not vain or self-conceited. This self-assertion sets religion against religion and leads a man to think that at every station he is in Unity. The house is bright from the sun but when it sets the truth is plain. Plants say we are green and gay by nature, but the summer says just look when I am gone. d] (8) The body boasts of its beauty but the spirit has given it life for a day or two and says: "What will happen to your pride when I take off and you are in the grave?". The beams of the spirit are speech and ear and eye and they fall on the body as do the beams of the Saint on the soul. When the Soul of soul withdraws the soul becomes as a lifeless body. e] (12) I lay my head humbly upon the earth in witness at the Day of Resurrection of what has passed within me. Then will the earth and rocks speak and the mystics alone will hear not the philosopher who did not believe in the moaning pillar. He said melancholia brings phantasies but it was his own wickedness which made him think this. He does not believe in the Devil but is himself possessed as are you. Whoever doubts is a secret philosopher; he professes firm belief but his philosophy will sometime shame him. f] (11) Take care Oh Faithful, in you are all seventy two sects, make sure they don't overcome you. You laughed at the Devil because you thought yourself a good man but when the soul is revealed how many believers will say: "Woe is me." Now everything shines like gold, but do Thou protect when we are tested on the final Day. For thousand of years Iblis was a saint but on account of pride he grappled with Adam and was shamed becoming like dung at morningtide.

**Section Five** 3298-3320 (23) *How Bal'am son of Bā'ūr prayed (to God) saying, Cause Moses and his people to turn back, without having gained their desire, from this city where they have been besieged.* a] (11) Bal'am was like Jesus curing the sick, but he grappled with Moses out of pride and thinking himself perfect. There are thousands like Iblis and Bal'am



but God made these two notorious and publicly punished them as a warning. You are a favourite of God but don't grapple with a greater favourite. These signs of God's punishment is evidence of the might of the Rational Soul. b] (12) Kill all animals for the sake of man; kill all men for the sake of Reason (hūsh). Reason is the quality of a saint endowed with the Universal Intelligence. Partial reason is reason too but infirm. Wild animals are inferior to man and may be killed because they are not human and hostile to humanity. What of you who have become like timorous wild asses ? The ass is useful but when it turns wild may be killed since the Lord does not excuse it. How much the less shall man be excused if he becomes wild to Reason ? His blood may be shed for his is a reason that flees from the Reason of reason and is transported from rationality to animality.

**Section Six** 3321-3343 (23) *How Harut and Marut relied upon their immaculateness and desired to mix with the people of this world and fell into temptation.* a] (9) Divine wrath smote Hārūt and Mārūt because of their arrogance; they thought they who were buffaloes could contend with a lion. The Şarşar wind uproots trees but makes the leaves look beautiful; it has pity on the grass for its weakness. The axe smites thick branches but not the leaf. b] (14) What is form when confronted with reality ? Reason directs and the wind and breath and the sky act from their reality. Reality is Allāh says the Shaikh. All the tiers of heaven and earth are straws in the Sea of Reality.

**Section Seven** 3344-3359 (16) *The rest of the story of Harut and Marut, and how an exemplary punishment was inflicted on them, even in this world, in the pit of Babylon.* a] (6) They looked down from Heaven and saw sin and wickedness but they did not see their own fault. When the self-conceited see the sins of others they are outraged but do not see their own soul of arrogance. This is not the Defence of Religion which has a different character. b] (5) God said to them: "Do not scorn the sinners; give thanks you are free from lust and sexuality. Let me impose that nature on you and heaven will accept you no more. The preservation you have from this is a reflection of my protection. Beware the Devil will prevail against you." c] (5) This is what happened to the Prophet's scribe who thought Wisdom resided in himself. If you imitate a nightingale how will you know its feelings towards the rose; only from analogy and surmise as a deaf man reads lips.

**Section Eight** 3360-3395 (36) *How the deaf man went to visit his sick neighbour.* a] (10) A wealthy man told a deaf man he should visit a neighbour who was ill but the deaf man knew he would not understand what he said so he decided to surmise and give some conjectured answers. b] (6) He asked how he was; the patient said: "Dying." but the deaf man said;

“Thanks be to God”. He asked him what he had drunk; the patient said: “Poison.” but the deaf man said: “May it do you good.” He asked which doctor was attending; the patient said: “The angel of death.” but the deaf man said: “Be glad.” Then he left. c] (8) The patient was furious and abusive. Since the purpose of visiting the sick is to produce tranquillity then this man must be my mortal enemy, he thought. d] (12) Many works of devotion are like this, since what the pietist thinks is pure is really foul, just like the kindly deaf man who destroyed ten years of friendship by kindling the fire of resentment. Avoid analogical reasoning, especially if the senses draw analogies about Revelation, for the sensuous ear cannot understand and the spiritual ear is deaf.

**Section Nine** 3396-3425 (30) *The first to bring analogical reasoning to bear against the Revealed Text was Iblis.* a] (4) Iblis was the first to bring analogies to bear regarding God’s work when he said he was of fire and better than Adam of earth, he of light, Adam of darkness. But God said that the only way to pre-eminence was to be through asceticism and piety. b] (7) This is a spiritual heritage not an earthly one based on relationships; the devout inherit from the Prophets but Noah’s son lost his way and Abū Jahl’s son became a true believer. “The children of Adam become illumined like the moon; you are the child of fire, go in disgrace.” The wise man used reason to identify the *qibla* at night, but when the Ka’ba is visible before you don’t pretend you can’t see it and avert your face because you have reasoned. c] (8) A cheep from the Bird of God you hear and learn by heart then construct analogies and make your imagination substance. But the saints have inner expressions you do not know and you upset their hearts as the deaf man did the patient through your analogies built only on the sound of the Bird’s language and you are proud of your success. The Prophet’s scribe supposed he was the Bird’s equal and the Bird killed him. d] (12) God said: “Do not you Hārūt and Mārūt superior to the angels fall from the dignity of heaven. Have mercy on wickedness and do not cleave to egoism and self-conceit lest Divine jealousy destroy you.” Although they said that God’s protection was their security, desire in them sowed self-conceit and they said they would come down and spread justice, peace and security on earth. But there is a real difference between the state of heaven and earth.

**Section Ten** 3426-3466 (41) *Explaining that one must keep one’s own (spiritual) state and (mystical ) intoxication hidden from the ignorant.* a] (4) Hakim Sanai said lay your head in the same place where you have drunk the wine. When a drunken man leaves the tavern he becomes the laughing stock of children and fools who know nothing of his intoxication nor the taste of wine. b] (12) All mankind are children except those intoxicated with God or freed from sensual desire. This world is play and you are all like children; only adults have purity of

spirit. Lust here is like the sexual intercourse of children, wars are fought with wooden swords and riders are really on hobby horses. Wait till the hosts of heaven come galloping by. You are all pretending to ride. c] (12) Opinion is a bad steed and imagination and reflection is like a child's play horse. The mystic's sciences are good steeds but those of sensual man a burden. Knowledge not from God is burdensome, but if you carry the burden well you will be released from it and gain spiritual joy. Do not carry it for selfish reasons, but mortify yourself so that the burden will drop. How will you be freed from sensuous desire except by the cup of Hū ? d] (13) What is born from name and attribute ? Phantasy which shows the way to union. Have you ever seen something named without a reality, go seek the thing named. But if you seek to pass beyond name and letter purge yourself of self. Become in your discipline like a mirror without rust so that you can see all sciences without a book as the Prophet said there are some who see him as I behold them, without any hadith.

**Section Eleven** 3467-3499 (33) *The story of the contention between the Greeks and the Chinese in the art of painting and picturing.* a] (16) The Chinese and Greeks disputed over who were the better painters. The Sultan put them to the test and two adjoining rooms were given one to each group. The Chinese used many colours but the Greeks went on burnishing. When the Sultan saw the Chinese room he was amazed by the pictures; but when the curtain was pulled back from the Greeks room the Chinese pictures shone in reflection on those pure walls more beautifully than in the other room. b] (17) The Greeks, Oh Father, are Sufis who have burnished their breasts from greed and avarice. That purity of mirror is the heart that can receive all images as Moses holds the form of the Unseen in his heart. The mirror of the heart is unbounded and here the understanding becomes silent because the heart is He and every image shines unto everlasting without blemish. They that burnish their hearts have escaped from colour and scent and see only Beauty, they have relinquished knowledge and gained certainty, given up thought and gained light. Death has no hold and none can overcome their hearts. They have let go of grammar and gained self-effacement and spiritual poverty. Their hearts are receptive of a hundred impressions which are the very sight of God.

### ***Analysis***

Although the eleven sections given above from lines 3150-3499 have been represented as constituting a single discourse, it is also possible to treat these eleven sections as a link section followed by a discourse of ten sections. Both possibilities will be examined here since both are equally valid ways of reading the text and it is quite possible that the author intended both since the overall message of these sections is unaffected. However, in the next chapter,

which examines Book One as a whole, it will be seen there is a symmetry in Maulānā's use of link sections, and a link section at this point would upset the symmetry. Accordingly, preference is given here to Discourse Ten being of eleven sections. But first the other possibility will be looked at.

When the section 3150-3156 is treated as the link, connecting Discourse Nine with Discourse Ten through the idea of the mirror of the purified heart, then Discourse Ten has ten sections. These sections are best treated as four contrasting blocks, the first block is formed by Sections 1 and 2 about Joseph, *riyādat* and the mirror and this block is parallel with the final block formed by Sections 9 and 10 which are two sections also about *riyādat* and the mirror. Then, in contrast to these two blocks there are two block of three sections which give examples of those things which prevent the heart from being a mirror: pride, self-conceit, arrogance in the first block of Sections 3, 4 and 5 and various forms of analogy and comparison that lead to self importance and complacency in the second block formed by Sections 6, 7 and 8. These two inner blocks are in parallel thematically and linked together by the two sections dealing with Harut and Marut. This is the first structure treated in blocks rather than in separate sections.

The second possible structure, and the one preferred here, is to treat all eleven as a single discourse, so that the section on the Sufis as mirrors becomes Section I in parallel with the final Section 11 on the Chinese and Anatolian painters and the mirror images. Section 2 becomes the Joseph section which emphasises *riyādat* in parallel with Section 10 which is about keeping secrets and *riyādat*. Section 3 deals with fault being the mirror of perfection and the worst fault that prevents one from rushing to God is the conceit that one is perfect which was the fault of Iblis. This is in parallel with Section 9 which is precisely about Iblis and his fault. Section 4 about the scribe, and Section 9 about the deaf man, Maulānā himself states to be parallel in verses 3355-9. Section 5 about Bal'am and Section 7 about Hārūt and Mārūt are parallel through the two themes of pride and punishment. This leaves Section 6 as the central section within which is stated that the Reality (*ma'nī*) is God as the Prophet said. This is the centrality both of the discourse and of the universe, and this section elaborates the last line of Section I in which the beautiful face in love with the mirror is not just the polisher of the soul but also the kindler of the fear of God in men's hearts.

## The Structure of Discourse Ten

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- Section 1 Kings seat Sufis facing them to act as the soul's mirror; beauty loves the mirror
  - Section 2 Joseph's friend; spirits trapped in bodies; what gift for Judgement day; *riyādat*
  - Section 3 Gift a mirror to show his beauty; fault mirror of perfection; conceit; Iblīs; Pīr
  - Section 4 Prophet's scribe; pride and conceit; God has a cure; nothing lasts for long
  - Section 5 Bal'am lost to Moses from conceit; Reason of saints; you are wild asses
  - Section 6 Hārūt and Mārūt acted from arrogance; Reason directs; Reality is Allāh
  - Section 7 Hārūt and Mārūt saw sin but not their own; conceit; God's punishment
  - Section 8 Deaf man infuriates patient; much devotion like this; avoid surmise, analogy
  - Section 9 Iblīs used analogy first; saints beyond analogy; don't be egotistical
  - Section 10 Hide spiritual state; opinion and knowledge not for God, bad; *riyādat*
  - Section 11 Burnish the mirror of the heart; Greek and Chinese painters

### Interpretation

This is the second discourse to deal with the *nafs-i muṭma'innah* and its specific problems. Unlike the previous discourse, there is in Discourse 10 a large amount of direct and explicit exhortation to the *sālik*. The diagram above reveals the beautifully conceived spatial extension of this discourse. The mirror of the Sufi's soul in Section 1 and the mirror of the heart in Section 11 both pointing inwards, positioned to reflect Reality, which is Allāh, in the central section. In Sections 2 and 10 the theme of *riyādat*, here, discipline as the polishing and burnishing of the soul and heart, is situated so that it clearly emphasises the need to cleanse the mirror and keep it clean. Between the mirrors and their wiping and the Reality of God, are a number of specific defects which prevent the mirrors from reflecting Reality: conceit, pride and arrogance, on the one hand, and analogy, surmise and opinion, on the other. The pride and arrogance here are different in kind from their manifestation in the *nafs-i ammārah*, they are the more intractable problems of egoism, egotistical or spiritual pride, the conceit of perfection and so on, to which, as Maulānā's examples demonstrate, not even the angels are invulnerable. The second set of problems and defects which cloud the mirror and prevent the reflection of Reality, are analogy, opinion and surmise. If you give somebody an important book to read and they come back saying: "It reminds me of Plato's dialogues", or if you takes them to your most cherished view or landscape and they say: "It reminds me of Bournemouth", you know they have not had a direct encounter with either the reality of the book or the reality of the view. Instead of a direct contact, they have seen both the book and the view through the fog of their own pre-existing associations and memories and come up with analogies, second-hand responses, instead of a response of their own produced by a direct encounter with reality. Similarly, pre-existing opinions, or guesses in the case of the

deaf man, prevent a direct contact with reality, because they too produce a fog through which the reality is distorted. Although analogy, opinion and surmise would not usually be thought of in the same category as pride arrogance and conceit, for the *nafs-i muṭma'innah* they produce the same result, an inability to have a direct contact with reality, an inability of the heart and soul to reflect back the Reality and Beauty of God. All of this is expressed 'spatially' by the rhetorical structure of this discourse.

Since most of the discourse is explicit and clear, and many points of detail and reference are discussed by Nicholson in his commentary, it is not felt necessary here to add further to this interpretation. The rationale is perfectly articulated in the rhetorical structure.

### **Discourse Eleven: Zayd's Vision**

#### ***Summary of the narrative and thematic contents***

**Section One** 3500-3583 (84) *How the Prophet, on whom be peace, asked Zayd: "How art thou today and in what state hast thou risen?" and how Zayd answered him saying, "This morning I am a true believer, O Messenger of Allah."* a] (6) The Prophet asked Zayd how he was and was told he was a true believer. He asked what was his token from the garden of faith and Zayd replied he had been filled with love day and night and gone beyond them both to where thousands of years are but an hour. b] (21) When the Prophet asked for the traveller's token, Zayd continued that he had seen the seven Hells and the eight Paradises and knew the difference between the blessed and the damned and how when the spirits were born in the next life, the blessed carried off the blessed, and the damned the damned. In this world you cannot tell Hindu from Turk but I was seeing all as on the day of Resurrection. c] (16) Oh Prophet, shall I make manifest the Resurrection and pull back the curtains on Paradise, Hell and the intermediate state for the infidel to see? Shall I tell of the pleasures of Paradise and the cries of woe from the damned? I would tell all but I fear to offend the Messenger of God. d] (15) Hold back, said the Prophet, because when the reflection of God strikes the heart all shame goes. The mirror has shot out of its case and the mirror and balance cannot lie. If you ask them to conceal the truth they would say you should not expect them to deceive because God has made them to reveal the truth. Put the mirror back in its case if illumination has lit up your breast. "How can the Sun of eternity be contained in a case?" said Zayd. The Prophet replied that if you put a finger on the eye you can obscure the sun and a finger-tip can veil the moon. That is a symbol of God's covering, that a whole world may be hidden by a single

point. e] (8) Look at the sea; God made it subject to man, as he did the four rivers of Paradise, and just as the two flowing eyes are subject to the heart and spirit. As the heart dictates they turn to poison or edification, to the sensuous or the clothed, to universals or particulars. f] (12) Likewise the senses obey the dictates of the heart. The foot dances or flees, the hand writes. Sometimes the hand is a friend, sometimes an enemy. The heart speaks to all the members of the body; it is a wonderful hidden link. The heart must have the seal of Solomon over all the senses and limbs. g] (6) Oh heart since you are a Solomon take control over the demons since if you are free from deceit the demons cannot take the seal from your hand. But if you have deceit then your kingdom is past. If you deny your deceit how will you escape from the mirror and the balance ?

**Section Two** 3584-3608 (25) *How suspicion was thrown upon Luqman by the slaves and fellow servants who said that he had eaten the fresh fruit which they were bringing (to their master).*

a] (14) Luqmān was an ugly slave and despised. Their master used to send them to the garden to fetch him fruit but out of greed they ate it all and blamed Luqmān. The master was angry but Luqmān suggested he give everyone hot water to drink and made them run till they were sick which would show who had eaten the fruit. The master did so and from Luqmān there came only pure water. b] (10) If Luqmān's wisdom can do this, consider the Lord's wisdom since one day all the veils will be lifted and everything revealed. The fire of Hell is the torment of infidels because it is the test of stone and their hearts are stony. Bad treatment for bad people; ugly mate for ugly mate. If you wish for the light make ready to receive light; if you wish to be far from God be self-conceited. If you wish to find a way out of this prison, bow in worship to the Beloved.

**Section Three** 3608-3655 (48) *The remainder of the story of Zayd (and what he said) in answer the Prophet, on whom be peace.*

a] (10) Arise, Zayd, and restrain you rational spirit which exposes faults, for God now requires concealment so that no one should refrain from worship. His mercy is universal and He wishes prince and captive both to be hopeful, fearful and afraid. Hope and fear are behind the veil so they can be fostered. When you rent this veil, what becomes of fear and hope ? b] (9) A man by the river thought a fisherman was Solomon, but wondered why he was in disguise. He was still in two minds when Solomon became King again and the demon fled. Then the man looked at Solomon's ring and all doubt fled. Anxiety exists when the object sought is hidden. The searching is for the unseen. When he was absent, imagination was strong; when absent, imagination left. c] (14) God wants us to believe in the unseen which is why He has shut the window on the fleeting world in order that they may make their efforts in darkness. Now things are reversed and the thief tries the magistrate and

the Sultan becomes a slave of his own slave for a while. Service performed in absence, like protecting a border far from the Sultanate, is worth far more than service performed in the presence. d] (3) Since the unseen, the absent and the veil are better; it is best to close the mouth. Refrain from speech; God Himself will make manifest what is needed. Witness for the sun is its face, but the greatest witness is God. e] (12) Speak I must since God and His angels and men of knowledge bear witness that there is no Lord except Him who endures forever. The angels are associated with the testimony because unsound eyes cannot stand the radiance of the sun and lose hope like the bat. The angels are helpers in this testimony, each with its rank and worth, reflected in three or four pairs of luminous wings. Each human is associated with that angel who shares the same dignity.

**Section Four** 3656-3667 (12) *How the Prophet said to Zayd: "Do not tell this mystery more plainly than this, and take care to comply (with the religious law)."* a] (12) The Prophet said his companions were like stars, a candle for travellers and meteors to be cast at devils. No moon or stars would be needed if everyone had an eye that could look at the sun. He, the moon, said he was just a man but it was revealed to him that God is One. "I was as dark as you but the sun gave me this revelation. I am dark in relation to spiritual suns but light with regard to human darkness. I am dark so you can bear my light. I am mixed like honey and vinegar to cure the sickness of the heart; now you have recovered from your illness, drink only the honey." If the heart is restored to soundness and purged of sensuality then thereon God is seated. He controls the heart directly. But where is Zayd that he can be counselled not to seek notoriety.

**Section Five** 3668-3706 (39) *The (author's) return to the story of Zayd.* a] (3) You will not find Zayd now for he has gone. Not just you, Zayd could not find himself; he is without trace like a star in the Milky Way. b] (14) Senses and rational thought are obliterated in the knowledge of the King but when night comes the stars have to work and God restores the senses to the senseless and dancing and waving they praise God for having brought them to life. At resurrection both the thankful and the ungrateful rush from non-existence to existence. Why do you pretend not to see ? You have been dragged into existence by the Lord. Non-existence is the slave and is always trembling in fear of being brought into existence. c] (10) You seek the world out of fear of the agony of spirit. Agony of spirit is everything, however pleasing, other than the love of God; it is to face death without the water of life. People look at earth and death and doubt about the water of life. Reduce doubt; go towards God in the night for the water of life is the mate of darkness. But don't sleep because when the merchant sleeps the night-thief gets to work. Your enemies are those made of fire. d] (12) Fire is the



enemy of water and water the enemy of fire which it kills. The fire is lust , the root of evil, and brings you to Hell. It is not quenched by water but from light, the light of God. Lust is not reduced by indulgence but by restraint; don't feed the fire. Why should the fire of lust blacken the soul which has in it the fear of God ?

**Section Six** 3707-3720 (14) *How a conflagration occurred in the city (Medina) in the days of 'Umar.* a] (14) In the time of 'Umar a fire caught half a city and water was afraid of it. People threw water on it but it increased, fed from beyond itself. The people went to 'Umar and said water will not work. He replied that the fire was their own wickedness, forget water and give out bread in charity. Cease to be avaricious. They said they have been bountiful, generous and opened their doors but 'Umar said they had done so for ostentation and rule and habit not from fear and piety and supplication. Distinguish the friend of God from the enemy of God; sit with the man who sits with God. Everyone shows favour to his own kind and thinks he has done really good work.

### ***Analysis***

This discourse is in six sections. Section1 introduces Zayd who had a vision in which he saw the true nature of people and who were virtuous and who were sinners. Section 6 again requires that one should distinguish from the friends of God and the enemies of God and provides a further example in 'Umar of a Perfect Man who has cleaned his mirror and can see people's real nature and their motives. Sections 2 and 5 are parallel through water which reveals Luqmān's virtue in 2 and the Water of Life in 5. There is also a parallelism through the Day of Resurrection in both sections. Sections 3 and 4 are parallel in that they are both about Zayd, and in both the Prophet explains the reasons why he should not speak of what he had seen. This has been shown below in the diagram as the primary rhetorical structure.

There is also parallelism between Section1 and Section 5, both in the fact that they are the start and finish of Zayd's story, and also through the theme of the Day of Resurrection. There is further parallelism between Sections 2 and 6, both in the fact that neither is about Zayd, but more so in the theme of water, fire, and the fact that like gets like and the fire of avarice is met with God's fire. Which parallelisms are intended to be primary and which secondary is immaterial, since both add to the total integration of the discourse. In the diagram below, however, the first structure is preferred.

There is a third possibility which has to be mentioned, that is to treat Section 6 as a link section between Discourse Eleven and Discourse Twelve. This has not been done here, but it is a possibility. Rather like Section 1 of Discourse Ten on Sufis sitting in front of kings, this section has about it a similar ambiguity, it could belong, or it could be independent and a link, since it both looks backward and forward.

### The Structure of Discourse Eleven

- Section I Zayd tells Prophet his vision; who is damned, who blessed; Prophet stops him
- Section II Luqmān's innocence shown by water; Judgement Day; each will get like for like
- Section III God wants things hidden to inspire fear and hope; be silent; he wishes to tell a
- Section IV Prophet says he got light from the Sun but others could not bear it, even Zayd
- Section V Zayd is gone without trace; Resurrection; Water of Life; Fire of lust; fear of God
- Section VI Fire destroys city; water won't stop it; 'Umar says it's God's; be truly generous

### Interpretation

This is the third discourse dealing with the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, and the problems that it faces. It is quite explicit, and those points there are of difficulty or of particular interest are commented on by Nicholson. As Nicholson says, the vision of Zayd illustrates the 'hidden knowledge' of the mystic who sees with the eye of certainty, '*ayn al-yaqīn*'. The problem Zayd has is not that he has seen what he saw, but that he wanted to proclaim it. This is where the Prophet has to rein him in. The importance of the reasons given as to why he should not speak about such matters is emphasised by the fact that the two sections containing the explanation are found in the central position. These two central sections are flanked by sections which touch on the Day of Resurrection, a theme the *sālik* should keep in his awareness at this stage of his development. The outer sections deal with the division of people into the *ahl-i dīn*, the friends of the Religion, and the *ahl-i kīn*, the enemies of God, and the final advice to sit with the man who sits with God, which, of course, additionally foreshadows the next discourse, as does the theme of sincerity.

### Discourse Twelve: The Story of 'Alī and the Infidel Knight

#### Summary of the Narrative and Thematic Content

**Section One**            3721-3772 (50) *How an enemy spat in the face of the Prince of the Faithful, 'Alī, may God honour his person, and how 'Alī dropped the sword from his hand. a]*

(6) 'Ali, the Lion of God, was empty of deceit. One day in battle with the infidel he had overcome a certain knight and was about to slay him when the knight spat in his face. He immediately threw his sword away and the knight was astonished at this display of mercy and forgiveness. b] (7) Said the Knight, "What did you see that was more interesting than killing me, that caused your anger to abate, that was better than life that you gave me mine ? In bravery you are a Lion of the Lord, in generosity the cloud of Moses." c] (5) Moses' cloud gave cooked and sweet food in the desert for forty years unceasingly until the vile people of Israel demanded leeks, green herbs and lettuce. d] (6) Oh people of the Prophet, that food is spiritual food which will continue till the last day. Accept the Prophet's saying that "He gives me food and drink" as meaning spiritual food, without any false interpretation - which is really rejection - since false interpretation derives from faulty understanding. Since Universal Reason is the kernel and our reason the rind, alter yourselves and not the traditions of the Prophet. e] (7) "Tell what you have seen, Oh 'Ali, for these are God's mysteries. Your eyes saw the Unseen while the bystanders saw nothing." f] (5) One man sees the moon plainly, one sees only the dark while a third sees three moons. They are all alert in their senses but not everything is accessible to every eye. g] (9) "Reveal the mystery, Oh 'Ali, or I will tell you how it seems to me. You are giving off light like the moon, but it would be better if the moon comes to speech. You are the Gate of Mercy to the City of Knowledge, be open, Oh Entrance to God. Every atom is a viewpoint of God, but only when it is opened." h] (6) Until the Watcher opens a door, the idea does not dawn, but when the door is opened then the person is amazed to discover what he had been searching fruitlessly for years. Opinion never gets further than its own nostrils. Can you see anything other than your own nose ? How will it be with your nose turned up in conceit ?

**Section Two**            3773-3786 (14) *How that infidel asked 'Ali, saying "Since thou wert victorious over such a man as I am, how didst thou drop the sword from thy hand?"* a] (9) "Speak Oh 'Ali, that my soul may stir like the embryo." The embryo cannot stir when it is under the control of the stars so it turns towards the sun which endows it with spirit. How does the sun do this ? It has many hidden ways whereby it transforms natures. b] (4) "Tell it forth, O royal falcon, wherefore this mercy in place of vengeance ?"

**Section Three**            3787-3843 (57) *How the Prince of the Faithful made answer (and explained) what was the reason of his dropping the sword from his hand on that occasion.* a] (23)

I wield the sword for God. I am not the servant of my body but the servant of God. I am the Lion of God not the Lion of my passions. I am as the sword and the wielder is the Sun. I have

remover the baggage of self and deemed that which is other than God to be non-existence. I am the shadow, my Lord is the Sun. In battle I make men living, not dead. I am a mountain of mercy, patience and justice, how could the wind of passion carry off a mountain ? Only rubbish can a wind carry off. I am a mountain and only stirred by love of God. Anger is king over kings but to me is a slave. Since the thought of something other than God intervened I sheathed my sword that everything I do, loving, hating, giving, withholding may be only for God's sake. I am God's entirely and what I do for God's sake is not from opinion, or fancy or conformity, but from intuition since I have tied my sleeve to the skirt of God. I am the moon and the Sun in front of me is my guide. b] (2) I have to speak according to the understanding of the audience, there is no other way as the Prophet showed. "I am free from self-interest; hear the testimony of a freeman for that of a slave is worth nothing." c] (12) In religious law the testimony of a slave is worthless, and in God's sight that of the slave of lust is the worst. Only God's favour can redeem such a slave. The only approved witness is he who is not the slave of sensuality so in the Warning in the *Qur'ān* the witness was the Prophet who was free from creaturely existence. d] (6) Since I am free how can anger bind me. There is nothing here but Divine qualities, come in. God has made you free, you have escaped, come in. You are I and I am you how could 'Ali kill 'Ali ? You committed a sin better than any act of piety." e] (10) How fortunate was the sin, like that of 'Umar against the Prophet or the magicians of Pharaoh. Disobedience becomes obedience despite the slanderous devils who seek to make a sin of it. God's act of mercy has driven them away in envy. f] (3) "Come in for I open the door for you. You spat and I gave you a present. If I give this to the sinner, I give treasures and kingdoms to the righteous.

#### **Section Four**

3844-3892 (49) *How the Prophet said in the ear of the stirrup holder of the Prince of the Faithful ('Ali), may God honour his person , "I tell thee, 'Ali will be slain by thy hand."* a] (10) I am so merciful I was not even angry at my own murderer. The Prophet told my servant that one day he, my servant, would kill me. My servant told me to kill him so it would not happen but I said this is Divine Ordainment; I do not hate you because you are God's instrument and I must not attack the instrument of God." b] (5) "When then is retaliation allowed ?" asked the Knight. 'Ali replied: "It is from God too and it is a mystery. He takes offence at His own act since in mercy and vengeance He is One. If He breaks His own instrument, He mends what He has broken." c] (17) Every law that God has cancelled He has replaced with a better, as night cancels day and day then night, for contraries are manifested by means of contraries. In the black core of the heart he places the light of love. The Prophet's warring caused peace in a later age. He cut off thousands of heads that the whole world might be secure, as the gardener lops off a branch or pulls up weeds and the

dentist pulls out bad teeth. Many advantages are hidden in defects; for martyrs there is life in death. d] (17) How long will you be attached to white bread for which you have lost your honour ? Although white bread has broken your fast, He alone can mend what has been broken. He knows how to tear and how to sew, how to ruin a house and how to make it habitable, how to cut off a head and how to restore a hundred. Had He not ordained retaliation the no one would dare to retaliate because everyone whose eyes God had opened would know that the slayer was subject to Divine predestination, even if he had to kill his own child. Go, fear God, and do not rail at the wicked. Know your own helplessness before the snare of the Divine decree.

**Section Five**            3893-3923 (31)    *How Adam marvelled at the perdition of Iblis and showed vanity.* a] (6) Adam looked with contempt and scorn on Iblis, he behaved with self-conceit and became self-approving; he laughed at the plight of the accursed Iblis. The jealousy of God cried out against him: Adam you are ignorant of inner mysteries. If God should choose to He could put to shame a hundred Adams and bring forth a hundred Devils newly converted to Islam. Adam said, "I repent of this look, I will not be so disrespectful again." b] (25) Oh Help of those that cry for help, lead us aright. There is nothing worse than separation from Thee. Possessions and our bodies destroy our spirituality and no one can save his soul without Thy security. Even if one could save his soul he would still be miserable separated from Thee. You have the right to upbraid your creatures because You alone are perfect and brought the non-existent into existence. You can make grow and then destroy, and then, having destroyed, restore again. Since You made us, we should only be humble and content, but since we are engaged with the flesh, unless You call us, we are Ahrimans. If we are delivered from Ahriman it is only because You have delivered us. You are the Guide without whom we are blind. Excepting you everything destroys us and becomes fire for us. Everything but God is empty; truly the grace of God is a cloud pouring abundantly and constantly.

**Section Six**            3924-3937 (14)    *Returning to the story of the Prince of the Faithful, 'Ali and how generously he behaved to his murderer.* a] (6) Returning to 'Ali and his murderer, 'Ali said: "I see him day and night but am not angered by him because death has become sweet for me." It is death outwardly but life inwardly; what seems an end is really permanence. b] (8) Since I long for death the prohibition not to cast oneself into destruction is meant for me. Slay me my friends for in death is my life. How long shall I be parted from home ? If I was not separated from God why else would He say: "Verily we are returning to Him." He who returns flees from the revolution of Time and approaches Unity.

**Section Seven**            3938-3947 (10) *How the stirrup holder of 'Ali, came (to him), saying, "For God's sake kill me and deliver me from this doom."* a] (10) The murderer begged me to kill him, saying he would make it lawful, but I told him it was not possible for it had been written. He should not grieve for I am his intercessor. I am the spirit's master not the body's slave. Without my body I am noble and death will be my banquet. How could someone who treats his body like this covet the Princedom and the Caliphate. Only outwardly does he strive for power, in order to show princes the right way, to give another spirit to the Princedom, and fruit to the palm-tree of the Caliphate.

**Section Eight**            3948-3974 (27) *Explaining that the motive of the prophet in seeking to conquer Mecca and other (places) than Mecca was not love of worldly dominion , inasmuch as he has said "this world is a carcass," but that on the contrary it was by the command (of God.)* a] (9) How can you think that the Prophet sought to conquer Mecca out of love for the world ? He cared only for God rather than the treasures of the Seventh Heaven. If these treasures were worthless to him then what of Mecca, Syria and 'Iraq ? b] (7) This is the thinking of a hypocrite who judges from the analogy of his own worthless soul. Iblis saw the dust and said how can this offspring of clay be superior to me of the fiery brow ? Such a view which regards the holy Prophets and saints as men is the inheritance from Iblis. c] (11) I am the Lion of God who has escaped from phenomenal form and seeks freedom and death, not the lion of this world who seeks prey and provision. Desire for death became a criterion for the Jews in the *Qur'ān*; if they were the chosen people they would have wished for death to enter paradise, but they didn't and became dhimmis asking the Prophet not to shame them.

**Section Nine**            3975-4003 (29)            *How the Prince of the Faithful, 'Ali – may God honour his person - said to his antagonist , "When thou didst spit in my face, my fleshly self was aroused and I could no longer act with entire sincerity (towards God); that hindered me from slaying thee."* a] (5) 'Ali said to the knight that when he spat in his face his fleshly self was aroused and half of his fighting was for God's sake and half from passion; since partnership with God is not allowed he did not finish him. He, the knight, was made by God and you can only break God's image by the command of God. b] (9) When the infidel heard this he repented and sought to become the slave of that Lamp which lit the light of 'Ali. He asked for the Muslim profession of faith and fifty of his tribe accepted Islam. By the sword of mercy 'Ali saved so many from the sword of iron. c] (13) Now a morsel of bread has broken the flow. When bread was spirit it was inspirational, now it has become form it leads to disbelief. The words are coming forth earth-soiled; the water is turbid; stop up the mouth of

the well so God may again make it pure and sweet, that He who made it turbid may again make it pure. Patience brings the object of desire, not haste. Have patience – and God knows best what is right.

### **Analysis**

The form of this discourse is identical to that of Discourse One with which it is clearly in parallel. It is formally A, B, C, D, E, D\*, C\*, B\*, A\* with the emphasis on Section 5 which is a direct prayer to God. Section 1 and Section 9 are in parallel in that narratively they represent the beginning and the conclusion of the story in that Section 1 gives the sparing of the Knight and Section 9 his conversion. Thematically they are paralleled by the concept of *ikhlas*, purity and sincere attachment to God in act, the word that occurs in the first line of the story and is repeated as the theme in the title of the last section. Section 2 and Section 8 are parallel in that Section 2 introduces the concept of the sun as the *Insān-i Kāmil* who transforms the embryonic *sālik's* nature and Section 8 presents the Prophet and 'Ali as the Perfect Man. Narratively the question asked in 2 as to why mercy in place of vengeance is answered in 8 by the title, the example of the Prophet, and 'Ali's insistence that he too is not interested in worldly dominion. Sections 3 and 7 are parallel in that in both 'Ali states he is not the servant of his body but the servant of God and master of the spirit, and in both sections he refrained from killing because it was not ordained. Sections 4 and 6 are parallel in that they are both concerned with 'Ali's murderer, and the fact that 'Ali was not angry with him. In thematic terms, Section 4 introduces the contraries, and God in multiplicity, as well as God replacing one thing with another, whereas in 6, this is developed into seeing death as life and a return to God as Unity. This leaves Section 5 which stands as the central emphasis. This begins with an anecdote on the need for humility and is followed by a direct prayer to God requesting His Grace and Love without which we are nothing.

### **The Structure of Discourse Twelve**

- Section One** Learn *ikhlas* from 'Ali; 'Ali not killing enemy who spat; knight asks why
- Section Two** Knight asks the reason and seeks to know how the sun transforms
- Section Three** 'Ali not slave of body but of God, no self-interest on his part
- Section Four** 'Ali not angry with his future murderer; contraries; Divine decree
- Section Five** Need for humility; prayer to God for His grace without which nothing
- Section Six** 'Ali not angry with his murderer; death is life; a return to the Unity of God
- Section Seven** 'Ali not killing murderer; not written; not body's slave but master of spirit
- Section Eight** Prophet and 'Ali as Perfect Men; no interest in worldly dominion
- Section Nine** 'Ali not killing since not fully Will of God; conversion; end of book; patience

## *Interpretation*

This discourse is the climax of the development of the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, which culminates in the state of *ikhhlāṣ*, sincerity, total submission to God's Will, without any trace of self-interest. It is the model the *sālik* needs to hold before himself, and it is exemplified in 'Alī. But *ikhhlāṣ* is not the only element in the ideal placed before the *sālik* in this discourse: indeed, it is the outer message, in the sense that it is contained in the two outmost sections, Sections 1 and 9. Why does Maulānā launch into the various stages of development of the embryo in Section 2 ? First, he has the infidel liken his own un-awoken soul to the embryo in the opening question, and that sets the analogy. Nicholson explains the conventional understanding of the embryo's development by quoting from the *Rasā'il al-Ikhwān al-Ṣafā*, a work founded on microcosm/macrocosm analogies. If the embryo is taken as the soul, then what is the sun ? Certainly it implies God, but also the Perfect Man, as exemplified by Muḥammad and 'Alī in the parallel Section 8. Of all the exemplars of the Perfect Man, however, there is one, *par excellence*, associated with the sun, namely Šams of Tabrīz. This is a useful reminder that Maulānā was not writing from theory, but from his own experience, and that there is in all the discourses an autobiographical element. The two messages from this parallelism are first that the Perfect Man, whose eye has seen the Friend, quickens the soul as the sun does the embryo; and second, that only the children of Iblīs judge the saints and the prophets from the analogy of their own wicked souls, as indeed the infidel had judged 'Alī and was surprised in consequence to be still alive. Both could be seen also as messages deriving from Maulānā's own experience with Šams and the judgement some of the disciples made about Šams.

Coming further in, Section 3 could be said almost to list the ideal qualities the *sālik* should aim for: to be the Lion of God, not of the passions; to have removed the baggage of self; to deem what is other than God to be non-existence; to be a shadow, with God as the sun; to be united with God, to make men living not slain; to have anger as one's slave, not vice-versa; to be free from self-interest. In the parallel Section 7 the list continues: not to attempt to act against what is written; to be the spirit's master, not the body's slave; to deem the body to be on no value. "Given all this", asks 'Alī, "how could one covet Princesdom?"



Coming even closer to the central inner purport are the two flanking sections, Sections 4 and 6, which deal with 'Alī and how he behaved to his future murderer. This episode is well-known and certainly germane to the overall narrative, and needs no further justification, but since an autobiographical resonance has been raised with regard to Section 2, there is possibly here a suggestion of a parallel situation concerning Šams and his fate, but this is pure speculation and quite unprovable. The central theme of Section 4 is God's Ordainment, and how it is a hidden mystery. How when God breaks he really mends, is one of the contraries which is part of His mystery. The narratively parallel Section 6 is also thematically parallel in that one of the great spiritual contraries is here illustrated, that what is death outwardly is life inwardly. Here is the ideal given for the *sāliks* who have attained to the stage of the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, that for them death should become sweet, and that like 'Alī they should wonder how long they will be parted from home and a return to Unity. It is only safe to reach this stage if it is coupled with a total acceptance of God's Ordainment, lest they seek death before the ordained time. Maulānā emphasises this point by the parallelism, as well as by the warning given in verse 3930.

Finally there is the central section, Section 5, which contains the main inner message of the discourse. This begins with the episode of Adam's look of contempt for Iblīs, which an outraged cry from God quickly corrects and leads to Adam's repentance. The word Maulānā uses for the fault which produced Adam's look, is *'ujb*, which Nicholson translates as vanity, but it covers pride, haughtiness, conceit, superiority, indeed all the opposites of humility. It means to think highly of one's self. God's response was that, should He wish, he could shame a hundred Adams and produce a hundred Devils newly converted to Islām. Adam was properly put in his place, and the message for the *sālik* is clear, that lack of humility is a particular problem for the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*. This episode is followed by a most wonderful prayer which should be read in its entirety, since it is the inner summit of Book One. It is a prayer for help, a prayer for humility, a reminder that even evil is ordained, and much more besides. It concludes with a final verse in Arabic:

Everything except Allāh is empty and vain;  
The Grace of Allāh is a cloud pouring abundantly and continually.

THE END OF CHAPTER TWO

## CHAPTER THREE

### BOOK ONE AS A WHOLE AND AS A PART

The previous chapter has shown how it is possible to treat all the sections of Book One as being grouped into twelve discourses, with three link sections. Only two sections, Section 1 in Discourse 10 and Section 6 in Discourse 11, have raised questions as to whether they belonged to a discourse or were semi-autonomous link sections. It was decided they could be treated as either, and could have been designed to act as both. It is here argued that the analysis in Chapter Two fully supports the hypothesis that was articulated at the end of Chapter One with regard to the organisation of sections into discourses making use of the principles of parallelism and chiasmus. This chapter is concerned with the proposals in the hypothesis which deal with the organisation of Book One as a whole, and whether Book One is also a carefully integrated part in a larger whole, the *Mathnawī* itself. It is recognised that the material advanced for the latter proposal can only be provisional and suggestive in the absence of further additional analysis of at least a similar depth to that conducted in Chapter Two. But it is with an analysis of Book One as a whole that this chapter begins.

#### *The Analysis of Book One as a Whole*

The analysis in Chapter Two now makes it possible to examine Book One as a whole, using the discourses identified as the parts of that whole. The formal structure is set out in the table below which shows that the twelve discourses are arranged chiasmically and in parallel. The first and twelfth discourses both have nine sections and the sixth and seventh, separated by a highly significant link section at the very centre, both have twelve sections. There is confirmatory symmetry in the patterning of the discourses, which have odd and even numbers of sections, giving Odd, Even, Odd, Even, Even, Even, (centre) Even, Even, Even, Odd, Even, Odd. (This symmetry, incidentally, gives further support to the proposal to treat Discourse Ten as having eleven sections rather than ten.) Further clear evidence of the emergent rhetorical structure is given by the fact that Discourse Four, a Lion story, is in parallel with Discourse Nine, another Lion story, the combined total of their sections being 40. Discourse Five, a Caliph story, similarly is in parallel with Discourse Eight, another

Caliph story, and again the combined total of their sections is 40. When looked at as two halves, both halves show a link section between the first and the second discourses. It is here argued that such formal symmetry could never have arisen accidentally, as the result of spontaneous inspiration; it must have been the outcome of very careful planning by Maulānā, probably before even a line was composed. The symmetry is too perfect, and the numerology too significant for it to have happened in any other way.

The addition of the number of sections in discourses which are in parallel, is particularly interesting. First, Discourses One and Twelve each have nine sections, and the sum of these is the extremely important Maulawī number of eighteen. Discourse Two and Discourse Eleven have together thirty sections, that is, five times six, as opposed to three times six for the preceding couple. Discourses Three and Ten again have eighteen sections when added together, again three times six. As has been pointed out above, Discourses Four and Nine, the two parallel Lion discourses, and Discourses Five and Eight, the two Caliph discourses, have, for each pair, forty sections. Forty is not divisible by six, but it does not need to be because it is a very important Sufi number in its own right, as for example in the *chilla*, the forty days and nights of *khalwat*, seclusion, retreat, which is a practice observed by a number of Sufi Orders. Finally there are Discourses Six and Seven, both of twelve sections. Twelve is clearly important to Maulānā, as to many others, in that there are twelve discourses in Book One. The sum of two twelves is twenty four, that is four times six. The six pairs therefore produce the following sequence: Three time six, five times six, three times six, forty, forty, four times six. The importance of the number six is, of course, confirmed by the fact that the *Mathnawī* itself has six books. It will need an expert in Sufi, and especially, Maulawī, numerology to explain the full significance of these numbers, and such an expert might well recognise patterns that have not been noticed here. For present purposes it is enough to have identified the numerical symmetry of Book One, and to have shown that, this symmetry relies upon pairs of chiasmically organised parallel discourses. In the table below, the number of sections in each discourse is shown in square brackets.

It is now important to examine the parallelism between discourses in the same way that, in the previous chapter, the parallelism between sections was analysed. The thematic structure confirms and further elucidates the formal structure. Particularly strong is the parallelism between Discourse One and Discourse Twelve. Both share the same internal structure A, B, C, D, E, D\*, C\*, B\*, A\*, which places a special emphasis on E. When the King greets the

## The Rhetorical Structure of Book One

**Discourse One** The King and the Handmaiden [9]

**Link** The Greengrocer and the Parrot [1]

**Discourse Two** The Jewish King who for Bigotry's sake used to Slay Christians [24]

**Discourse Three** Another Jewish King who tried to destroy the religion of Jesus [7]

**Discourse Four** The Lion, the Beasts and the Hare [34]

**Discourse Five** The Caliph 'Umar and the Ambassador of Rum [8]

**Discourse Six** The Merchant and the Parrot [12]

**Link** Explanation of the tradition: "*Whatever God Wills Cometh to Pass*" [1]

**Discourse Seven** The Story of the Harper [12]

**Link** The Two Angels [1]

**Discourse Eight** The Caliph, the Arab of the Desert and his Wife [32]

**Discourse Nine** The Lion, the Wolf and the Fox [6]

**Discourse Ten** Joseph and the Mirror [11]

**Discourse Eleven** The Vision of Zayd [6]

**Discourse Twelve** 'Ali and the Infidel Knight [9]

Divine Physician in Discourse One, he addresses him as 'the Chosen One, the Approved One' using the epithet *Murtaḍā*, which is a title applied to 'Alī. This is then followed by words attributed to 'Alī. This permits a provisional identification of the Divine Physician which is confirmed in the parallel Discourse Twelve which is explicitly about 'Alī as the Perfect Man. Narratively the parallelism between the two stories is that the first is about killing when it is the Will of God, while the second is about not killing when it is not the Will of God. But within the book as a whole, which deals with the *nafs*, Discourse One gives the beginning of the way, the *sulūk*, with the *nafs* falling in love with the world and having to be weaned off it by the Divine Physician and Love. Discourse Twelve can be considered as the completion of the way and perfect action, illustrated in the total surrender and obedience to the Will of God exemplified by the *ikhlaṣ* of 'Alī.

There are many other parallelisms between these two discourses; both place emphasis on patience, *ṣabr*; the maiden's love of this world is in contrastive parallelism with 'Alī's love of the next world in the final discourse; the first begins with things turning out worse than was hoped for, when the maiden fell ill and the doctors failed because they did not say "If God Wills", while the final discourse begins and continues with things turning out better than could be expected, especially for the Knight and 'Alī's future murderer, because of 'Alī

acting from *ikhhlās* and obedience to God's Will; both end with the contrastive parallelism of the rightness of killing in the first and the rightness of not killing in the second; both have at their centre a major passage, the first on Love, human and divine, the Perfect Man and mention of Šams, the second on the need for humility and a great prayer to God for help without which nothing is possible. Between these two major passages comes the link section between Discourse Six and Discourse Seven on the tradition "Whatever God Wills comes to pass" which is similarly majestic and magisterial in tone and style and completes the structural and thematic symmetry. There are so many parallelisms of various kinds between these two discourses that it is difficult to choose a single phrase to encapsulate them all but perhaps 'The Will of God and pure and impure love and action' comes closest. There is also clearly a strong autobiographical element in Discourse One, especially in Section 5, but also in the totality. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to expect a similar autobiographical element in the parallel Discourse 12. One speculative autobiographical possibility was suggested in the Interpretation of that discourse, but Section 5 could well have a biographical resonance for Maulānā in the crucial importance of humility, a quality hard to retain, by all reports, as one's spiritual state advances.

The parallelism between Discourse Two and Discourse Eleven is equally complex but could be best expressed as that of 'vision'. The Jewish King is squint-eyed; he sees double and cannot see that Moses and Jesus are one. His vizier confuses the Christians by producing a multiplicity of conflicting doctrines and appointing twelve different successors so the Christians end up killing each other. This multiple vision is in contrastive parallelism with Discourse Eleven about the pure vision of Zayd. Zayd's asceticism and self-discipline has been rewarded with a vision of people's natures and fates as seen from the next world and he wishes to speak about it. The Prophet of the Lord of both worlds, tells him not to speak, since these are things that God wishes to remain hidden. It is important that it is Muḥammad who instructs Zayd. In Discourse Two, Moses is the symbol of plurality and this world, Jesus of unity and the next world and Muḥammad, whose name was a refuge for the Christians who survived the slaughter, the symbol of unity in diversity and diversity in unity and of both worlds. Discourse Two ends with the question: "If the name of Aḥmad can become an impregnable fortress, what of the essence of that trusted Spirit?" Discourse Eleven answers this by showing Muḥammad as the Perfect Man. In the first discourse, the Christians, as the spiritual powers, and travellers on the way, are shown as deceived and with distorted vision. In the second, the traveller is Zayd who has achieved a state worthy of pure vision but needs further instruction on what can be said from the Prophet of the Lord of the two worlds, Muḥammad. Thus vision, Muḥammad and living in both worlds constitute

the main parallelism between the two discourses. Again it was suggested that there was a strong autobiographical element in Discourse Two. Equally, therefore, it might be expected that Discourse Eleven has an autobiographical element, and from poems in the *Dīwān-i Šams*, it is apparent that Maulānā had many high spiritual experiences and raptures. While, however, these states are described in general terms, the contents rarely are, and it must seem likely that he too was reined back and told not to speak of things which are meant by God to be hidden.

Between Discourse Three and Discourse Ten, the parallelism can be summed up as 'reflection back and return to one's origin'. In Discourse Three, the King sets up an idol of the *nafs* and if the Christians, the travellers on the way, don't bow down to it they are thrown into the fire. The Christians, following the child, all entered the fire (of asceticism) and obtained *fanā*. The King's wickedness was reflected back to him by their state and actions and he was shamed. Finally the fire blazed up and killed the Jews. The Jews were born of fire and returned to fire since everything returns to its own congener. Discourse Ten also deals with these two themes, the mirror being a central image, especially the mirror of the heart or soul which needs to be cleansed by ascetic disciplines. The return to one's source in this discourse is the return to God with the mirror of the heart polished so that it reflects back God's Beauty. The use of the Sufis as mirrors to reflect back the nature of the king in front of whom they sat is described in Section 1 of Discourse Ten. This is paralleled by the shaming of the king by a similar reflection back in Discourse Three.

Discourses Four and Nine are clearly narratively parallel in that they are both Lion stories, but they are also thematically parallel in that they both deal with the self: the first with egoism, pride and selfishness, and the second with selflessness and the loss of the sense of 'I'. In the first story the *nafs* wants control and is killed at the end of the story. In the second story, the *nafs* is killed at the beginning and the Lion acts to ensure the freedom of the animals.

Discourse Five and Discourse Eight are both Caliph stories and the theme that makes them parallel is that of *faqr* or spiritual poverty. In the first story the ambassador, who is by definition rich and a Christian, expects the Caliph 'Umar to have a palace and is surprised by his 'poverty'. The ambassador can be said to represent the traveller at the very beginning of the way when he first meets his *Pir*, 'Umar. In Discourse Eight, the Arab himself already is a *faqīr* and the story shows the various stages on the way as he obtains harmony with his *nafs*, his wife. In addition, then, to poverty, the stories are made parallel with the further

themes of the stages on the way and the importance of the *Pīr*. There is one further parallelism which is the development of the role of the Caliph. In Discourse Five he is the *Pīr* but in Discourse Eight he is God.

Discourse Six and Discourse Seven are parallel through the theme of Voice. In the first story, the parrot is in the cage because of his voice and he only becomes free when he makes himself as if dead. He starts the story in the cage and ends the story free. Discourse Seven starts at the universal level with the Voice and Breathings of God and the particular story of the Harper comes in the second half. He too has been led astray by his voice throughout his life and now he repents in his old age and God grants him riches and the transformation of his *nafs*. The two stories show a clear development from the voice of the parrot which keeps the parrot in the cage, to the voice of God, which sets the spirit free. In both of these discourses, it is the cage of 'reputation', *jāh*, in which the voice keeps both the parrot and the Harper. It is tempting to wonder just how much of these two discourses is autobiographical given Maulānā's poetical voice and his formidable reputation. That Maulānā also experienced the Voice of God must be apparent to everyone who has read the *Mathnawī*. In Maulānā's usage of twelve term structures, there is nearly always a crux, a crisis, a transition to be made, between 6 and 7. It will be recalled that the comment on the central Link Section dwelt at length with the crucial role played by *faqr* and *niyāz*, not only as the key to unlock the cage, but as the key to entering the second half of the book, with its depiction of higher spiritual states. Was this too a hard-earned lesson learnt by Maulānā which he passes on to every reader or hearer of his *Mathnawī*, and every *sālik* in the *khānqāh*? Of course such a suggestion is speculative and quite unprovable, but there is about it a likelihood, and there is such authenticity in the telling, that it is better the question be left open.

Before moving on, it is interesting to look at the parallel pairs of discourses, and the number of their sections. The sequence runs: three times six, five times six, three times six, forty, forty, four times six. Could it be that those pairs of discourses which are multiples of six are the ones with the largest autobiographical element, and the ones with forty sections between them, of more general Sufi teaching and training? If so, then consideration must be given to the parallel pair of Discourses Three and Ten, which deal with kings and reflection back, and have not heretofore been regarded as even partially autobiographical. One has only to read the opening passages of Maulānā's *Discourses*, the *Fīhi mā fīhi*, to realise that kings and princes figured large in Maulānā's life experience, and he certainly sat facing princes in his time. Who he consigns to the fire in Discourse Three, however, must be left for somebody else to answer, since there are candidates enough in his biography. The two pairs

with forty sections between them are first animal fables dealing with the general problem of the ego and the 'I', and second, the Caliph stories whose communality of message is the general need for poverty and the importance of the Pīr. Again, this putative relationship is a question raised, but left open.

### *The Rationale of Book One as a Whole*

Having examined the parallelism between the chiasmically arranged discourses, it is now necessary to look at the discourses sequentially, to identify the rationale which determines what comes where. It is possible to say that the first four discourses display the negative aspects of the *nafs*, the *nafs-i ammārah*, the self which commands to evil; the next four show the situation changing as the *nafs* becomes the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the self which blames itself; the last four show the positive and developed *nafs*, the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, the self at peace. This is a formal thematic structuring, in that it divides Book One into three blocks, each of four discourses. That is why, in the diagram above, there is a space between Discourses Four and Five, and between Discourses Eight and Nine. It is also a demonstration and confirmation of the proposal that the identification of the rhetorical structure will reveal the rationale of Book One. There was already the expectation that Book One dealt with the *nafs*, because that is the characteristic of the first of the King's sons in the *Ilāhī-Nāmeḥ* of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār which Maulānā has followed in assigning the overall subjects of each of the six books, presumably as an act of homage to that great Sufi and poet, but nowhere has it been suggested that Maulānā went further and made the threefold typology of the *nafs*, the basis of the organisation of Book One. Each block, each stage of the selfhood, will now be considered in turn.

In the first block of discourses, Discourse One sets the scene and states the problem: the *rūḥ*, the spirit, symbolised by the king, has acquired a hand-maiden, the *nafs*, who quickly falls ill within this new association, because she is already in love with the world, as symbolised by the goldsmith. This is the starting point of Book One, of the *Mathnawī* itself, and of the Sufi Way. The problem is resolved only by the intervention of the Divine Physician, who could be all or any of Love, the Perfect Man, the advanced Sufi Shaikh or several other possibilities. Discourse Two shows how certain properties of the *nafs-i ammārah*, such as anger, jealousy or bigotry, produce double vision, and how the *nafs* deceives, confuses and divides. Discourse Three presents the choice of worshipping the *nafs* or taking on the fire of asceticism which leads to *fanā*. It is the fire of lust which destroys the *nafs* worshipper. In



the next discourse, the Lion is pride and egoism, which destroys itself, having been outwitted by the Hare, *'aql*, intelligence, which has access to the *aql-i ma'ād*, Universal Intelligence. In these four discourses, first the goldsmith, then the vizier, then the Jewish King and then the lion are all killed, but, in fact, each has, either directly or indirectly, brought about their own destruction. Each of these four discourses displays certain aspects of the *nafs-i ammārah*: the falling in love with the world, pride, jealousy, anger, bigotry, worship of the self, and egoism, for example. Each also offers a different solution: Divine intervention and being cleansed by Love; the prophets, and particularly the Name of Aḥmad; asceticism or self-denial; and the intelligence. As has already been pointed out, there is no time-scale for these first four discourses, but they all seem to belong to the *Jāhiliyya*, the pre-Islamic period of ignorance, appropriately, since they deal with the *nafs-i ammārah*.

Looking at the second block of four discourses, Discourse Five brings about the beginnings of a change due to the first meeting with a *Pīr* who explains about *ḥāl* and *maqām* and why the spirit is combined with matter. Discourse Six shows the merchant as the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, the *nafs* which blames itself, distraught, thinking he has killed his spirit through what he said and reported. At the end, the parrot of the spirit flies off, having given the merchant spiritual advice, so the merchant ends up wiser, but not yet transformed. Discourses Seven and Eight give further examples of this form of the *nafs* in the persons of the Harper and the Wife of the Arab. These last two stories see the *nafs-i lawwāmah* moving, at least in a temporary *ḥāl*, state, to the next stage, the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*. As with the first block of four discourses, this second block similarly shows four stages in the development of the second type of selfhood, the self which blames itself. The first shows the *nafs* in the form of the unbelieving ambassador, who is in the grip of the worldly assumptions of *māl o jāh*, wealth and rank, being awakened to spiritual things. The second shows the *nafs* in the form of the merchant regretting bitterly having killed the spirit through what he said and repeated, but ending up wiser but not transformed. Then comes the turning point of the book, with the central Link section on “What God Wills, cometh to pass” which explains that the pretended death of the parrots symbolised *niyāz*, supplication, self-naughting, and which also speaks of spiritual resurrection. The third discourse is in the second half of Book One, and tells of the Voice and Breathings of God permitting the repentant *nafs* in the form of the Harper to transform further, but only when it gives up lamentation, the self-indulgence of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*. Finally, the entire process of transformation is exemplified in the Arab, who symbolises *'aql*, intelligence, and his wife, the *nafs*, whose eventual harmony permits the *nafs* to move to the final stage of its transformation.

The final set of four discourses all have to do with the *nafs-i muṭma'innah*, the self that believes and is at peace. They deal respectively with selflessness, polishing the heart to be a mirror for God, spiritual vision and *ikhḷāṣ*, pure action from the Will of God, sincerity and submission. None of these states would be possible until the *nafs* had transformed into *nafs-i muṭma'innah*; each is a sequential development of this final state of the self. This state of the *nafs*, also has its problems, which each discourse illustrates: "I" consciousness in the first; the dirt on the mirror in the second, - that is pride, conceit and arrogance, on the one hand, and analogy, opinion and surmise, on the other; the danger of speaking of things that should remain hidden, in the third; the danger of acting not wholly from the Will of God but also from self-interest in the fourth, which also places particular emphasis on the need for humility.

This exposition of the different stages in the development of the *nafs*, is the main rationale of Book One, but it is not the whole of it: sometimes hidden, sometimes explicit, there is in every discourse, instruction to the *sālik*, the traveller on the Sufi Path. In fact, the expositions of the Sufi path and that of the three stages of the *nafs* are fully integrated to form one single rationale, although one which has, rhetorically at least, both an outer, *zāhir*, side, the stages of the *nafs*, and an inner, *bāṭin*, side, the Sufi spiritual path. It is now proposed to trace this spiritual path through the twelve discourses.

Discourse One is foreshadowed in the last line of the Proem as providing 'the very marrow of our inward state'. This discourse is both a general introduction to the book and to the Sufi path. It start its instruction to the *sālik* with that most crucial quality to be cultivated, *adab*, which Nicholson translates as seemliness, but which has, of course, a much wider and more significant import than this word conveys. It involves at all times a proper attitude to God, and then to all creation, including other people, and especially towards one's Shaikh. *Ṣabr*, patience, self-control, restraint, is another quality emphasised and illustrated. There are a number of pointers to other aspects of the Sufi path: the importance of dreams as the mode of contact with the spiritual world; the giving and keeping of promises; the keeping of secrets; *muḥāsibat*, self-investigation; *khalwat*, seclusion; the central importance of prayer and the Shaikh, Saint or Perfect Man; but above all the crucial role of Love - "Love, human or divine, both lead us yonder." Discourse One is Maulānā's Sufi manifesto, it proclaims the Maulawī path to be the Path of Love, but as the first book is seen from the perspective of the *nafs*, then it is Love as the cleanser of the *nafs* which is highlighted. As Maulānā says in the Proem: "He (alone) whose garment is rent by a (mighty) love is purged of covetousness and

all defect.” It is Love and *‘irfān*, gnosis, which are the poison used slowly to undermine the goldsmith and thus free the *nafs* from its love of the world. In this way, the first discourse can be seen as a general statement of Maulānā’s particular Sufi Path of Love.

Discourse Two brings the *sālik* face to face with the deviousness and thorough nastiness of the *nafs-i ammārah*, the self that commands to evil. Much of the message for the *sālik* is contained in the explicit story and the warnings about the damage that jealousy and envy can do; specifically Maulānā shows how the *nafs* is so clever it can undermine and utilise almost everything the *sālik* might do on the spiritual path: prayer, virtuous action, seclusion, silence etc. and it can destroy his inner togetherness, his *jam‘iyat*. Discourse Three presents the dilemma starkly: submit to the *nafs*, or follow the way of discipline and self-mortification. But in the central inner section, there is first the warning to the *sālik* not to ridicule the Shaikh or it will rebound on himself, and then the advice to learn how to weep, through being merciful to the weak and those that weep, because weeping attracts the Mercy of God. Discourse Four begins with the debate about the respective merits of relying on Destiny to provide, *tawakkul*, or on work and effort. It was pointed out in the Interpretation of this passage that, whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments, every *sālik* is likely to experience the whole gamut of attitudes and arguments within himself in his early years on the spiritual path. At the very centre of this discourse, the subject emphasised is the keeping of secrets, but this is contained within an exposition of *‘aql*, intelligence, both particular and Universal. It is the potential access that a cleansed heart can have to the Universal Intelligence, which offers a way to the *sālik*, the way of catching an objective glimpse of himself, as the lion did when he saw his own reflection in the bottom of the well, and of not liking what one sees. But Maulānā is careful to insist, in the final section of Discourse Four, that particular intelligence, *‘aql-i juzī*, cannot itself defeat the *nafs*, only God can.

Discourse Five is generally accepted by the commentators as being about the first meeting with one’s Shaikh or Pīr. The Interpretation of this discourse on pps.100-2 should be consulted here, since it gives ample evidence of the correctness of this proposal. The Shaikh, ‘Umar, found the potential *sālik*, the ambassador, eager and of good potential, and begins to instruct him and finally induces in him a transformation and a yearning for God. Discourse Six is notable for a significant contrast between the training of the *sālik* in the first half of the discourse and that in the second half. As stated in the Interpretation (pages 110-113), in the first half, the *sālik* is urged to “prefer silence and watch his speech very carefully. Abstinence is required and the avoidance of self-indulgence. He requires a master and needs

a pattern to follow: to wear the darwish frock, to weep in private, to eat and follow only what is lawful, to recognise he is imperfect and not to strive beyond his limitations out of conceit.” Then comes the pretended death of the parrot which Maulānā explains as *niyāz*, self-abasement, and *faqr*, spiritual poverty. Then, in the second half, the training of the *sālik* consists of awakening love for God within his heart by means here of wonderful flights of mystical love poetry from Maulānā. It would be a mistake to take the two halves sequentially, since clearly both types of training took place concurrently, with *niyāz* and *faqr* at the interface between the two.

At the interface between the first half of the book and the second half, comes the wonderful central Link section which can be read again and again, and probably was. It marks a major transition to a higher level, which seemingly only someone in whom some degree of transformation had already taken place, could hope to reach. The first half of Discourse Seven, which begins Book One, is devoted to the Universal spiritual world, only descending to the particular in the story of the old Harper, possibly personifying a reminiscence of Maulānā, in the second half. The Harper provides the ideal here for the *sālik*: the gratitude he expresses for God’s Favours, his repentance, his dedication of himself to God, his poverty and his self-abasement. Prayer in the graveyard is also another specifically Sufi practice, and, throughout this discourse, a constant theme is that of resurrection, both as spiritual re-birth, and as the ever-present reminder of the coming Day of Judgement. But the message of this discourse for the *sālik* is the encouragement it gives for him to participate in the commerce and traffic between the two worlds, especially through dreams. The two twists in this discourse are both instructive for the *sālik*. The first twist relates to the special spiritual rain which can make people unaware of God, so that this world can continue to function, since it relies on the motive power of selfishness. Such a perspective provides a valuable corrective to any feeling of spiritual superiority in the *sālik*. The second twist is when it is revealed that excessive lamentation is the self-indulgence of the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, since it contains the very self-consciousness which inhibits further progress.

The final discourse dealing with the *nafs-i lawwāmah*, is Discourse Eight. It has two halves, the first showing how the *nafs*, protesting to the ‘*aql* about the deprivation it is suffering as a result of a regime of asceticism, changes direction and wins the ‘*aql* over by a different strategy; the second showing how the two working together in harmony allow the soul to reach the Caliph’s court where there is a transformation to a higher spiritual level, and a cleansing of worldliness. Crucial to this discourse are the two main themes: spiritual poverty, and the need for a Pīr. Even ‘Alī needs a Shaikh, as the Prophet advised. The

message for the *sālik* here, is that, when he has a Shaikh, he must endure whatever harsh treatment the Shaikh dispenses, since it will be for his eventual spiritual benefit.

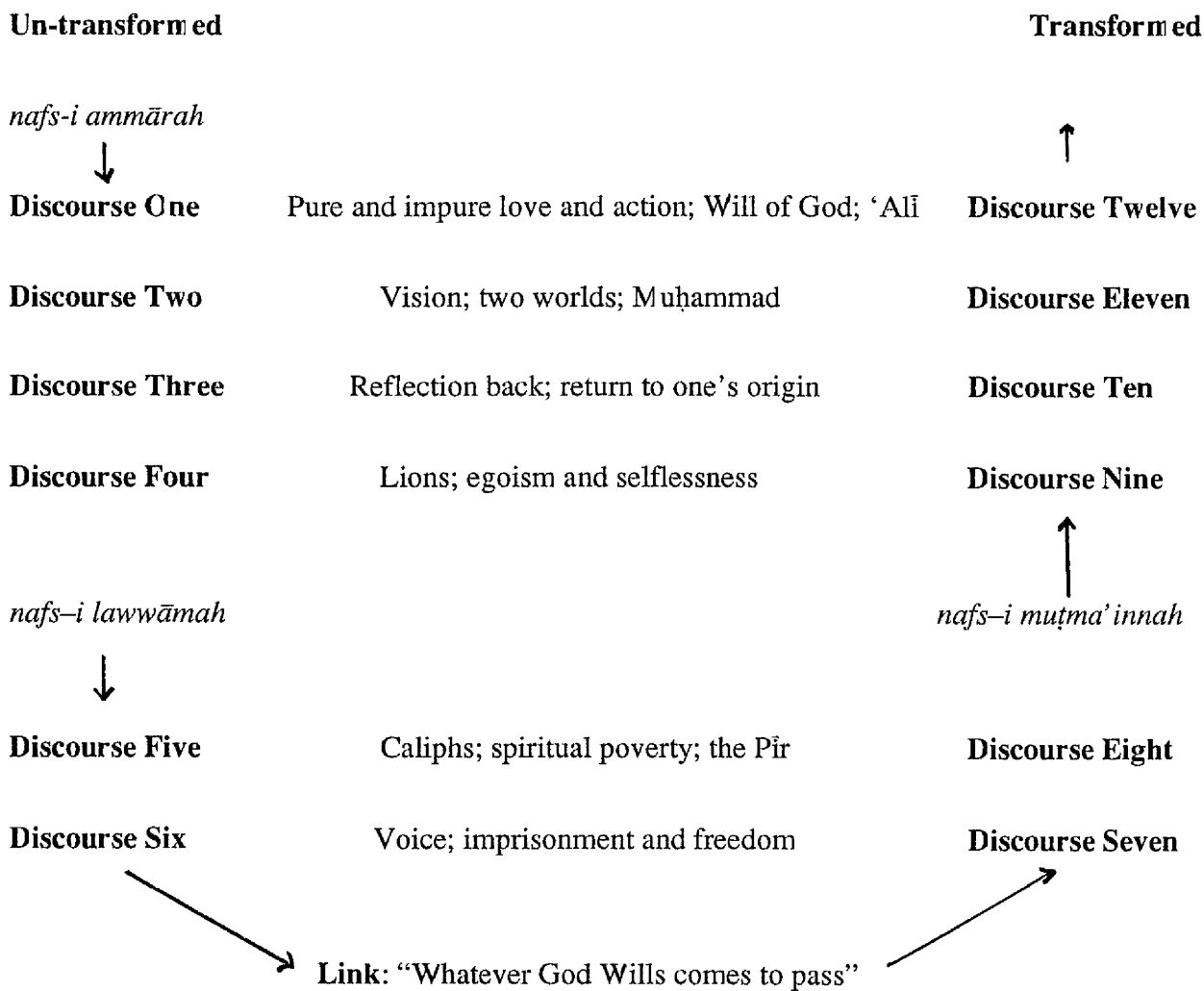
Discourse Nine is short and contains general Sufi instruction, foreshadowed in the previous discourse, about the need to lose 'I' consciousness. Discourse Ten, however, is more elaborate and concentrates on those defects which prevent the *sālik* from polishing his heart and soul to reflect the Reality and Beauty of God. These are first: spiritual pride, conceit and a sense of superiority; and second: analogy, opinion and surmise. Again *riyādat*, discipline, is given as a necessary requirement for the *sālik* to effect such a cleansing. The discourse also gives the *sālik* a wonderful analogy as the ideal to hold before himself, that of the cleansed heart and soul as the traveller's gift of a mirror which he could take back to God on his return so that it reflects back to God, His own Beauty. Discourse Eleven makes a very strong explicit case for not speaking about high spiritual experiences and the things that are shown, since God wishes that people should believe in the unseen. Finally, Discourse Twelve presents the *sālik* with the spiritual ideal: to be totally surrendered to the Will of God, without any self-interest. *Ikhlaṣ* is so much more than 'sincerity'; it is total purity of action and full surrender to God in every possible respect. If this were not a sufficient ideal for the *sālik*, other qualities of the Perfect Man mount up: to be a lion of God, not of the passions; to have removed the baggage of self; to regard anything other than God as non-existence; to be united with God and deem the body as of no value; to accept God's Ordainment, even though death is considered preferable to life. Right at the very centre comes Maulānā's great prayer to God for help, and the great emphasis given by Maulānā to the need for humility. In the ideal of 'Alī as the Perfect Man, the *sulūk* finds its culmination.

### ***The Linear and The Non-Linear Ordering of Book One***

Finally, it is possible to show both ordering principles, the sequential and the synoptic, working together, with the themes which connect the discourses in parallel. The difference between the two sides, between the first six discourses and the last six discourses, can be described as 'un-transformed' and 'transformed', which will convey the development from the left-hand side to the right-hand side. The table below also shows the sequential movement down, the turning point of *niyāz*, self-abasement, and the movement of resurrection and spiritual rebirth up again. This is not an altogether satisfactory representation, since the twelve discourses start from the low point and rise progressively as the *sālik* develops. The true descent is the *ney*'s lament in the Proem, the journey from God,

and this book describes the beginnings of the journey back, at least from the perspective of the *nafs*. Allowance must be made for this inadequacy in the diagram. There are then two systems of ordering: the sequential and the non-linear parallelism of the synoptic. It is here argued that, in order to exemplify formal, narrative, thematic and spiritual integration so beautifully within a single structure, the whole book must have been planned very carefully, probably before a single line was written. The table below attempts to show the two systems of ordering as they are integrated in the structure of Book One.

### The Sequential and Chiasmic Structure of Book One



## *Book One as a Part*

The final proposal in the hypothesis was that possibly Book One was a part in the larger whole of the *Mathnawī* itself, and the work itself had its own over-arching level of organisation. What evidence might there be for this proposition? First, there is the division into six books, each with a subject represented by one of the six sons in the *Ilāhī-Nāmeḥ* of Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār. This gives an overall plan to the work. Second, there is the love story that extends from Book Three into Book Four. Functionally this story acts as a hinge, a binding, that connects the first half of the work with the second half. If then the work is thought of as a hinged mirror, Books One, Two and Three, will be reflected in Books Six, Five and Four. This is the right order because chiasmus is a mirror image. Here, in a most provisional way, and without the depth of analysis of Book Six that has been presented in Chapter Two for Book One, some attempt will be made to test the hypothesis that Book One and Book Six are chiasmically in parallel. Everything that has been seen so far in this thesis suggests that this could well be the case.

Book One had as its subject the *nafs*. As the selfhood is the instrument given to enable human kind to exist and operate in this world, its view of the world is essentially sensual and phenomenological. Its instinct is to see the part and not the whole. The literary mode most in keeping with such a perspective would be one of separateness, to have clearly identifiable discrete parts, narratively and thematically distinct. This has been shown by analysis to be the case, since there was little problem in identifying the separate discourses, in spite of Maulānā's reluctance to mark them. Book Six, however, has a quite different subject, that of *tauḥīd*, Unity. This requires a different literary mode from Book One, one in which everything appears inter-connected. Such, indeed, is the case in Book Six, where one discourse appears to merge with the next, and there seem to be few obvious borders. If the world of form is exemplified in Book One, in Book Six it is the world of formlessness that is exemplified. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify areas which are thematically related, and, although no attempt is made here to identify the discourses of Book Six, in a general way it will be shown there is evidence of inter-textual parallelism and chiasmus between the two books, certainly enough to justify a deeper examination.

The first discourse of Book One is the story of the King and the Handmaiden, which needs no further description here. The essence of the human state is that the spirit, *rūḥ*, which has come from the spiritual world of Formlessness and No Place, is in association with a selfhood, *nafs*, which is tied to the phenomenal world. The final 'story' in Book Six, that of the three

princes, is similarly concerned. Nicholson writes, in his commentary: "Its subject is the soul's descent into the world of forms and the subsequent experiences of the 'traveller' (*sālik*) in quest of Reality." That Maulānā not only intended these two discourses to be in parallel, but intended that they should be known to be so, is made clear by the reference to the story of the King and the Handmaiden of Book One in verse 3666 of Book Six, early on in the final story. The occasion for this mention is the failure of the three princes to utter the saving clause, *istithnā*, "If God Will", in the same way that the physicians in the first story of the *Mathnawī* failed to cure the girl because they too neglected to utter the saving clause. Maulānā devotes a number of scathing verses in Book Six to the mistaken underlying attitude of the physicians which led them to neglect the *istithnā*, associating the reader too with the same lack of understanding. But the parallelism does not stop here: it was shown how 'Alī, as an exemplar of the Perfect Man, was a common element in the parallelism between Discourse One and Discourse Twelve in Book One. In Book Six, there is in this final story an entire section devoted to the tradition that Muḥammad said: "When I am the protector of any one, 'Alī too is his protector." There are also abundant examples of the crucial role played by the *walī*, the saint or Perfect Man, in both stories. But above all else, it is the role of Love which provides the conclusive correspondence between these two discourses. In the opening discourse of the *Mathnawī*, in the crucial central section, it was said: "Love, human and Divine, both lead us yonder." In the concluding discourse in Book Six, there are plenty of examples of precisely this. In Book One, Love is the great physician, the cleanser of the *nafs*; in this part of Book Six, Love is the great universal power of which even Hell is afraid: "For this reason, O sincere man, Hell is enfeebled and extinguished by the fire of Love." (verse 4608) It is not uncommon for an author to conclude his work by a reference back to its beginning, so parallelism between the beginning of a work and its end is not conclusive evidence of the hypothesis advanced here. Nonetheless, it is the first step, and there is encouragement from the fact that other commentators have noted the parallelism just discussed.<sup>1</sup>

Discourse Two in Book One (Bk.1:verses 324-738) and Discourse Eleven in Book Six (Bk.6: verses 3014-3582) are the next discourses which will be in parallel if the hypothesis is correct. It will be recalled that the first of these discourses had as major themes: seeing double, jealousy and envy, deception and cunning, multiplicity and the loss of togetherness, the Prophets Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, a king and a vizier. It was also suggested that there was a strong autobiographical element to this discourse, possibly relating to the jealousy which arose among the disciples of Maulānā when he began his close association with Šams

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrinkub, *Sirr-i Ney*, Elmi, Teheran, 1985, pp. 63-4.



al-Dīn Tabrīzī, which led to a breakdown in the togetherness of the disciples, both outwardly and inwardly, and to the ultimate disappearance of Šams. Discourse Eleven in Book Six is about a poor darwish who was heavily in debt but unworried, because he knew he could rely on the generosity of a certain Khwājā in Tabrīz. He goes to Tabrīz only to find the Khwājā had died, at which he was devastated. The bailiff arranges for a collection to be made, but it is not enough. They visit the Khwājā's tomb together, then return to the bailiff's house where they fall asleep. In a dream, the Khwājā tells the bailiff that he had provided for the darwish and explains where he had buried the riches. It is not difficult to find in this story a continuation of the autobiographical element in Discourse Two of Book One, since Maulānā himself must have been in just this situation after the disappearance, probable death, of Šams. If this is speculative, more certain parallelisms are to be found. The second section of Discourse Eleven is about a king seeking advice from his vizier while under attack in his fortress from Ja'far who had ridden out alone. The vizier says the king should surrender, since Ja'far was clearly Divinely aided and had a great collectedness in his soul derived from God. The fifth section contains a parable about a man who sees double. The seventh and eighth sections are about envy and jealousy, initially for a horse, which Khwarizmshah was talked out of by the chief minister, but then about God's Jealousy if one pays attention to anything other than God. God is not only the source of all jealousy, but also the source of all deception and cunning. All the main themes of Discourse Two in Book One are taken up and developed in Discourse Eleven of Book Six.

Between Discourse Three of Book One and Discourse Ten of Book Six the parallelism is the theme of *jinsiyyat*, how everything returns to its own congener. It is the major theme of both discourses, although Discourse Ten illustrates, in the story of the frog and the mouse, the consequences of association with someone other than one's own congener, as foreshadowed towards the end of Discourse Three. Between Discourse Four of Book One and Discourse Nine of Book Six, the parallelism is the theme of sharing or not sharing food, and who should eat what. In Book Six, to the wonderful story of the Muslim, the Christian and the Jew and who ate the halwā, is appended a fifth section about Dalqak from which the moral is that one should pause and reflect before entering upon precipitate action. If the messages of Book Six were applied to Book One, the egotistical lion would simply have eaten the hare the moment he turned up, and he would have thought hard and long before ever jumping into the well. Of course, there is the deeper level that both discourses share: that of seeing situations directly, and what prevents one from doing so. "Know that (true) knowledge consists in seeing fire plainly, not in prating that smoke is evidence of fire." (Bk.6: verse 2505) "(All this) noise and pompous talk and assumption of authority (only means) 'I cannot see: (kindly) excuse me'".

(Bk.6: verse 2509) In this way, it is possible to regard the inter-textual chiasmic parallelisms between Book Six and Book One as a sort of commentary on the themes and situations of Book One, but from the perspective of Unity.

Neither time nor space permit any further exploration of this hypothesis. Over half of the verses of Book Six have been examined and within them the parallelism with Book One has been found to be both striking and considered. There is, therefore, no reason to think that the other half of Book Six will be any different. Brief and unsatisfactory as this examination has been, it has demonstrated, albeit in a preliminary way, that the hypothesis is correct, and that there is an even higher level of organisation than that of the book, namely, that of the *Mathnawī* as a whole. A great deal more work, both of analysis and reflection, will be required before the full extent and depth of this over-arching organisation can be revealed. Meanwhile, as Maulānā himself says when explaining the lengthy interval between the appearance of Book One and that of Book Two, time is needed to allow the blood to turn into milk.

THE END OF CHAPTER THREE

## CONCLUSION

The two analytical chapters, Chapter Two and Chapter Three, have, it is to be hoped, successfully demonstrated the validity of the hypotheses advanced in Chapter One. There can now be little doubt surely that Maulānā used parallelism and chiasmus to organise the higher levels of his great work. This conclusion looks at some of the consequences of this discovery.

The first thing that needs to be considered is just what is the beautifully symmetrical and numerologically precise design revealed in Chapter Three ? At one level it has to be regarded as the author's plan, almost certainly pre-existing the actual verses of the *Mathnawī*. It is too specific, too precise, to have arisen accidentally, as the result of some creative outpouring of extempore poetry. If that is the case, then it means that Maulānā must have planned the *Mathnawī* in advance, right down to the level of the section headings. There are a sufficient number of cases in which the section headings seem almost at odds with the content of the verses that follow, to suggest that the section headings came first. This would imply that Maulānā went into the creative composing sessions he reportedly had with Ḥusām al-Dīn, his amanuensis, with a very clear idea of what was to be achieved in each section. The verses within a section flow naturally and logically, moving seemingly effortless from one theme to the next. Occasionally he soars on some particular subject and then apologises to Ḥusām al-Dīn for keeping him up all night. There is no contradiction, then, between the pre-planning of the *Mathnawī*, on the one hand, and the spontaneity of Maulānā's creativity on the other. Any constraint the plan placed on creative spontaneity must have been more than compensated for by the provision of subject, context and direction. This suggested mode of composition is implicit in the discovery.

The next thing to consider is why Maulānā chose to plan his work using parallelism and chiasmus to organise sections into discourses, discourses into books, and books into one single unified work. He could have used sequentiality and logical entailment, coupled with the traditional symbolism found in Sufi texts, but he chose not to. This choice was crucial for a number of reasons. Although Augustine used this type of synoptic structuring in his *Confessions*, he was writing for an audience well versed in the literary culture of late antiquity who would have recognised at once what was being done and adjusted their expectations accordingly. Was Maulānā too using a familiar genre which his readers would immediately recognise ? It is not here believed that parallelism and chiasmus were widespread and familiar literary principles in Maulānā's times, and, in so far as their use

could be said to constitute a genre, it must have been a somewhat esoteric one. Their use has been identified in Nizāmī, and no doubt it will be found elsewhere when people are alerted to the possibility, provided the texts have good editions. But it is not a subject referred to in contemporary works on poetics or rhetoric, as far as is known, nor have any of the commentators over the last seven hundred years so much as mentioned it. It is here believed that, not only did Maulānā hide his rich organisation and design in an unexpected and unfamiliar mode of composition, but he deliberately made it harder to find by not identifying discourses as discrete wholes, which he could easily have done. The result is that the *Mathnawī* appears as a seemingly endless sequential flow of randomly occurring sections, for convenience only being grouped into six books. It is not unreasonable to wonder why.

Why can be answered on several levels. First, it is here argued, Maulānā did not mark and identify the discourses because he wished the readers, out of dissatisfaction or curiosity, to do it for themselves. Certainly in Book One it is not difficult, as has been shown here, because of the strong narrative story lines. Secondly, had he shown which sections belonged to which discourse, it would very quickly have become apparent that he was using parallelism and chiasmus, and his whole hidden design would be unravelled, without mystery, without the search. One has only to read Discourse Eleven about Zayd's vision to realise that Maulānā believed very strongly that what is meant to be hidden should be hidden. "(God said) "I want (what is signified by the words) *they believe in the unseen*: on that account I have shut the window of the fleeting world. . . . In order that in this darkness they may make endeavours (to find the way), they are turning, every one, their faces in some direction." (Bk.1: verses 3628 and 3630). It is important for a self-proclaimed seeker, that they should seek, and Maulānā certainly expected his disciples to be intelligent and to work at things. The *Mathnawī* is not just about spiritual training, it is spiritual training. Thirdly, one of the most persistent themes in the *Mathnawī* is that the world of the senses, the phenomenal world, the world of appearance, is not the real world. There is the *zāhir*, the manifest world of form, and there is the *bāṭin*, the inner, hidden world of the spirit, and this every *sālik* knows, so it would be expected of the *sāliks* to look beyond the appearance of the *Mathnawī*, beyond its self-presentation, to reach the inner hidden levels of meaning and purpose they would know Maulānā would have hidden there. Finally, and connected with the last reason, there is the injunction of Maulānā embodied in the title of this thesis: "Love the Whole and not the Part." Although contrasting the Universal spiritual world which is Unity, with the empirical pluralistic world of the particular, there could be no clearer instruction than this as to how to read the *Mathnawī*. All of these possible reasons why Maulānā might have wished his design to be hidden, reasons fully in accord with his approach and his understanding of the structure of reality, further reinforce the belief that in

choosing to use parallelism and chiasmus he was deliberately doing the unexpected, deliberately using an unfamiliar genre.

The consequence of using the principles of parallelism and chiasmus is to produce a text which sequentially is subject to sudden discontinuities, unexpected digressions, un-bridged transitions and repetitions, in short to appear plan-less. Both Augustine and Maulānā were fully capable of producing long works which were sequentially 'well-constructed', but they chose not to. The self-presentation of their works, had, therefore, somehow to justify the uneven and disorganised sequential surface appearance of their texts. As was said before, Augustine has used himself as 'speaker' brilliantly to bring the reader, as intimate witness, into the work to be carried upward in the ascent. At the same time, the medium of prayer disguises, and even makes a virtue of, the sudden transitions and digressions and general planlessness. Similarly Maulānā uses himself as 'speaker'; the reader, or hearer, treated as a *sālik* under instruction, sometimes addressed as 'you', is subjected to the same diagnosis, and given the same, often abusive, treatment as the *sālik*. In addition, Maulānā sometimes presents himself as the poet, carried away with some theme, having to return to some story he was in process of telling before he was diverted. Both modes, the occasion by occasion direction of the *salik* by a Shaikh, or the poet inspired by some theme, are used to cover, to some extent, the somewhat awkward sequential appearance of the text and its seeming lack of direction. But, as has been argued before, the seeming randomness and lack of apparent order in which the sections come, is part of the deliberate self-presentation of the *Mathnawī*.

Unlike Augustine's *Confessions*, the *Mathnawī* is not a monologue addressed to God, - although sometimes it is, - it is probably best thought of as addressed mainly to the *sāliks*, the disciples in the *khānqāh*, to whom passages were presumably read aloud. There are, though, continual changes of voice and of addressee. Largely, however, it presents itself, as do the *Confessions*, not as a product, but as the record of an oral process, the process of spiritual instruction, training and teaching through parables. The *Mathnawī*, too, presents itself as unrehearsed, as moving spontaneously, as wandering into digressions, as subject to sudden changes of direction and sudden leaps of thought, and yet with the assurance that it too is guided and protected by God, and a place of refuge and refreshment for the spiritual traveller. This is its self-presentation, of spontaneous extempore outpouring, written down by Ḥusām al-Dīn, his long-suffering amanuensis. This is Maulānā as speaker, as superb poet, as a hugely entertaining yet profoundly wise spiritual adept. It is the excellence of the poetry, the insights and the incidents, the flights of mystical imagination and the depth of human understanding, that take the edge off the criticism directed at the *Mathnawī* for being random, lacking in order or structure, and being without direction. The self-presentation of the *Mathnawī*, like that of the *Confessions*, is fundamental to its literary form, and it is the literary form as given to which critics of both works have objected on the grounds of bad

composition. There is justice in their criticism, and the scholarly consensus is correct at this level, in both works the literary form presented is one of planlessness.

But as this study has shown, the self-presentation of the *Mathnawī* is only part of the story. The effect of using parallelism and chiasmus, which is an unexpected and unfamiliar mode of composition, is to give a hidden structure and organisation, on the one hand, and a disorganised sequential surface on the other. This was ideally suited to Maulānā's purpose and design, and he exploited it brilliantly. So well, in fact, that few appear to have fully grasped what Maulānā has done, or, if they have, few, if any, have chosen to speak about it. But is the hidden design of Book One diagrammatically represented in Chapter Three, anything more than a writer's plan of a work yet to be written, is it more than the headings one might write on the back of an envelope in preparation for an after-dinner speech? It must be said, first, that it would need to be a very large envelope, since there are 173 sections in Book One alone and some 980 in the *Mathnawī* as a whole. The overall plan, that of the *Mathnawī* as a whole, was to use as the subject of each book, one of the six sons of 'Aṭṭār's *Ilāhī-nāmeḥ*, respectively representing the *nafs*, or selfhood; the Devil, or Iblīs; 'aql, or intelligence; 'ilm, or knowledge; *faqr*, or spiritual poverty; and *tauḥīd*, or Unity. The work would be divided into two halves, each of three books, hinged in the middle with a story that connected Book Three and Book Four. Since the central theme of the *Mathnawī* is Love, that would be concentrated around the very centre of the work. Love might appear in other places, such as in Book One, but there it would be seen from the perspective of the *nafs*, as the great purifier of covetousness and worldliness, for example. In the central position, Love would be treated in its own right. It is the hinge in the middle that creates the chiasmus and places, for example, Book One, on the *nafs*, in parallel with Book Six, on *tauḥīd*. This provides the opportunity to present situations, viewed first from the perspective of the *nafs* in Book One, and again viewed from the perspective of *tauḥīd* in Book Six, but in reverse order. That then is the overarching master plan of the *Mathnawī*.

Coming down to the next level, the level of the book, it seems chronologically unlikely that Books One and Six were planned in detail at the same time, nor would it have been necessary. Once Book One was written, it would have been easy enough to write Book Six when the time came, simply by reflecting the situations or features of Book One but in reverse order. Against this, however, it does seem that the story of the frog and the mouse in Book Six might have been foreshadowed at the end of the Discourse Three in Book One. It could be that in writing Book One, Maulānā already had in mind some of the possible themes and subjects of Book Six, even if it had not been planned in detail. The specification was settled: to write twelve discourses on the different stages and characteristics of the *nafs*, while at the same time showing the different stages along the Sufi Path. Again, the first consideration would have been to use the two halves to show the un-transformed selfhood in

the first and the transformed selfhood in the second, with the true turning point at the very centre, where *niyāz* and *faqr* come. This must have very soon been linked up with the threefold division of the discourses, four dealing with each of the three stages of the *nafs*, with the *nafs-i lawwāmah* appropriately straddling the central position. A further specification was that the discourses themselves should be in parallel chiasmically, so a communality of theme was required between the six parallel pairs of discourses as was shown in the second diagram of Chapter Three. Maybe at this stage too Maulānā imposed on himself the further specification of the numerological symmetry, in terms of how many sections any particular pair of parallel discourses should have. Already, this has become more than just a writer's plan. There is now the beginnings of a hierarchy of organisation, the plan of the work providing the subject of Book One, or, put another way, providing the context for Book One. What was revealed by the analysis in Chapter Three was the rationale of Book One, that is the internal logic and objective reference of the writer's plan. The rationale of Book One, in its turn, provides both the subject and the context for each of the discourses.

As has been shown, it is hoped, in Chapter Two, each discourse is a work of art in its own right. Each has its own unique structure and rationale, even those with the same number of sections managing to use them in its own unique way to produce its own particular distribution of emphasis. Consider, for example, the parallel pair of discourses, Discourse Six and Discourse Seven. Both have twelve sections, both make use of the division into two halves, but they each do it in a different way as the analyses and interpretations have shown. But having fixed upon a shape and structure for a discourse, the themes to be dealt with, and the narrative line, the real demand on Maulānā must have been the self-imposed requirement of parallelism. Parallelism can be thought of as both a curse and a blessing for a writer. It is a curse because it places yet another constraint upon a writer, in the same way that the metre and the rhyme does. It is a blessing because it offers the opportunity of making a point in two different ways, of being more explicit, of developing an emphasis, of going beyond a single verbal assertion to presenting a shape, a relationship, an opening of the understanding which can be transforming. In Book One there are 85 pairs of parallel sections, and Maulānā uses parallelism in many different ways, as has been seen. Many sections, for instance, deal with a number of different points, and the parallel sections are able to define which point is central. It is not just the author whose creativity is reigned back by parallelism, the reader too faces the problem of his own creative imagination and enrichment which parallelism can help to solve provided the reader knows it is there. In a literary culture in which analogy and symbolism abound, it is particularly important to be able to define the level at which something is to be taken. Mary Douglas in the recent F.D.Maurice Lectures makes this point well: "Ambiguity is everywhere. The gift of analogy carries the possibility of wildly boisterous double or triple meanings. Words interpenetrate, their references tumble through

the sounds, they mix incontinently, leaking, laughing, breaking bounds.<sup>1</sup> This is the joy of analogy, the release and the freedom. The down side is that anything can mean anything, because similarity is unbounded. If anything in a given text can mean anything, communication would collapse. A clear message needs a way of firmly capturing meanings and setting their limits, organising them. Ring composition provides this constraint on the creative process.” Take, for example, Discourse Four in which the lion, out of pride and egoism, jumps into the well and is destroyed. Some readers and commentators expect in a mystical work every death to be really symbolic of *fanā*, the annihilation of self, and are unwilling to let anyone just die a normal death. But here, once the rationale of Book One is understood, it is clear that the death of the lion is an example of how the *nafs-i ammārah* destroys itself, not of *fanā*. It is in the second parallel lion discourse, Discourse Nine, where the need for *fanā* is emphasised. This is an example of how the rhetorical structure, through the organisation of contexts, is able to set limits on a reader’s enrichment and add clarity and definition to meanings.

The actual verses written within a section proceed sequentially without recourse to either parallelism or chiasmus. It is no part of this thesis to examine their style. What this thesis has done is to show how Maulānā, through his use of an unexpected genre, has been able to produce a work fully in accord with his understanding of reality and illustrative of it. Beneath a surface texture that is sequentially random and disorganised, he has hidden the world which gives it significance and meaning, a world that is beautifully structured and co-ordinated, a world that is highly rational and intelligent, a world created by a truly illumined spirit which it has been a privilege to explore and share. There is much more that requires to be done: there are five more books to analyse and reflect upon, five more rationales to identify, and then the rationale of the *Mathnawī* itself. Studies need to be made of Maulānā’s discourse structures, of his use of parallelism, of the antecedents to his macro-compositional style. But all of these are for another day, for the present there is just one more issue to confront: if Maulānā has hidden this world, for whatever reason, what right has the present author, like Zayd in Discourse Eleven, to proclaim it aloud. Will not the disclosure frustrate Maulānā’s purpose, and spoil the *Mathnawī* for many readers? There are reasons for hoping this will not be the case.

The first reason is that, although Maulānā has clearly deliberately hidden the beautiful order and organisation of his great work, he must have done so in a time when he had some expectation of it being uncovered by suitable equipped individuals. Although there is nothing in writing, it would be absurd to imagine that nobody else has realised what

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<sup>1</sup> Starobinski, Jean, *Les Mots sous les Mots, Les anagrammes de Ferdinand Saussure*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, quoted in the text of her Third F.D.Maurice Lecture at Kings College, London, on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2002.



Maulānā had done over the last seven centuries. But what is certain, for reasons given in the Introduction, is that now it is even less likely that anyone, let alone the modern reader, will discover for themselves what Maulānā has hidden, especially as the scholarly consensus is that there is no organisation, hidden or otherwise. Further, the current popularity of 'Rūmī' can only serve to muddy the water even more, through the proliferation of mistaken views and through the presentation of bits of the *Mathnawī* in anthology form which further obscures the rhetorical structure which contains the organisation of contexts and significance. Earlier, what has been discovered in this thesis was likened to a map; the modern reader needs such a map for the *Mathnawī*, and a map has never ruined the view nor spoilt the walk.

There are two more positive reasons for not being concerned. First, what has been discovered here greatly enhances the *Mathnawī*. It reveals that the work has far greater richness and heights than had hitherto been suspected, and that Maulānā is an even more considerable literary and spiritual figure that even his present reputation allows. Second, it shows the mystical and spiritual world to be highly rational and intelligent, not at all the preserve of the woolly-minded who find mystery in muddle and the irrational. One could, however, be concerned for those who derive great comfort and inspiration from the *Mathnawī* as it is now, and for whom these discoveries might appear to constitute a threat or, worse, a claim to ownership of something precious of their own. Let them be reassured; this study has added nothing to the *Mathnawī*, it has projected nothing on to the *Mathnawī*, it has simply shown what Maulānā has done at the macro-compositional level. It is still wholly Maulānā's; speaking to whoever can hear, and the present study constitutes no threat, nor does it undermine what anyone holds most precious, nor does it make any claim to superior understanding. For those Iranians, however, whether expatriate or not, who mistake the cultural comfort they derive from the *Mathnawī* with spiritual comfort, Maulānā himself has a parable in Book Two. He tells of a peasant going out in the dark to stroke his ox in a stall, little realising that what he is stroking is the lion who has eaten his ox. Maulānā allows the lion to reflect for a moment on what the peasant might feel if he realised: "If the light were to become greater, his gall-bladder would burst and his heart would turn to blood." The reader laughs at the stupidity of the peasant. Then Maulānā turns on the reader: "God is saying, "O blind dupe, did not Mt. Sinai fall in pieces at My Name.. You have heard this (God's Name and Religion) from your parents; in consequence you have embraced it without thinking. If you become acquainted with Him without *taqlīd*, blind imitation, by His Grace you will become without self-existence, like a voice from Heaven." Everyone must decide for themselves whether 'their' *Mathnawī* is a familiar, comforting ox being stroked with *taqlīd*, or whether it is a lion encountered first hand and directly, which leads on to the final and most significant reason for not being concerned.

It must not be thought that the uncovering of the rationale of Book One has revealed any great spiritual or theological mystery: the threefold division of the states of the *nafs* and the different properties of each had already been discussed at length by a number of prestigious authors long before Maulānā's time. Similarly the Sufi spiritual Path had been the subject of a number of different systematisations prior to Maulānā. The notion of searching for 'deeper' meanings, which suggests digging a pit ever deeper in search of buried treasure, is perhaps not the most appropriate way to approach the *Mathnawī*, even though, in its opening sentence, the *Mathnawī*, it will be recalled, was described as the roots of the roots of the roots of Religion. This the commentators interpret as referring first to the *Ṣarī'a*, the clear broad path to a watering place, which are the roots nearest the surface and, in terms of the *Mathnawī*, the literal surface level; second, the intermediate roots are taken to refer to the *Ṭarīqa*, the narrower Path followed by the Sufi *sālik*, the spiritual traveller, which, in terms of the *Mathnawī*, is the hidden, *bāṭin*, inner organisation that this study has partially unveiled; third, the deepest roots are understood to be *Ḥaqīqa*, Reality, the watering Place itself, which, it is ventured, is not to be found in the *Mathnawī*, but rather through the *Mathnawī* and what it is allowed to do in the reader. What is interesting, and why the notion of 'deeper' was found inappropriate, is that the hidden organisation that this thesis has identified is not underground at all, it is the superstructure of the work itself. It towers above the surface text like Sinan's Selimiyeh Cami Mosque at Edirne, ever thrusting upward to the heavens. Each of the twelve discourses in Book One can best be thought of as a beautifully proportioned building with rooms interconnecting through the intricate system of correspondences that parallelism makes possible. These are to be explored and experienced, the connections and correspondences weighed and pondered, the shapes and situations, the perspectives and analogies, allowed to enter to awaken and to transform the understanding and aspirations of the reader. The findings of this study simply show what is there to be explored; there seems little danger that they will frustrate Maulānā's transforming purpose; rather, it is hoped, they will advance it.

What was Maulānā's purpose in creating the *Mathnawī*? Almost certainly it was to effect the spiritual transformation of his hearers and readers. He was a superb poet, who had such control he could produce almost any effect that he wished. He was also a very experienced Sufi Shaikh with a profound understanding of human nature and spiritual psychology. Finally, he was a true friend of God, to whom had been granted many transforming spiritual experiences, as is apparent from his writings and his biography. These three qualities he brought together in his major project of producing the *Mathnawī*, the reading and pondering of which is his form of spiritual training. The first level, the literal level, that of the roots nearest the surface, which was discussed as the self-presentation of the *Mathnawī*, largely uses edification as its methodology. The second level, the Sufi level of the intermediate roots, uses the hidden but beautiful organising structures which have been the subject of this

thesis. These are to be experienced and explored, since they are able to enter within the readers to form and transform their understanding, perspectives and aspirations. The third level, that of the deepest roots, is *Ḥaqīqa*, Reality. Maulānā distinguishes between *taqlīd*, imitation, where everything one learns is second-hand, and *tahqīq*, verification, realisation, where everything is encountered directly and met in its reality. For the readers and *sāliks*, the first thing on this level is to make the material with its structures and correspondences their own, and to verify it in their own experience. Then, in a non-programmatic way, realisation dawns; bits and pieces suddenly fall into place as part of the reader's reality, maybe while shaving, maybe triggered by a situation at the office, maybe when catching an unexpected reflection of himself in a mirror in a shop and not recognising who it is. Nobody can force this kind of realisation, it will happen when it will, when the situation is right. Certainly it has nothing to do with the intellectual search for 'deeper' meanings, which Maulānā might describe as looking for truffles in the mud. Realisation is about finding, not searching with the mind, and the place in which realisation dawns, as Maulānā constantly stresses, is in the heart and not the head, so for it to happen there has to be a shift in one's centre of gravity from head to heart. But this kind of realisation is, if you like, the lesser realisation: the greater realisation, *tahqīq*, is for the *sālik* to realise their own reality, to realise *Ḥaqq*, Almighty God, within themselves, about which the later books of the *Mathnawī* have much to say. This is a subject beyond the scope of the present thesis, and beyond the competence of the present author, so, as Maulānā often concludes, *W'Allāhu 'Alamu*, And God Knows Best.

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