



RUMI AND WOMEN: DEPICTION OF THE
COMPLEXITY OF THE FEMALE PSYCHE IN THE
MATHNAWI

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores why and how Rumi depicted women in the Mathnawi. This research covers mythologies and religious beliefs from Judaism to Christianity and Islam; philosophers from ancient Greece until today and shows that different cultural settings from the Middle East to China have always perceived women negatively. This finding is crucial because it serves as a general framework within which we find references to understanding Rumi's standpoint against women. The work identifies certain expressions in Rumi's works, which can be considered misogynistic. On the other hand, our findings also demonstrate that Sufism, with strong references to the Qur'an and the Hadith, constitutes the main basis for Rumi's perception of women. Rumi's consistent constructive relations with women around him confirm the finding that Sufism led Rumi to regard women positively. A deeper analysis reveals that when Rumi uses women in a negative context, he does not do so to insult them. He uses humour, symbols and vulgarity at times associated with women to convey his messages. The main conclusion drawn from this research is that considering his general philosophy of women and his daily encounters with them, Rumi's perception of women is positive and that he does not see them as less than men.

ملخص البحث

تناقش هذا البحث كيفية تصوير جلال الدين الرومي للمرأة في كتابه "المنوي". موضحاً أن النظرة السلبية تجاه المرأة تغلب عليها الأساطير والمعتقدات الدينية في الأديان اليهودية والمسيحية والإسلامية كافة؛ وكذلك نظرة الفلاسفة منذ بداية من العصر اليوناني القديم وحتى اليوم؛ وكذلك النظرة في الأوساط الثقافية المختلفة من الشرق الأوسط حتى الصين. وهذه النتيجة أو النظرة نجدها أنها في غاية الأهمية؛ لأنها تُعدُّ بمثابة إطار عام نجد فيه إشارات لفهم وجهة نظر جلال الدين الرومي تجاه المرأة. وفي واقع الأمر، فإن جلال الدين الرومي لم يقدّم بصياغة رسائله وهو في حالة عزلة. بل نجده أنه قد تعرّض بشكل كبير للأفكار المنتشرة ليس فقط في وطنه بل في البلاد الأخرى أيضاً. ومن ثمّ فإنه من غير المستغرب أن نجد أنّ بعض التعبيرات في أعمال جلال الدين الرومي، تنمُّ عن كراهية للنساء. وتوضّح النتائج التي توصل إليها البحث أيضاً، أن الصوفية وما بها من إشارات قوية إلى القرآن والحديث النبوي تشكّل حجر الأساس لتصور الرومي عن المرأة. فالصوفية قد تجاوزت الجنس، ولون البشرة، والعرق من أجل تحقيق المعرفة الإلهية، كما أن هذه المدرسة الفكرية ترى أنه لا يمكن الحكم على أوضاع الناس في هذا العالم إلا من خلال العلاقة الإلهية. إن علاقات الرومي البناءة دائماً بالنساء المحيطات به تؤكد نتيجة مفادها أن الصوفية قد قادت الرومي للنظر إلى المرأة نظرة إيجابية. ومن ثمّ فإنّ التحليل الدقيق يكشف أنه عندما يتعرض للمرأة في سياق سلبي عند نقل رسائله، فإنّه لا يعني إهانتها. بل يراد بها الدعابة والفكاهة والرموز والكلام السوقي. وفي التحليل النهائي، فإن الاستنتاج الرئيسي الذي نستنتجه من هذا البحث هو أنه بالنظر إلى فلسفة الرومي العامة بشأن المرأة ومقابلاته اليومية معها، فإنّ تصوّره للمرأة يُعدُّ إيجابياً، فلا يعتبرها أقل أو أدنى مستوى من الرجل.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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I would “Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing
and right doing there is a field.
I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass
the world is too full to talk about.”
Rumi

I was raised in a big family where education was highly praised and children were pushed one level after another all the way up to PhD. Being tired of years spent in the classrooms, I remember very vividly how I attempted to convince my parents that master degree was enough for me. My efforts, fortunately, did not yield any results and with family connections I was informed of ISTAC. Before I know it, I found myself packing my luggage for my trip to Kuala Lumpur.

In this regards, my first thanks go to my big family, namely my grandparents, parents, uncles, aunties and cousins, for creating the scholarly environment where I could have the vision to seek for further education all the time. Indeed, I need to single out my parents for raising me with care and being next to me all along regardless of my wrongdoings or right doings. Thank you mother, thank you father!

Being a student at ISTAC have been quite an experience. ISTAC is a very dynamic and interactive learning establishment where few but qualified students meet highly accomplished faculty. I have been proud and thankful to be a part of it. I would like to extent my appreciation to the Dean, faculty and secretariat of ISTAC, as well as the beautiful friends that I made there.

One of all faculties touched my soul more than the others. His vast knowledge and spiritual enlightenment captured and guided my intellectual journey. He re-introduced Rumi to me and, despite my background in theatre; he encouraged me to choose Rumi as the topic of my thesis. At that time he was translating Rumi's *Mathnawi* to Malay. He managed to complete this difficult task in only 9 months and 23 days. In the Malay Archipelago his work is the first and only translation of the *Mathnawi* of Rumi to Malay language. He supervised me throughout the learning process of this thesis. At times I was frustrated to choose women in the *Mathnawi*, as there has been rather limited literature on the subject. He reminded me that it is exactly why I had to take this topic. He practically refused my first draft for being far below his expectations, which frustrated me, even further. For a while, I even thought of quitting the program altogether. Yet, I did not give up and penned a second draft, which to my surprise and enjoyment satisfied him. Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ajmal Abdul Razak Al-Aidruss, thank you for believing in me, supporting me and supervising me. And, most importantly thank you for being my mentor. Without your able guidance, I could not finalize this work.

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“Knock, And He'll open the door
Vanish, And He'll make you shine like the sun
Fall, And He'll raise you to the heavens
Become nothing, And He'll turn you into everything.”
Rumi

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TABLE OF TRANSLITERATION

CONSONENTS			
Arabic	English	Arabic	English
ء	'	ض	Ö
ب	B	ط	Ù
ت	T	ظ	Ú
ث	Th	ع	Ñ
ج	J	غ	Gh
ح	×	ف	F
خ	Kh	ق	Q
د	D	ك	K
ذ	Dh	ل	L
ر	R	م	M
ز	Z	ن	N
س	S	و	W
ش	Sh	ه	H
ص	Ø	ي	Y

Vowels			
Short Vowels		Long Vowels	
أ	A	آ	Ó
إ	I	إي	Ô
أ	U	أو	Õ

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Every one became my friend from his own opinion; none sought out my secrets from within me.

My secret is not far from my plaint, but ear and eye lack the light (whereby it should be apprehended).¹

Over seven centuries after his demise, Rumi is still a source of inspiration and a guiding light in all over the world. Regardless of their backgrounds, religious beliefs and cultures, people become Rumi's friend with the hope that they attain to his secrets. His excellence as a poet; his ability to empathize with humans, animals and plants; his personal refinement; as well as, his flawless moral centre and ability to direct others towards good conduct and union with their Creator are among the reasons why he has been extensively read.

In recent years, the popularity of his works has increased substantially. For example, Rumi ranked America's best-selling poet for several years, including 2014.² Western admirers tend to extract Rumi from his historical context and embrace him as one of their own.³ Islamic readers, on the other hand, regard Rumi as an excellent commentator on the Qur'an.⁴

Rumi has been subject to intense studies over centuries. Almost every aspect of his personality, life and works has been commented on by various scholars from all

¹ *Mathnawi* I: 6-7.

² Leslie Wines, *Rumi; a spiritual biography*, (New York: The Crossroad, 2001), 13.

³ Jane Ciabattari, "Why is Rumi the best-selling poet in the US?," BBC Culture, <<http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140414-americas-best-selling-poet>> (accessed 15 August, 2014).

⁴ Leslie Wines, 16.

corners of the world. On the other hand, a thorough literature review reveals that Rumi's view on women has not attracted much academic interest. What was his opinion concerning women? How and why did he depict women in his works the way he did? This thesis aims to address these questions to offer its studied answers.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that this thesis will attempt to address are as follows:

- i. What is Rumi's philosophy regarding women?
- ii. How did Rumi depict women in his main works?
- iii. How did Rumi characterize women in the *Mathnawi*?

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives of this dissertation are as follows:

- i. to discuss Rumi's philosophy of women;
- ii. to map how Rumi's perception of women is reflected on in his main works;
- iii. to analyse women characters in the *Mathnawi*.

1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY

In this thesis, Rumi's perception of women will be discussed within the context of the *Mathnawi*. To this end, initially perception of women in various religions, philosophy and cultural settings will be explored to determine the general understanding of women, which is believed to have influenced Rumi's opinion about women. In addition, main sources of Rumi's thinking regarding women will be elaborated with specific emphasis on his father, Baha al-Din Walad and Shams-e Tabrizi. Then, Rumi's philosophy of women will be examined with reference to his main works.

Upon the basis of these discussions, characterization of women in the *Mathnawi* will be analysed to reveal the complexity of the female psyche in the *Mathnawi*.

The focus of overall discussion will be Rumi and his perception of women in the *Mathnawi* and secondary discussions are intended to support the main one. In this regard, other prominent philosophers, Rumi's understanding of issues other than women, Rumi's works other than the *Mathnawi* or the characters other than women characters in the *Mathnawi* either will be mentioned briefly whenever they are relevant to our discussion or they will not be addressed at all in this study.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Even though Rumi's *Mathnawi* has been the subject of innumerable academic studies by scholars from various backgrounds and at different levels, there is a scarcity of work on women characters in the *Mathnawi*. Hence, this study had to rely on available relevant, however, not direct, sources of information. Literature review, for this reason, reflects the studies conducted on Rumi and the *Mathnawi* in the literature, rather than specifically dealing with the female psyche in the *Mathnawi*.

Additionally, analysing a book written over seven centuries ago poses another challenge. Taking the words literally is rather risky. Therefore text needs to be analysed in a wider context to avoid any misinterpretations.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Rumi has been highly regarded in various circles and his ideas have been inspiring people from all walks of life over centuries. This makes him an interesting subject for study. Numerous scholars put pen on paper to shed light on different aspects of the *Mathnawi*, Rumi's final and most comprehensive work. However, as the literature

review conducted here disclosed, female psyche in the *Mathnawi* has largely gone unnoticed. It is in this regard that an investigation of Rumi's perception of women in the *Mathnawi* is of crucial importance.

In addition, the study is relevant because the concept of women is a hot subject of discussion. This study aims to contribute to knowledge in women studies by engaging Rumi's *Mathnawi*.

1.7 LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been many scholars from both Islamic world and the West who were influenced by Rumi, studied him and analysed his works. In this section, major scholars and their works will be explored. The journey will begin with Iran, then it will cover several regions in the Islamic world and finally it will extend to the Western world.

Shams al-Din Ahmad Aflaki⁵ is a precious source of first-hand information about Rumi's close circles. There are rather limited works available from this period, which increases the value of his work significantly. Aflaki, an Iranian historian, was one of the followers of Arif Chalabi, Rumi's grandson. He wrote extensively about anecdotes of Rumi, his father, wife, sons, daughters, Shams-e Tabrizi and other close companions of Rumi and first Mevlevi masters. He compiled these writings in his book *Manaqib al-'Arifin [The Feats of the Knowers of God]*, which contains very valuable information about the Sufi practices and the situation of the Anatolia during the time of Rumi.⁶ Aflaki, himself, explains in one of his writings his motivation for producing *Manaqib al-'Arifin*: "I once attended a gathering along with Arif Chalabi

⁵ d. 1360.

⁶ Nicolas Trépanier, "The Manaqib al-'Arifin as a source for political history", (MA. Dissertation: McGill University, 2002), 3.

and a host of other senior figures. When the focus of discussion shifted to *Tazkirat al-Awliya [Biographies of the Saints]* by Sheikh Farid al-Din Attar⁷, those present at the meeting came down in favour of the idea of writing a similar book on Rumi and his followers. And Aref Chalabi required me to put pen to paper.”⁸

Kamal al-Din Hussein bin Hassan Kharazmi’s⁹ *Konouz al-Haqaiq [The Treasure of Reality]* and *Javaher al-Asrar va Zavaher al-Anvar [The Jewels of Secret and the Flowers of Light]* are among the oldest interpretations of the *Mathnawi* to shed light on the mysterious world of the book. Beside the *Mathnawi*, these books featured verses of the Qur’an, Hadith and poems, both in Farsi and Arabic. Kharazmi’s style was rhythmic and extremely appealing, opening an illuminative path for future interpreters, such as Nezam al-Din Mahmud Shirazi’s¹⁰. Shirazi added his annotations to the *Mathnawi* and his work is considered praiseworthy. Just like Kharazmi, Shirazi was a follower of Ibn Arabi and they both examined the *Mathnawi* from the perspective of the great philosopher Ibn Arabi.¹¹

Hadi Sabzevari¹² is another prominent commentator on the *Mathnawi*. He offered his interpretations within the framework of Qur’an, hadith, anecdotes, and mystic principles of spiritual reunion with God, as well as philosophical and literary issues, which distinguished his work.

Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar deserves more extensive space in this section, due to his comprehensive studies on Rumi. In his *Sharh-e Mathnawi Sharif [Commentary on the Mathnawi Sharif]*, Foruzanfar put together well-known interpretations of the

⁷ c.1110-c.1220.

⁸ Manqaib al- ‘Arefin, < <http://ketabnak.com/comment.php?dlid=57098>> (accessed 5 June, 2013).

⁹ Kharazmi lived in the 14th century.

¹⁰ Also known as Shah Dai (1407 - 1467).

¹¹ Hasan Lahouti, “Sharh-e Asrar va Sharh-e Ankaravi [A Treatise on Secrets and Ankaravi’s Treasures]” *Monthly Journal of Philosophical and mystical studies*, vol. 7, no. 19 (October 1007): 113.

¹² 1797 – 1873.

Mathnawi as well as valuable works on Sufism, the science of discourse, philosophy, jurisprudence, interpretation and Persian and Arabic literature including *Javaher al-Asrar va Zavaher al-Anvar*, the interpretation of Vali Muhammad Akbar-Abadi, the interpretation of Abd al-Ali Muhammad Nezam al-Din (Bahr al-Ulum), and *Sharh Asrar [Commentary on the Secrets]* by Sabzevari, as well as non-Farsi sources such as *Fateh al-Abyat [The Conqueror of Verses]* by Ismail Ankaravi¹³ and the interpretation of Nicholson.

Foruzanfar has a unique way of examining the *Mathnawi*. He first lets the readers in on the general narrative. In other words, he first explains the main narrative in prose which is followed by secondary anecdotes. That, in turn, is followed by explanation in simple words of the main components of the text to arrive at a moral. What stands out in his book is that it explores the source of the stories that appear in the *Mathnawi*, provides fitting definitions for major principles of Sufism, philosophy, the science of discourse and jurisprudence, and explains difficult words and expressions. In this book, Foruzanfar has managed to go through the first three chapters of the first book of the *Mathnawi*. After Foruzanfar's death, Seyyed Jafar Shahidi¹⁴ picked up where he had left off and completed the interpretation of all six books of the *Mathnawi*. In his work, the *Mathnawi Sharif*, Shahidi tried to follow Foruzanfar's style, but the difference is distinct.¹⁵

Foruzanfar's *Resale Dar Tahqiq –e Ahval va Zendegani-e Moulana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi Mashhoor be Molavi [A Treatise on Rumi's life]*¹⁶ is an extensive research into the life, mystical status and the works of Mowlana, organized

¹³ d. 1631.

¹⁴ 1919-2008.

¹⁵ Anonymous, Vista News Hub, "Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar", < <http://vista.ir/article/206637> > (accessed 11 March 2013).

¹⁶ Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar, *Resale Dar Tahqiq –e Ahval va Zendegani-e Moulana Jalal al-Din Muhammad Balkhi Mashhoor be Molavi [A Treatise on Rumi's life]*, (Tehran: Majles press, 1936).

in 10 chapters. The book has explored the lineage of Mowlana and the masters who taught him as well as the reasons why he underwent spiritual renaissance and set out on a mystical journey. The book then looks at the time Mowlana spent on spiritual training before eventually focusing on the things that unfolded in the run-up to his death. It names prominent Sufi scholars, scientists, literary men, kings and military commanders contemporary with Mowlana. Part of the book also focuses on the mentality of Mowlana, his works and his family.

*Ahadis va Qesas-e Mathnawi: Talfiq az Ahadis Mathnawi va Ma'akhaz-e Qese-haye Mathnawi [Hadith and Anecdotes of Mathnawi: The Source of the Mathnawi's Stories and Allegories]*¹⁷ is another standout book by Foruzanfar. It is in fact a combination of two separate books: *The Hadith of Mathnawi* and *Sources of Mathnawi's Anecdotes and Allegories* along with Mathnawi couplets that appear in the works of Nicholson. What is important about this book is that it features a full translation and explanation of Arabic texts, something that makes it easily-understandable to the readers.¹⁸ Another important work Foruzanfar conducted was editing of the *Divan-e Kabir (Shams)*¹⁹. In this work he was assisted by Amir Hossein Yazdgerdi²⁰.

Jalal al-Din Homai's²¹ *Molavi Nameh: Molavi Che Miguyad? [Molavi nameh: What Molavi is Saying?]*²² is regarded one of the most complete works on the

¹⁷ Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar, *Ahadis va Qesas-e Mathnawi: Talfiq az Ahadis Mathnawi va Ma'akhaz-e Qese-haye Mathnawi [Hadith and Anecdotes of Mathnawi: The Source of the Mathnawi's Stories and Allegories]*, translated by Hossein Davoodi, (Tehran: Amir Kabir press, 1997).

¹⁸ Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar, *Ahadis va Qesas-e Mathnawi: Talfiq az Ahadis Mathnawi va Ma'akhaz-e Qese-haye Mathnawi [Hadith and Anecdotes of Mathnawi: The Source of the Mathnawi's Stories and Allegories]*, translated by Hossein Davoodi, (Tehran: Amir Kabir press, 1997), 5.

¹⁹ Jalal al-Din Rumi, *Kolliyat-e shams, ya divan-e kabir, moshtamel bar qasa'ed va ghazaliyat va moqata'at-e farsi va 'arabi va tarji'at va molme'at, ba tashih va havvashi-ye Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar* in 10 volume, Badi' al-Zaman Foruzanfar, (Tehran: Tehran University press, 1951-1966).

²⁰ 1927-1986.

²¹ Jalal al-Din Homai (1899- 1980) was an Iranian scholar.

Mathnawi. This work focuses mostly on the secret messages and philosophical dimensions of the *Mathnawi*. In this two-volume 1,100-page book, Homai attempts to shed as much light as possible on the thoughts and mentality of Mowlana. In the foreword of the book, the author says, “Many things have been said about Mowlana, but Mowlana himself has rarely been quoted as saying something.” Later the author says the following about what prompted him to write the book: “This book is primarily designed to express the viewpoints of Mowlana in his own words, particularly those which appear in the *Mathnawi*. It’s also meant to shed light on Mowlana’s spiritual status and his line of thinking.”²³ Homai’s revision of *Waladnameh* of Sultan Walad is noteworthy, too. What is important about the revised version is that its foreword focuses on the spiritual status and the works of Mowlana.²⁴ Allameh Muhammad-Taqi Ja’fari²⁵ wrote many books on a vast variety of fields, the most prominent of which is his 15-volume *Tafsi va Naqd va Tahlil-e Mathnawi-e Mowlana [Interpretation and Criticism of Rumi’s Mathnawi]*²⁶. It is an encyclopaedia that studies the thoughts and viewpoints of Mowlana, drawing an analogy between the developments of his mystical journey and realities on the ground in the modern world. Besides Mowlana’s mysticism, this work deals with a range of academic issues. It builds on various sources such as the works of Victor Hugo, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Balzac, Max Planck, and Einstein to examine and analyse new Western psychological viewpoints and the path of Western social thinking. What stands out about this book is

²² Jalal al-Din Homai, *Molavi Nameh: Molavi Che Miguyad? [Molavi nameh: What Molavi is Saying?]* Tehran: Homa press, 1997), in 2 Volumes.

²³ Mir Sadiq Seyyednijad, “Dargozasht Ostad Jalal al-Din Homai [In commemoration of Jalal al-Din Homai],” *Golbarg*, no. 31 (2008): 79. Etela’ Resani-e Hoze, via Hawzeh, <<http://www.hawzah.net>>.

²⁴ Mir Sadiq Seyyednijad, “Dargozasht Ostad Jalal al-Din Homai [In commemoration of Jalal al-Din Homai],” *Golbarg*, no. 31 (2008): 79. Etela’ Resani-e Hoze, via Hawzeh, <<http://www.hawzah.net>>.

²⁵ Allameh Muhammad-Taqi Ja’fari (1923 - 1998) was an Iranian scholar, thinker, and theologian.

²⁶ Allameh Muhammad-Taqi Ja’fari, *Tafsi va Naqd va Tahlil-e Mathnawi-e Mowlana [Interpretation and Criticism of Rumi’s Mathnawi]*, (Tehran: Islami, 1969), in 15 volume.

that it amounts to reconciliation between Islamic sciences and the humanities. In addition, it focuses on philosophical common ground between the East and the West which is described by the author in this encyclopaedia as “common human culture”. It is arguably the most detailed explanation of the *Mathnawi* written so far.²⁷

Another work of Ja’fari’s on Rumi, is *Molavi va Jahan Bini-ha [Mowlana and Worldviews]*²⁸ is a science and ideology based book that examines the viewpoints of Mowlana in relation to Buddhism, Illuminationism, the works of Kant, the doctrine of Rene Descartes, Realism, Monadology, the dialectical method of Hegel and existentialism.

Ja’fari continued his work on Rumi with a four-volume book titled *Az Darya be Darya [From Sea to Sea]*. The book contains all the couplets in the *Mathnawi* in an alphabetical order to facilitate the search on the *Mathnawi*.²⁹ In another book entitled *Avamele Jazabiyate Sokhanane Molana [What Makes Rumi’s Words So Fascinating]*³⁰, Ja’fari tries to explain why the *Mathnawi* and the *Divan-e Shams-e Tabrizi* have been this attractive for the readers: Rumi built on anecdotes to get his message across; he knew extensively about human and divine knowledge; he did not consider writing poems as a profession, rather it was a labour of love; he used stories to share his intuition; his words came from deep down; and he used simple words to share noble ideas.

²⁷ Anonymous, “Mowlana’s Thoughts,” *The Ostad Jafari Institute*, <<http://www.ostad-jafari.com>> (accessed 10 January, 2013).

²⁸ Allameh Muhammad-Taqi Ja’fari, *Molavi va Jahan Bini [Mowlana and Worldviews]*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Aasar-e Allame Ja’fari, 1978).

²⁹ “Mowlana’s Thoughts.”

³⁰ Allameh Muhammad-Taqi Ja’fari, *Avamele Jazabiyate Sokhanane Molana [What Makes Rumi’s Words So Fascinating]*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Aasar-e Allame Ja’fari, 2008).

*Fekrvareh Mathnawi [The Ideas Presented in the Mathnawi]*³¹ is yet another book Ja'fari has penned. In fact, it is an elaboration on the *Mathnawi* as far as Islam, humanity, ethics, mysticism, philosophy, history, civilization and other general thought-related issues are concerned. It also includes a blueprint of the *Mathnawi* interpretation and analysis categorized in keeping with scientific and research-based approaches.³²

Another Iranian scholar that is known for his profound research on Rumi and his works is Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub³³. In *Serr-e Ney [Secret of the Reed]*³⁴, he interprets and analyses the spiritual status and thoughts as well as literary and ethical personality of Mowlana and a number of others. The book also features comparisons, in each case, between the viewpoints of Mowlana and other prominent figures.

In *Bahr dar Koozeh [Sea in a Pitcher]*³⁵, Zarrinkoub focuses on “morality” and “the divine reflection” in the thoughts of Mowlana. Apparently, the following verse of the *Mathnawi* inspired him to choose the title of this book: “If thou pour the sea into a pitcher, how much will it hold? One day’s store.”³⁶ The book opens with a chapter titled “Humans and the State of Their Existence”. By explaining the meanings of body and soul, Zarrinkoub tries to bring to light what Mowlana has truly meant. Then comes the meaning of *Abdal-e Haq* (Friends of God), followed by those of need and annihilation in the eyes of Mowlana. The viewpoint of Mowlana about what is viewed as evil is also explained. The next chapter focuses on love and tries to paint a picture of a person Mowlana regards as a true lover. There are parts that deal with

³¹ Allameh Muhammad-Taqi Ja'fari, *Fekrvareh Mathnawi [The ideas presented in the Mathnawi]*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Aasar-e Allame Ja'fari, 1978).

³² “Mowlana’s Thoughts.”

³³ Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub (1923 –1999) was a prominent scholar of Iranian literature, history of literature, Persian culture and history.

³⁴ Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, *Serr-e Ney (Secret of the Reed)*, (Tehran:Elmi press, 1985).

³⁵ Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, *Bahr dar Koozeh [Sea in a Pitcher]*, (Tehran: Elmi press, 1987).

³⁶ *Mathnawi* I: 20.

epistemology, too. The author then claims that in his moral judgment, Mowlana drew a line between action and value, before focusing on justifiable judgment. The book then touches on ethical pluralism and analyses the relativity of values when they are seen as part of disposition. And finally, it is mentioned that development of knowledge about God comes through love rather than reason. Love makes it possible to secure Union, which in turn results in development of knowledge about God.³⁷

Another work of Zarrinkoub worth mentioning here is *Pelleh-Pelleh ta Molaghate Khoda [Step by Step to Union with God]*³⁸. This book is about Mowlana's life, his line of thinking and the spiritual path he chose. Unlike his other books, *Pelleh-Pelleh ta Molaghate Khoda [Step by Step to Union with God]* does not include any references and is written in a simple and smooth language. Zarrinkoub mentions the reason why he chose this title for this book is as follows: the book "depicts the spiritual path Mowlana followed in his lifetime. In one of the stories of the *Mathnawi*, Mowlana quotes a character as saying that he finds no trace of the path in question in the *Mathnawi*, although the book focuses on the spiritual path Mowlana has opted for."³⁹

*(That) from the stations of asceticism to the passing away (from self-existence), step by step up to union with God,*⁴⁰

Another commentary of the *Mathnawi* was written by Muhammad Estelami⁴¹.

This seven-volume commentary features a foreword, revisions, annotations, indexes

³⁷ Anonymous, Vista News Hub, "Bahr dar Koozeh [Sea in a Pitcher] (review)", <<http://vista.ir/book/236354>> (accessed 10 March 2013).

³⁸ Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, *Pelleh-Pelleh ta Molaghate Khoda [Step by Step to Union with God]*, (Tehran: Elmi press, 1980).

³⁹ Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, *Pelleh-Pelleh ta Molaghate Khoda [Step by Step to Union with God]*, (Tehran: Elmi press, 1980). Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub, *Pelleh-Pelleh ta Molaghate Khoda [Step by Step to Union with God]*, (Tehran: Elmi press, 1980). 7.

⁴⁰ *Mathnawi* III: 4235.

⁴¹ Muhammad Estelami (b.1936).

and references.⁴² Volume One through Six of this book includes the revised version of each *Mathnawi* books as well as the original version based on the 1278 edition, which is kept at Mowlana Museum in Konya, and the edition produced by Nicholson. The annotation of each couplet is numbered. In other words, in order to find the explanation of each couplet, one needs to locate that number in the annotation section of the book. The seventh volume has two parts. The first one, comprising seven chapters, focuses on Mowlana's special terminology, discussions, expressions, the names of individuals, books and places he has mentioned in his book, Qur'anic verses, hadith, and quotes. References and annotations of the first six volumes are also included in this part. The second part puts all the couplets in alphabetical order.⁴³

In 2008 the London Academy of Iranian Studies published a book titled *Rumi: Teaching* edited by Seyyed Ghahreman Safavi, an Iranian scholar. This valuable work includes 23 articles which are concerned with Rumi's poetic teaching methods as with his doctrinal teachings. These articles are also published in the Journal Transcendent Philosophy by the efforts of Seyyed Hossein Nasr⁴⁴ and William C. Chittick⁴⁵ and Oliver Leaman⁴⁶. Subsequently the editor groups them into five sections titled as follows: "Principles and Style", "The Structure and Methodology of *Mathnawi*," "The Relationship between Man and God", "Love in Mawlana Rumi's Works", and "The Interrelation and Influence of Rumi with and upon other Scholars."⁴⁷

⁴² Muhammad Estelami, *Sharh-e Mathnawi-e Mowlana [Commentary of the Mathnawi]*, (Tehran, Sokhan, 1996), in 7 volume.

⁴³ Olduz Tufani, Farvak, "Muhammad Estelami's commentary on the *Mathnawi*" <<http://farvak.persianblog.ir/post/37/>> (accessed 10 March 2013).

⁴⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), is an Iranian author and a prominent Islamic philosopher.

⁴⁵ b. 1943.

⁴⁶ b.1950

⁴⁷ James Bockmier, "Rumi: Teachings by Seyyed Gahreman Safavi," *Philosophy East & West*, vol. 60, no. 4 (October 2010):551.

Safavi also authored a book titled, *Rumi's Mystical Design; Reading the Mathnawi*⁴⁸, in which he adopts a philosophical approach to the text and contends that its language is symbolic rather than allegorical. In symbolic language one word may have several meanings and it is upon the interpreter to use the context to guess the sense the author has had in mind. Safavi says three theories, namely structuralism, hermeneutics and semantics have been used in his book. Although, in theory structuralism and hermeneutics run counter to each other, Safavi has applied both of them in this book which takes a critical look at past approaches and presents a new model to interpret *Mathnawi*. The new approach, which is accompanied by 16 charts, has been embraced by some prominent *Mathnawi* researchers.⁴⁹

*Tohfe-haye an Jahani [Otherworldly Gifts]*⁵⁰ by Ali Dehbashi examines the life and works of Mowlana Jalal al-Din Rumi. The book is in fact a collection of articles written by those who have conducted research about Mowlana. The first part is a biography of Mowlana in the words of Helmut Ritter, Badi al-Zaman Foruzanfar, Zarrinkoub, Abdulbqi Golpinarli⁵¹, and a host of other thinkers. The second part that challenges Mowlana's worldview and his line of thinking includes articles by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Abdolkarim Soroush⁵² among others. The third part analyses and critiques *Mathnawi* and includes articles penned by Afzal Iqbal⁵³ and Karim Zamani⁵⁴.

⁴⁸ Seyyed Ghahreman Safavi, Simon Weightman, *Rumi's Mystical Design Reading the Mathnawi*, Book One, (New York: Suny press, 2009).

⁴⁹ Mehrnoush Sadat-e Alavi, "The Structure of Rumi's *Mathnawi* by Seyyed Ghahreman Safavi," *London Academy of Iranian Studies*, < <http://iranianstudies.org/fa/> > (accessed 10 January, 2013).

⁵⁰ Ali Dehbashi, *Tohfe-haye an Jahani [Otherworldly Gifts]*, (Tehran: Sokhan, 2003).

⁵¹ d.1960.

⁵² Abdolkarim Soroush (b.1966) is an Iranian thinker, reformer and Rumi scholar.

⁵³ 1919-1994.

⁵⁴ b.1951.