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## INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF MOWLAVI'S MASNAVI GNOSTIC DISCOURSE ON MASNAVI-E-TAGHDIS

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### ABSTRACT

Mowlavi, a pious scholar and popular Gnostic, recited Masnavi Ma'anavi which is considered a documented anecdote and constantly-reiterating narration. Haji Molla Ahmad Naraghi is a Gnostic scholar who drinks from Mowlana's Masnavi watering trough and he himself becomes the creator of a prominent and outstanding work named "Taghdis", equivalent in English to "anticline" through every sip taken thereof. The author of the current research paper intends to display a schematic view of Masnavi thence to exhibit a manifestation of Mowlavi's work effect on Naraghi. The present study takes advantage of a descriptive-analytical research method. The required information has been gathered through referring to libraries and taking notes.

**Keywords:** *Mowlavi, Naraghi, Taghdis, human being, love*

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### Introduction

Masnavi is an important and elegant poetical format and it is the place where Gnosticism is manifested in Persian poetry and it is an all-inclusive container of the entire array of Gnostic and mystic concepts; such an appropriate poetical format provides an individual with an opportunity to express one's spiritual and Gnostic thoughts, beliefs and intentions. Certainly, Mowlana Jalal Al-Din Muhammad's spiritual couplet poems, better known as Masnavi Ma'anavi are the masterpieces of the Gnostic couplets enjoying an eternity among the other poems of the same kind and the excellent examples of Gnostic thoughts and excellent human thoughts have become known as "Masnavi"; Gnostic recitation of the couplet poems has also been carried on after Mowlavi, is still going on and there are numerous cases of such types of couplet poems some of which are printed and some others are still left in the format of manuscripts.

One of these valuable works is the Couplet Poems called "Masnavi-e-Taghdis" authored by the great scholar Molla Ahmad Naraghi. We are required to approach the works and the writings by the elders and famous writers and poets from every aspect. If dealing with the works authored by the great elders is performed for the purpose of making use of their accomplishments and their works and investigating and surveying them so as to continue their way and supplement their works, it would be a lot more useful and considered a sort of perfection and scientific promotion. Such invaluable works can pave the road for the contemporary human beings in his confrontation with the problems that have currently taken a firm grip of the mankind. The today's world features characteristics that distinguish it from the past epochs; such issues as hasty growth of the industry and technology, mechanization of the humans' life and the expansion of instrumental looks at them, the marvelous progresses in information instruments and the advent of network world, the creation of substantial changes and evolutions in social relations, the widespread development of the doubts and the challenging of the values and traditional beliefs as well as social, ethical and political crises and other issues of the like, have all caused the emergence of psychological and physical confusion and tiredness in the mankind.

One of the effective means that can be used by the today's humans to get out of the maze is paying attention to spiritual and Gnostic issues and the Islamic Gnosticism, as a dynamic and constructive school, offers fruitful teachings for the wandering

contemporary human being so as to tear down the boundaries of years and centuries and reach to a tranquility, diversity, affection and ethics that will, eventually, set him free of the need to resort to false Gnosticism.

Therefore, it is necessary to familiarize the today's societies with their Gnostic works and teachings so as to make the today's mankind acquainted with these miraculous utterances.

Based thereupon, the author of the current research paper thinks it is necessary to popularize, even with this small and trivial step, such a Gnostic work as "Masnavi-e-Taghdis" and provide the society members with a chance to get the most out of such a priceless work.

#### **Molla Ahmad Naraghi's Biography:**

Haji Molla Ahmad Naraghi and his father Haji Molla Muhammad Mahdi Naraghi are among the brilliant knowledge and spirituality faces who lived during the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> hegira century to 13<sup>th</sup> hegira century. He was born in Naragh and was reared under the shadow of his great father who was also his master. After a while, he set out on a trip to the holy shrines and attended the classes by the late Sayyed Mahdi Bahr Al-Olum and Sheikh Ja'afar Kashif Al-Qita'a and Muhammad Baqer Behbahani. Then, he returned to Naragh and became the great leader of the society after the demise of his father and the people from every corner of the region turned to him [1, 2].

He lived at the same time with the governorship of Fath Ali Shah Qajar who from the very beginning of his ruling made efforts through decorating and repairing the shrine and building mosques to be seen a virtuous king by the religious scholars and clergymen; he did his best to win their support by any possible means so as to influence them, thus he used to vest them with the governmental missions and tenures. This was the cause for the establishment of a relative peace between the rebels and the Khans with the government.

Qajar king, who had heard the news of Molla Ahmad Naraghi's fame and popularity among the people, found himself no way but to enter the door of friendship with this divine Gnostic individual and scholar to save his throne and attract the general public's attention, so he took several steps in doing so:

- 1) Building a big school in Kashan for the education and settlement of the seminarians of Naragh's Seminary
- 2) Following the lead of Molla Ahmad Naraghi in the secondary religious issues as his source of religious knowledge and asking him for writing a king-specific treatise which was authored by Fazel Naraghi under the title of "Wasila Al-Nijah" in two volumes on the canonical obligations and was offered to the king as a gift. Also, the book "Jame'e Al-Sa'adat", written by Allameh Naraghi, his great father, was translated to and written in eloquent and literary Persian and given the name "Me'eraj Al-Sa'adah" by him upon the Qajar King's request and was gifted to the emperor of China [2]

This great scholar did not have a governmental office so he did not use any political means at hand to remove the society's problems and, for the same reason, he proposed the jurisprudents' guardianship topics to the religious sciences pupils in a very specialized manner. As a jurisprudent and an exegete following Usuli religion and having a full understanding of the then needs, in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> hegira century, he is enumerated as the first jurisprudent who dedicates an independent discussion to the topic "jurisprudents' guardianship" for the first time in Shiite jurisprudence in the book "Ava'ed Al-Ayyam"

Naraghi has authored many works on jurisprudence and principles. "Khaza'en", "Ma'arej Al-Sa'adah", "Ava'ed Al-Ayyam" and "Masnavi-e-Taghdis" are among his works.

After a great many of scientific and political struggles (providing responses to the uncertainties of Christianity and taking part in the war against Tsar Russia), Molla Ahmad Naraghi died in 1823 in Naragh Village by an epidemic cholera and his body was transferred to Najaf-e-Ashraf where it was buried in the Holy Shrine of His Highness Ali (peace be upon him) [3].

#### **A Glance at Masnavi-e-Ma'anavi and Masnavi-e-Taghdis:**

The majority of the works, wherein there is a name of Molla Ahmad Naraghi cited, point to the idea that he has been a poet and his specialty has been "Safa'ee" poetry style. It is explicitly mentioned in such works that Molla Ahmad Naraghi has left behind a memento, a poetry book called "Masnavi-e-Taghdis" [4,5,6]

His poetry book contains ethical poems bearing Gnostic and spiritual advises and it is replete with wise and ethical mottoes and notifications amalgamated with literary elegance and delicacy and ornamented with the language of poetry to express a great many of the divine verdicts and orders and present chapters on the undoubted religion of Islam's fundamental as well as ancillary principles and tenets in simplified wording understandable and comprehensible to the elites and general public.

The contents of the book reveal to the human beings, in eloquent verbal expressions and a sweet tone, the road through the universe scenes towards felicity and eternal bliss.

This numinous scholar has been inspired by Mowlana Jalal Al-Din Muhammad Balkhi in reciting his everlasting work "Taghdis" in such a manner that his meter and rhythm of the poems are completely drawn after Mowlavi's style. The couplet poems recited by him follow the meter of "shortened sextuple poetical segments" rhyming with "Fa'elaton, Fa'elaton, Fa'elat (Fa'elon)" and there is made allusive use of Holy Quran's AYAT and Prophetic Ahadith and Immaculate Imams' Narratives. Like Mowlavi, he moulds his poems within the format of poetical expressions in a way that one can dare to say that some of the verses in his Masnavi, as cited by some elders of the poetry and literature like Adib Nayshabouri, are mistaken with the poems recited in Masnavi-e-Ma'anavi by Mowlavi and they are occasionally wrongfully attributed to Mowlavi (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 11).

An example of such couplets is the following in which "Majnoon warns the phlebotomist lest the lancet hits Layli's body" on the second platform:

"That phlebotomist came and sat beside him, took out a lancet and tightened his arm"

"Bleeding from both of the eyes, Majnoon said on which vein do you want to perform phlebotomy?"

"Phlebotomist said: from this vein. He said it is full of Layli, this vein of mine is full of gem and pearl"

"How does this vein deserve to be cut by a blade, may Majnoon's life be sacrificed for Layli"

"The phlebotomist said then I will cut the other vein so as to make you relieved of pain and suffering"

"Majnoon said that is as well the place where my Layla resides; it is the domicile of that high cedar of mine" (Ibid, 186).

In this beautiful couplet poems, the realities and the events of the daily life of a human is embodied in the format of nice stories and pleasurable anecdotes in such a way that they, as illuminating guides, favorably influence the readers, willy-nilly, by the informative topics introduced therein.

Masnavi-e-Taghdis opens with a verse in which the poet invites the readers to hear a true story and unlike the common methods of starting benediction poems, with no part being devoted to such subjects as introduction and with no words bearing the God's extolment and praising the great Apostle (May Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards), he directly jumps to Gnostic remarks; meaning that the first verses in Taghdis are the verses opening a story in which the poet has dealt with the philosophy of mankind creation and his relations with the Creator. Such a method of opening a poetry book is unprecedented except in Masnavi-e-Ma'navi; such a feature can be used as a clue to figure out Taghdis's real nature and the poet's poetical strategy.

"O' friends, hark this story; hear this story of the truthful individuals" (Ibid, 27)

And, in the first story of Masnavi-e-Mowlavi:

"O' friends listen to this story which is per se a truth narrating our states" (Masnavi, book 1, part: 35)

As it was mentioned, Taghdis, like many Gnostic books, is replete with short and long stories from every corner of which a connotation and an insight can be perceived. So, it not only resembles Masnavi in such a trait but it also is similar to Masnavi in the way it embeds stories within stories and this has rendered Taghdis similar to Masnavi. Naraghi, as well, like Mowlavi, appropriately begins another narration while the other one is not yet finished and sometimes for the lengthening of a secondary narration he warns himself that the reader is waiting to hear the rest of the primary story.

"Lo. Safa'ee! Leave this talk because the audience is waiting" (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 17).

Another clear and important similarity of Taghdis to Masnavi is the way both poems conclude narrations. Unlike his predecessors and even his later coming poets, Mowlavi does not wait for ending the narration to conclude and to express a comment and he retells any conclusion, result and remark anywhere in the story that it dawns on him and seizes the time. Naraghi, as well, posits every informative point that strikes his live and awake mind anywhere in the poem; however, general and pervasive conclusions are also handed over to the reader at the end of poetical narrations.

Except for what was said so far, the general and artistic structure of Taghdis is very much similar to the format and the motifs used in Masnavi. Taghdis is not divided into meaningful sections featuring clear-cut boundaries the way it is in Masnavi. In the point where the first platform ends, there is no sign of termination. Afterwards, the topics are introduced under the title of "the second platform" but backgrounds and introductions signaling the beginnings and the finishes are missing; however, Masnavi and Taghdis differ in that separate parts in Masnavi are called "Book" and the same exemplary partitioning sections are given the name of "platform" in Taghdis.

Another point that can be commented herein is that the first platform in Taghdis has been ended for the same reason or excuse with which the first book in Masnavi is terminated; In the ending part of the first book, Mowlavi speaks of an internal barrier that restrains him from putting forth an idea; it is not clear what has come about but clearly Mowlavi finishes his speech all of a sudden and uses the adjective "covered with soil" to describes his utterance:

"Intensely soiled utterances come to my mind, the water has become blur, cap the top of the well"

"The captain will again make it clear and pleasant; he will also purify the one who has blurred the water"

"Patience will make your wish come true not hurry, wait because only God knows the one who does good" (Masnavi, Book One, from part 4001 on)

This way, the first book is ended and the second book begins with an excuse for the delay:

"This Masnavi was delayed for a while, a respite is required for the blood to be turned into milk" (Ibid, Book 2, part: 1)

Quite similarly, Naraghi finishes Taghdis with the same form and manner:

"O', friends my mind is depressed, the rosary of my temperament is now withered"

"My story has not come to an end; a platform of my Taghdis has reached its termination ..."

"I wait till a message comes from the king declaring to me that arrange another platform Lo! The king of the time..."

"I wait till a message comes out of this dear of the world, who is visible like a body and hidden like a soul" (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 178)

And, the second platform starts as stated below:

"I sealed my lips for a while then I learnt words from my king"

"It was a while that I, like a milk feeding child, was dumb and silent and all ear"

“Till the time my tongue was opened by the grace of that king, so it began speaking extolling the king” (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 181)

The remaining verses are completely bearing the moods of the opening verses recited in Masnavi's books. Regarding the literary value of Taghdis, it only suffices to say that there are a lot of distinctions can be made between the good and the bad poems. Some of the verses are at the apex of eloquence and beauty and there are also weak poems found their way therein.

Fazel Naraghi speaks about his policy of verbiage in several places in Taghdis: somewhere, like Mowlavi, he says he does not deserve thinking about the rhyme and contemplating over the rhythm and metre and sees himself in a private place to where there is no room for speech and expresses his lack of knowledge regarding his poetry-reciting faculty and finds himself in a place where there is no room for articulation and asks his own poetical taste to “speechlessly speak about the beloved ones” because “the beloved ones cannot be contained in words and rhythm” [7].

“I called you a ditch because rhymes are scarce otherwise I would have called you Nile or Oxus”

“If the rhymes were not rare for us, we could have called you the crystal clear spring” (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 52)

In the writing style adopted by Naraghi, the narrations and the ancillary parts are segmented due to the lengthiness of the materials and the informative and advisory subjects and worship poems recited as pleadings to the court of the Eminent God are embedded in between; all his poems in Masnavi-e-Taghdis revolve about the single pivot of theology and monotheism. He, like Mowlavi, has not only stepped on this oasis in terms of his Masnavi's apparent structure and form but also in regard of the Gnostic principles and concepts introduced by him and the verses are sometimes found quite close to Masnavi from the perspective of their appearance as well as their Gnostic standpoint.

Molla Ahmad Naraghi has well understood that the best way to recognize mankind is through the gates of love and he sees everything as being born from the leaven of affection and he, like Mowlavi, believes that the leg of reason and proof and wisdom is broken and maimed when it comes to love:

“The leg of reasoning is made of wood, the wooden leg cannot be relied on” (Masnavi, Book 1, part: 2128)

“He broke the leg of reasoning and proof and dodged the languid lasso of reasoning”

“The leg of the proof and reason is zapped, the substantiation is per se weak and infirm and disabled” (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 191)

Naraghi learns the influence of love from Mowlana: “the fascination of love in the entire universe from the elements to compounds is bilateral”. Like Mowlavi, he believes that no lover is wishful for unification of a beloved who is not genuinely seeking for him.

“No lover can reach the unification with a beloved who is not seeking for him” (Masnavi, Book 3, part: 4393)

Quite the same way that Mowlavi speaks of love in “Noble Masnavi”:

“He whose garment is torn up by the love will be purified from greed and all the blots”

“Be happy! O' the good trader love, O', the healer of all our diseases”

“O', you are the medicine to all our haughtiness and honor, o', you are our Plato and Galen”

“The earthy body ascended to the heavens because of love, the mountain started dancing and became agile” (Masnavi, Book 1, part: 22)

And, Safa'ee Naraghi writes as below:

“Wherever there is a pain and suffering and hardship, love is both its physician and its medicine”

“I swear to the God that Galen and Plato's love has been well beyond every other one's”

“Love is the money changer of one's cash of soul; love is both Islam and faith” (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 183)

“The universe's rotating wheel became rapturous and began dancing; the plains and the deserts became the banquet place of the elites of the specials”

“The mountain became jocund and agile; the soil was changed and turned to skies” (Ibid, 258)

In the journey of love, the wayfarer attains autognosis and theology and the sparkle of zeal and verve appear in his heart. The wayfarer's stepping on the path reveals his gusto and in his every step he freely streamlines towards the beloved:

“Like a hunter, he set out on a trip towards the certainty; he saw the foot traces of the deer and got aware of the cause”

“The deer's steps suffice him for a while, after that the deer's navel leads him” (Masnavi, Book 2, part: 161-162)

And, Naraghi also believes that:

“The road to the city of universe guides one to the kingdom of survival, the leg for stepping on this road is enthusiasm and the roadster is one's determination”

“The wayfarer stepping on this path does not need legs; the envoy moving in this direction is composed of the agile unburdened wayfarers” (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 82)

Although the ways of taking steps towards the beloved are different they are indeed one and their teachings are one:

“That is because the praised one is just one; the creeds are all one for the same reason” (Masnavi, Book 3, Part: 2124)

And, it is stated in Masnavi-e-Taghdis that:

“It was ordered this way by that person of knowledge about the Righteous One that the roads to the God are the same number as the quantity of human beings”

“The roads are many but the destination is one, the roads all lead to one place” (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 206)

Naraghi, also, believes like Mowlavi that the entire barriers on the way to arrive at the optimum and the intended one should be removed then one can easily reach to his beloved. The main barrier on this path is the human's ego and the wayfarer can achieve voluntary death that is the same pure and clean life as soon as he succeeds in taking over his ego and its agents and when the lusts are deserted. This is the way that the lover can reach to a real perfection:

"I killed my earthiness and become famous; then I got rid of fame and reached to the real life"

"I got myself relieved of life and became a human, so I am not afraid because I do not get lost when I die"

"Then, I will get disposed of my manhood, so that I can grow the wings of the angels"

"And, I should also escape out of being an angle because everything perishes except the visage of the God" (Masnavi, Book 3, part: 391)

"O', boy when you killed your earthiness, then you will become alive of the green and wet plants"

"When you once again get rid of the plant life, then you will find life among the mankind"

"When once more you get disposed of the manhood, then you will become alive with thousands of winds and feathers" (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 315)

Such an enchantment and eloquence is derived from what he has learnt from Mowlavi and he has manifested them in the beauty of Safa'ee Poetry. The real love which is the affectionate feeling towards the perfect ones and the elders is experienced by Naraghi in the love for Mowlana that has freed him of hypocrisy and pretension and from whatever the cause that brings about falling down from the high summit of excellent human virtues and eventually purges the soul. Of course, the peak perfection of such a love and its reflection can be observed in his poems in Masnavi-e-Taghdis which is replete with the delicate utterances and secrets of the lovers' states and they all end in the love for His Highness Muhammad (may Allah bestow him and his sacred progeny with the best of His regards) and the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them). This is exactly the idea that is clearly displayed in Mowlavi's Masnavi and that is the Mowlavi's beloved who is a man of the God and his Ka'aba of intention which is the perfect human being. A perfect man, in his idea, is the one about which the world pivots and the skies are rotating by the sacred breaths of him; this perfect man is the tutor of the angles and he is the first divine light that has appeared in the world of beings and it is for his sake that the world is constantly preserved and his type is the most superior and the most magnificent of the creatures [8].

If we consider Mowlavi as the world-brightening sun in his creation of the Gnostic poems, then Molla Ahmad Naraghi should be resembled to the shining moon whose light is the reflection of a stronger and more illuminating source like Mowlavi and who could create a brilliant work like "Masnavi-e-Taghdis".

The similarities between Taghdis and Masnavi Ma'anavi start from the literary type and the poetical metre and they expand to the entire forms of speech and the ways of cognizance; but, the mentioning of such characteristics should not by any means be taken as connoting that he authenticates all Mowlavi's thoughts and considers them for granted or as denoting that he has stepped on the same path that Mowlavi had in such a manner that in some of the verses in "Masnavi-e-Taghdis" it is observed that he criticizes Mowlana and opens lips to the language of poetry as stated below:

"This is wise, O', my spiritual friend; say this to his highness Mowlavi"

"I know that Mowlavi understands the good from the bad and knows the path to the hell and to the heaven"

"He is well aware of the right-doing and wrongdoing, but, in practice, his leg is maimed and languid" (Masnavi-e-Taghdis, 283)

In several cases, Molla Ahmad Naraghi takes a way other than Masnavi's and one such a case is a reference to the Shiite Ahadith and the narratives quoted from the Immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) which are rarely found in Masnavi.

Taghdis is finished the way the religious sermons in Shiite circles are ended to wit by mentioning the calamities of Ahl Al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and, thus, it reflects a vivid difference with the poetry book recited by his master and source of imitation. Molla Ahmad Naraghi turns his last narration in Taghdis to a poetical killing zone that begins by a message brought by Gabriel to the Great Apostle of Islam and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him); and it finishes by His Highness Ali Akbar (peace be upon him)'s request for being dispatched to Jihad.

"Then, descended from the court of esteem the Gabriel who is the proof to the eternal kingdom's convoy"

"After a hundred hails and a hundred salutes, said: O', you whose position is at the vicinity of the One God"

"Gabriel Said: Lo! The just apostle, the God asks Hussein from you" (Ibid, from 417 on)

Another specimen marking the distinction between the paths taken in Taghdis and Masnavi Ma'anavi and the other Gnostic poems is the way they plead their petitions to the God most of which are conjoined with supplication and resorts to the attentions of His Highness the Absent Imam (may our souls be sacrificed for him).

These petitions are accompanied by a lot of mourning and lamentation and there are numerous cases in which the poets have expressed their intolerance and inability and begged for the special attention of the God.

## Conclusion

Although "Masnavi-e-Taghdis" is ranked lower in contrast to Mowlavi's Masnavi in terms of poetical techniques and content innovations but it is per se of a great literary brilliancy in comparison to the couplet poems recited contemporaneous to his era and this is the feature that he owes to his imitation of Mowlavi and the unprecedented Masnavi Ma'anavi's style and method.

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