THE STRUCTURE OF MAHBUB UL-QULUB AND THE ISSUES ADDRESSED IN IT

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Abstract: *This article presents views on the distinctive structure of Alisher Navoi's rare work Mahbub ul-Qulub and the themes of the narratives contained in it. It also emphasizes that such works have not lost their significance even in the present day.*

Keywords: *literature, narrative, parable, structure of the work, hamd (praise of God), na't (praise of the Prophet).*

The great thinker, poet, statesman, literary scholar, and linguist Alisher Navoi made an unparalleled contribution to Turkic literature, linguistics, and historiography. The magnificent works created by Navoi have withstood the test of time and continue to serve as valuable sources for peoples speaking Turkic and Persian languages. Literary scholar Natan Mallayev emphasizes this in his work Alisher Navoi and Folk Creativity:

"Alisher Navoi is one of the great representatives of world literature. He dedicated his entire career and creativity to the struggle for human happiness, to the welfare of the people, to preventing mutual conflicts, to public works, and to the advancement of science, art, and literature."

The work Mahbub ul-Qulub is a culmination of such noble efforts of the great writer and was created in 1500 as a major prose didactic work (pandnoma). In this work, the author reflects on his life from childhood to his

final years, the rich experiences he gained during his long and eventful life, the pains that touched his heart, and the high human virtues he wished to see in his contemporaries. Navoi himself writes about this in the preface of the work:

"The purpose of this preface is that I have roamed every street and neighborhood, conveying myself to people of all sorts, observing the outcomes of good and evil, experiencing the traits of good and bad, and thus both blessings and evils have reached my heart. And some of my friends, unaware of these matters, remain untouched by the effects of good and evil. Therefore, I have composed this work."

The work traditionally begins with hamd—praising the oneness and majesty of God—and na't—praising the noble qualities of the Prophet. The first part of the work consists of 40 chapters, in which the author expresses his thoughts on almost all social classes existing in the society of his time.

In the first part, valuable reflections are presented on the character, behavior, and the roles and duties of these social groups in the development of society. In illustrating these points, Navoi, after providing a prose explanation in each chapter, also turns to poetic lines. The fact that, in the first part alone, there are 7 masnavis, 16 couplets (baits), 3 poems (nazms), 6 rubaiyat, and 7 qitas serves as a clear example of this. These poetic lines play an important role in supporting and reinforcing the author's views.

The ideas expressed in the first part of Mahbub ul-Qulub are the culmination of Navoi's lifelong observations. They call for goodness, virtue, patriotism, conscientious fulfillment of each social group's duties, constant awareness of surrounding events, and the maintenance of public peace. As Navoi scholar Suyima G'aniyeva rightly emphasizes:

"Honoring humanity, caring for people, sharing in their suffering, striving to make them happy and prosperous, and rejecting vices contrary to true humanity—these remained the central themes throughout the entire work."

The work contains a total of 13 stories, 11 of which are in the second part and 2 in the third part. These stories feature figures such as Sufis, sheikhs, rulers, traditional archetypes, and representatives of various social groups. The stories narrate events related to certain mystical sheikhs, as well as rulers and kings, and their life journeys. The chapters and stories of the work are structured as follows:

1. Chapter One: "On Repentance (Tawba Zikrida)" – This chapter explains the essence of repentance. It includes a story about Sheikh Abdullah Mubarak.

2. Chapter Two: "On Asceticism (Zuhd Zikrida)" – Asceticism means renouncing worldly pleasures and dedicating oneself to worship and the path of God. To illustrate this, Navoi includes the story of Mawlana Shamsuddin Mu'iddi Ucha.

3. Chapter Three: "On Trust in God (Tawakkul Zikrida)" – "Tawakkul is considering all good and bad events as coming from God and relying wholeheartedly on the Creator. Tawakkul is the faith of a person endowed with divine grace; it is the highest station of faith attained through the perfection of knowledge." Following this chapter, the story of Ibrahim Adham dedicated to Sheikh Ibrahim Sitnaba from among the Companions is included.

4. Chapter Four: "On Contentment (Qana'at Zikrida)" – Navoi defines contentment as: "Contentment is like a spring whose water never dries, a storehouse that never empties, a seed that produces honor and nobility, and a tree whose fruit brings benefit and respect." The chapter concludes with a story about Sheikh Shah Ziyaratgohi.

5. Chapter Five: On Patience (Sabr) – In the pandnoma, Navoi likens patience to the key to joy, a companion leading to the destination despite tedious conversation, a friend guiding to desire, and a camel that walks slowly but brings one to the resting place. To illustrate the essence of patience, the chapter ends with a story about a lover's patience.

6. Chapter Six: “On Humility and Politeness (Tawazou’ va Adab Zikrida)” – Humility is proper etiquette. Those who possess it earn respect among people, avoid disrespect, and are protected from ridicule and oppression. Through good manners, elders are honored, and the young are respected. A society with humble and well-mannered people sees increased love and harmony. This chapter includes the story of the negligent Mudbir, and the noble and polite Muqbil.

7. Chapter Seven: On Remembrance (Zikr) – Navoi defines zikr as: “Remembrance is the eagerness of the heart to recall God, and speech directed with devotion. Some call it obedience of the tongue and engagement of the heart.” Navoi illustrates his ideas through the story of Mansur Hallaj.

8. Chapter Eight: “On Attention (Tavajjuh Zikrida)” – Attention (tavajjuh) is turning entirely, outwardly and inwardly, toward God. In Navoi’s lexicon, it means “taking a direction, facing, proceeding toward one side.” The work describes it as: “If arrows strike the face during attention, one should not close their eyes; if one eye is incapacitated, the other should be moved forward.”

9. Chapter Nine: “On Contentment with Divine Will (Rizo Zikrida)” – Rizo is the stage following tawakkul in Sufism, where the seeker frees themselves from their own desires and accepts whatever God wills. “Rizo is when a servant leaves their own will and enters into the will of the Beloved, without objection to divine destiny. At this stage, the seeker experiences no anger, agitation, resentment, or grief.”

10. Chapter Ten: On Love (Ishq) – In this chapter, the author divides love into three parts:

1. Love of the Common People (Avom) – This type of love reaches its highest peak when it culminates in a lawful (shar‘i) marriage.

2. Love of the Elite (Xoslar) – This is the love of select individuals. The aim of this group is: “to set the pure gaze upon the pure face, to awaken the

heart through the sight of that pure face, and through this pure medium, to experience the true beauty of the beloved." To illustrate these ideas, Navoi includes the story of Majnun's love.

3. Love of the Truly Devout (Siddiqlar) – This refers to the love of highly devoted people. The story of Sheikh Abu Said Kharraz is included to exemplify this type of love.

In this part, the work contains 1 masnavi, 3 qitas, 4 rubaiyat, and 14 couplets (baits).

The third part of Mahbub ul-Qulub is entitled Mutafarriqa Favoid va Amsol Surati ("Various Useful Advice and Proverbs"). This section contains proverbs and wise sayings on various topics. In this chapter, the author makes effective use of admonitions (tanbehs) while giving practical advice, moral guidance, and wisdom. Specifically, 127 admonitions are included in this section. To illustrate these ideas, the section also contains 57 couplets, 19 qitas, 12 masnavis, 8 rubaiyat, and 2 nazms.

This part includes 2 stories: one about Sheikh Bayazid Bastami and his disciple, and another about Harun al-Rashid.

• In the 107th admonition, the relationship between a spiritual master (pir) and disciple (murshid) is discussed, and the story of Sheikh Bayazid Bastami and his disciple is recounted.

• The 13th story concerns Harun al-Rashid and Sheikh Bahlul. Navoi uses a conversation between Harun al-Rashid and Sheikh Bahlul as an example in the chapter on gratitude and contentment.

Overall, the pandnama contains 22 masnavis, 19 rubaiyat, 88 couplets, 29 qitas, and 5 nazms.

Every poetic passage, couplet, qita, admonition, wise saying, and story in Mahbub ul-Qulub is based on real-life examples, which remain popular among the people to this day. The proverbs included in the work reflect

centuries of accumulated experience of the Uzbek people, embodying their wisdom, aspirations, and reflections.

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