

Book Review



Niṣāb-i Mawlawī: Guzīda-hā-yi Ismāʿīl Anqarawī az Mathnawī (The Essence of Rumi: Selections of the *Mathnawī* by Ismāʿīl Anqarawī). Edited with introduction, annotations, and notes by Maḥmūd-Riḍā Isfandiyār (Mahmoodreza Esfandiar). Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmat 1394 A.Hsh./2014, 258 pages.

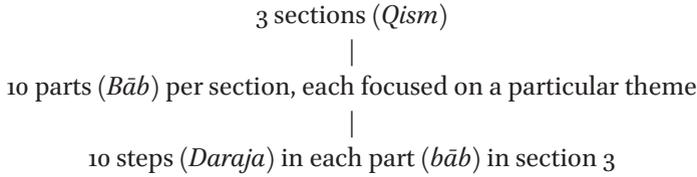
Niṣāb-i Mawlawī is a remarkable selection of extracts from Rumi's *Mathnawī* compiled by Rusūkh al-Dīn Ismāʿīl Anqarawī (d. 1041/1631), renowned as the 'Grand Commentator' (*Ḥaḍrat-i shāriḥ*), because his commentary on Rūmī's *Mathnawī* was celebrated and popular amongst members of the Mevlevi Order.¹ Anqarawī composed the *Niṣāb* in the Persian language in 1041/1631 (the last year of his life) at the request of Shaykh Yaḥyā Afandī (Effendi, d. 1053/1643).

Mahmoodreza Esfandiar (Maḥmūd-Riḍā Isfandiyār) provides us with this annotated edition of Anqarawī's *Niṣāb-i Mawlawī*, accompanied by an elaborate introduction (pp. 9–33). Anqarawī arranged the book in three main *qism*, or sections, namely: *Ādāb-i ṭarīqat* (Manners of the Sufi Path, pp. 35–89), *Ādāb-i sharīʿat* (Manners of the Legal Path, or Islamic Law; pp. 91–130), and *Ādāb-i maʿrifat wa ḥaqīqat* (Manners of Experiential Knowledge and Truth; pp. 131–257). Each of these *qisms* is, in turn, sub-divided into ten *bāb*, or parts, and in every *bāb* the description provided is based on a specific theme, followed by verses selected from the different books of the *Mathnawī* in illustration of the particular theme.

In the third *qism*, titled *Ādāb-i maʿrifat wa ḥaqīqat*, each *bāb* further contains ten *daraja*, steps or degrees, , thus tracing a path of one hundred steps

1 As explained on page 20 of the work under review. See also Eliza Tasbihi, 'The Mevlevi Sufi Shaykh Ismāʿīl Rusūkhī Anqarawī (d. 1631) and his Commentary on Rūmī's *Mathnawī*', *Mawlana Rumi Review* VI (2015), pp. 163–82; and the critical edition and translation of Anqarawī's Arabic commentary on the preface of Book I of the *Mathnawī* by Bilal Kuşpınar (ed. and trans.), 'Spiritual Nourishment for the People of Certainty: Commentary by Ismāʿīl al-Anqarawī on the Preface to Book I of the *Mathnawī* by Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī', *Mawlana Rumi Review* VII (2016), pp. 13–91 – Ed.]

as one proceeds through the entire *qism*. These steps, which are about self-realization, begin with the expression *yaqza* (awakening) and end with *tawhīd* (oneness with God). The organization of Anqarawī's commentary can thus be diagrammed as follows:



Anqarawī categorizes the basic discussions of the *Mathnawī* on the basis of Kh^wāja ‘Abdullāh Anṣārī's (d. 481/1089) *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (Waystations of the Wayfarers) and ‘Izz al-Dīn Mahmūd Kāshānī's (d. 734/1334) Persian manual of Sufi doctrine, *Misbāḥ al-hidāya* (Lamp of Guidance). Esfandiar shows that the division of topics of both the first and the second Section (*qism*) of the *Nisāb* are very similar to the chapter headings of Kāshānī's *Misbāḥ al-hidāya*, insofar as Anqarawī on various occasions quotes verbatim the topics that appear in the *Misbāḥ*. However, the topics and themes of Anqarawī's third Section are to a great extent similar to the *qisms* and *bābs* of Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sā'irīn* (pp. 24–25).

At the beginning of each *bāb* Anqarawī gives a brief description of relevant Qur'ānic verses, *aḥādīth* (Hadith of the Prophet), and Sufi sayings. He concludes each part with verses of Rumi's *Mathnawī* that are relevant to the discussions broached at the beginning of each *bāb*. Typically, he quotes more than fifteen verses from the *Mathnawī*, gathering and rearranging these verse selections from various places in the six books of the *Mathnawī*, as the overall theme of the discussion warrants.

Esfandiar claims that the lack of fluency in Anqarawī's Persian prose in the *Nisāb* (in contrast to the lines of verse which he quotes) shows that perhaps Anqarawī was not fully in command of the Persian language after all. Esfandiar notes that ‘in most of his writings, sentences are unclear’, while those phrases that are in fluently comprehensible Persian are for the most part borrowed directly from Persian mystical works such as the *Misbāḥ al-hidāya* with little modification (p. 25).

In compiling his critical edition of the text, Esfandiar used two manuscripts and one lithograph edition of Anqarawī's *Nisāb*. The first manuscript is preserved in the Central Library of the University of Tehran (Ms. T, No. 6532), dated 17 Ṣafar 1234 (16 December 1818), and appears to be the oldest of the three. Apparently this copy was in the possession of Sa'īd Nafīsī before being transferred to the Tehran University Library. The second manuscript is from

the Malik Library collection in Tehran (Ms. M, No. 4848), dated 14 Dhī'l-Qa'da 1259 (6 December 1843), while the third text used is a lithograph edition (*chāp-i sangī*), given the siglum Ms. B, published in Bombay in 1309 AH (1891).

Esfandiar's method in compiling his critical edition of the *Niṣāb* involved a comparison of the two manuscripts along with the lithograph text, with the oldest manuscript figuring as the principle copy text. Regarding references to the verses of the *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī*, he uses the Konya manuscript's verse numbering along with the book number (for example, 6/1440 = Book VI, verse 1440). For verses that could not be found in the Konya manuscript he cites the edition by Kulāla-yi Khāvar using the siglum خ. On rare occasions when the quoted verses could neither be found in the Konya manuscript nor in the Kulāla-yi Khāvar edition, they are listed under the rubric 'the forged seventh Book of the *Mathnawī*' (دقتر جعلی هفتم مشنوی), identified with the siglum ج to distinguish them from others.

In the comprehensive introduction, the editor familiarizes the reader with the importance of the *Mathnawī* in a brief but useful way. He also briefly introduces Anqarawī's personality and contributions as a man of letters, and provides a historical account of his joining the Mevlevi Order. Towards the end of his introduction, Esfandiar introduces the various manuscripts of the *Niṣāb-i Mawlawī*, before finally elaborating the method that he has adopted for his annotated critical edition, followed by a list of the Persian and Turkish sources he consulted.

1 An Overview of Anqarawī's *Niṣāb*

The *Niṣāb* begins with the traditional praise of God, followed by a commendation of the Seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad, and then some lines in praise of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī. The date of composition of the text comes next, followed by a mention of the request of Shaykh Yaḥyā Afandī to compose the volume. Anqarawī then provides the book's Table of Contents and introduces his work in three *qisms* based on the organization of the *Ṭarīqat-nāma*, another work by Anqarawī.

The first *qism*, entitled *Ādāb-i ṭarīqat* (Manners of the Sufi Path), is divided into the following ten *bābs*:

- 1.1 'On the Essential Nature of the *Mawlawī* (Mevlevi) *Ṭarīqa*' (ماهیت طریقت (مولوی)
- 1.2 'On the State of the Vicegerent and Vicegerentship' (در احوال خلیفه و خلافت)
- 1.3 'On the Esteemed Rank of Shaykhhood and That of the Perfect Master' (در رتبه مشیخت و مرتبه شیخ کامل)

- 1.4 'On the Necessity of Having a Living Guide, and the Harmfulness of Pursuing the Path without a Guide' (راه بی مرشد رفتن در لزوم مرشد زنده و موجب ضرر شدن)
- 1.5 'On the Self-surrender of the Seeker of the Truth to the Master' (تسلیمیت سالک به شیخ خود)
- 1.6 'On the Virtues of the Faqirs Sequestered in the Khānaqāh, and Their States of Spiritual Felicity' (ایشان در فضایل فقراء خانقاه نشین و احوال سعادت قرین)
- 1.7 'On the Excellence of the Outer Journey, and the Passages of the Inner Journey' (در فضیلت سفر ظاهراً و سیر و گذر باطناً)
- 1.8 'On the Prerequisites of Travelling, on the Spiritual States of One's Fellow Companions, and on the Purpose of Travelling' (در لوازم سفر و احوال مصابا (حب و هم نشین و مقصود از سفر و سیاحت)
- 1.9 'On the Mysteries of *Samā'* and Purity, and the Origins of Sound and Voice' (در اسرار سماع و صفا و اصل صوت و صدا)
- 1.10 'On the Mysteries of Dance, Whirling, Ecstasy, and the Spiritual States of Lovers' (در اسرار رقص و دوران و وجد و حال عاشقان)
- The second *qism*, which is devoted to *Ādāb-i Sharī'at* (Manners of the Legal Path, or Islamic Law), is divided into the following ten *bābs*:
- 2.1 'On Faith, Devotional Obedience, and the Abandonment of Sensual Desire and Sin' (در ایمان و طاعت و ترک هوا و معصیت)
- 2.2 'On the Excellence of the Word *Tawhīd*, the Supreme Name of God, and the Name *Hū'*' (در فضایل کلمه توحید و اسم جلاله و اسم هو)
- 2.3 'On Outward and Inward Purity, and the Mysteries of the Holy Virtue' (در طهارت ظاهر و باطن و اسرار فضایل او)
- 2.4 'On the Virtues of Ritual Prayer, and the Prayers of Those Brought Nigh unto God' (در فضایل صلوات و صلوات مقربین)
- 2.5 'On the Virtues of Almsgiving, Charity, and Generosity' (در فضایل زکات و صدقه و سخاوت)
- 2.6 'On the Virtues of Fasting and Hunger, and Eating Permissible Morsels' (در فضایل صوم و گرسنگی و لقمه حلال خوردن)
- 2.7 'On the Form and Meaning of Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)' (در صورت و معنی حج)
- 2.8 'On the Status of Being a Bachelor, on Marriage and Its Conditions, and on Intimate Association with Women' (در مجرد، تزویج و احوال نکا (ح و حسن معاشرت نساء)
- 2.9 'On the States of Earning a Livelihood, Reproaching the Vice of Begging, and Praise of Lawful Work in [the Way of] Faith and Obedience' (در احوال (اکتساب و مذمت سوال و مدحت کسب دین و طاعت کردن)

- 2.10 'On the Virtue of Hard Work and Effort, and [the Outer and Inner] Spiritual Struggle' (در فضیلت سعی و کوشش را و مجاهده و مجاهد) .
The third *qism*, which is named *Ādāb-i ma'rifat wa haqīqat* (Manners of Experiential Knowledge and the Truth) includes ten *bābs*, each divided into ten *daraja*, as follows:
- 3.1 'On the Initial Steps of the Path' (در درجاتی که در بدایت سلوک واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *yaqza* (awakening), *tawba* (repentance), *zārī va girya* (lamentation and weeping), *inābat* (turning in repentance towards God), *muḥāsiba* (self-examination), *tafakkur* (contemplation), *dhikr* (remembrance/invocation), *i'tiṣām* (holding tight [to the divine rope]), *khumūl* (humble anonymity), and *farār* (flight [from worldliness]).
- 3.2 'On the Stages That Are Identified with the Gates of the Path' (در درجاتی که در منزله ابواب سلوک واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *khalwat* (seclusion), *'uzlat* (retreat), *rīyādat* (ascetic discipline), *ḥuzn* (sorrow), *khawf* (fear), *rajā* (hope), *khudū'* (humility), *zuhd* (abstinence), *taqwā* (piety), and *wara'* (moral scrupulousness).
- 3.3 'On the Stages of the Sufi Wayfarers' (در درجاتی که در میان اهل سلوک واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *tabattul* (ascetic detachment), *'ibādat* (worship), *ḥurriyat* (spiritual liberation), *murāqaba* (contemplative vigilance), *ḥurmat va ta'zīm* (reverence and respect), *ikhlas* (sincere devotion), *istiqāmat* (rectitude), *tawakkul* (trust in God), *qanā'at* (contentment), and *taslīm* (submission to God's will).
- 3.4 'An Exposition of Good Manners and Their Various Degrees' (در بیان اخلاق حسنه و درجاتی که در اخلاق واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *khulq* (good disposition), *tawādu'* (humbleness), *ithār* (altruistic sacrifice), *futuwwat* (spiritual chivalry), *ṣidq* (sincerity), *ḥayā* (modesty), *shukr* (thanksgiving), *ṣabr* (patience), *riḍā* (submission to God's pleasure), and *inbisāt* (amiable conviviality).
- 3.5 'The Degrees of the Principal Stage of the Spiritual Journey' (در درجاتی که در ر منزله اصول سلوک واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *qaṣd* (quest), *'azm* (determination), *murīd* (disciple), *murād* (spiritual guide), *adab* (spiritual etiquette), *yaqīn* (certainty), *uns* (intimacy), *taṣawwuf* (Sufism), *faqr* (spiritual poverty), and *ghinā* (richness in heart).
- 3.6 'On the Stages of the Valley of the Spiritual Journey' (در درجاتی که در منزله اودیه سلوک است), including these ten *daraja*: *iḥsān* (doing what is beautiful), *ilm* (knowledge), *ḥikmat* (wisdom), *baṣīrat* (spiritual insight), *farāsat* (clairvoyance), *ilhām* (inspiration), *khawāṭir* (stray thoughts), *ḥazm* (prudence), *himmat* (aspiration), and *qurb* (nearness).

- 3.7 'An Exposition of the Stages of Mystical States and Spiritual Stations' (درجاتی که در احوال و مقامات واقع شده ان را بیان می کند), including these ten *daraja*: the stage of understanding the difference between *ḥāl* (or *aḥwāl*, Mystical States) and *maqām* (Spiritual Stations), *maḥabbat* (kindness), *ʿishq* (love), *shawq* (longing), *dhawq* (experimental taste), *ʿaṭash* (thirst), *ḥaybat* (awe), *ḥayrat* (bewilderment), *qalaq* (agitation), and *ghayrat* (zealousness).
- 3.8 'The Degrees of the Station of Sanctity and Sainthood' (در درجاتی که در مقام ولایت واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *awliyā'* (the saints), *sirr wa ahl-i sirr* (the heart's inner mystery and its adepts), *gharīb* (the stranger), *istighrāgh* (absorption), *maḥw* (obliteration), *waqt* (metaphysical time), *ṣafā* (purity), *surūr* (joy), *talwīn* (alteration), and *tamkīn* (stability).
- 3.9 'The Degrees Encountered in the Stage of Spiritual Realities' (در درجای که در مرتبه حقایق واقع شده), including these ten *daraja*: *mukāshafa* (spiritual disclosure), *mushāhada* (contemplation), *tajallī* (manifestation), *ḥayāt* (life), *qabḍ* (spiritual contraction), *baṣṭ* (spiritual expansion), *sukr* (intoxication), *ṣaḥw* (sobriety), *faṣl* (separation), and *waṣl* (union).
- 3.10 'The Degrees of the Final Stages of the Spiritual Journey' (در درجاتی که در نهایت سلوک واقع شده است), including the final ten *daraja*: *ma'rīfat* (experimental knowledge), *fanā'* (annihilation), *baqā'* (subsistence), *taḥqīq* (realization), *talbīs* (disguise), *wujūd* (existence), *tafrīd* (isolation), *jam'* (congregation), and *tawḥīd* (oneness with God).

Under each *bāb* and its ten *daraja*, Anqarawī presents a selection of verses from the *Mathnawī* to illustrate and explain the stages discussed. Finally, he concludes the work with these few Persian verses of his own composition (p. 258):

لفظ « خاتم » شد بر او تاریخ هم در تمام عمر حسن اختتام آمین ای سربخش ختم المرسلین	چون به ختم آمد وجود این رقم یا الهی تو بده ما را تمام بالنبی الصادق الوعد الامین
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We might translate this as follows:

Since with these words [this book's] existence has concluded, the word
khātam (seal) figures as their chronogram.
 O God, bestow on us a good end and completion all our life long
 For the sake of the true Prophet, whose promise is trustworthy – O You
 Who have selected him as the Seal of the Prophets – Amen!

The corresponding numerical value of the word *khātam* ('the seal') comes to 1041 according to the Abjad values for the letters of the Arabic alphabet, giving us the chronogram for the date of the completion of the manuscript as 1041 AH / 1631 CE.

The publication of Esfandiar's edition of Anqarawī's *Niṣāb* is a valuable contribution to our knowledge and understanding of Rūmī's *Mathnawī*. Having said that, however, the volume could be made more effective with some revision and reorganization. In some parts of the introduction Esfandiar writes in a formal, eloquent style, yet in certain passages his florid language interferes with the clarity of the information. The volume also suffers from poor copy-editing; there is much inconsistency between the Table of Contents and what we find in the book. For example, the subheadings provided in the Table of Contents do not always match the actual subheadings in the book chapters, leading to confusion for the reader. Moreover, the phrasing of the entries is often ambiguous or inaccurate. Careful choice of chapter headings, more editorial oversight, and a complete overhaul of the Table of Contents could improve the work. One hopes that these matters can be remedied in a future printing.

Amir H. Zekrgoo

International Islamic University, Malaysia

ahzekrgoo@gmail.com

Leyla H. Tajer

International Islamic University, Malaysia

leilatajer@gmail.com