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THE INTERPRETATION OF CONTENTMENT IN "MAHBUB-UL QULUB"

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Abstract: *In this article, the author focuses on the definition of contentment (qanoat) in the work Mahbub ul-Qulub and draws attention to the importance of this virtue in human perfection. Through a comparison of patience and haste as expressed in poetic couplets, emphasis is placed on the interpretation of vices as factors leading to the decline of human life. By substantiating patience and knowledge, the author compares their true and mystical (irfāniy) essence with the help of poetic lines.*

Keywords: *prose work, commentaries, love, patience, concepts of contentment, perfection.*

Because Mahbub ul-Qulub was written at the end of Hazrat Navoi's life, it reflects the lessons he drew from life, his conclusions, and his philosophical contemplations. Since the human being belongs to the progeny of mankind, the sources of the darkness and evil within the human psyche are the ego (nafs) and impatience. The degree to which one restrains and controls these vices is unique to each person; as long as one lives, one must struggle against the ego as an eternal enemy. Reflecting on the reasons for writing the book, the poet looks back at the past and emphasizes that whether the future becomes beneficial or futile depends on eliminating arrogance and evil – steps taken toward moral perfection. In Mahbub ul-Qulub, the author underscores

the bitter blows he endured, the pain of losing loved ones, the trials of fame and rank, and the anguish he suffered at the hands of the ignoble:

At times I found myself powerless before fate,
At times I tasted triumph from the age.
I saw much heat and cold in this world,
I tasted much bitterness and sweetness in life.

(Gahe topdim falakda notavonliq,
Gahe ko‘rdim zamondin komronlig‘.
Base issig‘-sovug‘ ko‘rdim zamonda
Base achchig‘-chuchuk totdim jahonda.[1]*)*

The work consists of three parts, each composed of chapters. The first part, entitled “On the State of the People and the Nature of Their Deeds and Words,” contains forty chapters discussing the socio-political conditions and actions of representatives of various social strata. It emphasizes that, above all, a just ruler, a wise and discerning vizier, and citizens who approach their duties with devotion are essential for ensuring political stability and social tranquility. While describing the most beautiful human qualities, the author draws examples from exemplary episodes in the lives of renowned figures appropriate to the context, urging the reader to reach reasoned conclusions. In the fourth chapter, for instance, Navoi devotes special attention to defining the concept of contentment (qanoat). Contentment – controlling the ego and refraining from lust, approaching every event with patience and reason, attaining clarity of heart and brightness of sight – is presented as the sole means of escaping meanness:

The dry bread of a contented dervish is better than the Chinese banquet of a greedy king,
The coarse gruel of a tranquil pauper surpasses the sugary halva of a bribe-taking rich man.
A true king is one who does not take but gives,

[1] Alisher Navoiy. Mahbub-ul qulub. – Toshkent: Yoshlar nashriyot uyi, 2018. – B.5.

A beggar is one who does not scatter wastefully but gathers with restraint.

(Qone' darveshning quruq noni, tome' shohning xitoyi xonidin xo'broqdir,

Va forug'i faqrandeshning yovg'on umochi olg'uchi g'aniyning nabotiy kulochidin marg'ubroq.

Shoh uldurki, olmag'ay va bergay.

Gado uldurkim, sochmag'ay va tergay[1]*.)*

Thus, the dry bread of a contented dervish is superior to the lavish table of a covetous king, and the simple soup of a peaceful poor man is nobler than the ornate sweets of a corrupt wealthy person. A just king does not take bribes but bestows charity. A beggar, meanwhile, does not squander the little he has; rather, he consumes with contentment the sustenance granted by the Creator. A person endowed with such noble ethics is far from two calamities. The first is the baseness of greed, which burns the house of honor and scatters the harvest of dignity – like a wind that extinguishes the lamp of human composure and grandeur. The second is the calamity of miserliness and stinginess. By describing the negative aspects of avarice and praising its opposite – generosity – the author calls on people to govern these vices through good deeds and positive actions, and to help others as true human beings. A miser, bound to material wealth and intent on hoarding it for himself alone, is, in Navoi's view, deprived of spiritual elevation. He defines miserliness thus: *"If a miser hoards what he gains today, tomorrow his grave will be as dark as his present household."* That is, present prosperity and wealth, when accompanied by avarice, lead in the future to the loss of moral honor and spiritual light. By contrast, Navoi presents beneficence (ehson) as a lofty virtue. Beneficence – helping others and doing good – signifies an awareness of social responsibility. He also examines this virtue in connection with sacred sayings, emphasizing that its reward elevates a person not only in worldly terms but also spiritually. In the words **"Hal jazo ul-ehsoni illa-l ehsan"** (Is the recompense for goodness anything but goodness?) he explains, through examples, that responding to good with good has been highly valued in all religious and ethical teachings. Every good deed has its own reward and

[1] O'sha asar. – B.58.

recompense, with significance both in this world and the hereafter. Navoi does not confine beneficence to material assistance alone; he also stresses that guiding others morally and offering selfless counsel constitute beneficence. He considers it important to share not only wealth, but also knowledge, good character, and ethical values. Thus, beneficence is recognized in the work as encompassing not merely material aid, but also spiritual and moral support. Only when people adhere to these principles, the text argues through concrete examples, will goodness prevail in their lives and their hereafter be prosperous. This aspect – the recognition of one's social and moral responsibility and acting upon it – is conveyed in poetic passages as the sole condition for a fulfilled life.

The work also discusses patience and haste. In comparing patience and haste, the poet demonstrates that patience is a higher virtue and considers it as essential for a person's spiritual and moral perfection as air and water. Navoi regards patience as a quality that is important in any situation. As he says, **"Sabr bilan ko'p bog'liq ish ochilur, ishda oshiqg'on kishi ko'p toyilur, ko'p toyilg'on ko'p yiqilur"**, *(With patience, many tangled matters are resolved; the one who rushes in his affairs stumbles often, and one who stumbles often falls many times)* emphasizing that impatient and hasty people commit many mistakes and face defeat. He defines patience as a quality that looks far ahead, leads toward a clear goal, and governs the process. A hasty person, by contrast, wishes to achieve results quickly, but this often leads to errors and failures, as the commentaries stress.

Har kimsaki, aylamas oshiqmoqni xayol,
Yafrog'ni ipak qilur, chechak bag'rini bol. (56)
(Whoever does not even think of haste,
Turns the leaf into silk and the heart of the flower into honey.)

In this couplet, Navoi criticizes impatience. Those who seek to reach the steps of their goals too quickly engage in futile and unstable actions. The work logically demonstrates that deeds performed in haste bring trouble upon one's own head. Navoi emphasizes that patience is often bitter, yet its benefit in eliminating harm and bringing

advantage is great. He likens patience to a physician's bitter medicine. Although the medicine is bitter, it cures a harmful disease. Likewise, patience may seem bitter at first glance, but when applied against impatience, it becomes the only remedy capable of leading a person to inner peace and perfection. In Navoi's understanding, patience is not merely passing time or waiting, but carrying out every action correctly and cautiously.

Ajab ranjeki andin sa'b yo'q ranj,
Vale chekkan kishining bahrasi ganj. (60)
(What a strange hardship – there is no hardship more difficult than it,
Yet the one who endures it attains a treasure as his share.)

Navoi expresses the essence of the virtue of patience briefly and concisely. While an impatient person goes astray through haste, a patient person matures amid hardships. He stresses that no matter how difficult and arduous patience may be, one who follows the path of patience can, at the end of life, attain results as valuable as a treasure. In this couplet, based on his deep life experience, the poet advises that the hardships endured on the path of spiritual purification can culminate in a lofty moral state. Throughout the work, Navoi presents the qualities necessary for human elevation – especially patience, propriety, beneficence, honesty, forbearance, modesty, repentance, and self-sufficiency – as being organically interconnected. He does not merely offer moral admonitions; rather, he explains with deep philosophical foundations the role of each virtue in social life, its outcomes, and its influence on the individual.

Through his poetic quatrains, Alisher Navoi vividly reveals, on the basis of profound artistic and ethical analysis, the futility of the life of a person enslaved by vices and the condition of those who squander two great blessings – knowledge and wealth – on the wrong path. He sharply criticizes both the scholar who possesses knowledge but fails to adorn it with practice, and the wealthy person who, despite riches, shows no generosity. The former studies, labors, and endures hardship, devoting his life to knowledge, yet does not apply it in life – thus oppressing his own self. The

latter accumulates wealth but brings benefit neither to himself nor to others, thereby foolishly harming himself. Navoi depicts the lives of these two groups as wasted, ending with regret as they reach the grave. Navoi considers the education of youth to be the most important issue. He emphasizes that by sowing the seeds of goodness in their hearts and cultivating virtues such as honesty, patience, fairness, and propriety, it is possible to achieve the moral perfection of the entire society. Every aphorism and every expression of the poet is the product of life experience and profound reflection. Mahbub ul-Qulub is not merely a book of moral advice, but a lofty spiritual and philosophical school. Through this work, Navoi succeeded in instilling his universal ideas and his vision of the perfect human being into the consciousness of generations.

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