

Grammatical and Semantic Analysis of a Verse from Rumi's *Masnavi* with an Emphasis on the Role of "Dastūr" in the Impossibility of Seeing the Soul

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This study presents an interdisciplinary analysis of Rumi's renowned verse "*Tan ze jān o jān ze tan mastur nīst/Lik kas rā dād-e jān dastūr nīst*" from four perspectives: grammatical, semiotic, semantic, and mystical. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Nasr (hierarchy of meaning), Purnamdarian (mystical semiotics), Schimmel (multilayered meaning), and Zarrinkoob (language as the manifestation of meaning), the research demonstrates how Rumi employed the capacities of the Persian language to express sublime mystical concepts. The findings reveal that each word in this verse creates a complex network of significations. Grammatically, the symmetrical structure of the first hemistich reflects the unity of existence, while the asymmetrical structure of the second hemistich represents the limitations of human perception. A semiotic analysis of key terms such as "*tan*" (body), "*jān*" (soul), "*mastur*" (hidden), and "*dastūr*" (permission) shows that these elements operate simultaneously on both material and spiritual levels. The examination of four semantic levels (literal, allegorical, symbolic, and mystical) and various epistemological layers (ontological, epistemological, mystical-experiential, and poetic-linguistic) confirms that this concise verse can convey profound philosophical and mystical concepts in a condensed linguistic form. Notably, Zarrinkoob's integrative theory demonstrates how three fundamental principles—the equivalence of form and meaning, the correspondence between linguistic structure and cognitive structure, and the symbolic function of language—are realized in this verse. This research emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in analyzing mystical texts while proposing a novel paradigm for interpreting Rumi's works, which can serve as a foundation for future studies in this field.

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Introduction

Persian mystical poetry represents one of the richest intellectual and artistic traditions of the Islamic world, wherein linguistic subtlety converges with transcendent metaphysical insight. Among the prominent figures of this tradition, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Rumi occupies a preeminent status. A quintessential manifestation of Rumi's poetic and speculative genius is embodied in the renowned verse from the prologue (*Nay-nāmeḥ*) of the *Masnavi-ye Ma'navi*:

“Tan ze jān o jān ze tan mastūr nīst / Līk kas rā dīd-e jān dastūr nīst”

(Body is not veiled from soul, nor soul from body / Yet none is granted permission/capacity to behold the soul).

Despite the apparent simplicity of its phrasing, the verse poses significant hermeneutical, syntactic, and epistemological challenges. A persistent gap remains in literary scholarship between purely formalist/syntactic inquiries and abstract mystical exegesis. Specifically, the syntactic assignment of the operative term *dastūr* (conventionally signifying permission, decree, model, or capacity/possibility) and its grammatical interaction with *dīd-e jān* directly govern the epistemological interpretation of the impossibility of soul-perception. The primary inquiry of this study is to examine whether a systematic, dialectical relationship operates between the grammatical configuration of this verse and its mystical core, demonstrating how Rumi strategically leveraged the grammatical affordances of Classical Persian to formalize a paradox of transcendence and immanence.

Method

This research applies a qualitative, descriptive-analytical methodology rooted in an interdisciplinary synthesis that bridges descriptive Persian functional grammar with four complementary mystical-hermeneutic frameworks:

1. **Seyyed Hossein Nasr's Semantic Hierarchy:** Structuring textual comprehension across four ontological strata: literal (*zāhirī*), allegorical (*bātinī*), symbolic (*ramzī*), and mystical/true (*ḥaqīqī*).

۲. **Taqi Pournamdarian's Mystical Semiotics:** Deconstructing the semiotic dyad and network of signs that bridge phenomenal referents with the transcendent realm.
۳. **Annemarie Schimmel's Multilayered Poetics:** Unpacking polysemy, structural ambiguity, and the simultaneous co-presence of existential and epistemological planes.
۴. **Abdolhossein Zarrinkoob's Integrative Philosophy of Mystical Language:** Guided by three cardinal principles: (a) the equivalence of form and meaning (*ham-arzi-ye surat o ma'na*), (b) the structural isomorphism between linguistic form and epistemological states (*tanāzor-e sākhṭār-e zabānī va ma'refatī*), and © the symbolic instrumentality of language in articulating transcendent realities.

Syntactically, the verse—particularly the hemistich “*Līk kas rā dīd-e jān dastūr nīst*”—is dissected using classical Persian prescriptive grammar alongside functional predicate analysis, interrogating the roles of *dastūr* as a negative predicate (*mosnad-e manfī*), *dīd* as an infinitive head noun, and the morpheme *rā* as either a dative marker of possession/inability or an objective complement.

Results

The multi-layered analysis yields key grammatical, semiotic, and conceptual findings:

- **Syntactic Isomorphism and Asymmetry:** The first hemistich (“*Tan ze jān...*”) features an exact symmetrical and reciprocal copular structure (*A from B / B from A*), linguistically mirroring the ontological unity, interpenetration, and non-duality of body and soul. In contrast, the second hemistich abruptly fractures this symmetry through an asymmetrical, negative structure (“*Līk kas rā...*”), syntactically embodying cognitive limitation and ontological rupture.
- **The Grammatical Resolution of “*Dastūr*”:** Grammatical parsing confirms that *dastūr* does not function as an agent or grammatical subject (*nahād*), but as a negative predicate (*mosnad-e manfī*) coupled with the negative copula *nīst* (meaning “is not permissible / is not possible / is out of reach”). The nominalized infinitive *dīd-e jān* serves as the subject/topic, while *kas rā* functions as an

oblique dative complement marking human incapacity. The inability to behold the spirit is thereby structurally asserted as an absolute existential condition.

- **Semiotic and Paradoxical Dynamics:** Applying Pournamdarian's semiotics reveals a tightly woven binary: *tan* (multiplicity, physical manifestation) stands in opposition to *jān* (unity, transcendent essence). The interaction between *mastūr nīst* (unveiled/manifest) and *dastūr nīst* (impermissible/unobtainable) generates a profound spiritual paradox: truth is completely present and unveiled in phenomenal manifestation, yet simultaneously inaccessible to physical and sensory cognition.
- **Epistemological Stratification:** Under Nasr's and Schimmel's frameworks, *dastūr nīst* evolves across layers: at the literal tier, it denotes physical sightlessness; at the symbolic tier, it marks the boundaries of discursive intellect; and at the mystical tier, it affirms the apophatic reality that absolute Essence remains forever beyond creaturely apprehension, even while its effects saturate cosmic multiplicity.

Conclusion

The investigation demonstrates that in Rumi's poetic idiom, grammar ceases to be a passive communicative container and becomes an active, organic vehicle of mystical ontology (*tajallīgāh-e ma'nā*). As validated through Zarrinkoob's integrative paradigm, an unyielding organic coherence binds the linguistic surface to the esoteric core: the balance of the first hemistich inscribes universal cohesion (*wahdat al-wujūd*), while the calculated disruption and negation in the second hemistich codifies human epistemological finitude.

By strategically assigning *dastūr* to the role of a negative predicate, Rumi encapsulates the tension between divine immanence and transcendence within fourteen concise words. Ultimately, the study confirms the viability of combining rigorous grammatical parsing with mystical semiotics, providing an applicable analytical paradigm for deciphering how sacred and mystical Persian poetry mobilizes deep syntactic structures to express complex metaphysical doctrines.