

Usman Hamid

### Making a Gift Suitable:

#### Rhetorical Strategies in ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī’s *Risālah-i Nūrīyah-i Sulṭānīyah*

Works of advice (*naṣīḥat*), whether they address norms of comportment (*adab*) or ethics (*akhlāq*), constitute a popular genre of Persian literature. In the study of early modern North India, Muzaffar Alam and Sajida Alvi have drawn attention to the more ecumenical aspects of political theory found in advice literature addressed to Indo-Muslim rulers, which are said to undergird the Mughals’ inclusive style of governance. This intense focus on the political dimensions of these texts has yet to be matched by an equal interest in the literary aspects of the works. More than mere ornamentation, literary procedures such as citation, translation, and retelling constituted a core element of works’ argumentation.

This presentation aims to supplement the contributions of Alam and Alvi by examining a Mughal advice text that has received little attention, namely, the *Risālah-i Nūrīyah-i Sulṭānīyah* written by the famous Sufi biographer, scholar of hadith, and one-time courtier ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī (958–1052/1551–1642). Addressed to the Mughal emperor Jahāngīr on his ascension, ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq’s *Risālah* presents a vision of Muslim kingship that blends the inheritance of Perso-Islamic political thought, the realities of the North Indian environment, and the legacy of Akbar’s rule. It is a carefully crafted work that uses proof texts from Scriptural sources such as the Quran and hadith, verses of wildly popular poets such as Sa‘dī, and anecdotes from the corpus of Persian literature, all with express rhetorical purpose.

The presentation will draw attention to some of ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Dihlawī unique arguments and the ways in which his ideas were at variance with those found in the otherwise fairly conventional genre. Particular attention will be placed on the implications of his citation of proof texts, translation of Arabic into Persian, and retelling of well-known anecdotes (*ḥikāyat*).