

A Study on the Characterization of Attar Neyshabouri's “Elahi Nameh” in Comparison with Illustrated Literary Manuscripts

Abstract

Attar is one of the utmost theological poets of the sixth and early seventh century AH, who took use of stories and anecdotes to express his deep spiritual meanings since mankind was his distinctive addressee. “Elahi Nameh” is one of Attar's outstanding works in which the poet has succeeded in creating amiable and profound anecdotes. Given the key role that characterization plays in the creation of stories and anecdotes, the issue of characterization is raised in theological concepts and its adaptation to illustrated stories. This research has been done based on descriptive and analytical methods and relying on library data. Findings of the research indicate that the character, the element of the incident and the speed of its occurrence are central elements in the realm of story and storytelling in Attar's anecdotes. Even though the mentioned work has the aspect of asceticism and moralism, the sequence and speed of the events of the story is the motivating and is considered as the driving factor of each tale. At the end, it can be generally stated that in the anecdotes, tales and novels; one cannot move with a single outlook or it can be concluded that the elements of the story shape the main feature of the stories or anecdotes or that they add meaning and value to the features of the story. Attar's ability to accurately describe anecdotes has led to a tangible depiction of such narrations.

Research aims:

1. An analysis of the elements of anecdotes in Attar's theology.
2. A study of characterization in Attar's theological anecdotes.

Research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of anecdotes in Attar's theology?
- 2- What is the role of characterization in the stories of “Elahi Nameh” by Attar?

Keywords: characterization, anecdotes, Elahi Nameh, Attar, illustrated stories

Introduction

Attar's Elahi Nameh is one of the valuable literary works of Iran, whose stories and anecdotes are also popular among the masses. Various factors have led to the beauty of theological anecdotes. Attar's stories and anecdotes in this work are a mirror of his thoughts and his temporal and spatial conditions. In fact, every poet or writer at some point in his life considers the status of the world and where it stands; in other words, artists and thinkers continuously examine themselves and their presence in existence. Attar is one of the leaders in this field, or the reader is one of the leaders in this field that the reader understands his thoughts while reading his works, and while Attar studies, he sees and understands beyond what he considers in various books. Therefore, the study of Attar's Elahi Nameh and the study of the issue of characterization can be a significant step in the field of processing literary works with this style. The adaptation of Attar's characterization with the illustrated stories that have survived in the history of Iran during the Islamic period can more or less reveal the influence of the Elahi Nameh as a literary work on mystical and folk literature. Attar's Elahi Nameh is full of fascinating short and long stories, all of which are embedded in one main story. This work is one of the texts that has a significant contribution in the formation and expansion of short and long narratives in mystical works, and the semiotic analysis of the narrative in the anecdotes of this work can to some extent provide a basis for showing how the elements of the narrative are organized.

Regarding the background of the present research, it should be said that an independent work with this title has not been written so far, but several works have been written in recognition of Attar's Elahi Nameh. An article entitled "Fictional Elements of the Story of a Pious Woman in Attar's Elahi Nameh" has been written by Fatemeh Emami (2010). In this story, Attar has succeeded in presenting a lasting story by creating a character. This anecdote shows the peak of Attar's art of storytelling. Another article entitled "Study of theatrical aspects in a number of stories of Attar Neyshabouri's Tazkereh al-Awliya" has been written by Fahmieh Soheilirad (2007). In this work, the author has studied the theatrical aspects of this work. These elements are placed in a set consisting of the structure of the play. The stories of Fazil Ayaz, Rabia Adavieh, and Hussein to Mansour Hallaj have been selected from Tazkereh al-Awliya to express the potential theatrical capabilities of the work, and this is done by searching for theatrical elements in these stories and analyzing various methods. Their applications in the play have been realized (Soheilirad, 2007: 25). The present study intends to investigate the effect of the themes of this literary work in mystical and folklore literature by comparatively examining the personality of a section in Attar's Elahi Nameh with illustrated stories. This research has been done in a descriptive and analytical method by relying on library data.

Conclusion

The element of incident and character are the most important elements of a story that aids advancing the course of the story and its plot formation. Revealing the characters and the extent to which they influence and attract the audience is one of the most fundamental elements of the story, which moves the story forward and, most importantly, grants it depth and meaning. The deeper and more complex the incident, the greater the power of attracting the audience and the more famous and lasting the effect. In the meantime, the Elahi Nameh has valuable concepts and messages for individuals and audiences; moreover, the concepts are expressed in simple language written by Attar and from his point of view for many humans and this adds to the remarkable and admirable features of this literary artwork. In fact, the mystic writer Attar has attempted to use his narrative possibilities to convey his notions in the most tangible manner. The events in

the anecdotes happen so finely and consecutively that the culmination of the incident lies in the words and sentences, and the whole incident has a spiritual and semantic aspect. It can be said that the speed of events is such that it excites the audience and from the beginning to the end of the story, maybe in five to twenty minutes, and this excitement lasts from the beginning to the end of reading the story; hence, the audience is not constantly suspended and the ascent and descent of various events exists. Rather, it is just an incident in the heart of a story, and no story or incident fits into the concrete of this story or incident, and this is in fact a feature of that story. Therefore, Attar was not far from this method in his anecdotes, and in fact, his intention was not to make an accident at all, but he has a lot of characterization, because his intention is to build a utopia city by composing his stories. It is the ideal human race to be worthy of the cobra gate of its deity. Attar has portrayed the narrations around the characters, which has turned the divine letter into an exemplary model in illustrated stories.

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