The Reaction of Surprise "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" in Persian Poetry and Miniature

Abstract

Humans show different emotions in reaction to various phenomena around them. One of these emotions is surprise that is expressed in reaction to impressive events. A surprised individual shows reactions that have physiological and cultural roots. One of these reactions is "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" (to put one's curved index finger on one's mouth) which seems to be specific to the Iranian culture. Applying a descriptive-historical approach, this study seeks to delve into the history of this reaction, its possible changes over time, and why it is used in Persian miniature. For this purpose, the expression of "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" was studied through the library and documentary method as a surprise reaction in Persian poetry from the time of Rudaki onward (nearly a thousand years). On the other hand, its visual examples in the Persian miniature in the past 700 years were examined. The findings show that this reaction has remained unchanged in its form and meaning over the centuries and has been present all the time in Iranian cultural history. It has always been a good way to represent a surprised individual by a miniature artist who, following the codes of Persian miniature, should not represent facial emotions.

Research aims:

1- The history of "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" and its possible changes in Persian Poetry and Miniature.

2- The reason of using this literary term in Persian miniature.

Research questions:

1- What is the history of "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" and its possible changes in Persian Poetry and Miniature?

2- Why does this literary term exist in Persian miniature?

Keywords: Persian Poetry and Miniature, Surprise Reaction, "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan".

Introduction

Humans show different emotions in reaction to various phenomena around them. One of these emotions is surprise that is expressed in reaction to impressive events. A surprised individual shows reactions that have physiological and cultural roots. Reactions such as opening the mouth, pause and rounding the eyes appear to be physiological because they are almost identical in most cultures and individuals. However, there are also reactions that are not merely physiological because they are only observed in a specific culture. One of these reactions is "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" which seems to be specific to the Iranian culture

and can be seen in the history of Persian poetry and miniature for nearly a thousand years. Therefore, examining the "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" reaction as one of the Iranians' reactions to the emotion of surprise over a thousand years of history will be a major concern of this research. It will study the history of this reaction in poetry and painting and its changes over time. To this end, examples of this reaction in Iranian art and literary works in each century will be presented and analyzed to clarify its continuation, changes or extinction. Unfortunately, this issue has not been covered by researchers so far. Therefore, it seems necessary to be addressed as the results of such a review can be helpful in the fields of psychology, history of art and literature. This study, which is a fundamental research in terms of purpose, attempts to clarify the gesture of "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" as a surprise reaction in the context of the history of Iranian art and literature. The research was conducted through the descriptive-historical and correlational method. Research data on painting, psychology, literature, and art were extracted from library and documentary sources through observation and taking notes. In this regard, attempts have been made to select and study at least one sample of poetry and painting related to the subject from each century in order to elucidate the main issue by comparing the two areas. There has been no comprehensive research to date on this subject. There have been only a few studies on portraiture in Iranian painting that are relatively close to the subject of this research. In their article titled "A Study of the Evolution of Portrait Painting in to the End of the Safavid Period" published in the Negareh Magazine, Hassanvand and Akhundi (2012) concluded that drawing non-realistic figures in traditional Iranian painting was not the result of Iranian painters' inaptitude. There have been many factors such as the taste, politics, bookbinding style, the master-student discipline, the subject and the literature, and the royal library has transferred these traditions to later periods. Adherence to this particular framework and principles had continued for centuries. Although faces are unrealistic, they have their own unique characteristics. In their article entitled "Seljuk Portrait Painting - Continuing the Manichan Visual Culture" published in the Journal of Cultural History Studies, Mousavi Lor and Namaz Alizadeh (2012) concluded that Seljuk portrait painting was derived from Manichan portraiture patterns in which avoidance of absolute imitation and representation was one of the features, insofar as the male and female faces were identical.

Conclusion

The literary term "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" is one of the terms that have been used throughout history by Iranian artists and poets to illustrate the reaction of the surprised individuals to miraculous phenomena. In this reaction, the surprised man, while staring at the subject, puts his index finger on his lips, teeth or mouth or bites it. The expression of "angosht be dandān gereftan" (index finger on teeth and biting) is used more than "angosht be dahān gereftan" (index finger in mouth) in poetry. But there isn't any expression of "angosht be dandān gereftan" in painting. It is illustrated as putting the finger on the lips or mouth without biting. Since Iranian painting and poetry have a symbolic expression and as the depiction of facial expressions in different emotional situations is similar in Iranian painting, the use of this term was an appropriate way for the painter artist to express one's inner states. As "angosht be dahān/dandān gereftan" is a term that is only visible in Iranian literature and painting, it must be specific to Iranian culture. The term first appeared in ancient Persian poetry and its beauty attracted literary attention and became a widely used term in Iranian literature. It persisted for almost a thousand years, especially in Persian poetry. The profound impact of Persian literature on Iranian painting led to the appearance of the term in painting. It is repeated in abundance, without any semantic change, with the same signs and symbols. It is visible in traditional Iranian painting from seven hundred years ago to the present day.

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