THE THEMES OF EPIC NARRATION IN ATTAAR NEISHABOURI’S MANYEGH AL-TEIR

Masoomeh Rahmani Nejad1, Mehdi Nezhad2

1M.S. student of Persian Language and Literature, Payam Nour University, Lavasanat Branch,
2Ph.D. Student of Culture and civilization of Islamic Nations (IRAN)

DOI: 10.7813/jll.2015/6-4/59

Received: 15 Oct, 2015
Accepted: 25 Nov, 2015

ABSTRACT

Mantegh Al-Teir is a creation without which no human society and human culture can live. Mystical education subletes the field of epistemology and cognition and contemplate in the mysteries of creation and high spiritual degrees in this book are not something to finish once. This article aims to study the Iranian play themes in this highlighted collection. Findings show that Attaar Neishabouri collection has outstanding capacities and capabilities concerning play theme. Technique of Puppet Theater, shadow play, use of masks, poetry, music, and singing are some themes in Attar collection.

Key words: Attar, Manyegh Al-Teir, diapaly themes

1. IRIRAN PLAY THEMES IN ATTAAR NEISHABOURI’S MANYEGH AL-TEIR

Iranian poets have not paid attention to the field of theater and dramatic literature and they only worked on epic, lyrical, and didactic field. Nevertheless, there are some creations in Persian literature with clear display capabilities and capacities. They can change into dramatic creations. As a result, Attaar Neishabouri’s Manyegh Al-Teir can be considered among such works. Narrative, symbolic, allegorical, holistic and segmented structure of this creation causes us to consider it a dramatic literature work. The following themes are studied in this study:

1.1. Epic Narration

Epic Narration is the most important feature of Iranian plays. It is a single-actor show in structure but multiple characters in content expressed by narrator. Narration reminds Iranian communication culture. It is a culture derived from monologue society within which it has grown understanding rather than communication. If this culture of dialogue desires to show itself in the field of dramatic arts, narration can undoubtedly be considered the most highlighted feature. Narration is a type of play in which a narrator expresses an event, story, poetry, etc. (Beizayee, 1965: 60). Narration aims to educate moral, religious, social, and political issues. Narration- along with religious rituals and the role of man in social activities- is one of three factors associated with the advent of plays (Nazer Zadeh Kermani, 1999: 66). This art dates back to Parthian period. The narrators of this period used to be called “Gussan” who used “musical instrument and singing” in their narrations (Beizayee, 1965: 60). Like many other arts, narration experienced fluctuations with the advent of Islamic era. After a while, their modern life was resumed by understanding the time circumstances and has been able to achieve such a transformation that several different narration species appeared such as Shahnameh narration, historical, mythical, and religious narration (Jian, 2002: 14). With the formalization of Shiite, “religious narration” was divided into other branches such as Mangheb Khani1, Fazael Khani2, and speech (Beizayee, 1965: 75).

1.2. Pardeh Khani3

Pardeh Khani is another type of narration known as “screen reading”. Story, painting, and narration are three main components of Pardeh Khani (Gharib Khani, 1999: 56). The combination of words and image made “Pardeh Khani” the most scenic form of narration. It is ranked after Taziyeh4 (Beizayee, 1965: 74). Pardeh Khan [screen reader] tries to accompany emotions of audiences by the help of paintings during the description of events and figures (Akhalghi, 207: 1998). At the beginning, Mantegh Al-Teir talks about birds and introduces them one by one. Narrator is Attar, although the narrative structure of the story is ignored because the narrator is a part of story. The story is reconstructed in reader’s mind through the verbal communication via the voice of narrator first and then the story (Akhalghi, 207: 1998). According to the Mantegh Al-Teir, Attar is the real narration author andnitiator and the birds’ personalities are the “narration audience” in the collection. Although the narrator interacts with birds during introduction at the beginning, he narrates other parts, events, behaviors, and speech outside of the story. The interaction between the narrator and birds at the beginning during introduction leads to eliminate the time and place distance with the subject, creating a sense of proximity between the narrator and birds. This leads to change past to present in the whole story. This type of narration is associated with executive form of “narration and Pardeh Khani”. The whole narration is imagined like narrative paintings in that the narrator introduces figures and related events by going back and forth next to the painting. The figures goes beyond the painting by the explanation of narrator and becomes and active section of narration. If the speech is possible to be enlivened by narration, parts of Mantegh Al-Teirare likely to be performed in this way. The nature of many stories is associated with birds. The efforts made by lapwing to convince others reflect the “rhetoric” ceremony. “Lapwing” is considered an expertise speech maker which uses “Promise”, “Sonnet”, “allegory”, and frequent “description”. The most dramatic aspect of the ceremony, getting naked and the arrival of protagonists from both sides of the conflict can be performed by exchanging birds’ feathers. Birds come out of their

1 Mangheebkhani is a type of religious admiration and epic, religious, artistic narration which praise the God.
2 It is similar to Managhebkhani but regarding the prophets.
3 Pardeh Kahn (Reading from the picture) is type of Iranian religious narration in which “Pardeh Khan” [screen reader] users rhythmic melodies to describe the difficulties of prophets specially the Shiites.
4 It is a form of narration to describe the Battle of Karbala and Imam Hussein
coverage, lose their feathers, follow humility, and obey the right vote. Then lapwing gives their feathers back. Despite Mantegh Al-Teir in which birds are passive against lapwing sallegory except for initial reactions and protests, birds need to be active and critical.

1.3. Techniques of Puppet shows

Various origins have been cited for Iranian puppet shows. Some believe that they are Indian gifts which entered Iran at the time of Bahram Gur. Others believe that they are gifts by the Chinese. Likewise, some scholars believe that puppet shows are originated from the creativity of Iranian nomadic tribes (Beizayee, 1965: 70). Due to their wonderful flexibility and certain inherent capacity, they are considered the most creative type of act which gives optimal administrative facilities for the artist to the extent that no boundary appears for his creativity. This puppet show technique can be highly effective for Mantegh Al-Teir. The actors wear bird-like coverage. At the same time, they handle a similar bird doll and act with. In addition to simplicity of exemplification, this technique is coordinated with the content of Mantegh Al-Teir and Iranian world view. The birds in Mantegh Al-Teir are expressive examples of restless spirits. They are examples of “divine order” trying to fly. Therefore the actor who plays the role of the bird blocks anything except for birds. In addition to this administrative approach, it can be a location which has trapped human’s minds in virtual presence, although it has provoked the interest to fly for this world. At the end, when birds reach to phoenix and find the realities, actors can leave birds to show the release from determinations and merge with phoenix.

1.4. Shadow puppetry

Shadow puppetry is type of puppetry known as “day dreaming” and “the veil of imagination”. In this type of play, puppeteers move and play the toy between a curtain and a light supply. They perform the story through the shadow (Beizayee, 1965: 83). China is believed to be the origin of this type of play. “Tang” dynasty is known the period of emergence. This type of play emerged by showing prediction resulting from theasthetic inspiration (Tesioun, 2004: 191). The allegorical, mystical, and imaginative themes of Mantegh Al-Teir enable the narrators to take advantage of shadow puppetry technique, especially when secondary stories are needed. The story can be performed by screen and shadow together. In this state, other birds can watch their companions in shadow puppetry. This technique can also be sued to show phoenix, or the image formed in birds’ minds.

1.5. The application of Mask

“Mask” is one of instruments used for play. The first application of this tool is referred to “Thespia”, known as the first actor worldwide. Later on, artists in this field used masks to polish their act (Saghaeian, 1999: 133). Basically, the application of mask was to stay away from the reality. It was also an indicator in which the artist stays away from “outer self” and appeared in another “body”. Concerning the content, Mantegh Al-Teir is closely related to this concept. Figures appeared in birds, although they are the symbol of people in different classes. If Mantegh Al-Teir intends to enter the rich narrative play, it has to employ birds to play the role of human. “Mask” is one tool to meet this goal. Actors can wear mask or half mask of any birds to convey the allegorical content of the collection. When secondary stories are formed within the main story and new characters enter the stage, determining the role of new actor can be done by new mask. The application of mask leads to ritual-mysterious nature of Mantegh Al-Teir narration which is linked with Eastern play traditions.

1.6. Poetry

Poetry is the most important aspect of Iranian taste which is not ignorable in all aspects of Iranian life. Traditional and Iranian plays have benefited from poetry. Epic poetry can be seen in all forms of Iranian plays including epic narration, Pardeh Khani, Marekeh 1, Ru Hozi 2, Taziyeh, etc. Mantegh Al-Teir can benefit from poetic language because of not only rhythmic and poetic narrative structure but also its spiritual content. What gains special importance is converting poetic language to play language which is in accordance with play dialogue and play. In order to strengthen the linguistic action and diversity and stay away from bored language, different and diverse measures are employed because such diversity enables narrators to use different rhythmic measures for the roles based on their nature and personality. Poetic performance of Mantegh Al-Teir highlights its Iranian-Eastern view.

1.7. Music

Although Islam is not interested in music, different types of plays including Taziyeh, Ru Hozi, field plays, and even puppet show are woven with music. One of the functions of the music in the Iranian show is expressing and reinforcing the overall sense of scene. Iranian plays intend their musical texture according to situations and type of words, speech, images, and accent. The musical and internal factors of play create various atmospheres such as fear, chaos, and encouragement (Saghaeian, 1999: 143). Since Mantegh Al-Teir clearly has play and narration elements. Iranian musical function seems necessary to strengthen such elements. Taking the spiritual content of Mantegh Al-Teir and the combination of music and spirituality into account, it enables the narrators to noticeably benefit from spiritual and mystical music along with various Iranian tuning systems, ballads, and colors. Iranian tuning systems would also give an Iranian-Eastern color to Mantegh Al-Teir nature which will be highly effective to create the atmosphere of play along with many traditional musical instruments such as flute, tambourine, harp, Tar 3, Setar 4, etc.

1.8. Costume

Costumes have more functions than simple clothes in plays. They are considered a visual part of plays, showing symbolic implications. Time and place documentations, helping to create characters, helping the actor in role, and intensifying the color in plays are some of costume functions (Saghyian, 1999: 103). The efforts of Iranian plays are concentrated on the fact that each costume is associated with role and personality features. In Mantegh Al-Teir, the characteristics of appearance and costumes, or coverage have not been highlighted. However, the content of Mantegh Al-Teir is not realistic. As a result, realism cannot be taken into account for birds like what they are in real world. The costumes in Mantegh Al-Teir plays need to be symblastic with abstract signs.

1.9. Stage

Stage gives additional characteristics to time, dimension, content, and structure of plays. Like other types of arts, Iranian plays follow the attitude which gives originality to the play by staying away from details. Therefore, Iranian plays intended to objects to reflect place and space. The location of plays is in accordance with other elements such as simplicity and symbolism. It relies on actors’ ability creativity, and audience’s imagination rather than tools and devices. Mantegh Al-

1 It is an open space where jugglers display their art
2 There used to be a fountain in the middle of yard used for having ceremonies with comedians. The actor used to blacken his face.
3 Iranian String musical instrument
4 Iranian String musical instrument with three strings
Teir is closely associated with Iranian plays due to the narrative structure and content so that another type of performance cannot be imagined. As a result, its spiritual content needs to be performed with respect to Iranian play elements. Circular and field stage highlights the content. Since Mantegh Al-Teir has a general and ambiguous concept because of Iranian traditions of time and place, the application of circular stage seems necessary. Both geometrical and content structure of Mantegh Al-Teir is based on circular shape. The birds in Mantegh Al-Teir draw, as though, a circular environment around themselves. The end reaches the beginning which is the starting point. In addition to strengthening the conveyance of content, the performance of Mantegh Al-Teir on circular stage enables the actors to show their creativities by staying away from time, place, and natural rules.

1.10. Singing

Signing can be considered separate from music. Signing is as important as music in Iranian plays. In some Iranian plays such as Taziyeh, narration, Pardeh Khani, and puppet show, actors are the most important sections. Singing capabilities can be employed to perform Mantegh Al-Teir. Personalities can be taken into account and singing in a specific tuning system can be selected based on the role nature. Since boundaries of good and evil are not well clarifies, diversity of singing cannot be taken into account for them, however singing is added to enrich the other capabilities. For example, a "Dar Amad Nava" in "Mahour" tuning system is used for hoopoe and "Nava" for peacock in "Homayoun" tuning system. Chorus is also used at the beginning, end, and different sections of plays.

2. CONCLUSION

Despite Greek counter parts that have been enriching such dramatic literature, Iranian scholars have not paid much attention to this field. They have only been active in educational and epic literature. Some creations, however, emerged with clear capabilities and abilities of dramatic plays. Such creations can be changed into plays by some changes. As a result, narrative approach can be taken into account by some elements. Mantegh Al-Teir of Attar is undoubtedly considered among such creations and frequent samples can be shown such as narration, Pardeh Khani, puppet show, shadow show, etc.

REFERENCES