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THE SIMURGH ROLE IN MYSTICAL WRITING OF MANTIQ-UT-TAYR

EL PAPEL DE SIMURGH EN LA ESCRITURA MÍSTICA DE MANTIQ-UT-TAYR



Nina Ghabulian Zaree

RESUMEN
El objetivo de la investigación es determinar el papel simultáneo en la escritura mística de Mantiq-ut-tayr. Simurgh (Phoenix) es uno de los elementos míticos más prominentes en la cultura y literatura iraní que se remonta a la antigüedad. Simurgh se ha manifestado de diversas maneras en diferentes contextos de la literatura persa. Después de examinar varios aspectos que afectan los mitos iraníes en esta investigación, el mito de Simurgh se ha definido en la literatura mística y sus desarrollos en el campo de la literatura mística se han estudiado cuidadosamente en las obras de Sheikh Eshraq y Mantiq-al-Tayyar de Attar.
Palabras clave: Simurgh: Mantik-ut-ter, Místico, Attar.

ABSTRACT
The aim of research is determining the simurgh role in mystical writing of Mantiq-ut-tayr. Simurgh (Phoenix) is one of the most prominent mythical elements in Iranian culture and literature dating back to ancient times. The descriptive-analytical method was used in this research. After examining various aspects affecting the Iranian myths in this research, Simurgh's myth has been defined in mystical literature and its developments in the field of mystical literature have been carefully studied in the works of Sheikh Eshraq and Mantiq-al-Tayyar of Attar.
Keywords: Simurgh, Mantiq-ut-Tayr, Mystical, Attar

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INTRODUCTION

The myths not only express the human thoughts about the fundamental concept of life but also there are living principles for human beings; hence, they can be considered as a logical justification for society survival. This study was conducted to identify the steps of Iranian though history in order.

The Simurgh myth has been always a symbol in Iranian culture, religious-national knowledge, and experiences; hence, this myth can be named as the mother myth or a creator myth that has revealed the mutual creation of human nature with a perfect view of the cosmic struggle between good and evil. This myth plays a vital role in connecting the past and present time by keeping the holiness and revival of this myth is emanation of the holy. It is also obvious that it has always had an effect on the social-historical memory and cultural conscience of Iranian people.

This mythical bird has been existing in Iranian culture before Islam. Besides images in texts, the logo of Simurgh on the cups and dishes indicates outstanding position of this bird. Simurgh exists in epic poems and plays a spiritual role in Shahnameh written by Ferdowsi.

According to the philosophical thought and analyses of Iranian people in mystical works, Gabriel is able to be a divine angel. Multiple aspects of this astonishing bird and its extraordinary talent in continuous resurrection during the history of Iran's culture and literature have made it an alive and energetic myth. In contemporary literature, this bird has been a symbol in poems of great poets so that Simurgh has been always existed in literal spaces in various and new shapes. As this study does not include the contemporary literature, only a few examples are mentioned herein.

The modern poetry begins with poem Ghoghnoos composed by Nima Yooshij. Siavash Kasrai and Ahmad Shamlou have created a new image of this mythical bird and criticized the social challenges in their poems called grief of phoenix and phoenix in the rain, respectively. Their critique could express a logical justification for daily social affairs based on the mythical beliefs in form of protest literature.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Simurgh is a prominent element in Iranian culture and literature with an old history in Persian literature.

Different references give us information about the Iranian myths; Avesta is one of these references. The ancient myths have been kept and reflected based on the general Zoroastrian structure. The most important mythological part of Avesta is

the Yasht 24 or the hymn to different gods that belong to before Zoroastrianism. Bundahishn includes a collection of translated Avesta examples about Creation, which reveals ancient thoughts and beliefs. Zoroastrian references have been studied to find mythical characteristics of Simurgh in order to draw the face of this ancient Iranian model .

In field of epic literature, Ferdowsi Tusi prosed the restored history of Iran from the early Islam domination over the epic literature. Some myths such as natural disasters or extraordinary creatures have been illustrated in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh and many of gods and mythical heroes have been shown as kings or historical heroes.

Mystical literature has a mysterious language. Mysterious language can be seen in all of mystical works; this language can show the depth of words within the hidden layers of expressions as mysterious forms. The story of birds is about the grief and poorness of the rational soul that tries to return to its origin with the help of the guide angel after being aware of its poorness in dark world of the body.

Eyniyyeh Ode by Ibn Sina and Risalat Al-Tayr by Bu Ali can be named as example works. After him, Imam Mohammad Ghazali deceased at 505 lunar year (Safa, 2018) wrote a Risalat Al-Tayr book in Arabic then his brother, Ahmad Ghazali, translated it into the Persian language. Suhrawardi murdered at 587 lunar year (Sajadi, 2018) used the secret of bird mentioned in Aql-i Surkh (The Red Intellect) as the rational soul of human and finally mystical proses written by Farid ud-Din Attar of Nishapur were appeared as a sun in mystical literature while other works could not shine as much as this work.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-analytical method was used in this research as different aspects of the main issue of research has been examined to find realities and recognize the main points of the study. After examining various aspects affecting the Iranian myths in this research, Simurgh's myth has been defined in mystical literature and its developments in the field of mystical literature have been carefully studied in the works of Sheikh Eshraq and Mantiq-al-Tayyar of Attar.

RESULTS

RECREATION OF AVESTAN SIMURGH MYTH IN CREATION OF PHILOSOPHICAL WISDOM AND MYSTICAL LITERATURE

The greatness and popularity of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh in Iran led to mouth-to-mouth quotation of its tales so ordinary people or mystics kept those epic stories in

their minds commemorating the glorious history of Iran before Islam; therefore, Shahnameh is considered as the only national book by Iranian people. These honorable tales were originated from the great soul of Ferdowsi, so these stories not only motivated the Iranian pride and patriotism spirit against Arabs and Turks but also affected their excellent imaginations and human ethics. In this regard, the poetry, literature, and history were under the influence of Shahnameh and the name of one of more heroes of Shahnameh can be seen in many of textbooks .

Iran's Sufism also benefited from this masterpiece so that real or imaginary characters of Shahnameh were appeared as mysterious or allegorical forms such as Simurgh that wayfarers wished to see this bird in mystical books. There are numerous stories about this desire in which, spiritual and extraordinary aspect of this desire was highlighted and led to recreation of ancient myths as a modern form .

The word recreate is a kind of revival or repetition of primitive myths that not only have not been violated but also they should remain alive to find their hidden truth. The collective unconscious expressed by Carl Jung can be the base for similarities of stories, tales, myths and their repetition in different cultures within consecutive times because the universal properties, generality of this aspect of the soul and its stabilization prepare the field for such repetitions and links between ancient culture and modern civilization.

Repetition of myths within evolution of literature from the beginning until now should be reviewed. This precise attitude indicates the common spiritual and mental context between human beings leading to same tendencies and ideals .

The myths are repeated in new forms at each era; however, a new attitude toward different aspects of life such as the life in this world and hereafter leads to an artistic and modern method of expressing myths in which, the boredom of this repetition is removed by using specific expressions. There are some reasons inside and outside of the mind of human to recreate the myths.

THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS (BOOKS OF RESALAT AL-TAYR)

According to mystical literature, the human soul is defined as a bird that has come from the divine world and trapped in the body (Ashrafzadeh, 2016). The soul or rational ego thinks of the freedom after making aware of its poorness in the world of darkness and body prison. The books of conference of the birds include mysterious stories that indicate the next step of the soul awareness; the step in which, the soul has understood its poor situation, has found the barriers against the tendency toward its origin, and has started its travel. This travel starts from the soil

toward the sky, from the dark depths of the west to the highest and farthest eastern place .

These works are the most beautiful and influential mystical-philosophical books including spiritual incidents and stories beyond this world; hence, they are considered as mysterious works. The word mystery indicates the expression method, the subject nature, the content and quality of the author's experience (Pournamdarian, 2016, p. 401).

IBN SINA AND STORY OF BIRDS

Ibn Sina (dead in 370 lunar year) is the first person who analogized the birds to human by using mysterious words (Ashrafzadeh, 2016) .

He interprets the human soul as a bird in his ballads called Varghaeye and resalat al-tayr. Resalat Al-tay (conference of the birds) by Ibn Sina is a great story with philosophical not mystical theme. According to Monzavi in book of Simurgh and Si (thirty) Morgh (birds) entitled the context of Ibn Sina's stories, the soul of human beings is similar to free birds that forget their freedom after being trapped by hunters but remembered the freedom when saw the free birds; then achieved their freedom with the help of free birds and went to the city of birds' king behind the HashtKuh (name of a mountain).

Hence, in story written by Ibn Sina, not only the ascending trend toward the god mentioned in Miraj Nameh is seen but also the descending way of the birds in cage and deserts, which is not seen in Miraj Nameh, is mentioned in details. However, duality and separation of the God and the world (the king and birds) is more considerable in story written by Ibn Sina compared with the story written by Attar. The story of Ibn Sina ends in connection; the captured birds try to see the king. When the king sees the birds, sends them elsewhere, while Attar ends the story with alliance between birds. The free birds choose a leader (Hoopoe) in order to visit the king of birds but find that they themselves are the king of birds when get there. The numbers of residences that are teaching steps of Ishraqi are called 8 mountains by Ibn Sina and 7 valleys by Attar (Monzavi, 2018, p. 51) .

After the introduction, Abu Ali Sina narrates a story about a bird that is looking for food, but is captured and her foot is fasten but she tries to free herself. The bird sees some free birds and they free the captured bird but they cannot disentangle her foot because the person who can free her is the person who has captured her. Hence, they take her on a journey to make her free. They pass through many lands, reach to a luxurious palace of a king, and pass out when see that greatness .

The king revives them and they tell their problem; the king sends a messenger with them to free the bird. The captured bird is back to where they originally came from. The story continues with expressing traits of the king and ends with an emphasis on the truth.

RISALAT AL-ṬAYR (OR AL-ṬUYŪR) (EPISTLE OF THE BIRDS) BY AHMAD GHAZALI

After Ibn Sina, the story of birds travel attracted the attention of many authors such as Abu Hamed Mohammad Ibn Mohammad Ghazali Tusi died in 1126 (Safa, 2018) who wrote about the spiritual journey of a mystic and analogized this journey to the birds search for Simurgh .

Risalat al-ṭayr by Imam Mohammad Ghazali is the first report on the birds' travel, which is a mystical story and is written in Arabic in brief like Buali's epistle. The uncommon point in history is that this work has been written or translated by Khajeh Ahmad Ghazal at the era of the original author .

Like other books of Miraj Nameh, the story begins with the ascension without mentioning the previous descending trend and the soul imprisonment in the body cage that has been added by Ibn Sina to his troy. Hence, the work of Ghazali is similar to the book of Attar with the difference that the birds in story of Ghazali face the king of birds as the God of Holy Sami Book after reaching to their destination. The God is manifested as a world king with some traits like Iranian metaphysic face. Although the birds of Ghazali do not see the God, the barrier for this visit is the wall of castle or far distance not lack of visibility. Duality of the creator and creature is obvious in story written by Ghazali; while in the book of Attar (the conference of birds), when the herald rises the curtains in front of the mirror, they see the simorg (thirty birds) in the mirror. In other words, they see themselves in the mirror and duality disappears:

They saw the face of Simurgh found that the Simurgh was themselves (thirty (si) birds (morg))

They were wondering did not know they were this or that? (Attar, 2014)

The other issue is the conference of the birds on the need for a king that was mentioned in Bab Boom and Ghorab of Kalila and Demna for first time then in epistle by Akhavan Alsafa and resalat al-tayr by Ghazali, and the conference of the birds written by Attar .

According to comparison between Ghazali and Attar:

1. The structure of both of narrations is based on the narrative style.

2. The conference of the birds is a long story, Attar has interrupted it many times and included many side stories, and this method is used even after the end of story. Attar mentions the end of the main story when anecdote 163 is finished, but he opens a new chapter entitled the book features then ends the book by narrating 133 side anecdotes. In contrary, there is not a considerable difference between the book of Ghazali and Attar despite its brief content and structure .

3. In both of stories, the birds need an absolute leader and this is a barrier in narration, stories begins with the conference of birds and their consensus on the same belief, then the stories continue with the birds' ascension and the problem is solved.

The birds gathered together,,, and decided to visit the king… (Ghazali, 2015) .

The birds in the world gathered all kinds of the birds went there

All of them agreed that the world needs a powerful king

They decided to help each other to find and visit the king (Attar, 2014)

4. The Simurgh's court is the allegorical destination of travel in both of stories. The light and darkness veils and dignity in the conference of the birds have created interesting connection with this symbolic place.

5. There are some differences between the main structure of Attar's anecdote and Ghazali's story, which one of these differences belongs to the apparent structure of these stories. In anecdote written by Ghazali, story begins with the conference of the birds while this conference is hold with delay and citing several negotiations in the book of Attar.

6. The other difference is narrative style of these two stories is the useful leadership of Hoopoe in the conference of the birds, while such leadership does not exist in another story. The final selection of Hoopoe is based on his beneficial leadership and help .

Said: oh Birds, I am with you without doubt I am the devotee of the god also the messenger (Attar, 2014).

7. In Resalst al-Tayr, the story begins with the birds' consensus on the leadership of the Simurgh and searching for the Simurgh: Va ghad vajadu al-khabar an

estitanha fi mavaten al-ez (al-gharb) va taghararha fi baz al-jazaer (Ghazali, 2015). In the conference of birds, the story is formed by citing the start of Simurgh story and expressing excuse of the birds and answers of hoopoe to the birds and other relevant anecdotes .

8. In Resalat al-Tayr, a secret messenger prevents the birds from continuing the journey .

Va la talghu beaydikom ela altahlake…. faenkom en faraghtom ou tanakom zaaftom ahzanakom (Ghazali, 2015)

There are a lot deserts and seas in the way do not think that this is a short way.

A hero should start this journey, as there is a far distance and deep sea (Attar, 2014, 728).

9. In Resalat Al-Tayr, the birds do not listen to the warns of the secret messenger:

In the conference of the birds, the final step is taken by questions and answers exchanged between the bird and hoopoe as well as expressing other anecdotes and seven valleys .

Hence, the wayfarers rahloo fi mahjah al-ekhtiar… fahlak man kan men belad al-hor fi belad al-bard va maat men kan belad al-hor va tasaraf fihem al-savaegh va tahkamat alim al-avasef… (Ghazali, 2015, p. 47).

Some of birds were drowned some others were lost

Some of them get on the top of mountains and died of thirst and frustration (Attar, 2014)

Finally, a number of birds reaches to the king court and see an endless magnificence surprisingly:

...khalasto menhom ghalile ela jazirat al-molk va nazalu befanae va estazalu bejenabe… (Ghazali, 2015)

Finally, from the thousands of birds a few birds reached there

They saw a great king full of intelligence and kenning (Attar, 2014)

10. In the rest of the story, Ghazali follows some questions and answers, which are different with same questions and answers at the first part of the conference of the

birds. In the latter, birds make excuses, while the birds in first work speak about the greatness of king and weakness of wayfarers .

Fataghadam ela baz sokan al-hazare en yasalahom ma lazi hamlahom ala alhozoor. Faghalu: hazarna latakun malikana. Faghil lahom ataabatom fanahno almolk shatom ou abitom jetom ou zahabtom la haja bana alaykom… (Ghazali, 2015) .

The birds said that we came to this court to see the king of us, Simurgh

The messenger said to the birds you are like a flower in the heart of other birds

You are the only king the eternal king of the world (Attar, 2014)

Despite some differences, priority and delay in the narration, both stories ends with a similar conclusion :

Falama…. Aysoo va khajaloo khabat zanonahom fataatlu… ghil lahom…. Layass men ruh allah ella alghom alkaferoun… (Ghazali, 2015) .

When they became free of the world' belongings they became pure on the light of the messenger

The sunlight appeared and they became alive (Attar, 2014)

11. There is a difference between these two narrations of resalat (epistle) and the conference of the birds by showing different results:

Falama estaaneso baad en astiasoo…. Va vasaghu beghabze al-karam… salu an refaghehem… faghil: va la tahsabna alazin ghatalu fi sabil allah amvatan bal ahyaa…. Faenkom fi hejab alghara vaestar alboshriye… (Ghazali, 2015).

When those thirty birds looked they saw the Simurgh

They saw themselves in the mirror the Simurgh was the thirty birds (Attar, 2014)

At the end of story when the wayfarers talk about the misery of the dead birds during the journey, it is stated that:

…va lavarednahom ledaoonahom, laken karahnahom fataradnahom…. Nahno aghlaghnakom fahamalnakom (Ghazali, 2015) .

You passed through a lot of valleys you taught bravery to anyone you saw

You did the right thing you learnt the divine characteristics

You became interested in the love of God you found in this way the God

They saw the god face finally the shadow became lost in the sun (Attar, 2015)

At the end, both of narrators insist on the dominance of the divine power and the worldly weakness to understand the secret logic of divine world .

Attar pays more attention to the use of middle tales, use of initiative titles, description of incidents, and characterization of great characters while Ghazali considers a narrative style in which, unknown heroes are introduced and stories are narrated briefly .

There are common points in both anecdotes: an omniscient narrator narrates the stories and the travel is the base of both, common destination of journey in both stories, dynamism of characters and dominance of divine power that helps to find the reason and evidences (Koupa, 2016).

DISCUSION

The connection and harmony between mythical elements of Iran and Islamic mysticism with interpretations of mysterious stories under the light of Illumination School is rooted in the Persian literature so that mythical stories are revived under the light of this wisdom.

The descriptions cited by Tooba and Simurgh that lives over the home of Tooba in book of Aql-i Surkh (The Red Intellect) remind the Vispobish Tree and Saen Bird in Rashn Yasht (Pournamdarian, 2017, p. 76).

Sheykh Ishraq explains that Tooba Tree is implanted among one of 11 Qaf mountains. However, this tree is placed among the Farakhkart Sea (a mythical sea) in pre-Islamic works.

Qaf Mountain also has been considered as the Alborz Mountain and is a cosmic mountain equivalent to the cosmic tree (Pournamdarian, 2016, p. 194). In Risalat al-Tayr (The Treatise of the Bird) written by Suhrawardi, all of mythical aspects of simurgh are described and Simurgh is manifested with modern interpretations in brilliant Islamic culture.

Simurgh is considered as a mysterious story in which, the human soul goes back to its divine origin and shows itself as an astonishing rainbow in the sky of Attar's book.

The significant point in stories narrated by Suhrawardi and Mantiq-at-Tayr of Attar can be seen in the Red Intellect when Esfandiyar is murdered and the relationship between Simurgh and the sun is approved.

In this story, Rustam becomes ready for fight against Esfandiyar; he passes by Esfandyar and stands in front of the Simurgh like a mirror then two lights reflect toward the eyes of Esfandyar and these divine lights kill him.

Henry Corbin interprets the vulnerability of Esfandyar's eyes as his open conscience eye, this is a kind of awareness that persuades a mystic forget the life in this world hoping to better life hereafter (Shayegan, 2017, p. 374).

This interpretation at the end of Mantiq-at-Tayr of Attar can be also seen. After reaching a few numbers of birds out of hundred thousand birds to the Simurgh place after crossing the seven valleys (Quest, Love, Knowledge, Detachment, Unity, Wonderment, Poverty and Annihilation), Attar presents the highest mystical experience of himself and ends the story:

When the birds came in love to see Simurgh the birds felt pain in their bodies

There was a huge detachment in them the simurgh was kind enough

The messenger came and opened the door pulled the curtains back one by one

The world became unveiled the brilliant light streamed in (Attar, 2014, p. 425)

Sheykh Ishrq links the mystical simurgh to mythical simurgh of Shahnameh in his works. He grasped the main philosophical concepts of ancient Iran as well as the concept of darkness light using Islamic philosophy ad created a new concept called Ishraq philosophy (Illumination).

CONCLUSION

The most important skill of Attar is replacement of the phoenix with the word simurgh or Simurgh by using alliteration device (simurgh, Si Murgh) that indicates the skill of Attar. In this story, hundreds birds that seek the Simurgh, start a hazardous journey but only 30 birds can reach there and see themselves in the mirror of truth .

In this allegorical anecdote, Simurgh represents an absolute truth and a divine essence. This simurgh live in the sky, the earth is under her shadow, and any particle in the world is a mirror reflecting her light. As if this world changes its colors

like simurgh and all figures and forms show a part of simurgh's face. Simurgh links the physical world to its creature.

Therefore, the legend of simurgh in Mantiq-at-Tayr written by Attar is a unique beautiful creature that manifests the entire existence; it is stated, the god is beautiful and like beauty (Kalini, 2015). As it was mentioned in allegory of the world creation, Simurgh is a collection of world beauties full of colors and lights. Such symbol can direct all of truth seekers toward their destination because as the painters in past used to learn this art from China's painters, the truth seekers should see the beauties in the world as a small part of the god beauty in order to find the truth and be aware of the eternal divine light.

Besides the manifestation of simurgh in Mantiq-at-Tayr, the poetic character of this legendary bird can be seen in other works of Attar and this is a considerable point because as this deep and great concept of Simurgh is a key for a box full of secrets and mysteries. In fact, the name of Simurgh reflects all of the mystical thoughts and beliefs of Attar .

Such brief expression allows the reader to think deeply and find the secret of simurgh myth without any direct explanation by the writer of the work.

The modern Islamic-Iranian philosophy has been manifested in Mantiq-at-Tayr within a mystical process. Sheykh Shahab ad-Din Suhrawardi was a creative philosopher with unique thoughts in creating modern Persian culture and literature; accordingly, this writer prepared the field for recreation of myths and legends. Hence, further researches can study Persian epistle of Suhrawardi based on the mythology or study mystical interpretations of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh by Suhrawardi. Such studies not only contribute to find the connections between mythology and mysticism but also encourage the creative researchers to create and recreate cultural values and national identity.

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