

Exploration of Binary Oppositions in Nizami's Romantic Couplet Poems in Lyrical Literature

Exploración de las oposiciones binarias en los poemas de coplas románticas de Nizami en la literatura lírica

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Abstract

Nezami's romantic poems have brought about huge evolutions and changes in Iran's literary space and this issue can be well discerned in the literary works authored after him. The literature of the world incorporates a large part of the human emotions, affections and thoughts influencing all the aspects of social and individual life. Epical, resistance, lyrical, theosophical and other types of literature all point to the large systems of texts each of which embrace truths of the world in a subject-specific manner. The present study explores the binary oppositions in the stories of Laili and Majnoun and Khosrow and Shirin. Interesting results can be obtained in a comparison of the two romantic poetical sets of "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Laili and Majnoun" including the idea that these two poetical sets reflect different cultures and issues. Khosrow and Shirin introduces the pre-Islam Iran's status along with the customs and traditions of Sassanid kings and an open and well-calculated culture and Laili and Majnoun introduces the tribal life along with an image of the rigid customs and traditions as well as the closed culture of primitive Arabs. Love is earthly and virtual in Khosrow and Shirin and it transcends beyond the tangible world in Laili and Majnoun and seems to be more theosophical. The love of "Majnoun and Farhad" and "Laili and Shirin" and their death are very similar to one another and comparable. In Khosrow and Shirin, Shirin's face overlooks the entire story and the outstanding role of Majnoun is clearly evident in the story of Laili and Majnoun.

Keywords: Nezami Ganjavi, Laili and Majnoun, Khosrow and Shirin, love, lyrical literature.

Resumen

Los poemas románticos de Nezami han provocado enormes evoluciones y cambios en el espacio literario de Irán, y este tema se puede discernir bien en las obras literarias creadas después de él. La literatura del mundo incorpora una gran parte de las emociones, afectos y pensamientos humanos que influyen en todos los aspectos de la vida social e individual. Épicos, de resistencia, líricos, teosóficos y otros tipos de literatura apuntan a los grandes sistemas de textos, cada uno de los cuales abarca las verdades del mundo de una manera específica del tema. El presente estudio explora las oposiciones binarias en las historias de Laili y Majnoun y Khosrow y Shirin. Se pueden obtener resultados interesantes en una comparación de los dos conjuntos poéticos románticos de "Khosrow y Shirin" y "Laili y Majnoun", incluida la idea de que estos dos conjuntos poéticos reflejan diferentes culturas y problemas. Khosrow y Shirin presentan el estado del Irán anterior al Islam, junto con las costumbres y tradiciones de los reyes sasánidas y una cultura abierta y bien calculada, y Laili y Majnoun presentan la vida tribal junto con una imagen de las costumbres y tradiciones rígidas, así como de la cultura cerrada. cultura de los árabes primitivos. El amor es terrenal y virtual en Khosrow y Shirin y trasciende más allá del mundo tangible en Laili y Majnoun y parece ser más teosófico. El amor de "Majnoun y Farhad" y "Laili y Shirin" y su muerte son muy similares entre sí y comparables. En Khosrow y Shirin, el rostro de Shirin pasa por alto toda la historia y el destacado papel de Majnoun es claramente evidente en la historia de Laili y Majnoun.

Palabras clave: Nezami Ganjavi, Laili y Majnoun, Khosrow y Shirin, amor, literatura lírica.

Introduction

In the turn of the sixth hegira century, the poetical dimension of the stories, especially the ceremonial and lyrical stories, was maximally perfected by Nezami Ganjavi in such works as *Khosrow and Shirin* and *Laili and Majnoun*. He transformed several well-known stories of his time into poetry. Amongst the composers of the ceremonial and romantic stories, no other poet than him has succeeded in showcasing his versatility and vigor; this poet's visualization of it is very notable and his effect on the evolution history of this art has made him own a fruitful accomplishment in lyrical poetry to the extent that most of the composers of the romantic poems have created many artworks subject to the impression of his story-processing style and method (Shamisa, 2002, p.54). The binary oppositions are enumerated amongst the intellectual structuralism foundations with them being rooted in the linguistic theories by Saussure from whose perspective binary oppositions are the most basic units forming the system of his language (see also, Chandler, 2009, pp.15-146 and Sojudi, 2004, pp.74-81). Binary oppositions somehow form the intellectual core of many of the tribes and communities both in the old communities and the modern communities that the thoughts and recognitions are laid on the foundation of oppositions. The recognition of the world's creator and the proofs of justifying the source of existence are under the influence of such oppositions as cause and effect, necessary and possible beings and neutral existence, newly-occurred existence and prior existence and so forth (Nabilou, 2014, p.71).

In order to clarify the issue, it is necessary to deal with three cases of binary oppositions in *Laili and Majnoun* and *Khosrow and Shirin*.

At first, the issue of veneration of the father and mother and elders is posited as, in the story of *Laili and Majnoun*, when the father of *Laili* gives a positive answer to *Ibn Salam* without asking *Laili*'s permission and she does not object to her father's idea which has been against hers.

"Upon hearing the news, *Laili* became extremely upset by her father"

"She was sighing behind the curtain but she did not let her father know"

"When her father left her privacy; her daffodil became crimson out of too much crying"

"She shed blood out of her eyes so intensively that she could settle down the dust on her path" (Vahid Dastgerdi, 2012, p.120)

On the contrary, in the story of *Khosrow and Shirin*, the latter became so enchanted and delighted by an image drawn of the former by *Shapour* that she went to see him without asking

permission and making coordination with *Mahin*, her aunt.

"The army-crushing idol was riding on the back of her horse, *Shabdiz*; she was a dashing rider and her horse was bolting"

"When her horse darted away from amongst her companions; she was far ahead of them"

"At night, those stars appeared in the court of *Lady Mahin* without the shining of the moon"

"They started walking before her bed and said bitter things about *Shirin*"

"That what games the planet played at night; and kidnapped her on her horse"

"Upon hearing these words, *Lady Mahin* started speaking about the old sorrows" (Vahid Dastgerdi, 2000, p.74)

Another binary opposition seen in the story is in such a way that *Majnoun* falls so much in *Laili*'s love that he is not even ready to marry anybody else even after hearing that she has got married and *Majnoun* chooses the companion of the wild and brutal animals.

"He leaned on the neck of zebra; he put his head on the thigh of the elk"

"*Lion* was kneeling on his hip as it is holding a sword in his hand like humans"

"For guarding him, wolf has gone to sacrifice its life as his vanguard"

"The wildly born ferocious panther has become a humble animal with mild temperaments at his side" (Vahid Dastgerdi, 2012, p.147).

Binary Oppositions:

The western philosophical-scientific mindset is laid on the foundation of bipolar elements. It is a mindset that has been firstly created and then considered as a real issue: true/false, goodness/badness, light/dark, man/woman, life/death, psyche/physique and so forth are examples of binary oppositions with the first part being always superior and the second part always subordinate, i.e. the truth is always superior to the false and the same holds for goodness and badness, man and woman, life and death and psyche and physique. In other words, one's presence negates the other's. It can be stated that one of these poles is the imperfect and unevolved form of the other. Badness is the unevolved and imperfect type of the goodness and so forth. The belief in the dual poles has resulted in the practical founding of hierarchy based on granting superiority to and rendering distinct the presence of a pole in respect to the absence of the other (Ahmadi, 2002, p.384).

Binary oppositions are the essences of the structuralism mindset. Jonathan Culler says: "truly, the relations considered as the most important in a structural investigation are the simplest, as well: binary oppositions. Lingual

pattern ... dragged the structuralism followers to the thinking about the body of the binary terms and instigated them to search for the functional oppositions in every of their research subjects" (Culler, 2002, p.16). These oppositions are not only rooted in the human thought but examples of them can be also found in the nature's system: day/night. Mankind has always been confronted with these oppositions in the nature's system and it is by categorization of them that he has been able to bestow meaning to his peripheral world.

In the area of literature and art, as well, notable numbers of oppositions can be found; in most of the artworks, there are binary oppositions like oldness and youngness, blackness and whiteness, death and life, friend and foe and victory and defeat. These oppositions occasionally undergo metamorphosis in various periods of time in such a way that sometimes the sensory matters and sometimes the intellectual matters prevail in the course of Persian literature's history; it has also been so that the earthly and corporeal poems are deployed against the spiritual and theosophical ones" (Nabilou, 2014, p.73).

Binary Oppositions and Structuralism:

Structuralism followers have realized binary oppositions as pillars of language, recognition and human relations. Jakobson states that "binary oppositions are hidden in the essence of language; knowing of these oppositions is the first lingual action learnt by a child; they are the most natural and the most succinct of the codes" (Jakobson, 1958, pp.47-49). Therefore, the thing that causes a child discern the difference between the two words of "bull" and "pull" is the difference between the two phonemes of /b/ and /p/ that prevent these words from being identically heard. Jakobson states that "we identify a phoneme by unconscious application of a number of contrasts rendering it feasible for us to distinguish between the similar phonemes and sounds" (Selden, 1997, p.13-17). The structuralism followers' use of this discretion about the literary structures went beyond the phonemes; this method is applied as the general example of constructs. Levi Strauss adopted a strategy that dealt with a thing beyond the level of myth to figure out the structural similarities between the apparently different narrations. The thing that is notable about him is that he claimed the recognition of universal principles based on the oppositions existent in the language with its declaration having been indicative of the narrative structure of the myth. He used the language analysis method as a set of oppositions amongst the smallest possible elements, phonemes, for analyzing the myths. The analysis of the story of Oedipus shows a short summary of his method. He recognized many

events, actions and key relations as the primary elements of myth or mythemes and subsequently showcased their identical functions through rearranging them. Finally, such an order helped Strauss reach a formula for explaining myths and, more importantly, he came to the conclusion that one can recognize an intellectual quality that created the old myths and caused the generation of a modern science. On the other hand, the discussion about the binary oppositions is one of the essential foundations and concepts in criticizing theories on structuralism and linguistics and semiotics. The traces of the binary oppositions can be tracked to the theories by most of the structuralism followers, especially the ones following narratological structuralism". (Bart, 1992, p.15)

Lyrical Literature:

Lyrical literature originally includes the poems that present the personal emotions and affections. Such poems were short and recited in a rhythm with the harper's sound in Greek; so, song-like poems are termed layric in foreign languages. Layric might have been translated in the course of historical periods into lyric following the lead of Arabs who called the romantic and affective poems "Al-She'er al-Qena'ei" to mean romantic and ceremonial poems. Anyway, its old equivalent is sonnet. It has to be noted that a short and non-narrative poem is meant by lyrical poem in European literature wherein the speaker only expresses his or her emotions. If the poem is long and narrative such as Khosrow and Shirin and Laili and Majnoun, it is called fictional lyrical or dramatic poetry" (Shamisa, 2000, pp.133-134).

Lyrical poetry is the expression of the tendencies, viewpoints and needs that are formed in the world of the poet's emotions and affections in relation to the life issues such as individual or social (Ebadiyan, 2001, p.133).

"A series of the stories explaining about loves and hearts' bounds and sometimes end unhappily and occasionally happily; these account for a vast quotient of the poetical literature of Iran's art treasury. In these poems, the attachments of the hearts are more exciting and more fervent. These poems are a lot more detailed and full of details' explication and explanations of the beloveds' faces and heights and descriptions of the natural landscapes" (Suratgar, 1970, pp.7&8).

Summary of the Two Stories of "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Laili and Majnoun":

Khosrow and Shirin:

The primary framework of this story is in this way that Khosrow, an Iranian prince, and Shirin, niece of Lady Arman, start searching for one another by



the guidance and solution-seeking of Shapour, Khosrow's servant; after a series of separations and reunifications, they eventually unite; neither the enchantments by Maryam and Shekar inhibit Khosrow from loving Shirin nor the pains and needs of mountain-digging Farhad tempt Shirin who is in love with Khosrow. The sorrowful destiny of the two beloved features a pain and grief for it has been seasoned by the real love, the love of the frenzies and those that have failed to unite with their beloved: at night, Khosrow is murdered at the side of Shirin by the hands of a child (Shiruyeh) who is in his heart, his rival, as well (Zarrinkoub, 1995, pp.196-197; see also, Thervat, 1994, pp.480-490).

Laili and Majnoun:

It is the story presented in Nezami's third book of couplet poems composed by him and dedicated to Shervan Shah Abu Al-Mozaffar Ibn Manuchehr in 1188. Nezami has composed this story in 4700 verses and in a short while (less than four months) and it seems that he has made revisions in it later on; so this poetical story has been seemingly finished in 1192. It is an old Arabic story of a sad romance. Ibn Nadim mentions "Majnoun and Laili" amongst the lovers who lived during pre-Islam and Islamic periods and books have been written about them (Ibn Nadim, 1034). Moreover, Ibn Qotaybeh (*Al-She'er wa Al-Sho'ara'a*, 1810, pp.355-364) and Abu Al-Faraj Isfahani (*Al-Aqani*, v.1, pp.304-344 and v.2, pp.2-17) and Ibn Nabateh (*Sarh Al-Oyun*, pp.244-247), as well, have pointed to this story in details. Therefore, Nezami has not been inventive in telling this story but he has made a lot of changes in the story when transforming it into poetry (Safa, 1988, 2/803). Anyway, the story's general framework can be compared with the story of Daphnis and Chloe and even with the narration of Romeo and Juliet. It is the story of a love full of pain and cure that make two warring tribes faced with a difficult issue. It is a love that beings between a boy named Qais or Qais Ibn Amer and Laili, a classmate of him, at school. The Arabian zeal and bigotry places a lot of barriers on the path of this ardent and innocent love. Laili goes to the house of an unwanted husband called Ibn Salam and Qais who is not benefited by his father's intervention and Noufel's intercession becomes a real insane. He goes to the desert and seeks the company of the animals therein; neither the death news of his father and mother who die away from him makes him stop such a bewitchment nor the death news of Ibn Salam helps him achieve reunification and reunion. In between, Laili dies with no pleasure of this love and, after going to her grave, Majnoun shouts "O dear" and loses his life for his beloved.

Anyhow, this story is full of pain and grief and, as put by some, its main character, Majnoun Bani Amer, as well, if having never lived in this world, has not also been invented by Nezami and his name and the poem ascribed to him has been existent at least three or four centuries before its being cited by the storyteller of Ganjeh (Zarrinkoub, 1995, p.197).

1. Semantic Oppositions in the Two Poems of "Khosrow and Shirin" and "Laili and Majnoun":

Hakim Nezami Ganjavi left the world of mortification and asceticism in Makhzan Al-Asrar to enter the world of love in Khosrow and Shirin by the request of his contemporary rulers (the world champion, Atabak). Of course, the love of Hakim for his beloved, Afagh, who had then just passed away should not be considered as having had no effect in such a shift. Several years after composing this poem, Neazami begins composing the story of Laili and Majnoun by the request of Abu Al-Mozaffar Akhastan Ibn Manuchehr, king of Shervan. In this section, efforts are made to investigate and analyze the two stories from various aspects of semantic oppositions.

1.1. Primitiveness and Civility:

These two romantic poems are reflective of two classes, cultures and societies of different types: one, Khosrow and Shirin, is a story expressing the statuses of Iran before Islam with an image of the customs and traditions of Sassanid Kings; the other, Laili and Majnoun is a story portraying a tribal life with an image of sands and desert and rigid traditions of primitive Arabs.

"Laili" has been brought up in a society that conjectures amorous attachment and belonging as a prelude to a deviation the result of which would be definitely a fall into the dreadful hells of corruption and prostitution; and, it is due to the implications of such a belief that the entire power of the tribe is spent on keeping water away from water or, in more expressive terms, fire from cotton so that the human beings, especially the sin-prone and ignorant persons, might be subsequently saved from sinking into eternal loss even if the ground is set for perpetrating sins. In such an environment, a childish smile might become a mark of disgrace on the forehead of all the family members and even the tribe. The market of love is quite prosperous in this hot sandy land and the God's accountant is present not only in the market but also in the depths of the black tents and backyards of the houses. All the people, from the small school-going children to the old individuals of the tribe, are careful for their own and others' behaviors. The first smile of love by "Laili" for "Majnoun" in the small space of the school does not remain hidden either from

the sharp-sighted eyes of the teacher who has a stick in his hand or from the curious eyes of the classmates.

Nezami constructs a beautiful image through adopting a deep approach and exercising sharp-sightedness. It is an image of the women's limitations and the oppressions they have to tolerate and/or the image of the destiny to which the women should incumbently give up. Laili is also presented in this story to exemplify a certain type and character because she is also a captive of these same bigotries and constraints and submitted to her destiny in such a way that Laili envies and mourns about her being a woman:

"Although he is a symbol of pain, he is not a woman like me but a man"

"His body is not tortured like me and he can go wherever he wants"

"Although a woman might conquer a fighter, she is a woman because she has been a woman"

"Marry a woman for she is chivalrous in blood but she is still a woman even if a lion" (Nezami, 2007, p.161)

In this land of purity and piety, unlucky are the girl and boy who exchange a glance of interest for even the classmate children, with all their small age and unsophistication, enumerate a glance with such innocence amongst the dead sins and begin divulging scandal while clapping and singing songs and advance the quarrel and furor to the stage that the zealous father prevents the playful girl from going to school and incarcerates her to a life inside the fences of harem; and, the poor "Qais" becomes distressed and insane by the raid of his peers' sarcasm; and, an event with such simplicity is transformed into an exciting story replete with absurd words and fables with the local poets and song composers cast their explications of this love into the mold of songs and the wanderers start spreading this story mouth-to-mouth in the alleys and markets to the extent that the girl who has been inhibited from going to school and has sought seclusion in the backyard becomes the hot topic of the sonnet composers and also the subject of the instrumentalists in their playing of drums; and, such a touchy boy heads towards the mountains and moors and deserts.

But, in the land of Shirin, there is no prohibition of the conversation and socialization of men and women. Boys and girls sit together and go hiking and hunting together and take part in the feasts and parties together. How wonderful it is that the personalities of the girls guard their chastity even in the course of their socialization for they have a sheriff inside their own selves instead of fearing their fathers and being concerned with what the backbiters say and believe in respect for themselves. The daughters, mothers and elders know family as their benevolent counselor and the

friendly warning influences their hearts and souls so deeply that the temptations of a young capricious prince like Parviz cannot infiltrate through the steel fence of their chastity. In the entirety of the story of "Khosrow and Shirin", no verse and cue is seen indicating that a benevolent and prudent offspring of Adam has risen up to enjoin depravities and criticize the illogical action by Shirin. It seems as if all the people from this part of the world, from Armenia to the western boundaries of Iran and Qasr-e-Shirin, are fair sinners who have heard the story of "Isa" and stoning of the fornicator and retrieve the letter of their own actions upon being presented with the others' sins and generously and by the order of a sage close their fault-finding eyes to the youths' chivalrous actions and braveries.

Interaction and Opposition:

Khosrow feels threat in the presence of his rival and thinks of a solution for removing him from his route whereas Majnoun tolerates Ibn Salam and suffices solely to the writing of a letter of complaint to his beloved and complains about her marriage to another person and breaking of the promise she had made to him.

The heroines of the two poems are also in a vivid contrast. Both of the women have barriers showed up on the path to their loves. These separating blockades are occasionally others including the Roman Maryam and the Arab Ibn Salam and occasionally their beloved men. Majnoun and Khosrow veil their unification even though they are lovers of their counterpart beloveds and cause Laili and Shirin to suffer pains: Majnoun by his abnormal and uncommon insanities that "I am a lover of my beloved and have fallen in love with her" and Khosrow by his capricious and lustful and domineering heart that "I should pick up a flower from every grassland I reach and leave it for another".

These two innocent women of the history of love suffer from the irrational movements of their beloved men and what a vivid difference can be seen in the reaction of these two women to the two men's carving of impediments.

Virtual Love and Theosophical Love:

The love in the story of Khosrow and Shirin differs from that in the story of Laili and Majnoun. In the former, there is a love in the marital life, i.e. the virtual love of a man for another woman and a woman for another man, posited in addition to the ancillary story of the love between Farhad and Shirin; but, in the latter, although it is the love and being a lover apparently at work, they are just means for expressing a theosophical love. In other words,



the lover and beloved in the story of Khosrow and Shirin as in the story of Veis and Ramin are in the corporeal and earthy world but they are in a world beyond tangibles in the story of Laili and Majnoun.

The love between Khosrow and Shirin features an earthly tint and odor; so, it ends in unification but loves like the enchantments of Qais and Farhad do not end with unification since they are ethereal and heavenly. Even where Khosrow's love loses its earthly color and steps into the domain of the heavens, the unification loses its meaning and Shirin and Khosrow say farewell to the world and its virtual loves in the corner of Shiruyeh's dark jail and start ascending to the higher world in search of another love and unification.

Mansour Servat has ideas in this regard. He investigates the personality of Khosrow in four sections under such titles as the young Khosrow, Khosrow and capricious Parviz, Khosrow Parviz, the king, and Khosrow Parviz, the lover. He points to and insists on his lustfulness and hedonism more than any other of his characteristics. Dr. Parviz Servat has the following words about the personality of Shirin: "therefore, she changes and evolves based on the story into a clean love"

The issue is completely different about Laili and Majnoun. These two characters can be investigated within the format of allegorical personalities. That is because such a love that is not followed by any logic and does not feature a color of truth should surely have a message to deliver:

"He said this and fell on the soil; the spectators all became sad"

"They gracefully started to think of a solution for him and took him towards home"

"The love which is not eternal but a play of the youth's lust"

"It is not love but entirely imagination and it is eternally decadence"

"As the lofty name of the love, Majnoun is the cognizance of the love in whole"

Gender:

In Nezami's narration, Shirin is the figure that overlooks the entire story of Khosrow and Shirin. The visage of Shirin distinctly overshadows the entire characters and scenes of the story even with all the ebbs and flows of the events and incidents occurring in the story with nothing being more brilliant and more considerable than the Shirin's existence amongst the glory and magnificence of Khosrow Parviz. However, in the story of Laili and Majnoun, the role of Majnoun is well evident in the entire story. Of course, Laili shares this

destiny with him but she does not have the power of Majnoun's determination. Having become restless by Love and getting accustomed to the life with the savages in the deserts and being unable to sleep and eat out of the enchantment, Majnoun resists at the cost of his life with a robust determination and a true love. His love for his coy mistress is not chained by secretiveness and reticence. He is an insane person who does not care for name and fame and tearing apart the curtain of courtesy is the prerequisite to his mentality. It is worth mentioning that although Laili's love is another manifestation of love for a beloved and the coin's other side on which Majnoun's name has been written, the purity and simplicity of her love is occasionally poisoned by the womanly calculations and expediciencies that impose the observance of the inherited ancestral customs and traditions on the female gender in a desert life and even in the urban society.

Restriction by Tradition and Freedom:

The utopia sought by Nezami in Khosrow and Shirin is exactly the opposite point of Laili and Majnoun's world of asceticism and mortification and seclusion and grief. It is a world wherein a person can think of nothing else but love and unification. It is a world wherein Khosrow forgets his kingly splendor for his beloved; Shirin sacrifices her throne for love and Shiruyeh murders his father for its sake. Nezami's utopia is actualized in the poetical set of Khosrow and Shirin by the victory of love over pleasure; however, this is a kingly path that only ends in the palace of the kings. Only a king like Khosrow could resume a self-recognition from the abyss of selfishness and ascend to the apex of the others' love in the tumult of lust and pleasure ... the gate of this no man's land was closed to the general public and its key was firmly held by Khosrow in his hand ...

Hearing and Seeing:

In both of the stories, both the fathers of Khosrow Parviz and Majnoun only happen to have sons after petitions and entreaties to the God and distributing alms amongst the poor on His path. In the story of Khosrow and Shirin, Khosrow falls in an ardent love of the unseen beloved upon hearing the descriptions of Shirin from Shapour who is subsequently dispatched to Armenia for finding her. But, in the story of Laili and Majnoun, the latter gets acquainted with the former in a school and falls in love with her. In both of these poetical sets, beautiful and detailed descriptions have been given about Shirin and Laili. Of course, Shirin's description is more detailed than Laili's. In both

of the stories, the love begins from Khosrow and Majnoun. Shirin and Laili fall in love in a second stage. Upon hearing the descriptions of Shirin from Shapour, Khosrow craves to see her:

“When Shapour told her descriptions, the consciousness of his mind fell asleep and love woke up”

“Upon hearing those words, Khosrow became so distressed that he could not calm down and sleep due to that melancholy”

“He was waiting to hear more about the story every day and nothing else could remain in his memory”

Majnoun, as well, falls in love with Laili in the school upon seeing her:

“Upon seeing her, Qais presented her with his love and bought her love at the cost of the love of his heart”

“She was also searching for the company of Qais and love was growing in their chests”

“Love came and presented them with a crude beaker; a beaker exchanged for the pearl of the crude dispositions”

“Getting drunken by the first beaker is improbable; the unfallen person’s fall is hard”

“Upon smelling the flower of love, they get accustomed to one another forever”

Religiosity and Religion Evasion:

The story of Laili and Majnoun is the manifestation of entreaty and petition to the God along with practicing of a love for an earthly creature. “Nezami chooses night for showcasing Majnoun’s saying of prayers and entreaty to the God. In this book of couplet poems, Nezami constructs scenes for resolving and accomplishing tasks and displays lovers praying to the God behind the curtain of love. Here, Nezami creates the scenes via describing the settings and colors”.

“It was a brilliant night as bright as the day with sky being completely fresh like the greenness of the rosary”

“A hundred kinds of morning stars are being displayed by the sky all in one color”

“Majnoun was playing tricks on the wheel for making an image”

“First, he looked at Venus and said ‘O’ the star on which luck is pending”

“Do me a favor out of the graces you have and open the door of hope”

In another part of this story that is related to Majnoun’s petition to the divine court of the God, He falls asleep after saying a lot of prayers and sees in his dream that a tree is rising up to the sky and that a bird is jumping on its branches and pouring pearls on his head from its mouth. Upon waking up, Majnoun takes this dream as a sign of a good omen and it becomes so; she is delivered a letter from Laili and this is why Nezami makes

use of the day space and brightness:

“In sleep, his luck showed him that his tree grows from the soil to the peak of the sky”

“A bird started jumping on the branches and flew impudently towards him”

“When the dreamer woke up, the morning rose up from the horizon of the sky”

“It was a day but what day? A world-illuminating day that had brightened the eyes of everyone”

“His morning had been blown from the paradise and his luck had been touched by the breath of Jesus”

On the contrary, Khosrow is so much indulged in a life of pleasure that he rarely remembers that he has to say prayers to the God and express his thankfulness to Him. One of the few cases in which his worshipping of the God has been mentioned is when he dreams about his great grandfather and he begins praising the God upon getting up. Another case is the letter he begins with the name of the God and writes it to Shirin to inform her of Farhad’s death. Although there are few signs indicating Khosrow’s seeking of the God, emphasis has been made on his religiosity and adherence to the rituals. Khosrow fanatically exercises the rites and rituals of Zoroastrianism. When he invites Lady Mahin to a party, he asks a magus to perform the tradition of tribute and setting a stick on fire:

“Khosrow used to perform the tradition of tribute and lighting a stick in every meal”

“The tradition of tribute and lighting is so and he is an outstanding expert in tasting food”

When he was getting married to Shirin, he determined the amount of marriage portion for her as ruled by the magi and it was after the performance of the marriage customs by the magi that he enters a marital life with her. His bias towards Zoroastrianism and his adherence to the rituals are factors barring Khosrow from accepting Islam:

“He told him in a thick tone of voice that O’ gentleman, take the path of Islam and return from atheism”

“He answered him that I will not give up these rituals I have until I have my head on my body”

“How can I give away the traditions and customs my ancestors; I will feel shame if I do so before the previous kings”

Patriarchy and Matriarchy:

In Laili’s land, totalitarianism is cruel and masculinity is tied to the handle of a sword. They even go to such a delicate ceremony as marriage nomination while carrying rigid arrows and beating the drums of war; and, such a free and magnanimous man as Noufel does not absolutely think about the question that “even if you conquered the war and slaughtered Laili’s tribe



and handed the poor girl to Majnoun, how would Laili treat a man who has caused the murder of her father and brother and her relatives in this case?"

Yes, this question does not strike neither the zealous mind of Noufel nor the distressed mind of Majnoun and they are right that such an issue like this does not matter in a society like that. Most of the minions in the kings and commanders' harems are the daughters who have been captivated after their fathers' murder and, based on a generally accepted rule, the entire properties of the rival who is killed in a battle will be possessed by the murderer from horses, cows, palaces and castles to the servants, maids, wives and daughters all of whom become slaves and identical in value.

Conclusions

1) Amongst the most important semantic oppositions in these two poetical sets is the contrast between the cultures governing the two Iranian and Arabic societies. Many of the evidence pieces show that Nezami's storytelling in the story of Khosrow and Shirin is based on the slang elements and narrations and that the story features a specifically Iranian setting and it is this important factor that brings movement, excitement and zeal in the story. The existence of the elements of sleep that, as generally believed, imply the hearing of good news in future (Anushirvan's annunciation of good news to Khosrow in world of dream), falling in love with an unseen woman, existence of magical lands, hero's killing of a lion, belief in the fairies and their roles, haphazard meetings and discontinuous symmetries, bacchanal mindset and seizing of time, multiplicity of allusions and reference to the traditions and customs and allegories and slang narrations are amongst these pieces of evidence. In Laili and Majnoun, as well, the Arabian environment and tint including the wandering in desert and tribal struggles and violent loves is the main theme of the story; however, the details of the landscapes and scenes in Nezami's poem grants remarkable movement and excitement to this static and unchangeable environment to some extent and helps it exit stagnation and uniformness as the characteristics of the spiritless setting of Arabian desert. Cases like description of Majnoun's states and moods, desert, the Arab lover's being accustomed to the desert animals, saying prayers to the stars, Laili's captivity in the chains of the rigid primitive customs, Laili's acceptance of the order of an autocratic father, toleration of an unwanted

husband and others are amongst the cases in accordance with the life in desert and the traditions of primitive life.

- 2) Being adherent to and getting freed of the norms is amongst the most important binary oppositions in the two poetical sets of Laili and Majnoun and Khosrow and Shirin. The lovers in the story of Laili and Majnoun are adherent to the culture of the society and musts of a pure love. Laili speaks a little and articulates less calculated words and her words portray the countenance of a lady living a tribal life but in love in the mind. Majnoun, as well, possesses a lot of the patriarchal society's characteristics with all his insanities.
- 3) One of the opposite concepts in these two poetical sets is the humbleness and pride of the characters. Laili and Majnoun are both humble and modest persons. They accept love with all its rises and falls and there is no sign of coquettishness and pride in their characters. Unlike Laili and Majnoun, Khosrow is a boastful and matured youth in the verge of taking the tenure of such a busy occupation as sultanate. And, Shirin is a coy well-educated girl familiar with the secrets of enchantment and aware of the social situation and her age conditions. She is a girl who is supposed to lean on the throne of Armenia's governance instead of his aunt in near future and take the destiny of the men and women in that territory in her competent hands. The young girl is a fan of hunting, playing sports and recreation; she is not a captive in the harem. It is during one of these hiking trips that he sees the enchanting image of Parviz. The image is the product of the penning fingers and unprecedented talent of Shapour, the illustrator. The attractiveness of the image drags her to pause and contemplation. Finally, upon hearing the descriptions of Parviz from the glib tongue of such a sophisticated royal court attendant as Shapour, she becomes willing to see the owner of the image without any sarcasm by her peers and reproach by relatives and reprimand scorn by the people of her state.

The contrast of the matriarchal and patriarchal society is amongst the other oppositions existent in these two poetical sets. Unlike Laili's patriarchal world, Shirin's world is a universe open to impudence; it is a world the details of which are coordinated with one another. Shirin has been fostered by a woman who is more solid than men. She is an athlete and happiness-seeking and nature-friendly girl who sits on a tamed horse at the time of recreation and goes to play polo along with a group of her peer girls who "do not wear a veil" and are familiar with horse-riding and

battling and defending techniques to the extent that they can “pull out claw from lion and ivory from elephant” in the battlefield. A girl who has grown in such an environment is entangled neither by pestering prudence nor by love-killing pretense regarding her most natural and legitimate right, i.e. choosing of husband. That is because no girl has been hooked in her environment for the crime of being beautiful and no girl has been left alone in the jail of harem and stigmatized with disgrace and defamation mark on her forehead for the

crime of giving a glance of affection so that she might be frightened and learn a lesson and frown in her first glance at the image of Parviz and turn her face away and suffice to a stealthy look from the corner of eye. By the force of her upbringing and her immediate environment, she runs her internal feelings on her tongue with the first sparkle of love.

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