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An Analysis of Sheikh Sanaan's Story Based on Roland Barthes's Theory of Codes

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ABSTRACT

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“Sheikh Sanaan’s” story is one of the most beautiful stories of the Conference of the Birds (Mantiq-ul-Tayr) of Attar of Nishapur. An appeal for this story provides a necessary background for reading it again from the perspective of structuralism. Presenting evidence from the story of Sheikh Sanaan, this paper considers the structure of the story from the perspective of Roland Barthes’s five codes. These codes include: Hermeneutic or enigmatic codes, proairetic codes, symbolic codes, root meaning codes, and cultural codes. The purpose of the research is to analyze the story of Sheik Sanaan in the form of codes indicating how to analyze different types of literary texts using accurate rules and principles.

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1. Introduction

Modern literary approaches such as structuralism and semiotics are indebted to people like Roland Barthes. Roland Gerard Barthes (1915-1980) as the remarkable structuralism critics of the twentieth century was born in France. His studies in the field of semiotics, and the study of signs and symbols gave rise to creating a stream of structuralism and modern criticism. Barthes referred to an active role of a reader in making stories based on evidence in the text by a semiotic analysis of the short story “Sarrasine” by Honore de Balzac. According to Barthes, meaning cannot be determined by an author; but it must

actively be formed by the reader during the process of text analysis. In such an analysis, different codes should be considered for a text that each of its own part forms the text. In his opinion, the codes will result in an interwoven text (Sadeghi, Bita: P.65). Then, based on the Roland Barthes's theory, in each communicative action, the interaction between text's producer and audience is considered as a complex relationship. In the structural analysis of narratives, the Barthes's goal was to indicate the role of under-mentioned systems in making a text; however, his overall analysis caused that the meaning of texts is marginalized; For this reason, in the approach of textual analysis, his emphasis is on understanding how texts get meaningful; that is, he moves from the meaning issue that means searching for a fixed meaning of a sign to meaning creation during which the meaning should be created by the reader.

The codes themselves are a set of rules under which elements are selected that are combined with other elements to make new ones (Miremadi, 2005: P.73). Root meaning codes create multiple meanings for a text. According to Barthes, an ideal text is one that is reversible; open to various interpretations, and does not limit meaning. In a narrative text, the codes act as entities, whether or not we are aware of their existence that adjust, determine and above all produce meaning. The present research considers the story of Sheikh Sanaan of Attar of Nishapur based on Barthes's five codes. Before proceeding to analyze the story, it is essential to know what the narrative codes are.

2. Introduction of five codes

Symbolic language is the means of Sofia to express their inner experiences. One of the motivations of mystics for using the symbolic language is to hide occult secrets from others; another reason is to preserve life, and in other words, a kind of abstinence in the realm of mysticism (refer to Lahiji, 1992: P.31-34). Since the story of Sheikh Sanaan is known to all literary scholars, we avoid mentioning it again and therefore, we proceed to analyze the story. In the following, each of the Barthes's five codes is introduced briefly, and in the course of the story analysis, we will be familiar more with these codes extensively as follows:

Hermeneutic or enigmatic codes that follow text puzzles.

Proairetic codes that are related to narrative sequences.

Symbolic codes that are in binary oppositions within the text.

Cultural codes that provide a general framework to understand the context.

Root meaning codes that look for minimum units of its meaning and implication. This approach helps us to understand how the meaning is broken and scattered in the text.

3. Story analysis based on the theory of five codes

3.1. Hermeneutic codes

Hermeneutic codes include all units that their role is to raise questions, answers and a variety range of random events that may formulate a question or delay its answer or even raise riddle and direct us to it. Through these codes, questions are raised in the narrative and suspension is created, and they are finally answered (Refer to Sojoodi, 2008: P.154; Makaryk, 2009: P.138). Hence, the hermeneutic code is the same storytelling code that a question is raised in a narrative and makes the story suspended and mysterious, and also finally, opens the story node on its way. Since one of the hermeneutic meanings is interpretation, so encountering puzzles and questions in the story, the reader will try to interpret them and with the role of an actor, participate in understanding the implications of the text. Quoting from "Bauman" when raising and solving a puzzle, Roland Barthes introduces ten steps in the hermeneutic codes:

Subjectivism; what is a puzzle in a narrative?

Positioning; other confirmations of the puzzle;

Formulation of the puzzle;

Promising to respond to the puzzle;

Deception; pre-emption to give the correct response;

Ambiguity; mixture of deception and truth;

Obstruction; the puzzle is not solvable;

Suspended response; stop responding after this practice began;

Partial response, some aspects of the truth are revealed;

Exposing the truth (refer to Safaei, 2011: P.9). Given that all the elements mentioned may not be available in the Sheikh's story; we proceed to analyze this narrative.

The main question of the story that the whole story revolves around is that why a Sheikh who is perfect, austere and able to discover secrets, regardless of the name and shame suddenly fell in love with a Christian girl that following it, he violates his faith, perfection, and position entirely and is disgraced by the general and specific. A perfect Sheikh, who is the leader of Right Way seekers, fell in love with a Christian and acceded her demands, is an issue that caused the reader's curiosity and stress to follow the story.

A few consecutive nights, Sheikh dreamed that he had stayed in Rome bowed down to an idol. Sheikh was disrupted by the dream and felt that there was a problem and he should go a hard way at any cost because:

Till check t 'O Y ou, who with you riddle Sighs
Block up the Road of better Enterprise;
Sham Sorrow all, or bad as sham if true,
When once the better thing is come to do;
Beware lest wailing thus you meet his Doom
Who all too long his Darling wept, from whom
Y ou draw the very Name you hold so dear,
And which the World is somewhat tired to hear.'

(Attar of Nishapur, 2003: P. 68)

Mystics and religion elders' heart belief in "sleep" or "dream" which is interpreted as an honest dream is undeniable, such as the Prophet Yusuf's sleep referred to it in Quran (Chapter Yusuf: Verse 4).

Many Islamic philosophers believe that in the sleep mode, human rational soul is connected with the archetypes of astral world. Sleep is one of the ways to be informed of the unseen world. Ghazali says: "When sleeping, the senses are closed, they will open inside and be hidden from the universe of archetypes, to know and see what the future will be, but clearly, as would be the case, but it does need to be interpreted...". (Poornamdarian, 1989: P.198); accordingly, Sleep is one of the ways to be informed of the unseen world. Its repetition for Sheikh at several consecutive nights makes him sure that he is waiting for an important event; a difficult and hard way that is started with his determination to travel to Rome and subsequently, pious and abstemious Sheikh falls in love with a Christian girl. Another puzzle of this story is why Sheikh listens to that Christian girl's request like a ring in his ear:

The Reins of Reason and my Frenzy takes:
Y ea, whosoever once has quaint this wine
He leaves unlistened David's Song for mine.
In vain do Men for my Divisions strive,
And die themselves making dead Lutes alive:
I hang the Stars with Meshes for Men's Souls:
The Garden underneath my Music rolls.

(Attar of Nishapur, 2003: P. 75)

Even though Sheikh only accepts wine drinking among that four requests, by drinking and subsequently, by overcoming drunkenness, he quits his religion and becomes an infidel. Apparently, it seems, at his discretion, and overcoming love, Sheikh falls in love with that Christian girl when encountering her:

Wherefore still Forward, Forward! Love that fired
Thee first to search, by Search so re-inspired
As that the Spirit shall the carnal Load
Burn up, and double wing There on the Road;
That wert thou knocking at the very Door
Of Heav'n, thou still would'st cry for More, More, More

(Attar of Nishapur, 2003: P. 69)

Sheikh is so impressed by the Christian girl's beauty that does not have the ability to face it, and apparently, the story is deciphered. But its main reason is clarified in the course of the story; thus, afterwards, disciples of Sheikh returned to Mecca with disappointment of him. Following the request and great effort of one of the pious disciples of Sheikh in Mecca, and his attendance in the sight of God along with other disciples, in an unconscious manner, the world of discovery and intuition is revealed in the heart of this pious man and he sees the Prophet (PBUH) with revelation. He interceded with him for the freedom and assistance of pious Sheikh. Here, the main reason for Sheikh's involvement in the trap of the Christian girl's love and the main mystery as well as puzzle of the story is decoded from the Prophet's (PBUH) tongue:

Until Old Age sends him with one last Lust
Of Gold, to keep it where he found—in Dust.
Life at both ends so feeble and constrain'd
How should that Imp of Sin be slain or chain'd?
'And woe to him who feeds the hateful Beast
That of his Feeder makes an after-feast!
We know the Wolf: by Strategem and Force
Can hunt the Tiger down: but what Resource
Against the Plague we heedless hatch within,
Then, growing, pamper into full-blown Sin
(Attar of Nishapur, 2003: P. 82)

Accordingly, the main reason that Sheikh was trapped and tested was dust of sin sitting on his heart for a long time not seeing that Christian girl's beautiful face and his love.

What was the reason Sheikh was released from this hard work? Repentance that was followed by his shame and regret and returned to the Prophet's intercession as well as a great effort of Sheikh's disciples and their austerity of seeking this goal that God accepts Sheikh's repentance.

But the puzzle is not solved yet. What was the dust sin sitting on Sheikh's heart? Answering this question requires special scrutiny that will be discussed in the section of root meaning and symbolic codes in the same paper.

According to the knowledge of a reader to Sheikh's characteristics, that is his adherence to religious laws, and his piety as well as clear spiritual characteristics, the reader expects that Sheikh can easily succeed in the test or the same hard work put on his way, but as the story progresses, it is clarified that Sheikh cannot overcome him. Even with the advice and respectful request of his disciples, he is not able to get rid of the Christian girl's love. He knows it as the will of God and believes that only the will of God can get him out of the abyss:

But whose Neck kindles with a lower Fire
O! Slip the collar off of base Desire
(Attar of Nishapur, 2003: P. 73)

Obstruction of narrative occurs where Sheikh does not hear his disciples' advice and is not willing to give up the girl; when the disciples of Sheikh leave him alone in Rome, and they depart for Hejaz, it seems that the puzzle and problem of Sheikh cannot be solved.

3.2. Proairetic codes

This kind of codes is focused on their actions and effects. "These codes deal with the chain of events recorded during reading or gathering information that the narrative gives us, and is given a name, for example, we say the murder scene, the arrest scene, etc." (Sojoodi, 2008: P.156)

In the following, the chain of events of Sheikh Sanaan's story is expressed, stressing this point that the sequences of the main characters of the story that is Sheikh, the pious disciple, and the Christian girl are not out of the sequences and actions: 1- the scene that Sheikh dreams and leaves his land; 2- the scene that Sheikh meets the Christian girl in Rome; 3- the scene that Sheikh falls in love with the Christian girl; 4- a conversation between the Christian girl and Sheikh while expressing passion quality of his love to

the girl, a big part of the girl's reasons for the rejection of her Sheikh's love is stated; 5 – the scene where Sheikh accepts four conditions of the girl, including (wine drinking, infidelity, Quran burning, and idolatry) upon her request; 6- a conversation between Sheikh and disciples during which Sheikh is not willing to abandon his love due to his reasoning; 7- the scene of the great disciple who sees the Prophet (PBUH) through discovery and intuition and good tidings of the Prophet that God have mercy on Sheikh and his repentance is accepted; 8- the scene that Sheikh regrets his actions, cries and supplicates to God and then repents; 8- the scene that the Christian girl dreams; 10- the scene that the Christian girl looks for Sheikh, finds him and becomes a Muslim; 11- the scene that the Christian girl died near Sheikh which is the final scene of the story.

3.3. Root meaning codes and symbolic codes

Root meaning codes are the implied meanings and concerned with all implications making characters' traits or actions. Symbolic codes mean that how a text is organized in the form of binary oppositions. Based on these codes, we have to follow a set of binary opposite pairs giving meaning to a text (Allen, 2006: P. 137). Since in the structural analysis of the Sheikh Sanaan's story, getting the meaning of some symbols depends on the discovery of binary oppositions of the text, when considering the root meaning codes, the symbolic codes will also be taken into account. Root meaning codes are the same non-explicit and implicit implications embedded in a narrative that helps us understand the main purpose of the narrative and to comprehend it based on semiotics, the binary oppositions of the text must also be noted. It can be said that building a story is based on binary oppositions and the main node of the story is also closed based on the same oppositions. From the beginning of the story, "Sheikh Sanaan", describing his asceticism, piety and adherence, Attar deals with obedience and worship. There is no word of Sheikh's love and frenzy. Sheikh like angels has a characteristic of pure worship and dry piety and the dust the Prophet (PBUH) referred to and said that has been sitting in the heart of Sheikh for a long time and also led to keep away from God, is the dust of asceticism and piety. So, the contrast between pure asceticism and piety, and love is known as the capital of creating a story of Sheikh's frenzy and mania. As if awakening from the sleep of negligence, he sets about for a journey. In journey from Mecca to Rome, he experiences the love and achieves the unknown of his own presence. The sequence of the story indicates that love is not connected to bless-seeking. Given the above-mentioned, the story first shows the inner contrast and conflict of Sheikh himself. There is great difference between pious and devout Sheikh and lover and mystic Sheikh; so throughout the narrative, a kind of inner conflict of pious Sheikh with him is available so as to reach the truth from stereotypes and habits. Throughout the story, from his dream and journey to his secrets with the Christian girl and also his conversation with disciples are all instrumental that create the suspension and shock state in readers to follow the story. The story "Sheikh Sanaan" whether in the field of construction or meaning consists of a set of binary oppositions. The most important meaningful oppositions in the story of Sheikh Sanaan are mendicant drunken opposition and ascetic consciousness. In fact, there is a conflict between love and bless-seeking because the foundation of love is based on notoriety and is not related to bless-seeking. Often contrastive expressions are made in the course of conversations between characters; that is in a conversation between Sheikh and the Christian girl as well as in a conversation between Sheikh and his disciples, the girl is apparently the bandit of Sheikh; however, she is as the savior and cause of his awakening. In fact, the real bandit is the extreme attention and effort of Sheikh to customs and religious laws that are based on imitation, habit and ignorance causing a preference of appearance to interior or form to meaning. The most important binary oppositions that can be mentioned in the part of symbolic codes of the story of Sheikh Sanaan are as follows: Awakening contrast (Sahv, consciousness) and drunkenness (Sokr) / infidelity and faith / love and bless / love and honor / Muslim and Christian / chastity and sinfulness / Heaven and Hell / Arab (Hijaz) and Rome / monotheism and idolatry / cloak and belt wearing / Quran reading and Quran burning / asceticism and wine drinking / Kaaba and monastery / old age and youth / truth and authorized / pious and Christian / despair, mercy and hope / conflict between obedience, prayer and sermon with belt wearing, bell, Zoroastrian hat and joy.

But the considerable point is that the conflict and inconsistency exist between two pillars before and Sheikh's trip to Rome. After his travel to Rome, all the inconsistency is converted into consistency. How to

consider this consistency in addition to the symbolic meaning of some of these words and their semantic evolution as well as development in mysticism are referred in the following:

Trip: a symbol to search for truth, peace and eternity and to discover a moral code that its opposite point is Sheikh's residence in his town; and only in terms of habit and duty, he was involved in doing his own actions.

Sheikh: a mystic seeker who is equipped with path and religion; while at first, he was only as the symbol of the religion.

Christian girl: the symbol and epitome of beauty and unity.

Kaaba Shrine: Kaaba is the realm of piety and righteousness, and piety and righteousness cannot tolerate love. This land, in Sheikh Sanaan's story, is the symbol and Kiblah of apparent-oriented individuals and the land of Arab blacks; in addition, it is the house of religions, manifestation, imitation, and ignorance of stupid as well as blind-hearted people.

Rome: is the symbol of the land of light and exculpation of residents of that Shrine privacy; the end of the path; east of undying light and beauty of a comrade. The contrast between the Shrine that is symbolically a sacred realm and Rome as the place of blasphemy is also considerable in the story.

Moving toward Rome is symbolic and allegorical in the meaning of move and conduct of the essence. Dreaming, Sheikh enters homes of conduct and inherent move.

Abandoning customs and Muslim religious laws and accepting Christianity as well as idolatry; removing the cloak of piety and aging and putting on the Christians' cloth are all the codes and signs to move the seeker's conduct of the essence from imitative and apparent worship to romantic and sincere devotion.

Spiritual character of the girl: refers to sample and divine manifestations of God; and perfect perspective indicates the attribution and dependence of manifestations of beauty on the upper world and the sacred world.

Sheikh's love and attachment to a non-Muslim girl: mystic and lover's devotion to the light of God, influence and unity of lights of unique attributes in the mystic's nature.

Disciples: devotees to religious and customary appearances. They are the devotees of Sheikh's holy-oriented figure that in a symbolic action, he gets rid of them and sends them to Kaaba. The disciples' advice is not effective in a lover and mystic like Sheikh due to their intellectual parsimony.

Sheikh's insistence and persistence in love with a Christian girl: are his heart conduct and the death of his nature. Sheikh's nature is slowly dying by his attention to the girl and is remained in the Christian girl's actions, characteristics and nature.

Aging: is referred to great consistency and continuity of a devotee spent in heart conduct and move due to manifestations of the beloved.

Youth: is a sign of great strength, energy, and vitality of lights of beauty and glory manifestations of his nature.

Bowing down before the idol: is bowing down to the nature of beauty and glory of God

Quran burning and disbelieving: going out of darkness of superficial worship into the light of the unique nature.

Wine drinking: getting a cup of wine of manifestations of the beloved; drinking wine and getting drunk, Sheikh disbelieves the superficial religion and faith.

Pig herding: is a symbol of self-control; is referred to looking after a pig of self, and persistence and struggle in this austerity.

Prophet: is a symbol of the perfect man.

Agile and pious comrade of Sheikh: is a relationship intermediary with a perfect man, that is the same "heart".

The Christian girl's travel for Sheikh: the Christian girl who is the epitome of beauty and uniqueness is attracted and willing to the path of Sheikh, and following him, she departed for Kaaba. Here, the love becomes two-way and this time, the attraction is from Sheikh that draws the girl toward him. The end of Sheikh's conduct and move is in its inherent path and travel; that is to link life of beauty and glory manifestations of the universe with the nature of uniqueness implemented by the girl's death.

3.4. Cultural codes

Cultural or referral codes are used when a text calls readers for using their knowledge of the real world in order to shape the meaning. These codes are emerged in vocalic, moral, collective, nameless, and powerful forms speaking from wisdom. Barthes believes that the channel to refer the text is out and concerned with the general knowledge and ideology (Refer to Makaryk, 2009: P. 138, Sadeghi, Bita: P. 64 quoted from Barthes). Other codes collect human information and provide readers with the required implication so as to complete the ability to understand the text (Sojoodi, 1999: P. 125). Given the signs and signifiers that are extracted in the form of symbolic and root meaning codes, it must be said that at the level of the cultural codes, the Sheikh Sanaan's narrative describes the spiritual journey of Sheikh from the domain of knowledge and piety to the valley of love and drunkenness. This story contains the ideology of blaming and scolding bigoted, hypocritical and imitating devotees in its inner depth; a thought from dominant features of mystical ideas of our literature. Based on this insight, a seeker cannot reach the truth only by stereotyped and dry worship. The story, in its appearance and skin, also contains this point that everyone may make mistakes or commit errors in the course of his life, even perfect Sheikh, the pious and wise man like Sheikh Sanaan. The real scale and truth of every person is when placed in the Divine test plant; so, one should not be proud of deeds and the appearance of actions. An intellectual and literary infrastructure of the basic idea dominating the Sheikh Sanaan's story includes the avoidance of the religion and the avoidance of the doctrine or path toward the religion along with the path leading to the truth. Sheikh Sanaan experiences these stages in his travel, and the Christian girl also reaches the truth with her death in the vicinity of Sheikh as a symbol of her extinction in the existence of Sheikh and the unity with him.

3.5. Cultural codes

According to considerations taken in this research, it became clear, the Sheikh Sanaan's story as a coded and symbolic narrative can be re-reviewed based on new theories. Given the theory of codes of Roland Barthes, the story was analyzed and based on it, in the area of the hermeneutic codes; the main riddle of the story was also analyzed. In the part of the Proairetic codes, the chain of important events of the narrative was also discovered assigning a name to each one. In the part of the root meaning and symbolic codes that can be said are the most important interpretable codes in the narrative of the story, the implications, dual contrasts and symbolic concepts were examined. At the level of the cultural codes, the ideology devotees dominating the story were also criticized for dry asceticism; in other words, if customs and religious laws are not based on knowledge and the change of nature, but based on imitation, ignorance and habit and are so indulged that the appearance is preferred to the interior and the form to meaning, the man will be avoided from its previous process and move.

Some of the symbolic concepts of this section are taken from the paper "Cryptological Analysis of Sheikh Sanaan' Story" by Dr. Heidar Gholizadeh, and also look at the site (<http://www.ketab.ir/bookview.aspa>)

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