

The reasons for changing Nezami's style from mystical poems to love poems

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Abstract

Nezami Ganjavi is one of the greatest poets who lived in the twelfth century A.D. He rose storytelling to its highest apogee, but the thing which is ambiguous and questioning here is that what are the reasons for changing Nezami's style from the prosaic asceticism in *Makhzan al-Asrar* (The Treasury of Mysteries) to the love poems in *Khosrow o Shirin* (Khosrow and Shirin)? In this research, the author attempts to discuss and analyze this matter and give the reasons such as the environmental impacts of the city of Ganje (now present-day Azerbaijan) on Nezami, a sense of frustration of Ganje in him, the possibility of his failure in composing *Makhzan al-Asrar*, his dissatisfaction with *Makhzan al-Asrar*, his idealism and utopianism in his first work, his marriage to Afagh, his son's coming into the world named Mohammad and his psychological point of view to love element in human beings and daily matters. Finally, the author has expressed criticism against Ferdowsi and his *Shahname* as the main reason for changing Nezami's style. With respect to evidence, the last reason is more accepted, mainly because there are other signs of the same criticisms in other Nezami's works especially in *Eskandar Nameh* (The Book of Alexander).

Keywords: Nezami, Ferdowsi, *Makhzan al-Asrar*, *Khosrow o Shirin*.

Introduction

Pire Ganje ("the sage of Ganje", this is Nezami's epithet) rose storytelling to its highest apogee by composing *Panj Ganj* or *Khamsa* (Quinary), but

he never used an obscene word in the climax of his romantic stories and he is also considered to be one of the mystical leaders. Here the question is how it is possible that this mystic poet after ages of seclusion and composing the mystical *Makhzan al-Asrar* has attempted to compose love poems such as *Khosrow o Shirin*, *Layli o Majnun* and *Haft Paykar* (The Seven Beauties)? The interesting point here is that his poems are composed on one of the governor's orders in that time, which are unique, and considered to be a literary masterpiece.

Gholamhossien Yusufi, PhD, said about the power of Nezami's poetry and artistry that although most of stories, which are composed into poems by Nezami, have been existed among people earlier, what has been presented in *Khamsa* has an immortal freshness. When we contemplate about them, it sounds as though it is the first time that we feel and see love (Yusufi, 1994, p. 170).

Abdollahmohammad Ayati, PhD, said about Nezami that Hakim Ganje ("the sage of Ganje") was a reclusive, pious, devout and religious man. This view is apparent from Nezami's poems. In his works, unlike his contemporaries, there are no signs of vinity (Ayati, 1991, p. 29).

Nezami does not consider himself indebted to any poets, but he considers his poems because of his creative flair. One of the most important motivations for changing his style from mystical poems to love poems was his opposition against Ferdowsi that we will discuss later.

Change in Nezami's thought

Moving from the world of asceticism in *Makh-*

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zan al-Asrar to the world of fervency and excitement in *Khosrow o Shirin* that did not take more than one year for Nezami, was the continuation of searching for a utopian society. This new search was an audacious experience for achieving to what he was disappointed for in *Makhzan al-Asrar*. "Why I must spend time on a legend mixed with love and caprice instead of spending time on a work like *Makhzan al-Asrar*?" was a thought, which was fresh in his mind. In the spite of this thought, he thought that world has changed and people liked more love stories rather than mystical ones and he himself was in pursuit of a better world.

Which story can illustrate such a world better than *Khosrow o Shirin*? The story of such love was famous for all people of yore and people who came from Ganje to Baghdad or Mecca saw the traces of the story such as the image of *Khosrow Parviz's* dark horse on the *Bistoon's* rocks etc.

The reproach of Nezami by his friends

Composing a story like *Khosrow o Shirin* from Nezami seemed unlikely until caused reproach to Nezami by his friends. They did not know that by composing the story he was passing fancy and stirring his imagination in a way that his story is not only a story, but is a display of his poetic art and talent.

Apart from *Shirin's* characteristic, the atmosphere of the story was higher than *Khosrow*. In the end of the story where *Khosrow* is dying and does not want to waken *Shirin*, he seems a hero, but she demonstrate her faithfulness to her husband and superiority over him by rejecting *Shiruyeh's* ominous and tempting offer and killing herself.

The reasons for changing Nezami's style

Regarding the reasons for the changes in Nezami's style from the prosaic asceticism and composing mystical poems to composing love poems, the followings can be mentioned:

1) The environmental impacts of the city of Ganje on Nezami and his sense of frustration about it

The dominated atmosphere of the city of Ganje and its adjacency to the Christians' countries resulted in strictness in religion (Dastgerdi, 1993, p. 143).

2) The possibility of Nezami's failure and dissatisfaction with the poems of *Makhzan al-Asrar*

Nezami in the "concerning the rank of this

book" in the introduction of *Makhzan al-Asrar* says about the freshness and self-reliance of his work and believes that his work is his intellectual arena. Nezami's poems of *Makhzan al-Asrar* in comparison with *Sanayi's* *Hadighe* has not been successful because *Sanayi's* language is more simple and understandable and unlike *Makhzan al-Asrar*, *Hadighe* is devoid of any asceticism (Zanjani, 1995, p. 227).

Abdollahossien Zarinkoob, PhD, said concerning this subject that *Makhzan al-Asrar* was highly praised by poetry experts, but did not gain the expected fame among Sufic circles. Although its language was enchanting, it did not attract the monastery's members. *Sanayi's* *Hadighe*, in this regard, has been more successful than Nezami's *Makhzan al-Asrar* (Zarinkoob, 1995, p. 24).

3) Idealism and utopianism in composing *Makhzan al-Asrar*

If we contemplate about Nezami's essays' titles, we will realize that Nezami first discusses "the creation of man", "the events in the universe" and "superiority of humans over other animals and creatures and then invites us to "reproach the world for its unfaithfulness", "reproach ignorance", "reproach the duplicitous and the envious", "protect the poor's rights", "do justice". He believed that "imagining the afterlife" invites man to "seclusion" and "welcoming the afterlife". In his twenty essays, Nezami tries to seclude human beings from materialism and makes them ready to return unto God care freely and rightfully. Considering the above-mentioned descriptions, living in a justice-oriented society is a panorama of a utopia society. Nezami considers self-training and meditation as the foundation for happiness (Dastgerdi, 1993, p. 29).

4) Nezami's marriage to *Afagh* and coming into the world of his son named *Mohammad* is one of the strongest motivations for composing the love poems of *Khosrow o Shirin*.

Nezami, in composing *Khosrow o Shirin* poems is in the pursuit of bring back memories of his wife. At the end of composing this story, his wife (*Afagh*) dies and leaves *Mohammad* as a memorial. In other words, Nezami's love for his wife guides him from a prosaic mysticism to a well-balanced mysticism. At the end of the story, after the death of *Shirin*, Nezami remembers his wife regretfully (Dastgerdi, 1993, p. 351).

5) There is a psychological point of view to love element in human beings and daily matters.

The poet (Nezami) "in the search of this book"

section of his introduction in *Khosrow o Shirin* has criticized and asked himself that in spite of composing a mystic treasure like *Makhzan al-Asrar*, is it right to compose love poems? He answered himself that today all people are engaged in love and whim, thus I would be on a whim to write *Khosrow o Shirin* to be sympathy for lovers (Dastgerdi, 1993, p. 141).

6) The criticism of Ferdowsi, *Shahname*, and running into opposition against it

Although Nezami considers “listening to the voice of heart” as the main motivation for composing these love poems, in fact, he declares war against Ferdowsi and he accused him of exaggeration, lying, fire worshiping, prostitution for daily bread, and imitation of past generations. He also considers *Shahname* as a pack of lies and as a counterfeit coin, but considers himself a veracious man and believes that his poems are based on reflection. In the end, Nezami says that he did not repeat Ferdowsi’s words because he believe that repetition of mentioned statements is not auspicious (Mirzania, 1999, p. 56).

Behrooz Servatian, PhD, said about this matter that Nezami cruelly considers Ferdowsi as a counterfeit artist and proudly speaks about himself and says that *Shahname* is a counterfeit coin and is void of meaning, but it has only a superficial beauty that Ferdowsi’ art has overlaid it with gold (Servatian, 1990, p. 69).

Nezami’s capricious story ends with victory of “love” over “hedonism”, but it was a kingly way that only a king like “Khosrow” can go through it. This matter is impossible for common people. It was confirmed that *Khosrow*’s love was a true one. It was not caprice, thus *Shirin* respects and responds to his love by sacrificing her soul.

Conclusions

According to the mentioned matters, it can be concluded that there are various reasons for changing Nezami’s style from composing mystical poems to composing love poems, but more important than all, the reason is running opposition against Ferdowsi, which is the main motivation for this great change. Nezami cruelly considers Ferdowsi as a counterfeit artist and proudly speaks about his wisdom. He also considers Ferdowsi’s *Shahname* as a counterfeit coin and believes that it is only meaningless verbiage. Moreover, Nezami believes that Ferdowsi has overlaid his silver coin with gold by using words. He also believes that he is not indebted to any poets and claims that Ferdowsi’s stories are visionary, but his stories are true.

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