

## **Analysis of Some Imageries in *Nahjul Balaghah***

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*Received 12 September 2014*

*Accepted 10 June 2015*

### **Extended Abstract**

#### **1- Introduction**

“Imagery” or aesthetic referencing, i.e., symbolism or representation, is useful in conveying the intellectual treasures, as an imaginative synthetic process. The frequency of this aesthetic feature in Arabic literature and within the text of *Nahjul Balaghah*, which is one of the paragons of eloquent Arabic, gives rise to the questions of the history of imagery in Arabic literature and the role of imagery in *Nahjul Balaghah*’s exegesis. In the present study, clinging to the assumption that imagery is one of the ancient features of Arabic literature and that *Nahjul Balaghah*’s imagery has rendered its phrases eloquent, using a descriptive-analytical methodology and presenting some examples of imagery in Arabic literature along with *Nahjul Balaghah*, useful elements in creating this type of visual aesthetics are determined and their efficacy is explained.

#### **2- Theoretical Framework: Imagery in Arabic Literature**

In Arabic literature, phenomena pertaining to dynamic or static nature of objects with which the audience is familiar, in the forms of visualization, personification, and simile, are the fundamental elements of imagery. For instance, al-Shanfari, a poet of Jahiliyyah (age of ignorance), creating an imagery, analogizes the release of an arrow from a bow and its sound to the separation of a bereaved women’s child, in whose grief she is mourning and weeping, saying: “*Eza zalla anha assahm hannat ka annaha / morazzaaton sakla tarenno va tavalo*” (Whenever an arrow leaves it, it moans, as if it were a woman who is weeping and mourning). In a wise piece of advice offered by a woman in Jahiliyyah period to her newly-wed daughter who is moving in with her husband, he depicts the imagery of a bird leaving its nest, saying: “*khallafta aloshshe allazi darajte ela vakren lam tarefihe*” (Sefvat, 1985, p.145). (You left behind a nest in which you were and entered one which you do not know). In the verses of holy Quran, the phrase “*Yoghallabo kaffayhe*” (al-Kahf, 42) (Rubs the palms of his hands together) portrays the internal moods of grief and repentance of a wrongdoer, aesthetically, using imagery. The Prophetic Hadith of “*Annaso savaon ka asnanel moshte*” (al-Sadduq, 1992, p. 380)

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(People are quite equal as the teeth of a comb) is an imagery denoting equality of people. In the texts of *Nahjul Balaghah*, phrases such as “*Yaredonahoo vorood alaname*” (Like arriving of animals at the spring of water, they arrive), “*attaghva mataya zolol*” (virtue is like a tamed horse), “*yakhzamonah mallalahe ka khezmatel ebele*” (sermon 1) (They eat the common property of the society like a camel eats) are examples of imageries that are described and analyzed in the present study.

### **3- Findings: Some imageries from *Nahjul Balaghah***

Amir-ul-Mu'minin (PBUH), in describing pilgrims who are entering Beytollah al-Haram, has utilized the dynamic elements of nature, invoking an image of primate's headlong approach towards a fountain and the influx of pigeons into a trough, saying: “*Yaredonahoo vorood alaname / va yalagoon elayhe vclooh alhamame*” (sermon 1) (Like arriving of animals at the spring of water, they arrive). In this aesthetic depiction, Beytollah al-Haram, is a fountain towards which the pilgrims who are thirsty of Twaf move greedily, to satiate their parched souls by the spiritual serenity derived from making Tawaf in Kaaba.

Analyzing the words used in this imagery reveals that the terms used in it have added to the clarity of the expression. Since, firstly, the phrase *yalagoon- vclooh* is derived from “*valah*”(despair) which mean perplexity caused by enchantment. Apparently, Imam Ali (PBUH) is alluding to the fact that those who circumambulate Kabaa, move towards it with enchantment and love. Secondly, the denotative meaning of the verb, “*Yaredona*”(they enter) is arriving at a fountain and the root of the word, that is “*vorood*”(enter) means arriving at a source of water; however, utilizing figurative language, here it has been used for Kaaba. Thirdly, absolute objects of “*vorood alaname*”, “*vcloohal hamam*” are adverbs expressing the manner of the rushing and influx, adding to the clarity of the message. Moreover, as indicated in, “*Hamshi*”or “*Ehshae*”(implication)the words of “*Vorood*” and “*vclooh*” with their connotations are indicative of Amir-ul-Mu'minin's (PBUH)passionate viewpoint towards this religious ritual. In utilizing non-nature elements, those palpable objects are used that had a distinctive presence in the daily lives of people back then. Objects such as “*ghamis*” (shirt), “*raha*” (mill), “*dera*” (armor), “*jannah*” (shield), and “*sharak*” (cattle), “*Laghd taghammasaha folanon va ennahoo layalamo anna mahalli menha mahalla alghotbe men alrahha*” (sermon 3)(Swear to God, someone has put on the shirt of caliphate, while he knows that my position in caliphate is like the position of the axis of a millstone).In this aesthetic depiction, the abstract act of caliphate has been analogized to a shirt and grabbing hold of it unrightfully has been portrayed as putting someone else's shirt on. Since every shirt is tailored for an owner, the message of this analogy is that not everyone is worthy of superseding and creating a caliphate after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Similarly the phrase “*Ennahoo layalamo anna mahalli menha mahalla alghotbe men alrahha*” (He knows that my

position in caliphate was like the axis of millstone) which is imagery, is based on three analogies: Firstly, Prophet Muhammad has analogized his position, which is abstract, to the position of the eye of a millstone (millstone axis). Secondly, through analogizing tangible to tangible, he has analogized himself to the eye of a millstone. Thirdly, in analogizing the caliphate to a mill, he has analogized an abstract issue to a tangible one. The eloquence of similes in this imagery is that the caliphate of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and assuming the leadership of the Muslim Ummah, just like a millstone that has no use without its lever, will not materialize without my (Amir-ul-Mu'minin's) Imamah (leadership). The other message is that, just as in turning a millstone nothing can make up for its axis, in Caliphate, too, no one can be elected instead of him (Ali Ibn Abi Talib).

#### **4- Conclusion**

The findings of the study reveal that the history of Arabic imagery dates back to Jahiliyya and has been prevalent in the collective style of both that era and the advent of Islam. Imagery has been utilized for the purpose of clarity of message. Analyzing the imagery in *Nahjul Balaghah* revealed that Imam Ali (PBUH), too, in his utterances, has utilized the collective style of literati at the advent of Islam. His highness, corresponding to the theme of utterance, has borrowed dynamic and static natural elements and familiar objects. In many of the imageries used in *Nahjul Balaghah*, from analogies' perspective, spiritual issues have become salient.

**Keywords:** *Nahjul Balaghah*, Imagery, Religion, Piety, Collective style.

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