



در جستجوی حقیقت در تمثیل آن شخص جوینده شتر

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چکیده

از دیر باز شعرا و نویسندگان از ایماژ حیوانات در آثار خود برای بیان مفاهیم انتزاعی به صورت عینی بهره‌جسته‌اند و مولانا شاعر نامدار ایرانی یکی از این نویسندگان می‌باشد؛ ایشان در تمثیلی تحت عنوان: شرح فایده حکایت آن شخص شتر جوینده در کتاب مثنوی معنوی از ایماژ شتر برای تبیین جستجوی انسان برای یافتن حقیقت یا خداوند و موانع سر راه از طریق داستان استفاده می‌کند مردی که اشتر خود را گم می‌کند و مرد جوانی که به تقلید از او می‌پردازد و ادعا می‌کند او هم شتر خود را گم کرده ولی در طول جستجو در می‌یابد که او هم به راستی در گذشته شتر خود را گم کرده بوده و از آن به بعد به جستجوی شتر خود می‌پردازد. این مقاله قصد دارد جستجوی حقیقت را لایه‌ی پایین این تمثیل تفسیر نماید.

کلمات کلیدی: شتر، حقیقت، تمثیل، جستجو و مولانا

Quest for Truth in the Allegory of a Man's Search for his Lost Camel

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Abstract

From early times poets and writers utilized the images of animals in their works to convey abstract concepts concretely and one of those writers is Rumi, the accomplished Persian poet in 14th century. He employs the images of camel in his allegory in the second book of *Spiritual Couplets* entitled, *A Man's Search for his Lost Camel* in order to explain the quest of human for finding truth (or God) and its obstacles through the story of a man losing his camel and a young man imitating him and then realizing that he had lost his camel in the past and stops copying and looks for his own camel. This article aims at explaining the second layer of the allegory in question.

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Key Words: Camel, Allegory, Rumi, Truth, and Quest

Introduction

As the heroes of the deserts, camels are the unique animals whose astonishing physiology enabled them to survive the adverse weather conditions like lack of water, dust storm, and extreme heat. Consequently the nomads of the deserts, pilgrims, businessmen and others have exploited them fully both as the good source of food, hide, wool and medicine, as well as a dependable means of transport for traversing towards holy destinations and carrying cargoes in places locked by deserts. Poets and writers utilized the camels in their works, and this article endeavors to study an allegory from Rumi's *Spiritual Couplets: A Man's Search for his Lost Camel*, and decodes its hidden meaning.

Rumi's life and works

Rumi was born in a religious and educated family in Balkh, current Afghanistan, in 1205. When he has five years, his father made his mind to leave their city on the grounds of corrupt government of Kharazmshaiian causing mayhem and insecurity, and the threat of impeding invasion by bloodthirsty Mongols. Their journey was tiresome and very long; they passed through Neishabor where he met Attar, the author of Conference of Birds Baghdad, and Damascus. Finally they settled in Konya, now in Turkey, in 1229. There he started to teach in his father's religious schools but Burhanadin, his former teacher encouraged to resume his religious studies in Damascus to a perfect mufti and teacher of Konya. After seven years he completed his education. He was leading a peaceful and happy life until Shams Tabrizi, a bedraggled Dervish, dramatically changed the course of his life and delivered him from the rigid confines of dry world of Sharia and introduced to him untapped inner world; however, their close friendship which robbed Rumi from his orthodox disciples provoked their jealousy and fury forcing Shams to leave the city silently; however, Rumi met him again and married Kimya Khaton, his close relative, off to him. Shams mysteriously disappeared after his young wife's death and never returned. Under Sham's influence he composed his lyrics, Divan-e Shams, and dedicated it to him. Schimmel in her article in encyclopedia of Britannica 2010 beautifully summarize Divan Shams,

The Dīvān-e Shams ("The Collected Poetry of Shams") is a true translation of his experiences into poetry; its language, however, never becomes lost in lofty spiritual heights or nebulous speculation. The fresh language, propelled by its strong rhythms, sometimes assumes forms close to popular verses. There would seem to be cause for the belief, expressed by chroniclers, that much of this poetry was composed in a state of ecstasy, induced by the music of the flute or the drum, the hammering of the goldsmiths, or the sound of the water

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mill in Meram, where Rūmī used to go with his disciples to enjoy nature. He found in nature the reflection of the radiant beauty of the Sun of Religion and felt flowers and birds partaking in his love. He often accompanied his verses by a whirling dance, and many of his poems were composed to be sung in Sufi musical gathering.

The second important person in Rumi's life after Shams's death was an illiterate but honest-heart goldsmith, Salahuddin Zarkub who "had an expansive frame of mind and he provided Rumi with a sounding board for his ideas" (Emerick, 2008, p.17). Third stage of Rumi's life dawned when Husamuddin, his best student, asked him to start composing rhymed couplets to leave his teachings for posterity. Rumi acted on his valuable suggestion and began to write his Masnavi. Rumi in this work "drew heavily upon the teachings of the Qur'an, the sayings of Muhammad, and the stories of the prophets and saints of the past, resembled something of a commentary on the nature of spirituality in the Islamic religion" (Emerick, p.40). In 1273 at the age of 66 Rumi passed away. Since he was very tolerant and respectable man, Jews, Christians, and Muslims attended in his funeral together.

Definition of Allegory and Plot Summary of a Man's Search for his Lost Camel

This article explains the second layer of meaning or the second order of significance, in one of Rumi's allegories in his Mathnavi entitled: *a man's search for his lost camel*; therefore, familiarity with the concept of allegory and the synopsis of the allegory under study will be essential to better grasp of the article. According to Abrams (2009),

an allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived by the author to make coherent sense on the literal or primary level of signification and at the same time to communicate a second, correlated order of signification. We can distinguish two types (1) historical and political in which the characters and actions that are signified literally in their turn represent...historical personage or events...(2) the allegory of ideas in which the literal characters represent concepts and the plot allegorizes an abstract doctrine or thesis (p.7)

Considering Abrams's classification, the allegory under investigation comes into the category of the second type of the allegory and this will be clearer in discussion part. After shedding light on the allegory, it is ripe for offering the gist of the allegory: *A Man's Search for his Lost Camel*. This allegory tells the story of a man who lost his camel when caravan halted on the outskirts of the city. The man was getting agitated because the

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caravan was due to depart; therefore, he set out to look for his lost camel in the city. In addition, he promised to give a good reward for anyone who gave the correct address or the clue of his camel. He met the people in the city, who poked fun at him by offering him false clues hoping to get the coveted prize,

*So all the scoundrels see you and poke fun,
Jesting: 'We saw a camel head that way,
A reddish camel, searching for some hay.'
One asks, 'Was it crop-eared and quite perplexed?'
'Its saddle was embroidered,' claims the next.
Another asks, 'Did it have just one eye?'
The next, 'Was it sick and about to die?'
Each wretch in hope of a reward from you
Presents to you his fabricated clue (Rumi, 2004, p.171)*

The fabricated clues did not deter him from following his camel. While the man was searching for his camel, a young man saw him and was deeply impressed by the man's burning desire to find his camel; therefore, he decided to imitate him and pretend that he also lost his camel; during his search the young man blindly copied whatever the man did. During his imitative quest of the camel, the young man saw a camel which sounded very familiar. This camel reminded him that in the past he had lost his camel as well but he forgot to search it due to the fact that he was burdened by the cares of the world weighing heavily on his shoulders. After that he stopped aping the man, and pursued his own,

*Where your stray camel is when you've been brought
This mimic finds his stray, which he'd not sought;
He first recalls her when he sees her, then
He covets no more those of other men.
That mimic's search first starts thus when his eyes
Notice his own lost camel by surprise:
He only seeks to find his camel when
By chance he sees her; he'd not searched till then.
From that point he learns to move on alone,
Now having opened his eyes to his own (Rumi, pp. 175-176).*

When the truthful man asked why you left at last, he replied that at the beginning his quest was mimicry but under the influence of your sincerity I truly found my own camel, so I sincerely grateful for your help.

Discussion

As discussed earlier, an allegory is a narrative which has two levels of meaning. The most important element of the allegory is its characters which hold the key to understand its

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second meaning. Since Rumi's philosophy is shaped by Islamic philosophy; therefore, the characters in the allegory will be more meaningful and understandable if they are explained in the light of Islamic perspective. The real camel loser stands for a mystic who honestly seeks the ultimate truth (or God) which is signified by the camel but he understands that discovering it is not undemanding because he lives in an age in which fraud is its trademark and there are many false religious sects which are represented by different people in the market who offered the mystic the wrong clues about his camel. All of these religious warring factions claim that they can lead human beings towards their eventual destination which is truth (or God), but in reality they are just pretenders to the truth. Interestingly, Prophet Mohammad during his life time predicted that after his death there would be seventy two religious sects from which only one would be true. But the mystic disregards the messages and guidelines of these religious cults and he himself undertake his journey to his desired destination. Another character which is under the influence of the mystic's enthusiasm is the young man in the city who mimics him and feigns as a camel loser. He stands for the mere disciple of the mystic in the beginning but he turns to the honest follower of truth when he himself discovers the truth. The young man at first follows his leader (mystic) blindly and is unable to fathom the purpose of his spiritual journey; however, in the course he gets enlightened and becomes cognizant of his intense longing for God and truth owing to the accompaniment of his leader. His enlightenment is signified by his sudden realization that he really has lost his camel and has been unaware of it. Rumi believes that human beings belong to God; therefore, truth is their essence and in their heart there is always deep longing for God, and he exemplifies this divine-primordial relationship with a reed-flute and a reed bed. The mournful song which the reed flute makes is a lonely human soul's burning longing for reunion with its origin or creator which is likened to the reed bed. Nonetheless, humans ignore their essence and remain deaf to the mournful songs of their souls (the reed flute), instead they slavishly follow their carnal desires or worldly concerns devour them; as a result, the flames of their yearning either die out or get weaker; nevertheless, there is still possibility of rekindling the flames of craving for God and truth if they seek Him honestly as the young man under the guidance of a religious leader,

*My song's expressed each human's agony,
A breast which separation's split in two
Is what I seek, to share this pain with you:
When kept from their true origin, all yearn
For union on the day they can return (Rumi, 2007, p.5).*

Conclusion

Rumi, 14th century well-known Persian poet, in his masterpiece, *Spiritual Couplets*, frequently uses allegory as a literary device to elucidate complex issues because allegory provides two layers of meanings in which setting, plot, and characters of the surface level corresponds with those of the deep one. *A Man's Search for his Lost Camel* is an allegory

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in the second book of *Spiritual Couplets* about a man who loses his camel and enthusiastically looks for his camel and asks anyone whom he meets on his way but to his consternation they give him incorrect clues about his camel. Enchanted with his zeal to find his camel, a young man acts as a camel loser. But during his imaginary quest he understands that he has lost a camel in the past. The literal level of significance allegorizes an age in which fraud and materialism is all-pervasive, and moreover, in this period perusing truth (lost camel) is an arduous task due to the false religious groups claiming to guarantee reaching to God or truth while they are just complete shams. But a person like the young man standing for a disciple can be transformed into an honest-hearted fellow under an experienced and truthful leader's influences although at the beginning the disciple may copy him. The message Rumi wants to relay is that as far as the human being honestly looks for truth or God, he can find it/Him because he innately craves His reunion; however, the carnal desires and the cares of the world prevent his soul from undertaking a journey toward finding truth and God.

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