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Research Article

The Use of Allegory in Mystical Literature – Dari Persian Language

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Abstract. Allegory, as a sensory mode of imagination and an advanced form of simile, functions in mystical literature not only as a vehicle for conveying metaphysical meanings but also as a subtle medium for reflecting social realities. This study aims to examine how allegorical expressions in the mystical poetry of Sanaee, Attar, and Rumi simultaneously communicate spiritual teachings and encode the socio-historical contexts of their respective periods. Employing a qualitative textual analysis and comparative literary method, the research analyzes selected allegorical narratives, symbols, and thematic motifs in major mystical works, focusing on the relationship between abstract mystical concepts and their concrete narrative representations. The findings reveal that although mystical literature prioritizes the supremacy of the unseen world over the material realm, the poets' reliance on familiar stories, everyday imagery, and culturally embedded symbols demonstrates a conscious engagement with the social experiences, ethical concerns, and intellectual climates of their audiences. Consequently, allegory emerges as a tangible simile through which abstract spiritual truths are made accessible, while simultaneously allowing readers to discern the poets' social realities as refracted through personal mystical experience and collective cultural consciousness.

Keywords: Allegory, Mystical Literature, Metaphor, Mysticism, Society Simile

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a comprehensive reflection of society, an authentic manifestation of social conditions and one of the most significant means for the transmission and transformation of culture and thoughts. Social criticism and the sociological analysis of literary works can assist us in better understanding of the society. On the other hand, recognizing the relationship between literature and society helps us comprehend the context in which a literary work is created. This twofold examination leads to a deeper understanding of a society's culture.

In sociological studies of literary works, the author's thought patterns are examined in relation to the collective structures of their environment. The author's style, when analyzed through the lens of social and profitable changes of their time, reveals the process of artistic creation. In other words, such research illustrates the function of literature within society.

Given that a substantial portion of our rich literary heritage consists of mystical literature a genre that has remained alive in the minds and language of people in and region, and even globally it is our aim to explore the nature of allegory in mystical literature with a perspective that extends beyond spiritual teachings. We seek to analyze the sensitivity of these mystical poets to social issues. Considering the nature of allegory and its role in mystical literature, the influence of social concerns on the choice of allegories, imagery, and stories is a significant and remarkable subject for the investigation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative and interpretive methodology grounded in textual and comparative literary analysis. Primary texts by Sanaee, Attar, and Rumi were selected as the main corpus, with particular attention given to allegorical narratives, symbolic imagery, and recurring thematic structures within their major mystical works. The study employs close reading to identify the function of allegory as a mediating device between abstract mystical concepts and concrete social representations. These allegories are then examined comparatively to trace shared patterns and distinct approaches in reflecting social realities across different historical and cultural contexts. Secondary sources in the fields of mystical literature, symbolism, and socio-historical criticism are used to support interpretation and contextualization. Through this method, the research systematically explores how allegory operates simultaneously as a spiritual, aesthetic, and socio-cultural construct within classical Persian mystical poetry.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is Allegory?

Allegory (*tamthīl*) means to provide an example, to compare or to present a story or anecdote as a model. In literary terms, allegory elaborates expressions in both

poetry and prose in a way that conveys a wise or philosophical message, enhancing the beauty and power of the speech. For example, in Hafiz's a well-known verse:

*Don't think about me if I'm good or bad, think about your own self;
Everyone reaps in the end what they have sown.*

This allegory clearly illustrates the concept of foresight and the consequences of one's actions.

In literary discussions that frequently raised the questions is whether allegory belongs within the domain of metaphor or should be considered a form of simile. Generally, allegory has more specific dimensions compared to metaphor and simile, and it is capable to illustrate more detailed and elaborate imagination.

The discussion on the importance of allegory in rhetoric and its relationship to metaphor and simile is an engaging topic. It seems that classical rhetoricians held different views on allegory:

1. **Allegory as Metaphor:** Some rhetoricians believe that allegory is a type of metaphor. In this view, an idea is expressed through an image or a narrative that conveys a deeper, more abstract meaning.
2. **Allegory as Simile:** Some of the people believe that allegory is a type of simile. They are considering the point that linguistically, the term allegory and simile are synonymous to some extent and can be understood in relation to each other in the terms of meaning and structure. According to this perspective, simile has a broader scope. every allegory is in the essence of a simile, but not every simile qualifies as an allegory. This implies that allegory, specifically refers to those instances that carry deeper meanings and summarize philosophical or moral messages.

Ultimately, it is important to recognize that allegory, especially in Persian literature is used to create depth and beauty in expression and to convey complex emotions and thoughts (Jurjānī, 1954).

Khawājah Naseer al-Din Tusi's Perspective on Allegory

In his book *Asās al-Iqtibās*, Khawājah Naseer al-Din Tusi examines allegory and considers it one of the methods of reasoning in poetry. He explains that allegory can be employed in two ways:

1. **Poetic Imitation (Muḥākāt-e Shi'rī):** In this approach, the poet uses simile to represent a situation or emotional state through a specific image or narrative, guiding the reader toward a deeper understanding of the issue.
2. **Reasoning:** Tusi presents this method as a means of logical argumentation, wherein the condition of one similar case is analogizing to another one. This analogy is then used as evidence to prove a point. In this way, allegory becomes a tool for clarifying complex philosophies through more tangible and familiar images (Tusi, 1326).

The synthesis of different perspectives on allegory as a type of simile can be found in the definition provided by *Anwār al-Rabī'*, who states; "Allegory is the comparison of one state to another by the way of implication, such that one intends to refer to a meaning while using words that indicate different meanings (Dād, 1386).

This definition demonstrates that allegory, as a form of simile, requires a specific semantic connection that is constructed through metaphorical suggestion

and indirect reference. Thus, allegory serves as a literary device for conveying complex intentions and meanings. By employing indirect language, it invites the reader to engage in deeper interpretation and reflection.

Therefore, on the base of the viewpoint, allegory can indeed be considered a kind of simile, as it involves representing one state through another enhancing the significance and beauty of literary concepts (Dād, 1386).

The Nature and Origins of Allegory

Kāden (1995) considers *allegory* to be derived from the Greek word *allegoria* and defines it as follow:

Allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, that carries two levels of meanings: a primary (literal) meaning and a secondary (figurative or symbolic) meaning. In other words, allegory is a story that can be read and understood on two layers. In some cases, it may even convey up to three different meanings. Its form may be literary, visual, or both. The origin of allegory is ancient, and it has been employed in diverse ways as a form of expression. In essence, allegory is a method for conveying emotions and thoughts about the objects on the way one perceives them (Kāden, 1995).

The earliest examples of allegory in literature can be found in the works of Plato. The "Allegory of the Cave" in Plato's *Republic* is a clear example of this device. Allegory is one of the imaginative devices (*ṣuwar-i khayāl*) in the science of rhetoric (*bayān*), and as previously noted, it is considered a type of simile. However, what distinguishes it from other types of simile is, its *tenor* (the "thing compared to"). More precisely, one can say;

"Allegory is a simile in which the *compounding* (the image or comparison) takes the form of a parable or narrative. In allegorical simile, the *tenor* is an abstract or complex concept, and in order to explain or prove it, a compound and sensible *compounding* is presented" (Shamīsā, 1999: 110).

It is important to note that allegorical simile (*tashbīh-i tamthīlī*) should not be conflated with compound simile (*tashbīh-i murakkab*). In fact, there is a general-specific relationship between the two: that is, every allegorical simile is a compound simile, while every compounded simile is not qualifying as an allegory.

'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī's Classification of Simile and the Role of Allegory

'Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, classifies simile into two categories:

1. **Non-allegorical Simile:** In this type, the point of similarity (*wajh al-shabah*) is the clear evidence, and requires no interpretation. For instance, when a perceptible entity is compared to another perceptible entity, such as comparing a man to a lion in terms of bravery, the resemblance is readily grasping by the senses and natural instinct without any need for deeper analysis.
2. **Allegorical Simile (Tashbīh-i Tamthīlī):** In contrast, this type involves a resemblance that is neither obvious nor directly perceivable and therefore requires interpretation. Here, one must go beyond the surface meaning and delve into subtler dimensions, since the subject and the object of comparison (*mushabbah*

and *mushabbah bih*) do not share a literal or real quality. In such cases, the point of similarity is not physical, moral, instinctual, or actual, but rather abstract and even that abstraction may not exist inherently within the subject.

For instance, when we say, “This argument is as clear as the sun”, the comparison entails interpretation. It must be explained that the essence of the sun’s clarity lies in the absence of any veil or obstruction, just as doubt acts as a veil before intellectual comprehension. Therefore, when doubt is removed and knowledge is attained, one might say, “It is as clear as the sun”, meaning there is no barrier to understanding (Kadkani, 1971).

In other words, allegory must be based on a non-literal or even fictional resemblance—the quality being compared does not inherently exist in the subject. Although such a feature can be inferred from the term *tashbih* itself, which is derived from the Arabic intensive form *tafa‘ala*, in Persian rhetoric it is still necessary to explicitly make this distinction. For example, the statement “A dog is like a jackal” does not constitute a simile in the literary or rhetorical sense, as it states a factual resemblance devoid of literary value and thus does not fall within the domain of figurative expression (Nasr, 1987).

A widely accepted and comprehensive definition of allegory is as follows: “An allegorical simile is a comparison in which the point of similarity is drawn from a composite of multiple elements” (Purnamdāriān, 1996).

This definition deliberately omits the condition of whether the similarity is sensory or abstract. Thus, when the author of *Jawāhir al-Balāghah* states that understanding allegorical simile demands intellectual effort, it is precisely because the point of resemblance must be derived from multiple diverse aspects. He further clarifies that this requirement holds regardless of whether the quality being compared is perceptible or conceptual (Schimmel, 1975)

In Arabic rhetoric, the terms *mathal* and *mithāl* are sometimes used interchangeably with *tamthīl*, and at times, they refer broadly to different types of parables or illustrative stories. Though such narratives may vary in length and character, they are all categorized as *mathal* or allegory, irrespective of their form. In Persian, the word *dāstān* (story or tale) often functions similarly to the Arabic *mathal*. In the Holy Qur’an as in other sacred scriptures, especially the Four Gospels various allegories and parables appear in diverse forms (Purnamdāriān, 1996).

The Role of Allegory in Mystical Literature

In the Persian language, each type of story or tale does not have its own distinct and exclusive term. Words such as *dāstān* (story), *qiṣṣa* (tale), *ḥikāyat* (narrative), *maṭal* (parable), and *tamthīl* (allegory) are often used interchangeably. However, the differentiation between types of narratives is clearly reflected in English terminology, where specific terms such as *allegory*, *proverb*, *fable*, and *parable* each refer to a particular kind of story or didactic form.

Some allegories are political in nature. In political allegory, the author alters or masks characters to protect themselves from the potential dangers of direct speech. For instance, in the poem *Piers Plowman*, attributed to William Langland in the 14th century, the allegory of the mice who are afraid to place a bell on the cat symbolically

represents the House of Commons' failed attempt to restrain John of Gaunt, a military and political figure, the fifth Duke of Lancaster, who played an influential role in the politics of the time. Likewise, Jonathan Swift (17th–18th century) satirizes political degradation through the fictional land of Lilliput in *Gulliver's Travels* a distorted utopia inhabited by petty and diminutive figures (Pournamdāriān, 1996).

Among Persian political allegories, one can cite the celebrated poem *Mouse and Cat* by 'Ubayd Zākānī, an 8th-century (AH) poet, satirist, and critic. Another prominent example is *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. This story, structured as a fable, uses animal characters to depict the political environment of the Soviet Union under Stalin's dictatorship, portraying the replacement of one form of tyranny with another.

The classical Persian text *Kalīla wa Dimna* is another masterwork that uses allegory to convey political themes. At times, allegory draws on historical or mythological figures, and such forms are frequently found in Persian mystical literature.

It may be argued that allegory in mystical literature often serves the purpose of **concealment and subtlety**, protecting esoteric insights from the uninitiated. In political and social allegory, the motivation behind symbolic expression often stems from fear of oppressive rulers or prevailing political power. In other instances, the idea being veiled is not political, but rather a metaphysical truth or spiritual insight—accessible only to a particular intellectual or mystical elite. Allegory, therefore, becomes a medium of communication for those capable of deeper understanding.

In general terms, **allegory** is a short or long narrative that conveys an ethical, mystical, religious, social, political, or other kind of idea. If the moral or message remains completely hidden and requires interpretation, it is called **symbolic allegory**. The characters in allegories whether literal or symbolic—may be animals, objects, or human beings.

Since allegory functions as a form of simile and in simile, the *mushabbah bih* (the object of comparison) must be clearer and more familiar than the *mushabbah* (the subject) usually a sensory or tangible image is employed to represent an abstract or intellectual idea.

Arnold Hauser considers allegory as the **translation of an abstract meaning into a tangible image**, one that represents just one of many possible expressions of that meaning (Pournamdāriān, 1996).

Based on this perspective, one must acknowledge that **mystics**, in order to articulate their personal and often abstract experiences, rely on familiar and concrete images or narratives. Moreover, we know that in any simile, both the basis of comparison and the illustrative image are drawn from the author's surrounding environment and era. Thus, even though mystical allegories may refer to transcendent or otherworldly matters, the examples used to clarify these concepts are drawn from the poet's social context and from them, one may extract social commentary.

As noted earlier, the purpose of allegory is to **render abstract concepts more tangible**. Therefore, even allegories rooted in mystical experience are often shaped by the social realities of the poet or mystic, as their imagination and imagery

inevitably reflect their lived environment. Accordingly, while mystics and Sufi poets may present allegories without emphasizing their outer form or narrative structure, the images they employ remain embedded in the familiar and tangible realities of their time.

Hence, allegories especially those with political or social dimensions may serve as **reliable mirrors of social reality**, reflecting both the world of the text and that of the author. In political and social allegories, both the *muthāl* (example) and *mimthūl* (meaning or referent) are grounded in reality. In contrast, in spiritual or metaphysical allegories, while the *mimthūl* may be an abstract or transcendent truth, the example remains drawn from concrete and familiar domains. In such allegories, interpretation becomes essential for the reader (Böwering, 2008).

The mind, when reading an allegory, instinctively seeks to uncover its deeper meaning. In this discussion, our goal is to analyze allegorical structures in mystical texts regardless of whether the *mimthūl* is sensory or abstract to better understand the **social dynamics** of the author's time and place.

Persian mystical literature is marked by **three towering figures**, or as Dr. Shafī'ī Kadkanī puts it, "three waves" in the vast ocean of Persian mystical poetry: **Sanā'ī**, **ʿAṭṭār**, and **Rūmī**. Viewed from a distance, this literary sea begins with the early ascetic and ethical poetry of the Sāmānid period and continues through to the mystical expressions of later poets like Hātif Iṣfahānī and Ḥabīb Khurāsānī. Within this sea, three prominent surges stand out: Sanā'ī as the first great wave, ʿAṭṭār as the second, and **Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī** as the third and highest crest. As Shafī'ī Kadkanī notes:

"After Rūmī, what remains are ripples and smaller waves; we may even say the sea is no longer a sea it is a lake, a pond, and at times merely a basin or washbowl" (Shafī'ī Kadkanī, 1999).

Since our discussion focuses on the analysis of allegory in mystical literature, we aim to draw upon the allegorical elements found in the poetic works of these great Sufi poets.

Feigning Madness (The Wise Fools)

The "wise fools" were those who, beyond their outward appearance, were observed by the wise to possess qualities indicative of wisdom and insight. For this reason, they were also described with the attribute of being wise and called "wise fools."

Ibn-e- Khaldun, in his introduction to the group known as *Bahlul-like* individuals i.e., the wise fools states concisely: "These persons have attained the station of sainthood (*wilayah*), but the religious obligations (*shar'i* duties) have been lifted from them." (Pourjoudi, 1987).

These wise fools appear in Sufi literature in the guise of the *Qalandariyya*. The Sufi literary response to the issue of hypocrisy (*riya*) is the doctrine of blame (*malamatiyya*). The *malamati* thought is most vividly embodied in the figure of the *Qalandariyya* in Sufi literature. The *Qalandariyya*, rooted in the doctrine of blame, at certain times assume the role of breaking the taboos that a hypocritical society has become trapped within. From this emerges heroes in our mystical literature, known

as the "wise fools" or the "madmen in disguise." The wise fools can be seen as the artistic or narrative manifestation of those Qalandariyya who, in mystical works, have become legendary figures of courage, true asceticism, and taboo-breaking (Meisami, 1987).

At first glance in the works of Attar (such as *The Conference of the Birds*, *The Book of Secrets*, *The Divine Book*, *The Book of Calamities*), one is struck by the prominent presence of madmen. Although other poets and mystics also refer to these madmen in their works, Attar devotes more attention to them than anyone else. Given the brief overview of Attar's society, it must be said that the dissenting faction of society comprises those who are mad with passion and intoxicated with love (*majdhūbān*), who voice satirical and critical speeches that no one else dares to express, through the voices of these wise fools. They challenge abnormal social ideas, beliefs, behaviors, and relationships with a sharp and humorous language. (Zaryab Khoei, 1987).

One of the most beautiful tales concerning the madmen is the story of "The Madman and the Amīd of Khorasan," depicted in Attar's *The Book of Calamities*. Although the madman's finger of protest seemingly points to the cosmic order and God's governance of His servants, this protest also addresses the deep class divisions and unjust distribution of wealth in society (Lewisohn, 2003).

A penniless madman passes through Nishapur. Wherever his eyes fall from herds of cattle, horses, and sheep to obedient servants and towering palaces he asks who owns these, and he is told that all belong to the Amīd of Khorasan. In protest against this inequality, he throws his tattered turban into the sky and shouts: "O God, give this old turban to the Amīd as well!" In this bitter and biting satire, the unjust distribution of wealth is critiqued (Meier, 1968).

The cattle's eyes are all black across the plain,
 Like the desert of the heart, full of sin and guilt.
 He asked whose cattle these were,
 He was told, "These belong to the Amīd of our city."
 He wandered on, his eyes growing wide,
 He saw another darkened plain.
 He asked whose horses these were and was told,
 "They belong to that same Amīd, the ruler."
 He wandered on, the fool,
 He saw another plain full of sheep.
 He asked, "Whose flock is this?"
 A man said, "That is also the Amīd's."
 After a while, when he saw the gates,
 And countless servants like moon and stars,
 His heart thundered at their pearl earrings,
 The city's courtiers were all slaves to the Amīd.
 He said, "Who owns these servants, these proud strutters?"
 He was told, "They are the special slaves of the Amīd."

When the weak madman entered the city,

He saw a palace towering to the sky.
He asked a man, "Whose palace is this with many features?"
The man replied, "I am mad; I have neither bread nor life."
He quickly tore off his ragged garment,
And threw his head towards the sky.
He said, "Take this turban too, O grief,
And give it to your Amīd."
"Since everything belongs to the Amīd,

In my mind, this rag is deserved as well."

In another allegory from *The Divine Book (Elahi-Nameh)* whose hero is again one of Attar's madmen a madman longs for a coarse cloth (karbas). Although in this allegory Attar aims to convey one of the central mystical teachings, namely submission to the Truth (God), the outward appearance of the story reveals the poverty and nakedness of the common people, especially these passionate madmen:

*"Is there not a madman, passionate and arisen,
Who was naked, yet sought the Truth as coarse cloth?"* (Jurjānī, 1954)

In another tale from *The Book of Calamities (Masebat-Nameh)*, Bahloul one of the most famous of the wise fools uses sharp satire to admonish the injustice of Harun. Thus, Attar, through the voice of Bahloul, depicts the oppression and injustice caused by corrupt governance:

Suddenly, Bahloul felt a dryness (hunger),
He went to the king and requested some fat (lard).
The king tested him to see
If he would recognize anything at all.
He said, "The turnip must be cut and crushed,"
His servant crushed it and brought it forward.
Bahloul ate a little bread and that turnip,
He threw some to the ground and swallowed a handful of grief.
He said to the king, "Since you have become king,
The fat from the lard has left this place.
The food has lost its taste because of your wrath;
You must be removed from the city."
(Attar, 1959)

In *The Book of Calamities*, another tale features a madman confronting Anushirvan. The madman does not consider Anushirvan just. Through this story, Attar exposes the historical falsehood of Anushirvan's famed justice and redefines the meaning of justice through the voice of a madman:

A madman, inflamed by the restlessness of a broken heart,
Said: "You, Nushirvan the Just?"
He replied, "That's what people say everywhere."
The madman said, "Fill their mouths with the dust of the road!
So they no longer speak this lie of you,
For in your justice I see no radiance."

“Is this justice that for thirty full years
I have dwelt in ruin and despair,
While you lie each night upon a golden throne,
Surrounded by silver in countless heaps?”
(Attar, 1959)

The Allegory of Oppression in Attar’s Works

In *The Book of Calamities*, there is a tale of a king who builds a magnificent palace beside the poor dwelling of an old woman. Although Attar emphasizes the power of the oppressed's prayer in this narrative, he also highlights the existence of injustice, inequality, and the stark contrast between palace and hut. (Ibid: 113)

Another story in which Attar refers to the tyranny of rulers and their officials and to the consequences of the sigh of the oppressed is the tale of Malikshah’s servants and their injustice toward an old widow (Chittick,1983).

One day, as the servants of Malikshah were returning from a hunt, they passed through a village. There, they slaughtered a cow the only source of livelihood for a widow and her orphaned children and ate it. The distressed old woman, having no one to turn to, waited on a bridge along the king’s route, hoping to bring her grievance directly to him...

The king, from the meadows toward Isfahan,
Returned from the hunt with bow and command.
A meadow and a village lay in his path,
So at dusk, he made his camp in that place.
Some of his young servants rode ahead,
And by the road, they found a cow instead.
They slaughtered it and ate with pride and ease,
Then returned to camp, full and pleased.
But that cow belonged to a frail old widow,
Whose heart was torn, her soul sunk down.
She lived with a handful of orphaned kin,
Their only hope: the cow’s milk within.
She and the children clung to the beast,
Its milk alone had kept them from famine’s feast.
When word of the cow’s slaughter reached her ears,
She collapsed in shock, drenched in tears.
All through the night she wept and wailed,
And toward the bridge near the road she trailed. (Attar, 1959)

An old woman intercepts Malikshah on his path and raises her voice in protest: “O King! If you deliver me justice here on this bridge, you will be saved; otherwise, I shall demand justice from you on the Bridge of Sirat (on the Day of Judgment)!”

This tale serves as an example of the oppressed protesting against the oppressor, and the pursuit of justice within a mystical worldview.

Rumi, too, in the first book of the *Masnawi*, employs the allegory of the lion and the beasts of the jungle to depict tyranny, the monopolistic nature of oppressors, and the strategies for confronting them.

In this story: A lion resides in a forest and daily preys upon the animals. In order to be spared from his wrath and cruelty, the animals agree to a pact: each day, one of them will be selected by lot and offered as prey to the lion. One day, the lot falls on a clever rabbit. The rabbit devises a cunning plan and intentionally arrives late. When the lion demands to know the reason for the delay, the rabbit explains, “On the way, another lion who lives in a well ambushed me and claimed me as his prey.” The lion, enraged, goes with the rabbit to the well. The rabbit requests the lion to hold him close so that he may not fall in. As the lion leans over the well, he sees his own reflection alongside the rabbit’s in the water, mistakes it for a rival and usurper, and, in an attempt to reclaim the imagined prey, throws himself into the well and perishes. (Rumi, 1996)

Although Rumi alludes throughout the tale to mystical teachings such as effort and trust in God, he also implicitly addresses the concepts of oppression, the monopolistic behavior of tyrants, and ways to confront injustice. (Rumi, 1996).

Earthly Love in the Allegories of ‘Aṭṭār and Rūmī

Both Aṭṭār and Rūmī offered mystical interpretations of earthly forms of love. Nevertheless, the presence of such allegories and the frequent use of male beloveds in many of these tales are pointing to the widespread prevalence of certain social deviations in the troubled societies of their time.

The Allegory of Maḥmūd and Ayāz

One of the most frequently employed allegories in mystical literature is the story of Sultan Maḥmūd and Ayāz. Rūmī in the fifth book of the *Masnawi*, and Aṭṭār in the *Mosibat-nāma*, recount the episode of Ayāz hiding his old cloak and worn shoes, and interpret it through a mystical lens. Nearly all of Aṭṭār’s love-centered allegories revolve around male beloveds.

Aṭṭār uses these tales to emphasize divine love and the notion of spiritual devotion. One possible reason for the prevalence of such allegories may be the marginalization of women in the sociocultural context of that era.

The Tale of Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī and the Slave in the *Ilāhī-nāma*

In the *Ilāhī-nāma*, ‘Aṭṭār recounts a tale of Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī’s love for a slave boy named Shāh. This youth, like Joseph, is peerless in beauty. At a royal banquet, Fakhr al-Dīn, under the influence of wine, gazes longingly at the boy. Perceptively, the king offers the boy to him. However, Fakhr al-Dīn, fearing the king might regret his generosity, refrains from taking the boy home. (‘Aṭṭār, 1959: 83)

Other examples of *naẓar-bāzī* (erotic gazing) in Aṭṭār’s works include:

- The tale of a dervish’s love for a boy (*Ilāhī-nāma*, Aṭṭār, 1959)
- And similar tales

An important issue here is the contrast in language and tone between Rūmī and ‘Aṭṭār regarding these themes. Aṭṭār, in such stories, generally avoids humor or jest, whereas Rūmī often employs humorous or even coarse language in narrating them (Knysh, 1999).

Given that this article cannot accommodate the full scope of social realities reflected in these allegories, we briefly list some of the societal insights extracted from various tales in Aṭṭār's works and Rūmī's *Masnavi*:

- A particular perspective on women and their condition, such as in the tale of the *pious woman* in *Ilāhī-nāma* (Aṭṭār 1959b). Here, Aṭṭār tells of a devout woman whose husband is away on a journey. She has no security in society, and every passerby attempts to violate her sanctity. When she resists, she is cast out and falsely accused. She finds safety only by disguising herself as a man.
- Women's lack of personal and economic independence in Rūmī's era (*Masnavi*, Book 6, verses 1758–1765)
- The manner of speaking to women and a woman's response to a man passing through a group of women (*Masnavi*, *ibid.*, from verse 1727 onward)
- In one tale, Rūmī presents a dialogue between a husband and wife to express the economic dependency of women and its impact on family relationships.
- The story of the *Bedouin woman and her husband*, and the offering of a foul-smelling jug of water to the caliph (*Masnavi*, Book 1, verse 2616 onward). While this allegory conveys profound mystical themes, it also reflects the marital dynamics of the time.
- A negative view of law enforcement ('assās and 'awwān) in literary works (*Masnavi*, Book 4, verses 55–60)
- Depiction of sectarian differences in the allegory of the Arab, Turk, Greek, and Persian buying grapes (*Masnavi*, Book 2, verse 3611 onward)

Study and analyze each aspect of the problem one by one. It is necessary to build arguments and analyze the data discussed and compared with other research and scholarly works. In other words, the way to address an issue here is to combine data and discussion. If necessary, include tables, figures, figures or other illustrations.

For quotations use the APA (American Psychological Association) style, for example: (Iqbal, 1983). The body note contains the author's last name, year of publication, and page (Edelman, 2015). It is recommended to use the Mendeley reference management application (Ichwan, 2001).

CONCLUSION

A close examination of the allegories in the seminal works of Attār and Rūmī reveals that these allegories serve not only as instruments for conveying mystical concepts and spiritual journeys but also as mirrors reflecting the social realities of their time. Although mystical literature particularly in the writings of these two prominent poets emphasizes the superiority of the metaphysical world over the material one, the selection of themes, narrative structures, and allegorical forms reveals the poets' social awareness and cultural concerns regarding their surrounding environment.

Since allegory inherently connects abstract concepts to tangible and familiar elements, the poet must rely on recognizable stories and images to convey mystical messages to the audience. This dual nature of allegory transforms it into a multidimensional tool that, in addition to spiritual teachings, offers insight into social structures, cultural norms, and societal challenges of the poet's era.

In the allegories of Attār and Rūmī, social realities such as the tyranny of rulers, corruption of power structures, poverty and inequality, moral decay, patriarchal views on women, and criticism of state officials like *'avvāns* (agents) and *'assāsān* (night patrols) are clearly depicted. Moreover, their unique approach to mythological and historical figures through allegory reflects the intellectual and social tensions of their time.

Thus, it can be concluded that mystical literature, alongside its spiritual and transcendental dimensions, also possesses a sociological value indirectly portraying the social issues and crises of the period in which it was produced

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