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THE GARDENS OF PERSIAN POETICS

> Dedicated to Prof. Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, the author of "A Stranger In The City: The Poetics of Sabk-I Hindi" from the author of "The Indian Style and its Place in Persian Literature (Studies on Poetics)"[1]

In this paper I would like to discuss the problem of architectonics of the treatise on poetics 'Gardens of Magic in Nuances of Poetry' (*Hada'iq as-Sihr fi Daqa'iq ash-Sh'ir*) (Moscow, 1985) by the prominent 12 century poet and scholar Rashid ad-Din Watwat.

The 'Gardens of Magic' is one of the most authoritative compositions and one of the earliest among the treatises on *'ilm al-badi'* – the science and art of decoration of poetic language.

The treatise was translated into Russian in 1985 and supplied with Introduction,historical-literary and philological commentary and the Persian text of the treatise. This was the first translation of the treatise into a European language made by Dr. Natalya Chalisova. The translation was preceded by the Introduction.

According to the author of the Introduction 'to describe the structure of the Gardens' is 'to a certain extent to describe 'the structure of *'ilm al-badi'* itself.

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[1] Natalya Prigarina. "Indiyskiy styl I ego mesto v persidskoy literature (voprosy poetiki)". Moskva, 1999.

The problem of the structure of the treatise arises from the impression of 'non-symmetry' and lack of organization of the text. The only division, which is present here, is the nomination of 55 figures of speech. There is a little Foreword to the text by Rashid ad-Din Watwat and an additional chapter with eight more figures. The disposition of the figures and their very set is as if lacking any system.

In this paper, I would like to propose a hypothesis of the architectonics of the treatise in the light of which the text of Gardens could present a more symmetrical structure than it was previously supposed to possess.

The goal is to reconstruct the attitude of a medieval author towards the classification of the figures of poetical speech, as well as to find out the very principle of such a classification. However, one can meet a double danger here first, to prescribe to the author non-genuine ideas, and second - to remain within the boundaries of the's viewpoint, and so not to see the object from the outside.

Therefore, we shall treat the viewpoint of the author of the text and in a wider sense – of the cultural tradition – as an inner viewpoint. The position of a modern researcher must be understood as an outer viewpoint.

In her Introduction to the translation of the treatise, N.Chalisova pays great attention to its structure. First she mentions that the figures of *badi'* (*san'at*) are based on the mixed foundation from the viewpoint of European poetics. The sequence of figures does not permit to reveal even implicitly the division according to the level of

their description, or understanding the idea of putting them one after another[2]. However, she is sure that more detailed observation shows, that there exist definite order in the text. Starting from this point the researcher marks a core (*asl*) of homogenous figures and finds symmetry there, as well as that the less important peripherian to that group figures may be thrown around.[3]

In spite of this 'rational principle of organization' some other principles are mentioned, such as principle of the authority of previous tradition, according to which more important and ancient figures are placed in the beginning of the treatise, the less important are moved to its end, and the principle of analogy – the figures are placed side by side only because of an association (of their names).

Thus it becomes clear, that the group of figures attached to the meaning such as antithesis (*mutaddad*), metaphor (*isti'ara*), simile (*tashbih*) and hyperbole (*ighraq as-sifa*) are thrown about maximally (their positions are in sequence 8,11,22,46).

The search for motivated composition of the treatise meets different obstacles such as 'occasional position', 'disorder' and 'isolation' of the figures. From the European point of view (an outward one), it seems that the convenient disposition of the figures should be quite different.

The following approach towards the comprehension of the composition seems to be more productive. It is based on the doctrine of

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[2] Rashid ad-Din Watwat. Sady volshebstva v tonkostyah poezii [Gardens of Magic in Nuances of Poetry'] (*Hada'iq as-Sihr fi Daqa'iq ash-Sh'ir*), Translation from Persian, Analysis, and Commentary by N.Yu. Chalisova. Moscow, 1985, p. 36

[3] Watwat, p. 41.

Arabian grammarians on the unity of *lafz* and *ma'na* - the form and sense, or, saying it widely, the external form and semantics.[4]

Belonging to the definite tradition, the treatise is aimed at presenting models for creation and use of the ornate speech in a proper way. In his explanatory definitions, the author of the treatise reveals the main traditional models of the methods and principles of creation of figures.

Trying to solve this problem, we are starting from the point, that as a representative of the medieval Muslim science with its passion towards classification, the author of the treatise may not have been anything except a classifier. Thus he must have had in his mind (consciously even subconsciously) a strict non-contradictory foundation for the composition of the treatise.

At the same time, the word 'gardens' in the title of the treatise suggests a special care taken with its architectonics, corresponding to the loving garden planning in Muslim tradition. It is significant from the inner viewpoint and justifies our search for the symmetry.

Through the gardens created in the physical or spiritual spaces – J.Meisami notes – man is expressing not only his concept of the ideal state of things and his aspiration to acquire it once again, but also the feeling of his link with the Nature, representing a cosmic model and man's own place in it. Earthly garden is...different from the natural landscape because it is imagery, created in accordance with a plan (the fact concerning not only literary gardens but

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[4] Ibid., p. 44.

the real ones as well)... The garden itself becomes an ideal place if to maintain the principles of symmetry of the plan and its elements.[5]

Which are these principles? According to the descriptions, Persian gardens are regular and possess their geometrical plan. The Garden is oriented by four parts of the world; it is divided by four channels and has therefore a strict four-part structure, symbolizing Cosmos and four rivers of life. In spite of its geometrical organization, plants, trees and flowers, growing in the garden at the same time, produce an impression of the natural landscape. In the middle of the garden, a pavilion was usually built. This is an architectural form, providing the inner connection between the interior and surrounding spaces.[6]

Going back to the treatise, 'Ilm al-badi' is based on the logic-grammatical notions of the correlation of the elements *lafz* (form) and *ma'na* (sense). These notions are used by Watwat on four main levels: restrictive – for the elements of speech and word, direct – for the word, broad – for the units, more than one word, that is the level of the elements (sounds, letters, morphemes etc.), the level of word, the level of bayt as a unit of poetry, the level of work of art as a whole.

It would have been only natural if the concept of *lafz - ma'na* became the basic shaping principle for the construction of the poetic figures.

[5] Meisami J.S. Allegorical Gardens in the Persian poetic Tradition^Nezami, Rumi, Hafez. – IJMES.1985, Vol. 17, № 2, pp.229-230
[6] Laurie M. An Introduction to Landscape Architecture. New York – Amsterdam – Oxford, 1986, p.27

The simplest case of the ornate speech is establishing symmetry. In this case, minimum two words are opposed. Four results of this operation are obvious:

I.   full coincidence of elements

II.   partial coincidence of elements

III.   partial divergence of elements

IV.   full convergence of elements

We find here four general principles of the construction of poetic figures – identification, assimilation, dissimilation and opposition of the elements of poetic figures.

On the level of word, there are four combinations of *lafz* (L) - *ma'na* (M) when two words are opposed or confronted:

I. $L(1)=L(2)$, $M(1)= M(2)$ - coincidence realized on this level as the repetition of the word;

II. $L(1) \neq L(2)$, $M(1) \approx M(2)$, partial coincidence of the meaning, here - synonymy;

III. $L(1)= L(2)$, $M(1) \neq M(2)$, partial divergence or homonymy;

IV. $L(1) \neq L(2)$, $M(1) \neq M(2)$, convergence or antonimy.

On the two other levels – bayt and poem as a whole – this rule is relevant as well.

These four models may be used for the description (from the outward viewpoint) of all the figures of the treatise, except those, which deal with the composition of a poem (*husnha*) and aesthetics of the piece of art as the whole (e.g. *sahl-I mumtani'*). Implicitly these models could be registered sometimes in the description of figures by Watwat.

Hence, we have got at least two quaternary divisions for our Garden, vertical : four levels of description, and horizontal : four models of the figures. All the 'plants' of the 'Garden' may be put here.

Let us enter the Garden's gate (the Author's Foreword) and try to observe its architectonics in general.

First 11 figures (mainly formal) at the same time include *mutaddad* and *isti'ara* – antithesis and metaphor. They are put in this group as belonging to the same level of description – that is the level of elements of word and the word as a whole.

What's more, *isti'ara* signifies the appearance of the new language - that of poetical imagery, when the word is not equal to itself.

To some extent the metaphor serves as a borderline between the first group as a whole and the next ones. It presents also a new way of operating with L and M, based on the declaration of their autonomy. For the first time the doctrine of autonomy of L and M in poetics was proclaimed by Arabian poets and philologists of the 8-9 centuries and is regarded by modern scholars as a great discovery.

We would like to dwell on the idea of rank of the figures. In the treatise, we meet the notion of rank in the definition of the figure 2 - *tarsi' ma'-at-tajnisat*: 'However important the figure tarsi' is, it becomes even higher in its rank (*buland shavad*), when such figures like tajniss come to help it'.[7] The idea of rank of the figures is not given explicitly but it can be obtained through the analysis of the description of the figures in the text.

The next figures (*husns*) (12-15) start presenting the level of the bayt

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[7] Watwat. pp.87, 229

and contain indications on composition and aesthetcs of qasida.

The next group of figures (16-21) is united by the realization of the twofold nature of their meaning. Their description includes a condition, which we would define as 'a suggestion. Thus in the fig. 16 (*muraat an-nazir*) one object brings in another by association, in the fig. 18 (*muhtamil li ziddain*) the poet praises somebody in such a way that one may think that he blames him. In the fig. 20 (*iltifat*), the poet completes the motif and after than returns to it, reminding of it directly or by means of suggestion, and finally the very name of the figure *iham* means 'to make one meditate on something'.

In other words, starting from the fig.16 the author calls for the definite activity of the reader's mind, who must make some assumptions towards the principles of the method of poetics.

High suggestibility of the figures is one of the reasons, why the practical use of poetics is so difficult for the one alien to Irano-Islamic culture. Actually, one even would not notice the peculiarities of this method or keep in his mind that it is necessary to remember or guess something or simply strain his mind.

Thus, we can see that in this group of figures a new trait emerged - that is suggestibility (presented by the inner viewpoint of description). This is also the sign of the higher rank of this group from the outer viewpoint if we define it as a degree of complexity of those mental operations, which are necessary for the reconstruction of the model of figure.

In this sense, *iham* figures are more complex than *isti'ara* (metaphor).

Accordingly, the next group of figure -similes (*tashbihat*) is ranged higher than the previous ones. It demands for more efforts

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and logical operations for understanding its structure, than previous ones. Since the simile is understood in Western terms as the elementary form of trope, it is not easy to accept such a statement. The complexity of the structure of simile in the treatise is mirrored by its definition.

One of the more interesting problems, which arise from the text of the treatise, is the high position of the figures dealing with the peculiarities of Arabic script or concerning only written form of the text. From the level of description, there are different cases of autonomy of L and M of a bayt there, so their presence here is logically justified. The question is, whether at the same time the figures keep the extent of suggestibility, which was presented by former figures? In addition, one more question - whether it is correct to speak about suggestibility knowing well the formal character of these figures of speech?

The answer to both questions is positive. First, the suggestibility is proved by the enigmatic character of most of the figures. (Thus, *muwashshah* is realized when picking out of the bayt the words written by the ink of the other color than the other words, or make changes by putting other diacritic points and accents, one may get a new poetic line or a word with a new meaning). This group is completed by enigmas (*mu'amma*), anagrams and codes.

Second, there are purely literal figures there (all the bayt is written by the letters without points, or with points only or by letters joining one another or written separately etc). Here one must remember the sacred character of the Arabian graphic art in

the Islamic culture. In spite of the absence of mystical interpretation of the figures in the treatise, it is possible to suppose that their high position has its source in the importance of Arabian script and the art connected with it in the Islamic culture. Therefore, Abu'l-Faiz Faizi wrote his commentary on Qur'an *'Sawwati al-Ilham'* by letters having no single point. Arguing with those who called it *bid'at* (the blamed novelty); he said that *La ilaha illa-Llah* has no single point but includes all the Muslim faith.

According to our association of ideas with the Garden, we may compare this group of figures with the pavilion built in the center of the Garden uniting the inner and the outer space.

The next figures are also highly suggestive and demonstrate the higher level of description.

The following (46) figure hyperbole (*ighraq as-sifa*) is proposing a new level of suggestibility. It is based on the notion of an implied standard, exaggeration of which is the essence of the mental procedure with this figure.

The same thing could be said about the rest of the figures. N53 *ibda'* claims for the novelty of poetic motifs, beauty of expression and architectonics of the piece of art. This claim is close to the aesthetic spirit of the figures 12-15 - *husn al-matla, husn al-maqta, husn at-tahallus* and *husn at-talab*. This permits us to notice one more distinctive feature of the text. If we observe all the space of the 'garden' from the altitude of the highest figures of the treatise, we would see as if vertical rows running from the highest figures to the lowest, a sort of terraced garden. In this rows on its top point more

complicated figures are placed and they correlate to the lowest ones by their structure and conception. Thus, starting from the fig. 55 - *husn at-ta'lil* (the "beauty of motivation") we go down to fig.52 - *al-kalam al-jami'* (including in the bayt of wise thoughts and complaints about destiny); then to fig.45 - *tazmin* (including poetical lines of another author); to 42 *at-tarjima* (interpretation of Arabic bayt by means of Persian poetry); to fig.35 - *al-mulamma'* (one bayt. is written one in Arabic one in Persian); to fig.31 - *al-su'al-wa-l-jawab* (question and answer): to fig.28 *irsal al-mathalain* (inclusion of two proverbs); to fig 27 - *irsal al-mathal* (inclusion of one proverb); to fig. 25 - *i'tirad al-kalam* (interruption of speech by an insertion); to fig. 20 - *al-iltifat* (completing of a motif and return to it by a proverb,wish or in the other way).

Let us give a brief conclusion of the paper. The analysis of the Rashid ad-Din Watwat's 'The Gardens of Magic in the Nuances of Poetry' revealed its quaternary basis.

Four models of the figures given above help to describe practically all the figures except those, which have general aesthetic purposes.

There are four levels of the description of the figures.

The important factor of the increasing of the rank of figures is their suggestibility.

There exists an inner vertical correlation between different figures.

The combination of the outer and inner viewpoints allows to estimate the exactness of the title of the treatise : 'The

Gardens of Magic in the Nuances of Poetry'.