

Symbols and myths in Diwan, Hadiqat, and Siyar al-Ebad of Sanai

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Abstract

One of the important characteristics of Sanai's poems is its use of symbols and mythical elements through which the intuitional findings are declared. Moreover, they are used as a means of conveying mystical meanings. There are many elements; however, the present paper explains some of the elements such as blade, crown, throne, hat, khirqa (the cloak of the Sufi), rosary, girdle, and the symbolic word of Laa. The images associated with the mentioned elements, and their mystical points will be clarified, finally the mythical characteristics and symbolic points of the symbols will be studied. The main purpose of the present paper is to study symbols and myths in the works of Sanai (Diwan, Hadiqat, and Siyar al-Ebad). The purposes are achieved via studying and comparing the texts.

Key words: myths, symbol, mysticism, Sanai

Introduction

The art and poetry of Sanai are similar to the myths and dreams and they can express humans' internal feelings. There is an old link between literature and myths, symbols, and human's mind. Consequently, myths and symbols have been formed in the poetic styles. One of the most controversial poets whose poetry could be studied from symbol, mystical, and mythical viewpoint is Sanai. Certainly, the poems of Sanai Ghaznavi reflect a concerned mind which has lived in one of the most turbulent historical periods of Iran. Over this period, there were many foreigners' cultural and political consequences, moreover, the hypocrisies and immortalities caused disorders that affected the poet's mind and language and formed mystical concepts in the form of myths and symbols.

Discussion and results

Blade

Iron is a mysterious object that has a mythical and semantic aspect. Sword is one of the objects that have the mysteriousness of iron. It is a weapon for fighting against corruption, impurity, and devil force. The sacred feature of iron has been mentioned in surah al-hadid(25/55). In this ayah (verse), two features of "extreme hardship" and "being beneficial for people" have been mentioned for iron. Ibn-e-Kasir believes that in this ayah, "باس شديد" refers to weapons such as sword, spears, and shields (Ibn-e-Kasir, vol.4, p: 337). In the pictures of Babylonian myths, Egypt has turned into a monster and Jehovah has used his sword to kill it and save the Israelites (Henry Hook, 2012).

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Therefore, sword has a sacred originality and it could be found in Gospel of Mathew (34.10) where Jesus says” do not think that I have brought peace, because I have brought sword”. The symbolic meaning of sword refers to fighting against evil. Though the study of history indicates that sword has the meaning of sword in the Christians’ and Muslims’ fights, it might refer to something else. Anyhow, the position of war in Christianity and Islam should not be denied. The blade is not only used for fighting but also for defending. Usually, the ironic weapons have a mythical feature. They are believed to be ethical and religious characters’, gods’, and heroes’ means of power, therefore, they were considered sacred and against devils. “The capable and sacred angels who use ironic helmet and weapons to destroy thousands of devils are appreciated” (Pour Davood, 1998, p:477).

In the following verses, Sanai reminds the reader of the traditional originality of the sword.

In order to reach friendship with God, it is deserved to be scarified by the blade of kindness

(Sanai, 1983, 906)

Make a body for ration and reason in order to kill the arrogance by blade

(Sanai, 1983, 971)

Sanai, if you do not sacrifice yourself with the sword of calamity, you will not reach closeness of God

(Sanai, 1983, 172)

The blade of your anger cuts heads of the honored ones

(Sanai, 1995, 92)

Before you die, kill yourself with the blade of want

(Sanai, 1995, 92)

From Sanai’s point of view, the seeker and mystic need the sword to achieve a perfect purpose. The purpose is to fight against devil via the sword which is the body of thousands of wills. The sword is a memento of the ancient world. The sword (blade) is the cultural heritage of the ancients that give a magic power to the seeker in order to overcome difficulties. The blade remind the seeker of secrets which have been forgotten by the ancients. Consequently, the heavenly powers accompany humans to defeat the devil.

Kill the free-man by blade of zeal; kill both the one who pleads and the one who accepts the pleading

(Sanai, 1983, 32)

Blade deserves the real men not every one

(Sanai, 1995, 32)

If ypu were proud in the path of truth, now it is time to blade the pride

(Sanai, 1983, 971)

Therefore, Sanai has created peace and unity in the heart of contrasts of conflicts. He also causes this mystical composure in the heart and mind if the mystic. In fact, blade is a symbol of achieving mental unity based on awareness. It is fighting against self which is called the Great War (Jihad-e-Akbar) by Islam. The internal fight

whose tangible form is the external fight and determines the application of blade and it indicates the symbolic role of sword that defeats internal devils in order to lead human to eternity.

Your closeness is like a fresh spring, while being far from you is like sharp Zolfaqar

Our soul for the divine wine, our body for soil, and our heart for you, let give this dishonored head to the sharp blade

(Sanai, 1983, 26)

According to the above verses, Sanai refers to a kind of mythical sword. Since Zolfaqar is a special sword, it has mythical features. Some believe that the prophet of Islam had cut a branch of a tree and gave it to Imam Ali and it turned into an ironic sword (Tabari, 1973, p: 136). In the interpretation of Ruh-al-Janan, it has been mentioned that the iron of Zolfaqar has been sent to the prophet from the heaven so that he could give it to Imam Ali (Abulfath Razi, 1961, p: 255).

Zolfaqar which is a special sword is the symbol of power and courage and its two-blade edge is a symbol of the combination of water and fire which have been used for its construction (Esmaeilpour, 2008, p:22). The sword is the symbol of a constructive power and a devastative power which complete each other. The religious Jihad in the external world and Jihad-e-Akbar in oneself are two different and opposite realms that could reach unity. In this unity, all of the oppositions arrive at a kind of balance.

Crown and throne

Crown and throne are the royal credits; they are symbols of power, esteem, and majesty. Crown and throne have been used together in Sanai's poems.

His patience is the throne of the low-level things; his knowledge is the crown of the existence

(Sanai, 1981, 251)

Good for you the majestic "Barid", you deserve a throne of water and crown of fire

Sometimes you would have a crown and sometimes not, sometimes the world in favor of you and sometimes against you

(Sanai, 1981, 214)

Sanai refers to the god "Viv" which is one of the traditional gods of Iran and India. It is the 15th Yasht of Avesta (Ram Yasht). This god is described as a god leaning on a heavenly and majestic throne while he has wearing an indescribable crown. Since the wind informs the hearers of the speaker's words, it is called the messenger "Barid".

Sanai is completely aware of the civilization of Iranian nation and also the mysterious myths. Sanai takes advantage of concrete images in order to express abstract emotions and thoughts. One of the ways for expressing intuitional findings is via symbols. He applies symbols as a means of creating beauties and also as a means of conveying meanings. Therefore, crown and throne are symbols of blessing and empowering.

Put the crown of "I am God's servant" on Jesus' head and ask Mary not to speak

(Sanai, 1983, 483)

We had prosperity by having hope of God's closeness, and we had crown and throne

(Sanai, 1983, 163)

Sanai's imagination has the power to create various images. His imagination (internal power) goes beyond his reason and reveals his mysterious internal world. The symbols have concrete basis and they reflect the mental reality. Therefore, the symbols could only be understood via a perceivable intuition. The images of crown and throne in the mystical realm of Sanai are applied to teach social, moral, and religious truths. The crown almost has the feature of the symbol "circle". A circle is one of the symbols of eternity, crowns and thrones are mainly made from precious stones that indicate the application of empowering irons and stones. The link between heaven and iron has made the iron invulnerable against devil forces. Therefore, it is associated with eternity.

Hat

Hats and clothes which are worn on head are other samples of crowns that have the empowering ability.

If you do not neglect your lusts, you will not put on the hat of majesty

(Sanai, 1995, p:592)

As far as you are proud of yourself you cannot achieve a high position, if you leave your hat (pride), you will master the great humans. Being modest before the great humans is appreciated, therefore, leave the pride and arrogance.

(Sanai, 1995, p:126)

Love has no guide or path; to achieve love neither head nor hat is important.

(Sanai, 1995, p:327)

In fact, head is the symbol of existence and hat is the symbol of social position. Sanai believes that all of the existence manifestations and all of the constraints should be broken in order to reach obeying the eternal love (God). Sanai conveys the meaning to the readers via perceivable words. To him seeing and thinking are synonymous. He finds a symbol associated with truth in every speech and pays attention to its mystical or philosophical aspect, and then takes advantage of poem as a proper means of expressing them. In fact, poetic images are a way to express Sanai's abstract thoughts; therefore, a didactic work gets close to art as well. The history of hat refers to Mehries. In majority of Mehri statues there is a sack-like hat similar to the hat of dervishes, the tip of the hat is bent inward or outward. Some of the statues which are naked have a hat on; moreover, the statues which have come out of a flower or shell have also a hat on. The hat is also seen on the heads of some of the Mehri great men and women statues which belong to Partian and Sasanian periods. These statues have been carved in Naqsh-e-Rostam and Bishapour (Moqadam, 2009, p: 72).

If you want to have a hat in the path of love, you should have a hat of fire just like that of a candle. Hat and head are not allowed in the path of love, unless a hat of fire that deserves the love

(Sanai, 1995, p:128)

Your love is enough for me no need for prosperity, the head is mine no need for the hat

By using hat, Sanai brings about the gentlest mystical meanings of the language. The effectiveness of the images is rooted in Sanai's unconscious. Visualization is one of the main components of imagination. Sanai conveys mental concepts via his imagination and intelligence. In fact, the imaginary images help to understand mystical truths. The seeker understands the truth via intuitional experiences, it is impossible for him to get the truths via reason and perception. In this way, the recognition of absolute truth is done directly. Sanai takes advantage of language to present mental images without the intervention of reason. Over the intuitional experience, the truth is perceived wholly and Sanai gives this experience to the readers.

Khirqa

Khirqa is the cloak of sufies. It is devoid of world belongings. As a result, in the mystical literature it is a symbol of breaking lustful belongings. Therefore, a man who is wearing a khirqa has no sense of belonging to the world and moves toward the perfection.

Those who sell their souls live in the finite world; those who wear khirqa live in eternity

(Sanai, 1981, p:248)

Sometimes, some people have abuse khirqa to pretend that they are pious; however, they have been contaminated with lust. Moreover, khirqa is the symbol of a sheikh to whom the morid (follower) is obedient. Therefore, when the morid wears a khirqa it means that God has accepted him.

The one who adores a loaf of bread, is the one who leaves his khirqa for wine (of love)

(Sanai, 1983, p:163)

Anyhow, khirga gives a superior power to the person who wears it in order to be safe. In the Mandayi literature, gods and Diwans have clothes to be kept far from devils (Zanar, 1996, p: 196). The tradition of wearing khirqa also exists in Jewish narrations (Yaqub wears khirqa in order to mourn for his son” (Old Testament, genesis, chapter 1 and 2).

In the Old Testament it is also mentioned that on that day, God orders you to cry, mourn, and wear khirqa (Old Testament, Ashaya Nabi, chapter 22, verse 12). In Islam, taking khirqa is attributed to the prophet. Om-e-Khaled narrated that the government of prophet received many khirqas among which one of them was small and black and no one wore it, and then the prophet came to me and gave it to me and told me to wear it till it got old (2002, Kashani, pp:147-148).

In the history of Sufism, the followers of Sufism passed stages, and then received a khirqa from sheikh.

Wearing khirqa and being conscious is impossible, when you lost your consciousness you can wear khirqa

(Sanai, 1983, p:499)

Religion, reason, knowledge, piety and so forth are all in service of people, while Sanai believes that the mystics do not satisfy themselves with the earthly joys (the aforementioned issues) and want to be satisfied with the source of love.

In this good condition, all hearts wear khirqas, a khirqa out of heart should be made to keep heads in the middle of it

(Sanai, 1983, p:170)

Sanai believes that putting khirqa on heart has two meanings. The first meaning refers to giving one's heart to someone and the other meaning refers to getting obedient. Sanai makes a symbol of khirqa to present an idealistic paradigm. According to the above verse, one of the applications of khirqa is that it distinguishes the rationality of mind, a mind that thinks. Having the head in the middle of the khirqa that has been mentioned in the above verse refers to the fact that the mind agitates minds with its special messages and reflects decadence. Therefore, in the khirqa of heart, it is love which is the winner not the ration, however, the apparent meaning of keeping heads in between also means getting obedient.

Rosary and girdle

The holiness of objects that have supernatural power is the basis of all religions in which humans believe that good and evil spirits intervene in human's fate. The intervention is so deep that some primitive tribes assert that they could see image of god in the objects (Samadi, 1988, p:15).

The natives of the west beaches of Africa spiritually respect objects such as stone, iron, wood, and so forth. They believe that these objects are sacred, therefore, they take them with themselves in the wars and hunting (Arya, 1988, pp:25-26).

Religious symbols such as rosary in Islam and girdle in Christianity are not exceptions either. Usually, the rosary of Muslims has 99 beads that belong to the names of God (Asma-e-Allah", the 100th bead which is not visible is the symbol of referring from multiplicity to unity (Fazaeli, 2001, p:348).

Girdle which is a necklace attached to the Cross was used by Christians to be distinguished from Muslims (Sajadi, 1991, p:445). The rosary is the symbol of purity and holiness and the girdle as a sufi term is the symbol of being obedient to God.

Thou, the old Zoroastrian man give me a girdle because I left rosary

(Sanai, 1983, p:36)

Religion, monastery, and rosary make the structure of piety system, while girdle, bars, and infidelity make the structure of love system

(Sanai, 1983, p:337)

How long do you want to appreciate piety, rosary, and prayer? It is enough, be the servant of wine (of love) and the vintner

(Sanai, 1983, p:311)

He left the constraints and wore a girdle

(Sanai, 1983, p:823)

According to the above verses, rosary is the opposite point of girdle. Sanai is tired of the hypocrisy of religious individuals. He asserts that girdle is the social, political, and critical symbol while the rosary is the symbol of those who are influenced by authority and powerful people of the time. Sanai takes advantage of girdle in order to make the religious masters of his society. The symbols of girdle and rosary are applied to express experiences associated with ration and perception. The experience is the result of confrontation of mental conditions with strict religions, social events, and finally political events. In his period that the hope for solving problems has almost been lost, Sanai takes advantage of ironies in order to improve the society. The rosary and girdle are also symbols for other things which are rooted in the history of Iran.

The lovers are wearing girdles in order to be your servants

(Sanai, 1983, p:800)

Thou who have lost your existence before the real existence, thou who have left monastery and worn a girdle, now it is time to behave happily just like men drunk with wine of love

(Sanai, 1983, p:1117)

Any man could wear the girdle around his waist; the man of path of love is the one who wear it around his head

(Sanai, 1983, p:780)

Sanai uses love, infidelity, wine, girdle, and so forth in his poems. The reasons are the aesthetic motivation, mysticism, and politics. This method is appealed because it let the reader find the meaning of the poems by himself and based on his reasons. In this way, the messages of the poem are perceived. In fact, the most honest perceptions should be found in Sanai's poems. He has released his speech in his poems courageously. Sanai believes that infidelity, faith, rosary, girdle, certainty, and uncertainty should be burnt to reach the real love (love to God). In fact, putting on girdle on the head refers to being obedient to God and not having interest in traditions, in this occasion the true theism and faith will be born. In the next stage, girdle, rosary, faith, and infidelity which are traps of people should be burned by the fire of knowledge, obedience, sacrifice, honesty, and love so that the theism could be perceived. Sanai expresses the points of real love and gives meaning to the world of plurality. He has been the mystic of his period and developed the value of love and wisdom.

Laa

Intuition and mystical finding both are present at heart. A heart that has met God, therefore, if the mystic's heart reached the light of truth, the veils of darkness and light would be disappeared one after the other. Therefore, the findings are associated with the mystic's heart and the certain truths. In order to reach the truths, a mystic should get out of his surrounding darkness so that he could achieve a true understanding. He should say laa (no) to all of the things that cause his ignorance, and then he should try to acquire unity. Sanai asserts that a man cannot achieve perfection before neglecting whatever except God via saying laa.

Do not say Allah before you say laa, rejecting things but God is a must to say Allah

(Sanai, 1983, p:694)

Those who say laa are the good people because they have added one "a" to laa to achieve salvation

(Sanai, 1983, p:151)

The one who is in love of Allah should kill rasion via laa

(Sanai, 1983, p:201)

Laa is one of the Arabic letters used for rejection. In the mystical literature, laa is a symbol of non-existence and Sanai's purpose is to refer to "there is no God but Allah" via laa. In fact, by rejecting his existence, he meets the real existence. Via laa, the interests in things will be ignored and the theism will be reached and this is only found in the "there is no God but Alah" (Sheikh Mahmud Shabestari, 82).

Therefore, a true mystic rejects whatever except God; he also rejects his existence except God's existence. The true theism is achieved when he sees only one existence and tries to reject other existences. In the stage of monotheistic vision, there is no concern of the other existences and the tangible or material phenomena will disappear in order to let the pure theism appear.

When theism gave shining to your rasion, you should say laa to the world. Saying laa at the time of dying in the path of God is recommended because it is the beginning of the path to Allah

(Sanai, 1983, p:493)

I will say laa and I will neglect myself in order to achieve love

(Sanai, 1983, p:479)

All of the rejections used by Sanai refer to getting freed from a limited space and reaching the heaven. Therefore, the rejection is the basis for achieving the light of true-existence. Sanai constantly speaks about leaving whatever except God in order to reach the true love and perfection.

Conclusion

The position of myth and symbolic use of blade, crown, throne, hat, khirqa, rosary, girdle, and laa has been determined by searching through Hadiqat, Diwan, and Siyar al-Ebad by Sanai. The aforementioned objects have been described regarding characteristics of Sanai's language. As a result, it has been clarified that these objects are rooted in the beliefs, culture, and history of Iran. Moreover, they are associated with myths and symbols. These objects passed the myth and found a symbolic meaning and also a mystical position. The sword is a weapon for fighting the devil, a cause of human's eternality in the realm of mysticism, and a symbol of fighting against the internal devil. Crown and throne are the royal credits and the symbols of majesty, power, and esteem. Hat is the symbol of existence and social position, khirqa is the symbol of leaving the earthly dependences, rosary is the symbol of purity, holiness, and also hypocrisy, and girdle is the symbol of infidelity, and doubt, however, its deeper meaning refers to being obedient to God. Finally, laa is the symbol of "there is no God but Allah", it conveys the most semantic aspect of Sanai's poem. He applies mythical and symbolic elements in order to teach mystical, religious, moral, and social truths. He has a gentle look toward the world and his look is more moral than that of the sufies. The aforementioned objects have appeared in Sanai's poems in order to clean the mental disorder of seekers and let them follow cultural world patterns, pass through cultural and human levels, and reach the human's awakening.

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