

The Aesthetic Appeal of the Literary Device “Talmeh” In the Works of Sayf Farg‘Oniy

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Abstract. This article examines the use of the rhetorical device *talmeh* in the literary heritage of Sayf al-Din Muhammad Farg‘oniy, one of the prominent representatives of Persian-Tajik literature. Born in the 13th century in the Fergana Valley, Farg‘oniy was forced to leave his homeland due to the Mongol invasions. He spent a period in Tabriz and later settled in the present-day Turkish town of Aksaray, where he continued his literary activity until the end of his life. One of the essential aspects of poetic mastery lies in the skillful use of artistic devices. Like other classical poets, Sayf Farg‘oniy effectively employed figurative elements in his poetry, demonstrating both creativity and subtlety. He avoided redundancy in his thoughts and consistently strove to generate novel and multi-layered meanings. The poet utilized various stylistic techniques to enhance the richness and expressiveness of his ideas. His deliberate use of literary devices contributed significantly to the aesthetic appeal, semantic depth, and emotional resonance of his poetry.

Key words: Sayf Farg‘oniy, *talmeh*, poetry, imagery, meaning, creativity, style, thought, technique, expressiveness.

Since ancient times, Fergana has been recognized as one of the most important cultural centers in history. Numerous scholars, poets, writers, Sufis, and thinkers have emerged from this region. Among them are such prominent figures as Ahmad al-Farghani (Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Kathir al-Farghani)¹, Abu Hafs Umar ibn Muhammad Andukani al-Farghani, Abu Ja‘far Muhammad al-Farghani, Shaykh Sa‘id al-Din al-Farghani, Muhammad Sadiq ibn Abdulbaqi al-Farghani², Bob Farghani, Abu Bakr Wasiti al-Farghani³, Abu Salih Abdulaziz ibn Ubbad al-Farghani, Abu Sa‘id Mus‘ida ibn Bakr al-Farghani, Abu Abdurahman Qasim ibn Muhammad al-Farghani, Abul Abbas Hajib ibn Malik al-Farghani, and Abul Muzaffar Mushtib ibn Muhammad al-Farghani⁴. Another prominent figure from this region is Sayf al-Din Muhammad Farghani, known in poetry under the pen name Sayf Farghani. He was born in the Fergana Valley between the 1230s and 1240s (13th century).

Sayf Farghani’s poetry incorporates a wide range of literary devices, including simile (*tashbih*), metaphor (*isti‘ora*), allusion (*talmeh*), hyperbole (*mubolagha*), antithesis (*tazod*), and personification (*tashkhis*). In employing each of these devices, Sayf demonstrated a distinctive poetic mastery, often

¹ Хошимов К, Нишонова С, Иномова М, Ҳасанов Р. Педагогика тарихи. – Тошкент: Ўқитувчи, 1996. – Б. 75.

² Бухорий А. Тарикат одаблари. – Тошкент, 2003. – Б. 104.

³ Каримов С. Тасаввуф фалсафаси. – Самарқанд: СамДУ нашри, 2021. – Б. 47.

⁴ Ас-Самъоний Абдулкарим. Насабнома (ал-Ансоб). – Тошкент, 2017. – Б. 153

choosing expressive methods and stylistic approaches that are rarely observed in other poets of Persian-Tajik literature.

Among the various artistic devices employed in Sayf Farghani's poetry, the literary technique of "talmeh" holds a particularly prominent place. It contributes significantly to the expressive power and aesthetic beauty of Sayf's poetic imagery. In his use of talmeh, Sayf often evokes vivid and emotionally resonant associations, thereby enhancing the impact of his poetic expression. Literary scholars define talmeh as follows: "Talmeh is a classical poetic device in literature that involves alluding to well-known historical events, figures, or literary works. It allows the poet to avoid lengthy elaboration by referring instead to a widely recognized fact or narrative that conveys the intended idea or mood. The effectiveness of talmeh depends largely on the familiarity of the reference; the more famous and widely known the historical or artistic fact, the more accessible and impactful the allusion becomes for the reader"⁵.

The talmeh allusions in Sayf Farghani's poetry are rich and diverse in both theme and content. They poetically reflect a wide range of cultural and intellectual references, including ancient Eastern tales, romantic themes, historical events, narratives from the Qur'an, the lives and adventures of prophets, spiritually significant moments, saints and mystics, renowned poets and great personalities, as well as legends from Iranian peoples and other cultural traditions. All of these elements are artistically interwoven into his poetic expression.

The talmeh references used by Sayf Farghani in constructing meaning and content in his poetry can be categorized into the following thematic groups:

1. The use of names of legendary and romantic figures from Eastern – particularly Iranian – mythology and literary traditions, such as *Isfandiyar*, *Rustam*, *Faridun*, *Bejan*, *Iskandar* (*Alexander*), *Bahram Chobin*, *Suhrob*, *Layli*, *Majnun*, *Farhad*, *Khusraw*, and *Shirin*. For instance, in one of his poems, Sayf Farghani makes an allusion to the well-known lovers *Layli* and *Majnun*:

Зоро шунудай, ки зи Мачнуни ношикеб

Ошӯб дар қабилаи Лайло даруфтод.⁶

(Meaning: *Have you not heard that, due to Majnun's impatience, turmoil broke out among Layla's tribe.*)

In Abu'l-Qasim Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, Rustam and Isfandiyar are renowned for their intense and thrilling scenes of heroism and combat. In the following couplet, the poet refers to Rustam and Isfandiyar, emphasizing the transience of the world by noting that even such legendary heroes – and many others like them – could not escape death:

Ба сӯйи ишками гӯр, эй писар, зи пушти замин

Басо, ки Рустаму Исфандиёри Рӯин рафт.⁷

(Meaning: *O my son, many Rustams and invincible Isfandiyars have already gone to the grave before me.*)

In the following couplet, Sayf Farghani's use of talmeh as a means of constructing meaning and depth is particularly thought-provoking. Upon closer analysis of the content, it becomes evident that the poet is alluding to the well-known tale of Yusuf and Zulaykha:

Чӣ Юсуфӣ ту, ки аз дасти ту азизон чун

Занони Миср буриданд зор-зор ангушт?!

Зи дарду ҳасрати умре, ки бе ту рафт аз даст,

⁵ Куронов Д. Адабиётшунослик лугати. – Тошкент: Akademnashr, 2013. – Б. 307.

⁶ Фарғонӣ С. Девон. – Душанбе: ЭР-граф, 2023. – С. 67.

⁷ Ӯша асар. – Б. 55.

Газам ба ноби надомат ҳазор бор ангушт.⁸

(Meaning: *Because of the sorrow and longing for a life lost without you, I bite my finger in regret a thousand times.*)

In this couplet, Sayf Farghani makes an allusive reference – through talmeh – to the well-known romantic narrative of “Yusuf and Zulaykha.” In the tale, Zulaykha falls deeply in love with Yusuf. When the noble women of Egypt rebuke her, they are themselves astonished upon seeing Yusuf’s beauty. So overwhelmed are they that, instead of slicing the fruit in their hands, they unknowingly cut their own fingers. Sayf Farghani alludes to this very episode with the verse: “Zanāni Misr buridand zār-zār angusht” (“The women of Egypt, in their astonishment, tearfully cut their fingers”).

Sayf Farghani skillfully employs legendary figures such as Khusraw, Shirin, and Farhad (“Farhad gave his sweet life for a noble name – Khusraw was left with bitterness, and Shirin departed”), Rustam, Sam, and Zal (“Though you reign like Sam, conqueror of armies – Or display Rustam’s strength like the heroic Zal”), Iskandar (Alexander the Great) (“Had you ventured into darkness in search of water for my sake – You would have been like the sun guiding Iskandar’s march”), Bejan (“If you lead a commander like Bejan toward Iran – then even a dog’s rest is sweeter than wakefulness elsewhere”), and Bahram Chobin (“One who loves you needs nothing else – even Bahram would not desire a wooden sword”). Through such allusions, Sayf Farghani not only enriches his poetic imagery but also discovers new layers of meaning for his verse, drawing from the deep reservoir of classical Eastern mythology and epic tradition.

2. In Sayf Farghani’s poetry, one can also find verses that contain allusions to sacred scriptures. These are the divine books sent by Allah the Almighty to humanity through His prophets. Throughout history, many prophets were sent to humankind, but only twenty-five of them are mentioned in the Qur’an, and only a few were granted revealed books. Among them: the Tawrat (Torah) was revealed to Prophet Moses (Musa), the Zabur (Psalms) to David (Dawud), the Injil (Gospel) to Jesus (‘Isa), and the Qur’an to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

These holy scriptures are frequently referenced and quoted in literary works. In Sayf Farghani’s poetry, alongside these well-known scriptures, there is also mention of the Zoroastrian religious book, the Avesta, which is referred to by another name – "Zand".

Sayf Farghani composed a special qasida (ode) dedicated to the Qur’an, which begins with the line: “What is the Qur’an? It is the treasury of divine secrets” (“Qur'on chī buvad? Makhzan-i asrār-i Ilāhī”). This qasida is found on page 264 of his Dīwān and consists of thirty lines. In addition to this, throughout numerous pages of his Dīwān, Sayf Farghani either explicitly mentions the Qur’an or refers indirectly to its various attributes and teachings.

Аё надида зи Куръон дилат варои хуруф,

Ба ҷашми ҷон руҳи маънӣ нигар ба ҷои хуруф.⁹

(Meaning: If your heart sees nothing beyond the letters of the Qur’an, then look instead – through the eye of the heart – at the spirit of its meaning, not merely at the shapes of its letters.)

3. In Sayf Farghani’s poetry, another significant category of talmeh is composed of references to prophets, caliphs, companions of the Prophet, and stories from the Qur’an. In constructing poetic meaning, Sayf Farghani makes mention of prophets such as Adam, David (Dawud), Job (Ayyub), Abraham (Ibrahim), Jesus (‘Isa), Ishmael (Isma’il), Luqman, Moses (Musa), Noah (Nuh), Solomon (Sulayman), John (Yahya), Jacob (Ya‘qub), Jonah (Yunus), Joseph (Yusuf), and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Among the caliphs, he refers to Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, and ‘Ali; among the companions (sahabah), he mentions Bilal, Abu Hurayrah, Hasan, Husayn, Salman al-Farsi, and others.

⁸ Ӯша асар. – Б. 45.

⁹ Фарғонӣ С. Девон. – Душанбе: ЭР-граф, 2023. – С. 157.

It is important to note that this type of talmeh is used less frequently in comparison to the references to legendary and romantic figures. Among the prophets, the names of Jesus ('Isa), Jacob (Ya'qub), and Joseph (Yusuf) appear most frequently in Farghani's poetic works.

Бирав, илми паямбарро мусалмонвор тобеъ шав,
Ки тарсоён зи чаҳли худ Ҳудо гуфтанд Исоро.¹⁰

Meaning: *Submit to the knowledge of the Prophet like a true Muslim; for in their ignorance, the cowardly ones declared Jesus to be God.*

4. Another notable feature of the talmeh employed by Sayf Farghani is his use of references to a wide range of geographical locations—both historical and legendary. These include cities, regions, and lands such as Aqsaray, Badakhshan, Bukhara, China (Chin), Armenia (Arman), Iran (the land of Ajam), Isfahan, Ghazna, Khorasan, Rum, Qazvin, Canaan (Kan'an), Karbala, Jerusalem (Quddus), Mecca, Medina, Egypt (Misr), Merv, Shirvan, Shiraz, Tabriz, Turan, Tiroz, Oman, and Yemen. Additionally, he refers to various seas, rivers, and mountains, such as the Jayhun (Oxus/Amu Darya), Nile, Mulyan, the Sea of Oman, and Mount Tur (Sinai).

By using these geographical names as talmeh, the poet enhances the richness of his poetic meaning and imagery. These allusions not only deepen the thematic layers of his verse, but also serve to broaden the reader's intellectual and cultural horizon, prompting them to recall and reflect upon historical knowledge and literary traditions.

Шимри ту чун Язид самар шуд ба феъли бад,
Эй ту Ҳусайну **Оқсано Карбалои** ту.¹¹

(Meaning: *Your actions bore fruit as wicked as Shimr's and Yazid's, O you—whose Husayn is your victim and whose Aqsaray is your Karbala.)*

Numerous other examples of talmeh can be found throughout Sayf Farghani's poetry, which clearly demonstrates the poet's deep familiarity with history, culture, and the literary heritage of his ancestors, as well as his wise and purposeful use of these elements in his poetic works. From the talmeh expressions he employs, it becomes evident that Sayf Farghani's primary objective is not merely to reference names or events, but to use them as a means to reinforce and substantiate the ideas and visions he expresses in his poetry.

In this regard, literary scholar Muazzama Iqboli notes that talmeh serves as a tool for the poet to validate his words, and we fully support this interpretation.

As seen in the foregoing analysis, the art of talmeh is one of Sayf Farghani's favored poetic devices – one that, for a true artist, serves not only the purpose of creating meaning, but also fulfills intellectual and ethical functions within the broader framework of literary expression.

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¹⁰ Ӯша асар. – Б. 290.

¹¹ Ӯша асар. – Б. 215