



The Plot Typology Of Alisher Navoi And Abdurahman Jami's Epics Layli And Majnun

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Abstract

This thesis reflects the state of events in the plots of Alisher Navoi and Abdurahman Jami's Layli and Majnun epics up to the point when the conflicts arise. The reason for the central knot of the story—the fathers' disapproval—is briefly highlighted.

Keywords

Concentric plot, chronological plot, Sufism, Sufi, Bahouddin Naqshband, repentance, spiritual perfection.

Introduction

In comparative literary studies, it is undoubtedly appropriate to compare any two literary works in terms of their plots. This is because plot analysis opens the way to a deeper understanding of the content of the work. The artistic taste, thinking, and imagination of the creator can be judged by the plot of the work. The breadth and variety of the world of imagination, the smoothness of the plot line of the work, are elements that determine the level of the creator's mastery.

When discussing the functions of the plot in a literary work, it should first be noted that it organizes the life material that allows the artistic investigation of the problem of the work. Thus, while the plot shapes the theme in the work, its form depends on the author's creative intent.

In literary studies, the plot is usually classified into chronical and concentric types. Such types of plot are of great importance in determining the artistic direction of a work.

"In the chronical plot, the relationship of time between events (after event A occurred, event B followed) dominates, whereas in the concentric plot, the causal relationship between events (because event A occurred, event B happened) prevails."

The chronical plot ensures the consistency of the development of events in the work. This type of plot easily allows for the introduction of additional characters and genres into the structure of the work, thus providing a broad path to the resolution. The sequence of events in the structure of the work not only covers the consistency of time but also gives the writer the opportunity to weave his reflections and opinions into the content. Most literary works are based on the chronical plot.

The concentric plot, on the other hand, is characteristic mainly of detective works, in which events cluster around a central knot and move rapidly toward resolution. In general, we cannot say that literary works are created solely on the basis of one or the other type of plot, since these two types always presuppose each other. In analysis, we identify the type by whichever dominates in the work.

For example, both Alisher Navoi and Abdurahman Jami narrate the events up to Layli's first meeting in a chronological manner. With the first encounter of Qays and Layli, and the resulting spark of love in their hearts, a concentric plot element also becomes visible in the epic. That is, the reader may conclude one-sidedly: had they not met, love would not have driven them mad and destroyed them. In reality, however, the emergence of one event as the cause of another enriches the artistry and content of the epic and ensures its continuity. For instance:

"When Majnun saw her face,
It became amber for his heart's embrace.
They cast a glance at one another,
And in that moment set fire to the threshing floor together."

In the epic, it is the events that set the heroes into motion. Their psychology and actions grow and develop as the narrative moves from chapter to chapter.

The plot allows the writer to develop and fully reveal character and setting, as well as to bring forth the relationships and conflicts between people. Such depiction creates broad opportunities for the full realization of the intended aim and the expression of the idea envisioned in the work.

In all epic and dramatic works, and in most lyric-epic works, there are exposition, knot (conflict), development of events, climax, and resolution.

As is well known, the description of the circumstances formed before the conflict arises and the traits of character established within them is called the exposition. The exposition serves to justify the actions of the characters during the conflict that unfolds in the work; information about their lives, growth, and maturity is provided in various places.

So, what was the state of events before the conflict emerged?

In the previous chapter of our research, we observed the character traits of the heroes: in Navoi, Qays is depicted as being born with pain; in Jami, Qays is portrayed, before meeting Layli, as his father's darling, having everything ready at his command, lacking interest in girls, yet well-mannered, cautious in speech, even described as a poetically gifted youth.

The author's purpose is to show, through Majnun's infatuation with Karima, his realization that she leans toward another, his withdrawal from her, his search for beauty, and his finding Layli and giving his heart to her, the path of love's ascent—from common love to noble love, and from there to the divine. Qays, hearing of Layli, sets out in search of her, and upon seeing her at her home, falls in love. Afterwards, when Majnun again sets out for Layli's house, he faints several times while riding his camel. Having met Layli, he returns home cheerful and joyful. Unlike Navoi, in Jami we see the lover's joyful state after meeting Layli. Notably, following the description of this joyful Qays, Layli, in order to test Majnun's love, deliberately ignores him when he comes to the next meeting. While Layli spends her time happily with others, when Majnun wishes to speak, she leaves him disappointed and turns away. Witnessing this, Majnun exclaims:

"I asked from fate
An excuse for the sinner's sin,
That she, despite all my innocence,
Would not grant me a single excuse.
If no one becomes my intercessor,
Then these blood-like tears suffice as my intercessor."



That is to say: If I have unknowingly committed a sin, I will plead with Layli all my life. Despite my innocence, she wishes to make me repent. Even if no one stands as my guarantor, my bloodlike tears themselves will bear witness.

In the Sufi path, the concepts of *maqāmāt* (stations) and *ḥāl* (spiritual states) hold an important place. *Maqāmāt* is the plural of *maqām* (station, stop), and refers to the stages of the seeker's spiritual and moral perfection.

It is well known that both Abdurahman Jami and Alisher Navoi embraced the Naqshbandi Sufi teaching founded by Hazrat Bahauddin Naqshband. Hazrat Bahauddin Naqshband understood the first station of human spiritual perfection to be repentance (*tawba*). The concept of repentance means “to return”: when a person embarks on the path of ascent to the divine level, he turns back from the long path to the short one that leads him there. Bahauddin regarded repentance as a unified process of spiritual perfection that encompasses several stages. He classified repentance into the following four groups:

1. The repentance of the common people — returning from outward sins.
2. The repentance of the righteous — turning away from immoral behavior.
3. Inner repentance — returning in order to purify the heart.
4. The repentance of lovers (*muhibbs*) — turning away from heedlessness.

Abu Nasr Sarraj also noted repentance as the first of the stations (*maqāmāt*) of the Sufi path.

In the third section of Jami's epic *Subhat al-Abrar* (The Rosary of the Righteous), the expulsion of Satan from the divine court, Adam's banishment from paradise, Adam's repentance, and God's acceptance of that repentance are recounted. The poet draws the following conclusion: if Adam was expelled from paradise because of his disobedience and being deceived by Satan, his forgiveness came as a result of his repentance. Likewise, the children of Adam, who are caught in the darkness of the ego, can attain divine forgiveness only through repentance and supplication. Therefore, Jami maintains, people should always repent for sins committed knowingly or unknowingly, and live in hopeful expectation of God's mercy:

“Rise, Jami, let us offer our supplications,

Let us turn our face to the qibla of our needs.”

Repentance means “returning,” that is, returning to perfection and to noble moral qualities. Repentance is also called the gate of all gates, for the intention and essence of a person who takes his first step into the Sufi path become manifest first of all in his repentance.

The reality of repentance is that the seeker vows to turn away from everything that obstructs him on the path to God, directs all his striving and attention toward God, and completely renounces his former way of life. Repentance includes turning away from unbelief, from evil deeds forbidden by the Sharia, from base morality to virtuous morality, and from everything other than the Truth.

The essence of repentance lies in being able to recognize one's own shortcomings, to become aware of one's condition, to turn away from vile deeds, base character, and evil thoughts, and to realize the worthlessness and vanity of the world, renouncing oppression and injustice. Repentance out of fear, i.e., acknowledging sin, is typical for ordinary people. The repentance of Sufis, however, is the repentance of the heart's transformation—repentance as *istijabah*, a turning that entails a break and a change.

When Layli saw Qays suffering so deeply and repenting, she bound herself to him with a pact of loyalty and made Qays swear an oath. Earlier, when Majnun had fallen in love with Karima, the

people had given him the nickname “Majnun,” but this time the heavens themselves bestowed the epithet upon him:

He emerged from behind the veil in such a state,
And the sky named him Majnun.
Thus, in the end, this title was fixed,
And Qays’s name was erased from the scroll of time.
In every gathering where he was mentioned,
They cried out, “Majnun, Majnun.”

That is: once his madness became evident to all, the heavens gave him the name Majnun, and the name Qays was forever effaced. From then on, in every gathering, people called him “Majnun, Majnun.”

In dictionaries, the word *gardun* also carries the meaning of “fate.” Thus, the poet here wishes to suggest that fate itself deemed this epithet appropriate. From this event, Majnun’s adventures on the path of love truly begin.

What is interesting is that in Jami’s version, Qays is a fourteen-year-old youth who has reached puberty, while in Navoi’s version Layli and Majnun are still children, only five or six years old. Sufi scholar Najmiddin Komilov explains this as follows: the poet, employing the art of hyperbole, writes that Layli’s beauty illuminated the rose garden, while at the same time withering one sapling (her lover’s stature) in that garden. Another meaning can also be drawn: Absolute Beauty manifested itself, and the seekers of Truth were enraptured. The mirror of Absolute Beauty, in the spring of life, bent the stature of its lover (the seeker), leaving him longing—that is, the seeker, unable to withstand such beauty, fainted. Clearly, a Sufi meaning emerges here: according to Sufi teachings, the rose garden is the dervish’s entire inner being; it is seized by the love of God, and in his restlessness he loses consciousness. From this, the rest becomes easy to understand, for Qays has entered the path of the lover-seeker (*salik*), and already at his first meeting with Layli, the divine force manifests itself strongly in him. According to Sufi teaching, the rose garden is the dervish’s spirit, overtaken by the love of God, leaving him restless and fainting.

In both works, the driving force of events is conflict—namely, “the fierce struggle between love and lust, loyalty and hypocrisy, goodwill and selfishness, compassion and violence, justice and vice, nobility and baseness.” The broad development of the theme of love in the epics arises from the main knot of the story: the disapproval of the fathers. In both epics, the obstacle between the lovers is Layli’s father.

The knot is also tied to the artistic conflict of Layli’s father feeling shame at giving his daughter to a “madman” (Majnun).

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