

Studying Obvious Metaphor in Firdausi's Shahname

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Abstract: Firdausi, the world famous Persian poet, has masterly used metaphor in his eternal masterpiece. Mythic and heroic epics of Shahnameh are suitable context for poet's art verification in this form of fantasy. Obvious metaphor and its various forms – absolute, single, and explanatory – are suitable tools for poetic visualization in Shahnameh without any harm to verbal simplicity and fluency. Using natural elements in his metaphors, Firdausi has given certain motion and heat to his own work. In obvious metaphors of Shahnameh, explanatory metaphors are presented in the best artistic form. Although there are fewer abstract elements in Shahnameh and most obvious metaphors are research based, the poet's imagination together with his creativity generate the most beautiful imaginative metaphors. Among the numerous verses of Shahnameh, the presence of close and repeated metaphors beside strange and creative ones is not amazing. It is quite certain that metaphor was the most excellent tool in painting Shahnameh images. This article aims to study obvious metaphor and its various forms and classification in Shahnameh, to show how Firdausi's thoughts are reflected and retold from aesthetic points of view, and to assist scholars, teachers, and researchers in cognition and training various forms of imagination and in better comprehension of Shahnameh and Persian literature.

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1. Introduction

When the poet expresses himself comprehension of human and nature and the relations between them through his mental imaginations, he creates poetry; a poetry which is adorned with literary arrays and expresses meaning in a garment and a halo of beauty. In this regard, metaphor is an efficient and effective form of imagination in Persian poetry, so that there are many differences in ancient texts and among early scholars and rhetoricians in its definition. Metaphor is applying a term in its figurative meaning due to the similarity it has to the real meaning. The oldest definition of this kind can be found in the work of Jahez, Al-bayan Va Tabieen. In his book "Expression and Meaning", Sirous Shanisa calls metaphor as a kind of allegory and says, "Metaphor is a kind of allegory and naturally both of them must be discussed under one title as allegory; however, scholars and experts in this field, have separated metaphor from other kinds of allegory and due to its importance and numerous forms and its advantages and have specifically discussed it." Other scholars of rhetoric and speech science have also defined metaphor in various ways (Fromkin V et.al.2007). In poetry, metaphor has great importance and a poet who uses simile the most excellently and elegantly, finally displays his own technical superiority by using very beautiful metaphors. It could be said that metaphor is developed form of simile. The reader should reflect more to recognize metaphor, to be able to enjoy more by finding out a

beautiful metaphor. Firdausi knows quite well how to use different forms of imagination. He is an experienced poet who really knows where to place imagery and takes advantage of it. In using metaphor in Shahnameh, his skillfulness in applying different kinds of metaphor is observed; Mythic and heroic epics of Shahnameh are suitable context for poet's art verification in this form of fantasy. In romantic and heroic epics of Shahnameh, the poet blends exaggeration with simile and metaphor and makes exaggeration believable through gentle simile and metaphor. Poetical imagination of Firdausi has extracted Shahnameh's metaphors from the heart of nature. By keeping verbal beauties and fluent meaning, he has avoided pedantic speech and has granted certain personality to his poetical imagination. Both kinds of metaphor have been used in Firdausi's Shahnameh tremendously in terms of structure in spite of Brittles' opinion; obvious metaphor and ironic metaphor are two kinds of structural metaphor which are boastfully presented in Shahnameh. Metaphoric images in Shahnameh do not weak the epic atmosphere but they increase the epic comprehension of the work through their adjustment with the subject, and thus beside the subtleties used in the construction of metaphor, the roaring figure of epic is displayed better, and the exaggerated images of epic are displayed more effectively and pleasantly (Shafiee Kadkani .M. 2009).

1.2. Obvious Metaphor and Its Different Kinds

Firdausi has used different kinds of obvious metaphor, absolute metaphor, single metaphor, and explanatory metaphor so naturally and fluently in his great masterpiece that not only does the reader enjoy verbal beauties and fluency of the work, but he does not miss the theme of the story and the purpose of the author and completely keeps the work and its meaning in his mind. In obvious metaphor of absolute (free), sometimes Firdausi just used Sarafah Symmetry without using any signs of two sides of obvious metaphor. This symmetry is sometimes spiritual like the following poems in which "soil" is an obvious absolute metaphor of "Mehrab" and "wind" is a metaphor of "Sam". In another couplet, "fighting leopard" is a metaphor for "Rostam":

*Who is involved with self so wisely?
That wind will take the command of soil
Tomorrow you will see that in the battle
What I will do before the fighting leopard
(Warner, A.G. and Warner, E. (1925))*

And sometimes the poet shows verbal symmetry in his poems so that the reader could get the real meaning of metaphor more easily. In following poems Firdausi has used "fir" as a metaphor for a "fire controversial fight" and another time as a metaphor for "sword" and also "wind" as a metaphor for "Zal's horse"; in the first couplet, he has used "sharp sword" as a verbal symmetry for "fire" (fire controversial fight) and in the second couplet he has used "hand" as a verbal symmetry For "fire" (sword) and "wind" (horse), since fire and wind cannot be held in hand. In choosing "wind" as an obvious, absolute metaphor for horse, a kind of neighborhood and companion allegory has also been considered because the bridle of the horse is in the hand of Rostam or the horse rider and the poet has controlled the horse by the wind, but actually the supplies and whatever which is with the horse (bridle) is in the hand of the rider not the horse itself.

*They made fire out of the sharp sword
They burned the whole city immediately
(Warner, A.G. and Warner, E. (1925))*

*Behind them were Zal and Keighobad
In one hand (they had) fire and in the other wind.
(Warner, A.G. and Warner, E. (1925))*

And or in the next couplet "the shepherd" and "asking price" are the verbal symmetry for "dragon" and dragon is a metaphor for Rakhsh , because

neither is it possible to buy a "dragon" to ask for the price nor a shepherd can ever sell a dragon :

*He asked the shepherd that how much the dragon
costs and who asks for the money*

In absolute, obvious metaphor, sometimes Firdausi has used the same consistent symbols of metaphor from both sides; so that in the following couplet, "drinking" is consistent with "drinking cup" and "yellow spring". Drinking in respect and courtesy of someone has been an ancient Iranian custom:

*In memory of the King Rostam drank
He got dust from that yellow spring.*

But in the following couplet, Firdausi doesn't mention any symbol or consistency for Zabolistan and Hell:

*Do not carry the children to the Hell on foot,
Since the knowledgeable one will not call you honest
in opinion*

In Shahnameh some examples of single kind of obvious metaphor are seen in which the poet crates an artistic meaning by mentioning verbal symmetry and by using consistent symbols in metaphor. Since the poet has not made any exaggeration in his simile, it is called single metaphor that is without any exaggeration. Firdausi has made use of symbols and adjustments which he has borrowed from the heart of nature and has blended them with symmetries and has made the following single kinds of obvious metaphor; through personification and making idiomatic metaphors beside obvious ones, he displays his poetic ability while keeping the meaning. "Trumpet" in his poem becomes alive and wails and the "head and brain of the Cloud" is filled with that wail (idiomatic metaphor usage). "Vermillion water" is a single obvious metaphor for "blood" and "sword" is consistent with blood:

*The brain of the cloud was full of wail,
The soul of the sword was full of vermilion water*

There are many single obvious metaphors in Shahnameh , which refer to tangible affairs and things such as the single obvious metaphor of "Green Veil" (Chador) or "Wolf" which are considered for the greens and enemies of Iran for which verbal symmetries such as " the Earth's wearing Chador " and "using the King's soldiers and army for protecting Iran against Wolf" and also adjustments such as "Earth and Galan" for the first couplet and "King" (the force against enemy) and "Iran" for the second couplet are used respectively :

*Land is wearing a green Chador
Sky is roaring against Galan*

*With the power of that great King
To protect Iran against the wolf*

Even though the concepts that single obvious metaphors refer to are very few, they are intangible and spiritual affairs; “fire” as a metaphor for “romantic pain, sorrow, and passion” in the first two couplets and “dragon” as a metaphor for “greed” in the third couplet are examples of this kind. In following three couplets, to guide the readers, Firdausi has respectively used verbal symmetry of “heart” for “romantic pain and sorrow and passion” and for “greed” he keeps the spiritual symmetry open and uses “claw” as consistent it:

*My heart was filled with fire because of his illness,
How he was fighting with death
His heart was filled with fire because of Zal's
affection,
He walked away from him slowly and gently.
I'm afraid that within the claws of this dragon,
Your soul comes out of your body*

In Shahnameh, there is another kind of metaphor which is called explanatory metaphor. In this kind of metaphor, doesn't mention the symbols and adjustments of similarity in metaphor but refers to the words which are used in metaphor. He considers the words in metaphor and their references so identical that they are not counted as similar items but they are exactly the same. Aesthetic value of explanatory obvious metaphors in Shahnameh is more than the other two kinds:

*I don't want any trees from the root of Siavash ,
Not any branches or leaves or crown or throne.*

In this couplet, “root” is an explanatory obvious metaphor for ancestors; and “tree, and branches and leave” are metaphor for the adjustments of “root”. Firdausi refers to all signs of “root” and this way brings the reader's attention to the nature in search for the roots and trees and forests and takes his attention away from Siavash's ancestors. He makes an obvious likeness between metaphoric word and its reference. In the following couplet, “sea” is an explanatory obvious metaphor of Rostam and “wave” is an adjustment that grows its reference that is “sea”. In the second line, Fire is a metaphor for “Sohrab” as well, and “breath” is an adjustment for the reference (fire). In both line the likeness of Rostam and Sohrab with “se” and “sharp fire” is enhancing and since there are no signs or adjustments for Rostam and Sohrab and only there is a sign for the metaphoric word , it seems as if the target is “sea and sharp fire.”

*As the sea is moving by the wave,
It doesn't have the breath of sharp fire*

Or in this couplet Firdausi again displays two kinds

Of obvious metaphor according to their structure:

*That this desirable one took off the tooth of elephant,
He filled the Nile Sea with waves*

“Elephant's tooth is an absolute metaphor for Esfandiar . Here, there is no adjustment for two sides of the metaphor. “The Nile Sea” is an explanatory obvious metaphor for Esfandiar and “wave” is consistent with “the Nile Sea”.

2.1. Various imaginative and investigative similarities in Obvious Metaphors of Shahnameh

In obvious metaphors created By Firdausi, there is another division which is based on investigatory or imaginative kind of similarity in two main sides of metaphor; Since in Shahnameh tangible affairs are more observable and the poet usually focuses on the elements of nature and avoids abstract elements except few cases, there is investigative similarity in both sides of metaphor in most verses of Shahnameh . As it is seen in the following couplets, “wind” is an investigative obvious metaphor of “Rakhsh” and “speed” is the similarity that certainly exists between “wind” and “Rakhsh” and or when “Saman” is a metaphor for a “beautiful white face” and this whiteness and beauty exist in both Saman and a beautiful face:

*He bent the lasso in the wind,
He trapped the head of magic.
Beautiful girls kneeling in front of the king,
Their hair hanging from their head like Musk.*

In Persian poems being asleep is a symbol of ignorance and unawareness as in the following couplet the similarity of the metaphor between an asleep and an unaware one is unawareness and the similarity between an awake and an aware one is awareness :

*A guilty person was full of fear from him,
Asleep people were awake by him.*

Colors grant life and motion to Shahnameh . Colors are granting heat and flowing the force of nature in epic poems of Firdausi. “Color is the most effective and intuitive feature of sensual images and visual descriptions of Shahnameh and generally has a remarkable role in creating images and descriptive tales of Shahnameh; especially that it has been very effective in figurative language and poetical expression of Firdausi and in expressing dynamic and animated images of simile and metaphor by him (Tajalli, G. (2005). In the following investigative metaphors, Firdausi uses color for making metaphors:

*He spreads that blue Chador,
Topaz is created out of the cup
The blue wheel is made out of ruby,
Not out water or soil, nor out of wind or smoke*

In investigative metaphors of Shahnameh and in the following couplets - purple flowers (red species), musk shirt (dark night), green Chador (grass field on the earth), blue Chador (blue sky), yellow silk (the first rays of the sun), black silk (darkness of night), the attention of Firdausi to color and the focus on colorful imagery is found again; this application of color in images is more for the illustration of sunrise and sunset:

*He cut the hair and tied the waist with hair,
He tied the purple flower with hazel.
Like the Sun he was clawing the crab,
He tore the musk shirt .
The land was wearing a green Chador,
The sky was roaring at the Galan.
Like the sun that was wearing a blue sun,
One was wearing a yellow silk.
When the wheel of fortune is wearing black silk,
The man is celebrating with an instrument*

There is another kind of obvious metaphor in Shahnameh which is imaginative in which there is not actually any similarity in two main sides of metaphor but it is created by the poet's imagination. As in the words "sea" as a metaphor for Rostam, and "sharp fire" for Sohrab, "shining candles" for eyes and "treasure" for Keikhosro, there is no similarity between them in our world but the poetical imagination of Firdausi has created such a metaphor:

*As the sea is moving by the wave,
It doesn't have the breath of sharp fire
They laid a hot object on the king's eyes,
Then the shining candles became black.
The tie loosened at his suffering,
A treasure appeared for that famous king*

In creating poetic concepts and images, Firdausi has been inspired mostly by nature whether the metaphor is imaginary or investigative, tulip, musk, death, useless gem, are all elements which are borrowed from nature so that Firdausi is able to illustrate ruddy face, trapped creator, cutting off the head of Siavash from his tall body and maidens:

*His two pieces of magic full of sleep and water in
face,
His face full of tulip and his hair full of musk.
Death was not falling in my trap like you,*

*You will not get rid of my claws.
He gave the idols a faith by the new king,
Which were like useless gem?*

Opposing metaphor is another kind of obvious metaphor which is used by Firdausi in his eternal work. In this metaphor, its two main sides are not consistent and they are opposing and impossible to come together. In the following couplet, there is no consistency between "cloud" and "sword"; however, the scholar of Tous has used these two terms in metaphor. Maybe Firdausi is displaying the power of his heroes with a strong exaggeration who are able to do their task not only by the sword but also by the cloud like a sword:

*I have grabbed a cloud in my claw,
Which is the same color as water and is raining
blood?*

Although this kind of metaphor is rarely seen in numerous verses of Shahnameh, it is a very useful and sharp instrument for defeating the competitor during the battle and wrestling of the heroes; especially in satiric kind of obvious metaphor, the great lecturer has used obvious metaphor satirically and has shown the interest to similarity between the metaphoric word and its reference as opposing features. With the language of Bahram, he makes fun of two persons; once he calls the mean and disbelieving Baraham as "righteous" and another time he calls Khosro as "Gord":

*He said to Baraham, Oh, you, the righteous,
If the king hears about my freedom,
Bahram told him, "oh, you the Gord,
You deserve not to be king anymore.*

In imagination, some images are repeated and some are novel and far-fetched and away from mind. In obvious metaphors of Shahnameh both kinds of imagination that is possible and far-fetched are seen. Using repetitive metaphoric words such as compote for teeth, jujube for lips, moon for face, violets for hair, and Saman for a white beautiful face are examples of this kind which are a lot in Shahnameh like possible and repetitive metaphors.

*Sindokht asked Mehrab,
She opened Jujube from the compote .
Now, I will come with you to his court,
I will brighten his dark moon.
Like Soheil of Yaman to her face,
Two leaves of Saman are covered with violets.*

But, more artistic kind is far-fetched metaphor and in Shahnameh the creativity of Firdausi in creating far-fetched metaphor is well seen. In the

following couplets, Firdausi has used “Khosravani (aristocratic) tree” as a far-fetched obvious metaphor for “Esfandiar’s ancestor”, “the fruit of loyalty tree” for “Rostam-e Dastan” and “poison” for “death” to make the reader think and meditate, and move in his companion to the peak of poetic images in a fancy invasion:

*The lucky God was your partner,
That Khosravani (aristocratic) tree was created.
When he saw the fruits of the loyalty tree,
He knew that a key was given for his sorrow
It’s not worthy to live, it must die,
A tree that produces poison as its fruit*

Firdausi has used two kinds of obvious metaphor in Shahnameh. Sometimes he has borrowed a noun or noun phrase looking for similarity between two nouns such as a yellow garment and Sun’s brightness, crown and early brightness of dawn, Camphor and morning light, ivory throne and sky, black Chador and night, time and sky, useless gem and maiden:

*As the day was wearing a yellow shirt,
The world was lighting towards west.
As the shining sun revealed its crown,
It spread Camphor to ivory throne.
Sky in that black Chador,
You said it seems to be asleep.
As the sun is shining, sometimes
The pioneer came from near the king.
He decorated a silk cradle with gold,
In the cradle there was a useless gem.*

It is quite clear that the two sides of above metaphors are all sensual and they are not difficult to comprehend. In metaphoric images that Firdausi creates with natural and sensual elements, he grants life and animation to objects and natural elements. In the following couplets, he makes the sun wear a yellow garment, and he imagines the light which is a metaphor for the sun as a climber who climbs the mountain and appears, then the star gets disappointed and settles in the blue dome like a king:

*Like the Sun, from that blue Chador,
One was wearing a yellow garment.
As it came to the ground as the feather of crow,
A light came down from the peak of the mount.
As the white flag appeared from the sea,
Star got disappointed from darkness.
Like the sun on blue dome,
He made a tent from a yellow garment.*

We know quite well that metaphor is one of the best imaginations for writing songs and

describing beauties and in Persian literature there is often a work for a certain subject or concept, but as the spiritual domain of Persian poetry is very broad, meaning and content are usually combined; therefore, in epics romantic signs and stories are also seen in which metaphor gets more opportunity to appear. That is why metaphoric descriptions and the images that are created by the poet’s imagination can be seen in all elements of the story. In the following couplets it is observed that both partner and his life are painted with the most beautiful metaphors in Shahnameh :

*First, make the moon drunk by wine,
Throw away fear and thought from your heart.
He washed the flower and the purple with narcissus,
Since narcissus was ill , and flower healthy .*

Moon is a metaphoric description of Roudabeh’s beauty, narcissus is an obvious metaphor for eyes, flower and purple for face and narcissus illness is a metaphor for hangover and appealing eyes, or the following couplet is full of metaphors in lyrical contents which can be seen like a painting canvas:

*He saw a juniper for her the round moon,
Had put on her head a hat of amber*

In order to use metaphor in another form, Firdausi gets help from verb and adjective and looks for similarity in verbs or adjectives which is called subordinate metaphor. Some subordinate metaphors can be considered as an equivalent to the western term “foreground”. “foreground” refers to any linguistic eminence and its most important example is subordinate obvious metaphor in our eloquent idioms ; that is , obvious metaphor for verb means using a verb with a figurative meaning which is new , interesting , and noticeable , and which can be justified as a novel obvious metaphor. Many researchers have preferred the interpretation of subordinate metaphor to Makniye metaphor and have considered the symmetry of subordinate metaphor as similar to Makniyeh metaphor and have considered subordinate metaphor as one in which consistency with likeliness is omitted.⁸

“To rain” is one of the most elegant metaphoric verbs in subordinate metaphor which is used in exciting epics of Shahnameh; the similarity that exist between raining heavily and the breaking of mace and sword has made Firdausi to choose this subordinate metaphor:

*He went to the gate of Mazandaran,
Heavy maces and swords were falling down*

In the following literature, frequency and compression of war tools and soldiers are described as a woven fabric, laughter as blossoming and the green spring land and growing as a happy face as beautiful as a flower:

Plains and meadows which are braided shield in shield,

Are destroyed by swords like light

The face of the bare tower became like ruby,

The face of the Earth was laughing constantly.

The message of Manijeh was told to Bijan ,

His face was quite happy like a flower.

Other kind of verbs which have either epic spirit or hidden motion in verb , increase epic movement of poetry , and stimulate Firdausi too choose them as subordinate metaphor ; “ to boil” is a metaphor for “to get seriously angry” , “ brain’s burning” is a metaphor for “ being irritated” and “getting res” is a metaphor for “being impatient” in such verbs :

Fereidoun listened to it carefully,

When he heard it, his brain was boiling.

His heart is not filled with learning,

His brain is burning by thinking.

From the clean soul and life which is declining,

I am getting impatient like Azar Gashb.

2. Discussions

By paying careful attention to the whole imaginations of Firdausi’s Shahnameh, we understand that the skillful Persian poet has been very mighty and glorious in undertaking each part of his responsibility. Firdausi has used different kinds of obvious metaphor which are influenced by his poetic taste. He has not only raised the flag of respecting Persian language on the peak of all languages of the world in the most excellent way , but has also has shown Iranian culture and civilization in his own work and has displayed the literature and the beauty

of Persian speech to all people around the world . According to Shafiee Kadkani, Firdausi’s capability to use imaginations is full of mysteries which have distinguished him from others, “He is quite different from other poets in using various kinds of imagery and imagination; these differences have been impressive in recognizing his work and have made Shahnameh a unique epic.” In showing the beauty of Persian language and literature, Firdausi has worked so gently and fluently that no reader considers his poems as something compulsory in spite of all these literary arrays.

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