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CULTURAL SEMIOTICS IN MOLANA'S MASNAVI (CASE STUDY:
CODES OF THE STORY OF A KING AND A SLAVE-GIRL)

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the cultural semiotics of Molana's Masnavi by reviewing the codes in the story of the king and the slave girl. Studies have suggested that "self" and "other", which assume importance in the cultural semiotics approach, vary according to the context in which the semiosphere of each poem is embedded. Molana feels at peace when faced with "self" and thus seeks to extend this "self" to an outside realm of the "self" culture. The poet's codification of the semiosphere is inspired by the prevailing cultural setting. Because discursive ideologies vary, the codes and symbols of each discourse originate from the cultural setting governing them. Here, "boundary", a key term in cultural semiotics, distinguishes "culture" from "non-culture". This subject is notable in poetry, as boundary characterizes the limits for the poet, too. Understanding an arrangement of contrasting signs is considered to be one of the important issues in a desirable reading and comprehension of poetry, as it is thought of as the best technique used by poets to create meaning out of poetry. Using cultural semiotics, it is possible to comprehend such contexts. Generally speaking, there are too many cultural signs inherent in poetry. Analyzing these signs and construing their meaning can serve a strategic role in reading poetry. The point to be emphasized in this research is the era-specific "cultural backgrounds". Knowledge of these backgrounds helps the reader construe the meanings more conveniently and better understand the texts when confronted with the cultural signifiers inherent in the work.

INTRODUCTION

"Poetry" is considered to be a literary genre that concerns speech structure, thus contributing to the literary role of the language. Just as the linguist must attach importance to the literary role of language, a literature scholar needs to understand linguistic issues, as well. Various linguistics patterns of different goals and methods are seen as effective tools helping to criticize and understand a literary text. It is highly important to understand linguistic construction functions which creative thinking in the minds of the readership, as signs contribute to represent these functions. Signs lead us to concepts, the senses of which are founded on a social and cultural basis (Halliday, 1978).

The concepts from which literary criticism originates are rooted in cultural relations and allow for the dialogue between the reader and the text. This is while the sign system helps investigate the text. Semiotics has a long history, which mainly concerns "Saussure" linguistics, positing that we do not have linguistics whatsoever, we have semiotics, instead. To Saussure, language is, somehow, a name for things, and this appellation is a symbolic attitude; therefore, when people agree over a name or a symbol, they call it a sign, as things are formed and construed based on a codified system.

If regarded as a text, poetry can, as one put it, create models of the world and reveal them before the readership of literary works, thus they are called a collection that constitutes the culture of an era as they may serve a secondary modeling system. Thus, training poetry using such approaches as cultural semiotics may help better perceive the poems (texts), thereby representing the scope and complexity of the culture prevailing over them. In this case, one would argue that the world of poetry becomes more appealing, both in terms of form and of meaning. It should be pointed out, however, that there is no historical era with a single cultural code system, with different codes found in different cultures at the same time (Thorpp, 1999).

Cultural semiotics seeks to decode the cultural signs hidden in the text. In all texts, there is a collection of signs, none of which is neutral, while cultural beliefs are behind them. This type of semiotics aims to find cultural ideologies and codes between the lines. The Discovery of cultural signs leads to a discovery of relations which, in turn, leads to a discovery of meaning. Thus, "cultural semiotics" helps us discover meanings, knowledge of which, helps us understand the meaning of the whole text.

The present study draws upon the Structuralist Theory of Semiotics and the views by Ferdinand de Saussure to define signs and semiotics as it weighs on the cultural semiotics approach of the Tartu School to deal with the cultural signs in the poem "the King and the Slave Girls" by Molana.

Cultural Semiotics

In the Tartu School, Lotman views culture as a hierarchy of specific sign systems, a collection of texts, and relevant functions. The semiotic approach to culture helps one investigate cultural phenomena without referring to such concepts as the human soul or social role. One thing may be a means in a

culture and a non-functional artifact in another. Culture is essentially diverse and contains various sign systems and a complex body of texts. Uspensky founded the Moscow branch and Lotman the Tartu branch. This School is close to cultural history and cultural anthropology (Pakatchi, 2004). Cultural semiotics, as defined by the Tartu School, seeks "to codify a model of the same implicit model each member of a culture has already internalized" (Sojudi, 2011: 76). According to the Tartu school, texts can be interpreted because they are within the culture, while there is no system for interpreting cultural texts; however, a non-text cannot be interpreted because culture has abandoned them.

On cultural semiotics, Posner (2004) refers to a term used by Ernest Cassirer (1923-29), saying: Cultural semiotics is one branch of semiotic with its subject being culture. A sign context serves as an interface of various intertwined multi-layered texts in a specific layer which, to a certain level, involves internally complicated relations of varying degrees of translatability. Lying beneath this textual layer is a reality layer, which both form the cultural semiotics (Lotman; quoted by Agha Ebrahimi, 2018: 79). In cultural semiotics, there is an independent identity for the subjects under study, one formed based on the internal capabilities and relatedness network of that subject. Cultural semiotics has a critical approach because cultural studies are critical. Cultural signs are dynamic, which cannot be easily investigated like other subjects because they are the closest signs to the agent (subject) and are more represented by it (Namvar Motlagh, 2011).

Saussure considers language to be a collection of necessary and social contracts couched in words, describing the contracts as linguistic signs and their interrelationships. For him, language is a set of signs which, for some speakers, is also regarded as a form of specific contracts (Meshkat Al-Dini, 1997). It is these specific contracts later revealed in such approaches as cultural semiotics. Palmer (2012) argues if language is a system, with the message on one end of it and a set of signs or symbols on the other, one will perceive that Saussure refers to the message and the signs as the signifier (form) and the signified (meaning). The following describes a link between a concept and a phonetic form, called a linguistic sign.

Saussure never meant semiotics to be the knowledge of studying the role of signs as a part of social life. However, he maintained that signs make use of bodies of knowledge such as sociology and history. Robbins (1967 /1990) stresses the difference between Saussure and Pierce's arguments by suggesting that Saussure focuses on the social function of the sign while Pierce on its logical function, though with two closely related concepts. Saussure was influenced by Emile Durkheim's Sociological Theory. According to Saussure's definition, language should study a secondary element of social, political, and wider interdisciplinary subjects to explore the relationships between behaviors, events, and their sign-based domains (Sojudi, 2001).

Robbins (1967 [1990]) argues that Saussure addressed two linguistic dimensions of diachrony and synchrony. Synchronically speaking, he introduces each language to be a section of time as a sufficient and

independent communication system, while in diachrony, he concerns the history of changes made in languages over time. Chandler (2007 [2001]) suggests that Saussure views the language to provide the sound as a mere material element of linguistic applications. Linguistic signs are not physical rather made by distinctions that differentiate sound patterns from each other. Saussurean school semioticians advocate the optional relationship between the signifier and the signified.

For Saussure, the relationship between the signifier and signified or the nature of a linguistic sign is optional. Saussure's emphasis on the principle of optionality shows the precedence of symbolic signs. To him, semantic differences of the signifiers create meaning, which draws upon two types of syntagmatic (horizontal) and paradigmatic (vertical) axes, the latter involves an associative axis, describing this axis to include symphonious forms and synonymous meanings (Chandler; quoted by Parsa, 2008).

Linguistic syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations are the important principles proposed by Saussure. Saussure has concerned two hypothetical axes, called associative and syntagmatic axes in the language system. The former is a hypothetical and vertical one that invokes one unit in place of another. Charles Hackett also used the term paradigmatic axis in this sense. He also considered the paradigmatic axis to be a hypothetical and vertical one on which units of a system are selected in place of each other (Narsisians, 2008).

Saussure (1999) argues that diachrony phenomena are specific events imposed by language which lack generality, while synchronous events, whatever they may be, represent a kind of order not necessarily characterized.

For Pierce, a sign does not identify with the thing it implies, rather it differs from it in some characteristics; for this, it must involve, in itself, some of the characteristics that belong to it. This represents the material quality of the sign. Pierce, however, is not indifferent to the materiality of the sign; for him, a real thing is only construed through signs which may help one delves into the truth of a sign hierarchically. For Pierce, semiotics is a reference framework that includes any other study, and this shows that the diverse Pierce's semiotic writings (Pierre Giro, quoted by Nabavi, 2008: 147).

Cultural signs in Molana's poetry

Concerning the artistic-literary signs, the language of literature is equivocally diverse. The poet or writer does not portray the world as it is; rather, the literature world is more beautiful than the real one. This is even more appealing in mystical literature. The poet abandons any sign deemed to be contract-based in poetry, literature, and mysticism and selects other signs instead. Molana seems to have pioneered others by opting for the signs in their non-contractual senses. Molana learned "lyric poetry", especially "mystical lyric poetry" from Sanai and developed it extensively.

The language used by "Masnavi Manavi" is simple but the words are coded; this helps convey mystical concepts and Qur'anic teachings. Molana never

turns to direct advice and prescriptions, and his selection of the codes may have aimed to indirectly convey his ideas. Molana's symbolism and creation of cultural symbols are so notable that he deserves to be called a "symbol-making poet". In mystical literary texts, including Molana's works, mystical codes are of utmost importance, because mystics maintain that no unaware individual should discover their intentions. This is why they insist on keeping their intentions secret, as their myriad terms are both idiomatic and symbolic such as "Fire", "Life", "Veil", "Silence", "Sun", "Mercy", "Color", "Prison", "Cupbearer", "Seeker", "Reason", "Science", "Hatred", "Drunkard" and "Key" which are included in signs and intertwined with the components of mystical culture. Looking at the above mystical and theoretical system shows that the knowledge of semiotics can help understand the mystic or poet's literary competence already hidden from the readership. In the following, we cite cultural signs in a story narrated by Molana.

The Story of The King and The Slave Girl

"The King and the Slave Girl" is the first story of Masnavi that follows the symbolic and allegorical story of "Ney Nameh" (which translates to "a letter from the straw").

One day, a king goes to the desert for hunting along with his courtiers. On his way, he beholds a beautiful girl and falls in love with her. The king buys the slave girl from his master; however, after a while, the slave falls ill. The king invites the proficient physicians to treat the girl. The physicians are proud of their proficiency and forget God as they call themselves the healer Christ; to the king's despair, the drugs they prescribe are futile.

The king goes to a mosque in despair (here, the mosque is an important cultural sign; kind of giving identity to the place) and asks God to help him. While crying, the king falls asleep and sees in his dream a luminous man who tells him that God had accepted his prayer and an unknown man would come to his court tomorrow. The king takes the divine sage to the girl's bed and he diagnoses the girl's disease. The girl was suffering from love; and for this, rational-based physicians could not surmise her pains. The sage asks the girl about the ones whom she knows until he finds a young goldsmith living in Samarkand. The girl has her pulses beating when the goldsmith's name is mentioned. The sage shared this secret with the king and asked him to call on the goldsmith if he wanted to cure the girl. The king dispatched two men to Samarkand to bring the young man to the court with a promise. The goldsmith is deceived by the riches promised to him and goes to the court and, upon the advice of the sage, the girl marries the young man. The slave girl and the goldsmith live a happy life for six months. When the slave recoups her health, the sage then makes a drug and gives the goldsmith only to get him weaker and weaker. This suppresses his love for the girl and then he dies.

The story has five main characters: "The King", "The Slave", "The Boastful physicians", all identified by a single character (non-culture), "The Divine sage" (the Knower of the Secret), and "The Goldsmith". The story has two stages: first, a romantic atmosphere where "love and self-sacrifice" are

discussed, and second, a mystical atmosphere where "mysticism and enlightenment" as well as unseen allusions are implied. This story has two inward and outward domains. This research seeks to codify these cultural symbols. The story setting is also divided into internal and external levels, one is the internal (mystical) setting, which involves theme, content, peace, self, culture, logos, and the external level (romantic) setting embracing nothingness, emptiness, lust, horror, meaninglessness, catastrophes and non-culture affairs.

In this story, the mystical setting is codified which the inward aspect of the story is intended not its outward aspect. Here, the word "story" is used to distinguish between truth and non-truth.

Molana begins the story as follows:

*O' friends, listen to this story
The reality itself tells of our own story (Zamani, 2006:71).*

As Molana has suggested, what is quoted here is nothing but a story; however, symbols are pointing to facts in our real lives. The word "story" has been selected purposefully (this is a boundary that distinguishes others from self). The five characters in this story represent cultural signs not publicly used. The symbol-creating Molana has codified the story to represent the "king" (self, culture) implying one who goes hunting, but is by himself hunted by the "slave girl" who symbolizes the soul. This is where a conflict between "culture" and "non-culture" unfolds. The slave girl (non-culture, other) is by herself tied to earthly bondages. Goldsmiths also represents land and terrestrial belongings. When the king (man) returns to God the Almighty, the sage (symbol of divine providence) makes the earthly beauties abominable and ugly in the eyes of the king (man).

In a literature setting, the conflict between reason and love prevails, in addition to the confrontation between "virtual love" and "true love and mysticism". The reason is anti-culture and love, albeit, a real one represents culture.

Example 1:

*When he bought the slave and owned her
The slave girl fell ill
One had a donkey but lacked a packsaddle
Upon finding the packsaddle, the wolf devoured the donkey
He had a jar without water
Upon finding water, the jar broke (Zamani, 2006: 72).*

In both couplets, "self and the other" are replaced. One is sometimes in the center and the other in the periphery, with the periphery coming to the center replacing the center. Laying outside the circle is "chaos" (the wolf hurried away from the donkey).

We wrongly believed that the enjoyment of material things and owning riches would guarantee our happiness. The slave girl is a cultural symbol representing the caprice we seek. The "donkey" denotes any means which needs to be supplemented; however, when taking benefit of that supplement, we may lose the same means we longed for.

The signified of the signifier "wolf" is a cultural symbol here, truly signified by "mundane events" which are savage by nature temperament and cannot be controlled. Molana seeks to convey the cultural sense that happiness cannot be achieved in this material world. When there is water, the jar breaks because of some events. "Jar" and "unobtainable water" are logos while "water" and "broken jar" are "chaos".

Example 2:

*The king gathered all the physicians from all over
Saying: my and her lives are on your hands
My life is not so important, save hers
I am tired and exhausted, cure her
Whoever cures my beloved
Shall win all my treasures
They said they shall devote their lives
Striving to do their best to save the girl
Each of us is a Christ in his own
We got all the cures for every agony (Zamani, 2006: 73).*

The "king" is the symbol of man (an agent who bought the slave girl). The "slave girl" is a symbol of the soul, while "physicians" are the symbol of rationalists as they were agnostics, and were nothing (non-culture). The physicians failed to provide a cure for the king's beloved. Molana has condemned rationalism with the codes of physicians who were unable to cure the slave. On the other hand, the "luminous man in the dream" is a symbol of divine sage. He is a knower of the secret who is the "self" or the "center" in the story and stands against the physicians who are non-culture. Spatial and temporal codes help contemplate the context of the story. Some spatial codes, such as the mosque, are seen to be the center (culture) in their own right; it is a place where the king goes to when feels desperate. The court is the place where the man (the king) lives, and Samarkand, also the city of the goldsmith may represent the world. Examples of temporal codes include the "six months" during which the slave and the goldsmith lived together, indicating the brevity of life with virtual love as it emphasizes mortality.

Nonverbal codes such as the slave girl's disease (disease of love) which physicians failed to treat, as well as the girl's paling face, all convey senses that help develop the semiosphere. The conflict between love and reason is the arena where the self and others confront each other. However, "self" is meant to be the real love, and "reason" or "other" are "anti-culture", i.e., they are seen as the rational reason, though incapable of true love. Other non-verbal codes include body language such as the slave's pulse beating fast out of the goldsmith's love. In other words, true love is revealed from the inside of the

slave girl as the pulse beats faster while it is not seen on the appearance except in the face getting pale.

Semiosphere

Two semiosphere issues are cited in "The King and the Slave Girl":

1. Semiosphere of light: Here, such signs as king, human, divine sage, water, mosque are included.
2. Semiosphere of darkness: Here, the slave girl's soul, the goldsmith, the jar, the physicians, the court (maybe a symbol of the world) are included.

All the codes included in the semantic semiosphere convey senses on the syntagmatic axis while the senses may vary on the paradigmatic (allegory) axis, conflicting with other senses. This confirms Saussure's view of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes. For the author of this article, one would match the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axes proposed in Saussure's theory with the concepts of "self" and "other" advocated in the Tartu school.

Literature pre-outlined subjects include cultural concepts Molana uses them at the concluding part of the stories to challenge them and consider them ineffective. The sign "physicians" is plural, while the sign "gathering all the physicians" implies an "introspection" and "mixing" ideology of rationalists, contradicting the mystic's introspection and seclusiveness. For Sajjadi (2008), the mystic always aspires to gain the truth by discovery and intuition and delve into the inward and outward sciences; thus, what a scholar or a philosopher perceives via reason, logic, and reasoning, the mystic understands it through enlightenment. The following includes examples of signs in the semiosphere of the story of "The King and the Slave Girl".

Christ, The Physician

The sign "Christ" has been allegorically used to imply bringing the dead to life by Prophet Jesus, as rational physicians called themselves "the Christ of the universe." The couplet refers to the physicians as "claiming" and "boastful" using rationalist approaches, unaware that the pain of love was beyond their scope of power. The cultural sign "physician" implies any claimant who can direct and save man.

"God willing" (If God wills)

*If God wills, they failed to say this
thus, God made them fail and desperate (Zamani, 2006: 74)*

"God willing" is logos which He made them helpless, culminating in "chaos". They didn't say if God wills, which may have been due to callousness and guilt.

Exception

"Exception" is an allegorically cultural sign. To understand its signified, one must delve into its link with a Qur'anic verse. For Zamani (2006), this is construed from verse 18 of Chapter Ghalam in the Qur'an which says: "*and they did not make any exception*". Abandoning "exception" caused the divine providence not to affect the physicians' drugs.

*Failure to make exceptions was a callous act
Failure to say this was the cause of mishappening
Whoever fails to invoke God's willing
Shall deserve failure in his acts (Zamani, 2006: 92).*

Dryness, Exhaustion, And Recovery

*The slave girl fell ill and grew skinny
The king's eyes were streaming blood
Vinegar and honey were ironically concocted
As almond oil caused dryness
Halileh caused exhaustion, no recovery
Water and fire could mitigate the agony (Zamani, 2006: 75).*

Here, "ironically" is not conventionally meant to be "by the way"; rather it is a cultural sign with another signified. Here, the real sense is "divine providence".

Dryness, exhaustion, and recovery all represent cultural signs which, if perceived properly, the poet's intended sense is conveyed. Logos and Chaos are both manifest in these two couplets. On the other hand, if God wills, all-natural elements could produce inverse effects. Sign conflict is clear from the above example.

Barefoot

*When seeing the doctors couldn't make it
The king ran to the mosque for praying to God (Ibid, 77).*

For the author of this article, "barefooted" seems to be the expression of a state; the term barefoot is regarded in the laymen's culture as a non-culture against culture, especially when a king does so. However, in Molana's mystical culture, this non-culture turns into a culture, symbolizing submission to God. "Submission" and "giving in" as well as "absolute acceptance" and "faith in God" all suggest running to the mosque barefooted. This is while the code "barefooted" can also signify a sense void of any belonging.

Dream, the luminous old man

*While crying, he fell asleep
Saw an old man, coming to him (Zamani, 2006: 78).*

The dream implies a cultural sense. Mystics and sages invoke "dreams" to allegorically envisage the state of forsaking physical caprice and perceiving a spiritual power, indicating that death is insignificant. For this, the king was informed of an old man, representing a divine sage, who would meet him, which is also a cultural sign. The king considers the sage to be a close ally.

Day, the sun, the shade

*The promise was broken as now and then
The sun scorched the stars from the east
He saw a great and noble man
Like a sun in the midst of a shade
The sun was the reason behind the man
You won't cure, ask for it (Ibid: 79).*

"Day" is a sign of distancing from a preoccupied body. The "sun" signifies the spiritual presence of a divine old man, while "shade" signifies his body. The "sun" can be the "self" against the shade as the "other". For the author, a large number of paradoxes and contradictions in literary works have arisen under this contrasting sign system.

Breaking Taboos

*The dream the king saw
Came true in the face of the guest
The king went forward leading the doorkeepers
Went to greet the guest from the unseen
Both men consummated together
As if their lives were inseparable (Zamani, 2006: 81).*

According to the customs, the doorkeeper used to greet the guest; however, an instance of breaking taboos occurred here as the king himself welcomed the guest in person. The dream the king saw came true as the guest from the unseen appeared. The king was so enthusiastic to see the guest that he went to welcome him instead of the doorkeepers. The consummation of the divine saints symbolizes their inherent unity as if their lives were inseparable.

"Politeness", "impolite"

"Politeness" invokes order while bereavement of divine grace resulting in "impoliteness" is called "chaos." Signs such as success, politeness, grace, etc. have been employed to represent an order which, in contrast to signs such as fire that burns the horizon, are rich in allegorically cultural signs which require knowledge of Qur'anic stories and religious traditions to discover their exact senses. Politeness is "culture" and the "self", while impolite is "anti-culture" and the "other". The impolite is "anti-cultural"; in other words, the self has a specific sign system, which serves as a "human" against politeness. In this story, politeness is such a keyword Molana concerns in several couplets (as he ceases to continue the routine story).

*We ask God to bestow us politeness
As the impolite is bereaved from God's grace
The impolite not only damages himself
But also sets fire to the whole horizons (Zamani, 82-83).*

Identification

Example 1:

*What is latent in our hearts is interpreted as
To give a hand to the one immersed in mud and mire (Zamani, 2006: 88).*

Since the sphere of signs extends into the sphere of culture, one can refer to the two-way identification between man and the world here. "Immersed in mud and mire" does not convey a certain meaning per se; however, giving it identity suggests an entry into the cultural sphere.

Example 2:

*He reads the story of the suffered and the suffering
After a while, he associates with the suffered (Zamani, 2006: 89).*

In example 2, the poet believes the slave girl is a suffered individual, giving her a special identity. Here, the sign of "the suffered" denotes a cultural code. It is also attached a historical dimension in Molana's system of signs, as he regards the story to include one's agonies and suffering. Many of the appellations imply the relevant outcomes (assuming a historical dimension for a subject, etc.), i.e., the subject has been made an identified culture-based issue.

Example 3:

*Her pulses were harmless to her state
But kept asking about Samarkand sweetly
The pulses went down and the face paled
Hopeless of the Samarkand's goldsmith
When the sage found about this secret
Sought to find a cure for this agony (Ibid: 66).*

It is seen that Samarkand has been identified as suggested in the above couplets, so it is a cultural sign. Before the sage recalled Samarkand, the girl's pulses were beating normally. However, she had her pulses beating sharply as she was reminded of the city of the goldsmith. Her face paled. The sage, upon noticing this secret, found the root cause of the disease. The paled face has been signified by various codes (colors), each conveying a sense.

Example 4:

*The love changed her face color
It was not love rather the consequence of a stigma (Zamani, 2006: 111).*

Color does not have a cultural meaning by itself but finds a cultural meaning in association with love.

Example 5:

*The blood was streaming down his face
His face was the enemy of his soul
His enemy was the feather of the peacock
As its glory was killing the king
It said: I am the gazelle from whose navel
It shed the blood of my clean soul
I was the preying fox in the desert
Not knowing I was decapitated for my skin
I am the elephant suffering from the scars by my owner
Not knowing I was decapitated for the ivory (Ibid, 112 & 113).*

"Feather", "gazelle navel" and "foxtail" have entered the sphere of culture (i.e., that of signs). In the literature, "feather" is a cultural sign and a symbol of appearance beauty, which is considered to be an "anti-culture" contrasting the "self", i.e., a peacock, which is "culture". Also, the "King" and "kingdom glory" stand in opposition to each other. "Gazelle navel" and "gazelle", "fox" and "fox skin" (foxtail) are also seen to fall within the contrasting sphere of "culture" and "anti-culture".

In the story of "The Parrot and the Merchant", Molana describes a similar theme:

*Whoever put his faith in the beloved
Hundreds of bad omen shall be directed at him (Zamani, 2006: 574).*

Example 6:

*You see Khizr broke the ship deck
That's out of divine providence (Ibid, 120).*

Khizr enters the cultural sphere as a cultural sign; thus, creating a culture (self) in contrast to the anti-culture (other) in Molana's thinking and poetry.

For the author of this article, one may refer to Jakobson's intra-lingual translation and state that wherever Molana transforms the meaning of a Qur'anic verse into a hemistich or a couplet, a kind of intra-lingual translation occurs and he has done so like many other poets. Jakobson introduced the intralingual translation which is the interpretation of verbal signs by the verbal signs of the same language (sign system) and concerns the interpretation of genre and discourse. Uko also considers translation to be a type of interpretation (Sojudi, 2011). Inspired by translation, many Arabic terms have found their way into the Persian language, as their application in Persian poetry was considered to be a privilege. If the intralingual translation is said to be an expression of the subject using other words, interpreted from the verbal signs of a language using other signs from the same language, one may regard

Quranic verses and Arabic phrases to be other signs of the Persian language, as the two languages see common grounds on various areas.

Outlining A Rule-Based Text

Molana sketches moral teachings in the form of a rule-based text. These texts in cultural semiotics are valuable, helping our culture form against the non-culture. Molana creates a text (poem) and teaches moral, religious, and mystical principles; however, he does not do this directly; rather, in the form of a systematic structure like a sign system. For instance, keeping secrets is seen as an important moral principle also proposed in religious teachings, which Molana introduces in the form of a sign system. Selecting signs on the syntagmatic axis which, regardless of their moral contrast, convey a moral theme, such as "suffering", "hidden", "secrecy" are all considered to be cultural signs in Molana's thinking system:

Example 1:

*He saw thee suffering and the secret was unveiled
Though he hid it from the king
The sage checked the girl and concluded:
The medicine they previously prescribed
Did nothing as they demolished the whole mansion (Zamani, 2006: 89-90).*

The sage informed the king of the fact that the medicine prescribed by the boastful physicians not only failed to recover the girl but also deteriorated her state. The terms "mansion" and "demolition" are conventionally signified by "building" and "destruction", respectively, which are seen as signs in here. Thus, the mansion is logos while demolition is chaos.

"Suffering" and "secrecy" are signs signified by "disease" and "causes", respectively. "Secrecy" in the second hemistich is a cultural concept because the sage conceals it after discovering the disease and does not say anything to the king; this is because the saints do not expose one's secrets to others without permission.

Example 2:

*He said: O' king, empty the house
Keep away all the relatives and non-relatives
He asked gently, where is your city?
For the cure of each city, resident varies
Whom do you know in that city?
Who are the relatives and the kinsmen? (Zamani, 2006: 100)*

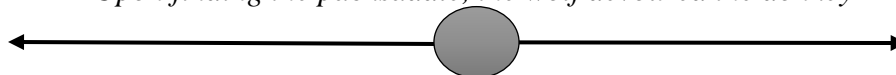
The divine sage asks the king to empty the house and to order all to leave it except for himself and the girl; this is because the sage does not want anyone to be informed of the girl's secrets. There is a kind of emphasis placed on the cultural concept of secrecy. An empty house is a sign to express the "self" in place of the "other", which is the same status of "self and the other". Examples

of this are seen in works of other poets such as Ferdowsi. For instance, the story of "Rudابه's throwing off her hair from the roof of the palace"; beginning with the following couplet:

*As the glowing sun disappeared
The chamber door was locked and the key lost*

For the author, antonymous words are seen as a set of codes constituting a sphere of "culture" against "non-culture" and sometimes "anti-cultural" on the syntagmatic axis. This prompts the poets to deliberately take advantage of these words, which could all be cultural signs. The story of the king and the slave girl is seen as a discourse with an ideology behind it, which is also that of the poet's, too. This story concerns the nothingness of outward loves, reminding the true love of God. Analyzing story characters, the codes about the girl were said to be deliberately chosen because she was from the lower class of the society. Also, the disease the girl was suffering from originated from a trivial, material, and humble thing, i.e., a non-true (outward) love. Here, one would ask that why Molana does not consider the king to replace the slave girl. It should be stated that Molana does not consider the king to be a normal human being as he can make up himself and be relieved from caprice and lust. This is why, the king began to treat his soul which is the slave girl in his story; i.e., he cures the patient's soul, and the point is that the patient's soul cannot be easily cured. Thus, there needs to have a spiritual physician who can, out of divine providence, treat it. As Molana's ideology suggests, these struggles are the Great Jihad. Another important point is why the divine physician kills the goldsmith. The goldsmith serves as a soul-instigating factor in the sign system. The human soul is the slave girl who has gone astray out of caprice by sensual instigators. The goldsmith is a sign of the same external and sensual instigators which, if exist, could preoccupy the soul, and if removed, man (the king) could overcome his lustful soul (slave), thus the sage aimed to remove the sensual instigators which result in caprice and lust. The words on the syntagmatic axis were selected very carefully. The paling of the goldsmith's face and his weakness, and examples like that, indicate the gradual destruction of the soul-instigating factors. Similarly, that the goldsmith lost his love for the slave girl denotes his death, as if Molana has created a relation:

*One had a donkey but lacked a packsaddle
Upon finding the packsaddle, the wolf devoured the donkey*



He had a donkey, not a packsaddle

He had a packsaddle but lost the donkey

In other words, achieving one means losing the other. This holds for the following:

*He had a jar without water
Upon finding water, the jar broke*

Entering the sphere of culture (i.e., the culture governing the Masnavi, especially this very story), the poet arrives at the sphere of signs; signs each

convey a special meaning; it is in the sign system that all signs can be contrasted and distinguished and be interpreted.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to identify the cultural semiotics of Molana's Masnavi. Studies have suggested that the literature of each society as part of its overarching cultures can embrace various discursive domains; thus, cultural semiotic-aided reading helps us better understand literary works, and turn away from the merely limited senses. This not only helps produce and reproduce literary texts, including poetry but also creates cultural and literary dynamism, thus helping the researchers and critics come out of repetitive frameworks that cause stagnated culture and art (of which literature is a part). Thus, understanding cultural signs in each poem helps better perceive cultural-historical experiences of inter-textual settings as they produce various interpretations. Because there are cultural and inter-cultural interactions, the way literary texts (poetry) are read will also be interpreted differently. Poetry text reveals its perspectives at different points in time.

The cultural semiotics approach helps criticize two perspectives of the text (poetry). One perspective which concerns the poet's main discourse is a kind of discourse founded in the culture governing the poet's era and helps produce poetry and its semiosphere, while the other perspective pertains to the reader who, from a standing of a critic, reads the poem based on his discourse that refers to the culture governing our era. On translation and its typologies, Jakobson (1987) discusses intralingual translation dynamism which has inspired researchers to argue that all cultures need such events, as cultural and intercultural aspects greatly contribute to the poetry in cultural semiotics, helping it come out of stagnation.

Studies have shown that "self" and "other", assuming much importance in the cultural semiotics approach, vary according to the semiosphere context of each type of poetry. Molana feels at peace when faced with "self", thus seeking to extend this "self" beyond the realm of "self" culture. Thus, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic axis proposed in Saussure's theory can be related to the concepts of "self and other" in the Tartu school. In other words, on the syntagmatic axis, a set of codes in the semantic sphere convey senses, while on the paradigmatic axis, these codes will involve different senses contrasting each other. In this context, the cultural codes of the story of Shah and the slave girls can be cited. These codes have been classified into two spheres of light and darkness. Man, king, divine sage, water, and mosque are included in the light semiosphere, and slave girls, goldsmiths, doctors, and the court in the darkness semiosphere. What distinguishes the semiospheres of light and darkness is the very senses of self and other in cultural semiotics.

The "borrowing" and "rejection" phenomena that occur from one culture to another cause signs in the semiosphere to take on different and new semantic senses. This process can also help create literary styles and contribute to the transformation of sign systems. In the meantime, we are faced with open and closed cultures. For example, cultures that regard facing another culture as frightening repeat diachronic translation frequently; e.g., the sage man, in the

story of the king and the girl, prescribes medicine for the goldsmith to eliminate the "other" because he only feels at peace when faced with self and believes that God orders this.

Poets construct codes within the semiosphere system and use the impacts of the prevailing cultural setting. Since discursive ideologies vary, the codes and symbols of each discourse arise from the cultural setting that governs them. The researcher in this article maintains that the reason why mythical codes are created is a product of rationalism culture. Addressing "boundary", which is important in cultural semiotics, delimits "culture" and "non-culture".

Cultural codes and signs in the semiosphere of any poem are so widespread that find their way into the abstract words, to the extent that such concepts as anger and power are blended with cultural components, thus producing abstract concepts between "culture" and "non-culture."

Cultural semiotics-based reading suggests how poets have tried to establish a two-way identity between the world of nature and man, while this interaction has materialized through processes such as proper nouns, noun and adjective relations, and the like. The process of naming in these cases also creates a specific semiosphere for each poet.

Understanding the contrasting arrangement of signs is deemed highly critical for a better reading of poetry and is one of the best techniques used by poets to create the meaning out of poetry. Cultural semiotics helps understand such settings better and more accurately. The "value of signs" proposed by Saussure represents this value as dependent on their difference with other signs; he argues that what is not codified by cultural symbols is ambiguous and forfeits an external existence. This is because they are cultural symbols that form a sign semiosphere. It is maintained poetry is variable because it is a part of the secondary modeling systems. Since cultural signs are constantly changing because of changing cultural relations, poems also change in each period. Therefore, the signs in the semiosphere of poetry in each period are different from the periods before and after it, and this is also one of the reasons for the changing Persian poetry styles.

Just as language can be studied in both synchronic and diachronic manners, signs can also be studied using these two perspectives to serve as useful ways to better read poetry. In other words, if semiotics is divided into two synchronic and diachronic dimensions, and one ever intends to examine the signs accordingly, he can find both the relations between the sign elements in the poem and the way the poems are formed and evolved throughout different eras. This suggests that the poetry is investigated once-through "synchronic cultural semiotics" and then through "diachronic cultural semiotics". The author believes that the latter, diachronic cultural semiotics, is more closely related to culture and cultural components. In other words, a review of cultural semiotics can help gain a better understanding of the evolving poetry over time.

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