

SELF-PRAISE (FAKHR) IN THE POETRY OF SAYYID QOSIM

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Abstract. The article explores the artistic features of fakhr passages found in the introduction and conclusion sections of the didactic epics “Majma ul-Akhbar”, “Gulshani Roz” and “Haqiqatnoma” by the Turkic poet Sayyid Qosim. The literary devices used in these couplets are analyzed based on scholarly examination. The study also investigates the role and function of fakhr in the poet’s creative work.

Key words: “Majma ul-Akhbar”, “Gulshani Roz”, “Haqiqatnoma”, fakhr (self-praise), majaz (metaphor), munajat (supplication), muqaddima (introduction), khatima (conclusion).

In 15th-century Turkic literature, poets also ventured into composing short didactic epics. Notable examples of such epics are found in the Masnaviyar Majmuasi (Collection of Masnavis) by Sayyid Qosim, a poet who lived and created in the first half of the 15th century. The author traditionally began his epics—such as Majma ul-axbor, Gulshani roz, and Haqiqatnoma—with sections of praise (hamd), eulogies (na‘t), and supplications (munajat), while the main body of these works consisted of didactic narratives. Alongside various literary devices, Sayyid Qosim made significant use of fakhr (self-praise) as an artistic means in expressing his ideas throughout his epics. These expressions of pride are mostly located in the introductions and conclusions of the epics. For instance, the epic Majma ul-axbor contains three instances of fakhr, all found in the section entitled dar sababi nazmi kitob (“the reason for composing the book of poetry”). The poet begins by addressing God, asking for forgiveness of his sins, and then petitions the Prophet Muhammad for intercession and protection on the Day of Judgment. In return, he emphasizes his commitment to composing works on religious and didactic themes, introducing his self-praise as follows:

The Scatterer spreads a precious pearl to all,
Each one unique, a shining, varied thrall.
May noble words in this wide world be sown,
And bring the soul delights yet never known.
Each breath a fiery spark that lights the way,
A metaphor where truth and spirit stay.
To lovers true, a blessing and a guide,
A healing balm for hearts worn deep inside.[1.15]

In the first line, the poet states that he has scattered meaningful pearls to the people, metaphorically referring to his epics as these valuable pearls. In the second line, he expresses, through the Persian term dar guzin, that these pearls are select and distinctive from one another. The Burhani Qot‘e dictionary includes root-based words such as guzin, guzinish, and guzini, with the word guzin meaning “chosen” or “selected” [2.25] among other related meanings. Considering that the word dar conveys the meaning of “inside” or “within,” the phrase implies that each work within this collection is a carefully selected and chosen epic. The first part of the couplet consists of Turkic words, while the second part is composed of Persian vocabulary[3.105] which gives rise to the artistic device of talme’ (mulamma) used for interpretation. In the second couplet, the poet reveals the purpose of composing the epic by expressing the desire that others find joy and inspiration in his words and, most importantly, leave a lasting name in the world through their own works. At the same time, he takes pride in his creativity by attributing qualities that bring delight to the soul. In the third couplet, through the use of the expression

nafasim (“my breath”), the author establishes a contextual synonymy with the phrase sozum (“my words”) from the second couplet. Avoiding redundancy, the poet ensures playfulness and melody in the lines. By employing this phrase, he metaphorically likens his work to a fire that gives warmth and vitality to the soul, reflecting his creative mastery. The following line clarifies the theme of the work, emphasizing through metaphor that the truth is being conveyed and indicating that the epic is composed in a religious and Sufi spirit. In the final couplet of the fakhr, the poet states that this epic serves as nourishment and healing for those on the path of love, referring to his work as futuh (“opening” or “revelation”). The term futuh in dictionaries means “opening.” Qosimiy wrote this epic inspired by Nizami’s Makhzan al-Asrar, as a response to it, and since it was the first and revealing work of the Majma ul-axbor epics, he refers to it with the epithet futuh. In another fakhr within the epic, the poet highlights that the value of his creativity is reflected in the respect and honor he commands in society and the realm of poetry.

My word is a jewel of great worth,
With words, one’s honor grows on earth.[4.15]

In his initial fakhr, where the poet likens his words to fire and pearls, he equates the value of his created works to precious jewels. In the second line, the term “word” signifies not only the profound content and beautiful expression of the poet’s creations but also implies that such works serve to enhance a person’s honor and reputation. Additionally, it subtly indicates that the poet himself was among the respected and esteemed creators of his time. About the poet, Navoi wrote: “Mawlana Qosim was sent to serve the sultans for certain important affairs by some notable figures. The sultans received him with respect, seated him with honor, and whatever he conveyed on behalf of the esteemed Hazrat, they accepted gratefully and sent him off with honor and distinction”. [5.276] This statement also indicates that he was one of the respected and honorable individuals in the presence of the sultan. In literature, comparing one’s creative work to pearls, jewels, or gems is a common and traditional stylistic device. However, in the following fakhr, Sayyid Qosim departs from this conventional approach by adopting a more creative and individual comparison, likening his words to beneficial rose syrup (gulqand):

Indeed, Qosimiy is a sufferer true,
His words like rose syrup, sweet and due.[6.17]

In the couplet, by declaring himself a dardmand (one afflicted with pain), the poet implicitly indicates that he is afflicted with the pain of love.[7.457] However, he emphasizes that his created works are as beneficial as rose syrup (gulqand). Gulqand is a sweet delicacy made by mixing red rose petals with sugar and preparing it under the sun, traditionally regarded as a remedy for various ailments. The use of this simile aims to convey that the religious and Sufi epic guides people onto the right path and serves as a healing balm for the heart. Since the poet’s dardmand (afflicted) state in the first line and the beneficial nature of gulqand in the second line represent conceptually opposing ideas, the artistic device of tazod (antithesis) emerges.

The reflective creator employed the gulqand simile not only in one instance but also in the fakhr sections of his other works. For example, at the conclusion of the Gulshani Roz masnavi, the author himself mentions that this comparison has been used by the people in reference to his poetic works:

From head to toe, every word is like rose syrup,
A treasure for the heart of the brave and wise.
Though these praises may not be meant for me,
They belong to those noble in generosity.
Within the words lie pain and meaning combined,
Enchanting the hearts of all peoples and kind.[8.125]

In the opening couplet, the masnavi is described as having every word akin to rose syrup from beginning to end. This simile is employed based on the work's melodious language and its beneficial nature for all. In the second line, the praise of the book continues, portraying it as nourishment for the heart, created by a mardī—that is, an intelligent and wise author. In the following couplet, the poet clarifies that the warm compliments directed at himself and his work do not personally belong to him but rather represent popular recognition by the people. This indicates that the value of the book is authentically determined by the audience's appreciation, thereby revealing the social significance of the epics he has created. In the final couplet, despite the masnavi being constructed upon painful expressions and thoughtful reflections that move the human heart, the poet concludes his fakhr by noting that the public has embraced it as a work that enlightens the soul.

In Sayyid Qosimiy's oeuvre, the epic Haqiqatnoma holds a special place due to its profound thematic content and unique composition within the religious-Sufi tradition. This epic is also structured based on traditional openings such as hamd (praise), na't (eulogies), and munajat (supplications). Regarding the value of his work, the poet expresses his thoughts through the device of fakhr (self-praise) in the munajat and concluding sections of the epic. The fakhr in the munajat section is distinct from those found in other genres, as it is written as a plea for God's assistance in fulfilling beautiful intentions and aspirations:

If I compose a poem in Turkic tongue,
May each letter carry a radiant song.
If I name it Haqiqatnoma with pride,
And describe the virtues those before implied.
If I spread the pearl of meanings wide,
And swim within Muhabbatnoma's tide...
I'll write to people gems of speech refined,
And shape a Turkic poetic line.
If divine grace grants me aid anew,
My evening prayers and morning's due.[9.130]

In the first couplet, the poet expresses a desire to create a work in the Turkic language, hoping that each letter of the book will serve as a fath bob (an opening or revelation). Considering that the work is written on a religious-Sufi theme, the author aspires for each word to unveil religious knowledge and divine enlightenment, possessing profound expression and meaning. In the second couplet, he reveals his intention to title this epic Haqiqatnoma and to describe the virtues of those who came before. Indeed, the epic consists of stories highlighting the qualities of historical figures such as Hasan Basri, Ibrahim Adham, and Khafiy Basri, reflecting the poet's purpose. In the third couplet, the author likens his epic to a pearl threaded on the string of meanings, foreseeing that his work will become a valuable example of high artistic achievement. Moreover, he sincerely wishes for it to spread throughout the world and aims to compose it within the style of the Muhabbatnoma ocean. The Khwarezmian book is composed in the hazaj musaddas mahzaf meter. Sayyid Qosimiy extensively utilized the possibilities of this meter while composing Haqiqatnoma as well.[10.177] In the final sections of the fakhr, the poet expresses his intention to create this Turkic poetic anthology for the people and conveys that he prays morning and evening for divine assistance in this endeavor, thereby depicting the spiritual state he experienced before beginning his work. This fakhr, found within the munajat sections, differs substantively from other types of fakhr in that alongside expressions of pride, it incorporates the poet's sincere intentions and supplications to the Creator for the fulfillment of those intentions. Moreover, it reveals the epic's meter, title, language, and purpose of

composition, as well as the elevated role of unveiling the author's psychological condition prior to writing.

Another fakhr from Haqiqatnoma is found in the concluding section of the epic:

By the lake of love, I have made my dwelling,
I have completed the Haqiqatnoma compelling.
I spread the pearl of meaning far and wide,
A spark from the heart's pain I have supplied.[11.176]

In the opening couplet of the poet's fakhr, he informs about his life devoted to the path of love and the completion of the work Haqiqatnoma within this framework. In the second couplet, the author briefly expresses the pain of love in his heart and takes pride in its dissemination throughout the universe. This is also evident from his use of the phrase *durri maoniy* (pearls of meaning) in reference to the epic. Notably, the poet expresses his aspirations in the *munajat* section of the fakhr, while the *khatima* (conclusion) reveals the fulfillment of these dreams. This represents a rare instance of logical linkage between the introduction and conclusion of a fakhr. In conclusion, it can be stated that the fakhr sections used in Sayyid Qosim's *Masnaviylar majmuasi* serve as an important literary device to showcase the poet's non-traditional creative style.

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