Introducing Some Characteristics of Technical Prose in Tarikh-i Vassaf

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Abstract— The author of the book Tarikh-i Vassaf was Vassaf-al Hazrat, the poet and writer of 7 and 8 centuries (A.H. that reviews the historical events of Il-khanate in Iran and the history of the kings and rulers around, from 656 -728 A.H. The writing style of the book is completely Technical (Masnou) with amazing exaggerations in using word, phrases, proverbs, Arabic and Persian poems, mentioning news, aḥādīth and verses of the Quran, and using different literary rhetoric in speech. The present article has critical point of view toward the writing style of this book and attempts to investigate some characteristics of Arabic and Persian evidences and literary rhetoric briefly.

Index Terms— Vassaf-al Hazrat, Tarikh-i Vassaf, Technical Prose, Arabic.

1 INTRODUCTION

TARIKH Vassaf or Tajziyat al-amsār wa-tajziyat al-ašār is one of the most important historical sources of the seventh century A.H. which is written in Persian about the status of Il-khanate Mughal and the events of that period. The author of this book Sharaf al-Din Abdallah ibn Fadlallah Shirāzī who is known as Vassaf-al Hazrat (663-730 A.H) due to his bureau jobs in Il-khanate courts and his accuracy and fidelity in narrating events gives us valuable information about this period (Ayati, 1993). It’s a pity that the prose of Tarikh-i Vassaf is technical, Mossaţā'ī, full of Phraseologies superfluous synonyms, redundancies in narrating events, poems, Arabic proverbs and verses of Quran (ibid), the deceased Bahar in this regard says “ the reading of this book can be difficult and boring for everyone even for those who are in love with these types of writings and even if the reader aims to get some historical information out of it that would be much more difficult and makes the reader feel board (Bahar, 1991:101).

Style of Tarikh-i Vassaf prose

As Vassaf cited in the first page of his book, Tarikh-i Vassaf is the continuation of Tarikh-i Jahangushay-ī Ata-Malik Juvaini (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269A.H:5) and in this book he has followed Juvaini’s way of writing. Vassaf al Hazrat is the last author in technical prose style who followed it seriously, since this type of prose is based on imitation of the Arabic and by bringing too many Arabic words, symmetries and synonyms Vassaf used this style excessively, therefore authors after him such as Sharaf ad-Din Ali Yazdi (the author of Zafarnama) and Mirza Mehdi Khan (the author of Naderi Vardāvār) have also imitated his style (Mir Fakhrāee, 2007). Of course Vassaf was aware of his writing method and says that his aim not only was to narrate the events but also was to show off his talent in using Rhetoric and Saj'a (rhymes) word making. He was even proud of his method and named his opponents as envies who were free of grace and eloquence (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269A.H). Characteristics of technical prose in Mughal period are divided in to two groups, literal and moral ones (Mir Fakhraee, 2007) and Tarikh-i Vassaf enjoys both of them.

2 LITERAL CHARACTERISTICS

Saj’a (Rhyme): In the sixth and seventh centuries A.H. rhyme was assumed one of the important pillars of writing techniques by authors and the amount of rhyme usage was different in their writings. Some used it just in their preface, others used it in brevity and moderation, but Tarikh-i Vassaf is one of those works which in addition to the preface, rhyme can be seen in other parts of the book as well in way that makes its prose much more difficult (Mir Fakhrāee, 2007) below there is an example:

“Sabahi dar sabuh abad ba melah o sebah, az sare massarat o ertiyah, eghdahe rah ra bar raghme ghade har gaddah, dar gardesh avarde bood va yaghote mozab e sorah az dideye por abe sorahi chon in sokhan ravan karde…” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:168).

Pun: In many cases the author’s intention is to show literal and moral arts and his own mastery of this technique, thus the author furnish his own hi with much of pun art in a way that sometimes the main purpose of text becomes unclear. Here is an example of written pun (minimal pair)

“Ta enane yaghiyan e baghiyan ba enane sepehr afrashite shod ” (Mir Fakhrāee, 2007:42).

An instance of Molafag pun:

Or “Man jani naranjana naran jani ” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:62).

This verse is the second hemistich of the couplet which totally is considered as one of the famous examples of the pun and its complete form is:

“En fi bostan naranjana man jani naranjana naran jani ”

Metathesis: for example: “va bi tavasot tasalof va tataf-fof talattof which is a kind of technical prose” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:149)

Metonymy and Metaphor: For example: “…. Ba vajode kamale dolat va eyalat va esteghal be omore molko o mellat gah gah gosho gardane aroos sokhan ra be goharhaye nazmo o nasr zivar midad ta angah ke tarikhe jahan goshaye javini bal jame jahan namaye maani ra dar reshteye zabt avarad…” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:4)

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Successive analogies, equilibrium and Momalethe in speech: For example “farrokh tarin navayii ke naye marghe zamzame soray zaband bedan dastan zanad va delnavaz tar yadegari ke be dastyarie kelke sargordan va kaghaze doroy negarpazir shaved, sepas afaridegar jahan, darandeye zamino o aseman ast. danandeye afzon va kasti va namayendete rahe rasti va sad hezar dorod va afarin moshk andod nogole goles-tane afarinesh va roshanayiye dideye binesh ra peyghambare rahnumaye dadgostare gereh goshaye o khodan o yaran o peirovane ov ra ta kherad niki pajhoh kar farmaye jahaniyan ast va mehro bar charhka garden taban va derakhshan.” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:146)

Detailed verbosity in speech: The best samples of Technical prose which include long phrases and detailed speeches can be found among the historical books of the Mughal period namely Tarikh-i Vassaf, since describing the historical events, stories and meanings in letter and other writings are only provided by the author, thus for narrating and describing historical events or to show his mastery and talent in using words, literal analogies, synonym in sentences and Arab literature skills the author uses much more technical styles which leads in affectation and technical prose. The samples of vain detailed verbosity can be found in all five volumes of Tarikh-i Vassaf, also at first volume along with the biography of al-Malik al-Zahir al-Bunduqdari (a Mamluk Sultan of Egypt and Levant) says: “Bunduqdar yazedar Abaqa Khan rasoli beristad va be vesatate sefarate marpeykar morgh mengar ke chon safir aghazad tavosane khavater ahe kamal dar jelevye neshat dar ayand…” after here exactly in twenty lines which eight of them are in Arabic he continues to write about "marpeykar morgh mengar”, that means in nearly one page Vassaf uses Persian and Tazi words in irony, metaphor, riddles and puzzles along with making symmetries, rhymes and conjugations, then finally writes:” yani galam arize in zekr az pardeye fek makshof gardanid...ela akhar” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H: 55-56). This style is evident through the whole book, namely the attack of Mughal to Baghdad (ibid: 34) and many other cases (ibid: 146, 32).

Adaptation of verses and ahädith: In some parts, verses and ahädith are used in conjunction with the meaning of speech as if they are part of the prose and in the case of omission the relationship will be completely broken (ibid: 2)

The above mentioned verse is one of the holy ahädith (Bi-hâr al-Anwâr, vol84:198) and the deceased Badi‘ozzamân Foruzânfarhas mentioned its complete form as below (2002:29):

In another group he brings phrases, verses and hadith that are not in relation with previous sentences and are just the evidences which complete or emphasis on the meaning of the previous sentences and in the case of omission do not affect the concept of speech (Mir Fakhraee, 2007)

“o niz enan baz khat mostarkha gozasht va ba molok o motaserfane amvale ziyade mozaeye va monagashati nakark gala PUBH rasol aghl bade aliman bellah modaraho alnas ” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H: 247) in this book (Tarikh-i Vassaf) the holy verses of Quran are mostly mentioned as well.

Using poems and proverbs: as mentioned earlier about the quality of affidavits on verses and ahädith, the poems and proverbs which are used along the prose of the book namely Arabic or Persian can also be divided in to two groups according to their literal or moral relations: first group are those that are not separable from prose, like:” agar basite Mamore ye jahan ra nesbat be ashkhas tavand kavade shiraz [chin mardomake cheshme jahan bin bashad]…” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:147-148) the sentence inside the square brackets is a hemistich of a verse (Mir Fakhraee, 2007), or in this case: “ dar an hal az zaban rozogar estegraghe sam mioftad ke dar goseh dolat migoft va esharat bedin bande mikard,

o hamchon khoaro khak o to chon aftab o abraj gol ha vo lalehah dard ar tarbijat koni ” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:405)

Second group are those in which author has separated the prose from prose by using some words, like: “ Rozegar az karde khod sereshke hasrat bar areye heirat mibaid va abyate khagani mikhand o mizarid, Az on kaftab sakho bavade charkh ze royezamin saye berdashtan

Jahan ra hamin yek javannard bodo felak ham hasad boroo o naghastash ” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:215) (Mir Fakhraee, 2007:55) Due to its technical prose the book is full of Arabic poems and proverbs, consider the following examples:

(Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:9-10)

Apparently were common proverbs of those days, also: (ibid: 18)

The above mentioned proverb can be said as a Persian proverb (A handful indicates a kharvar) or a hemistich” to khod hadithe mofasal bekhan az in mojmal” as well, or the below proverb (ibid: 20)

The theme of above proverb is the same with the poem of Abolfath Basti and the deceased Dehkhoda has pointed out to a famous sentence as well and also brought an evidence of Nizami’s couplet for it ” ehsan hame khalg ro navazad / azadan ra cho bande sazad”

(Dehkhoda, 1998:86), a point that must be kept in mind about the lyrics of Tarikh-i Vassaf especially Arabic lyrics is that beside his own poems Vassaf has named other poets in text or in the margin of the book. For example about Khâqânî’s Molama (Macaronic) in Persian - Arabic before pointing to the lyrics says that: “Molama delpazir Khâqânî dar goseh arbane hosh jay gir amadeh…” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:65) this Molama can be found inside the Khâqânî’s book among the short lyrics and Ghazals of this poet that are corrected by Mir Jalaleddin Kazzazi (Kazzazi, 1995:1037). However, since Vassaf was non-native Arabic speaker it seems that he did not have enough knowledge about the Arab poets and because of this reason in some cases he avoids to mentions the name of poets or sometime name them wrongly, for instance:

(Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:13)

It is written in the margin of the Tarikh-i Vassaf that the couplet is belonged to the ”le abi Tayyebe al Motanabbi” but the couplet cannot be found in the Diwan of Motanabi in the description of “Abul Baqa Akbar” which is one of the famous descriptions of the Motanabi since the couplet is belonged to the Abu Firas al-Hamdani which in his own Diwan in the description of Abdul Rahman al-Mastavi is the second couplet of
the poem which he has written for his cousin Seyfo – Doleh(Mastavi,1425A.H:63). Probably due to his lack of knowledge about Arabic and handwritingness of Tarikh-i Vassaf there are many mistakes and differences in terms of locating vowels and the words which are written in this book and the original ones that are written in the Diwan of poets.

The effect of Arabic wording in some Persian phrases: the arrangement of sentence elements in some parts of Tarikh-i Vassaf is in a way that it seems they are translated from Arabic. This kind of imitation shows the interest of that period’s authors in Arabic and the widespread-ness of Arabic in the texts of Persian prose, for instance:

“che manad be hayola anasor ke moshtarak oftade bi ertiyyab o sor an ba hamdighar dar mareze tabadol va engelab” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:604)

“in ast moghtazi raay rast va andishe dorost ” (ibid:410)

“ba lashkari araste chon cheshme khros va aj tan nahofte dar dere abnes” (ibid:410)

In all above sentences verbs, subjects and other elements of sentence are based on Arabic (Mir Fakhraee, 2007:70)

Using Mughal words: Poets and authors of this period especially historians (among them Vassaf-al Hazrat) who mostly were working in court and palace due to the requirements of their own period have entered many Mughal words in their own writings, but fortunately because of their lack of Rhetoric Iranian people did not use them much and spontaneously went out from Persian prose, consider the below sentences (Mir Fakhraee, 2007:73-74).

“rahe tojar o ortagan goshadeh shod ”(Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:51) artagh means tradesman but ortagh means Partner and companion.

“Joji besharafe tekshemeshi mostaed gasht ”(ibid:57) here tekshemeshi mean bowing.

“Tama be baspagi (baskaki) nasb kard ”(ibid: 568) baspagi means Darughachi (sheriff)

“soghat joy amadand ”(ibid:511) soghat means Souvenir, and many other cases like these (ibid:512,514)

3 MORAL CHARACTERISTICS

Description: describing is a common notion between prose and poetry although it is mostly used in poetry. There are many descriptions in Tarikh-i Vassaf, below is an instance of description about spring and natural phenomena:

“chon mazaje rozegar be hade etedal baz amad va bolbol bar sare sakhe gol dar parvaz va bedin besharat bar keshid avaz ghovate fasle bahar ba atashre golzar ab e saman arezan rikhteh va khake riay bad e moshk dari az demaghe kolbeye atar froo neshande.

Ze shakhe khish sama’n taft cho setareye roz

Ze bagh hamcho shab az roz shod ramideh ghorab

No arose bagh golrokh o yazam ezar shode va tooreye moanbarash tabdar badame cheshmeh dar saze kerevshemeh va tork naz sosane zabanashe be dah zaban dar goftane raz …” (Mir Fakhraee, 2007:76), or the descriptions which he has written about young and old people (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:341)

Eulogy, lampoon, Pathos: Tarikh-i Vassaf is full of these types of contents and the author has written his critical remarks and protests against the condition of his own period in this form (Mir Fakhraee, 2007:83).

Eulogy about kings: “… pas dar ahde dolate pedeshah eslam khene khanan jahan ghazan mahmod soltan khold Allah soltaneh ” (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:5)

Eulogy about Atâ-Malek Jovayni: “… zate be hemal sahebe saeed Ala-ud-din ata moke ibn al saheb al maghfor baha adinn mohammad ibn mohammad al jovayni sahebe diwan, ba kamayl e dolat va eyalat…” (ibid: 4)

Also pathos of Ala-ud-din sahebe Diwan: “ az in vahshat abad donya be janat saraye ogba kharamid va jahani maali ra ba khod dar dele khak zamin sakht ,hemistich ey khak che dani ke che paziroti ,didye fazl khon ab mipashid va rozegar be nakhon chehreye amani mikharashid ” (ibid: 119)

Using scientific terms and concepts: the author sometimes has used too much scientific terms without knowing their meaning thus made the point difficult to understand, like:

“dayeye ghaziye atfale nabat ra az moravedat va mokhale-tate pish karane chahar ganeey tirtib e tarbit az sar geref.

Harife namiyah dar estekmale aghtar jesm bar heyate tanaso-be tabi bi daste sanat bargoshad kadkhodaye movaledeh as-babe tolide mesl bar hasbe tabiyat mohaya gardanid ”(Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H:16), in above mentioned sentence ghaziye, namiyah, movaledeh are among plant and animal powers and to get the point ones should learn their meanings (Mir Fakhraee, 2007:85-87). Other scientific, economic and financial terms which author has used them (because of his job in court) are the same as the one mentioned above (Vassaf-al Hazrat, 1269 A.H: 411-606).

4 CONCLUSION

Finally, according to the evidences which were mentioned in this article it should be said that the technical and difficult prose of Tarikh-i Vassaf do not provide a good reason for forgetting this historically valuable book. Tarikh-i Vassaf beside Jami’ al-tawârîkh and along with Tarikh-i Jahangushay-i Ju-vaini is not only considered as a rich and documentary source for the events of Mughal Il-khanate period but also in terms of literary is in need of much more investigation and research, including opportunities for research in scientific terminology, legal, bureaucratic and economic situations of that period. Some of the shortcomings which are mostly in Arabic part that are probably due to the unfamiliarity of author with Arabic language and handwritingness of versions are in need of correction and investigation. The present article tried to introduce some technical prose characteristics of Tarikh-i Vassaf very briefly and succinctly, otherwise the detailed examination of each of these five volumes is in need of writing variety of books.
REFERENCES


