

The proverb Reference in Women's poetry in the Pre-Islamic and Islamic Eras

By

Hawraa Jasim Esmaeel

University of Basrah, College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of Arabic/Iraq

Email: raedalkaby80@gmail.com

Nidhal Ibrahim Yaseen

University of Basrah, College of Education for Human Sciences, Department of Arabic/Iraq

Email: nidhal.yassen@uobasrah.edu.iq

Abstract

Proverbs are the main key in understanding human and societal culture, as they bear the image of society, its customs and traditions, and represent the nation's realistic memory, being the language of all classes that respond to the public spontaneously and are characterized by honesty and realism. Moreover, they are an ideal and artistic model and a cultural tributary and a major element in the souls of the poetesses of the Pre-Islamic and Islamic eras who drew from it their cultural data and varied from one poetess to another. Thus, they gained knowledge of the heritage of the former, benefiting from it, employing it and developing it without imitation or simulation to construct a new effective text.

Keywords: reference, proverbs, women's poetry, pre-Islamic era, Umayyad era.

Introduction

Proverbs are considered one of the prose arts that have spread among people and are derived from the reality of their experiences in daily life, as they tell a real story or a well-known incident in history (they are a vivid picture of a real or imagined scene, drawn with expressive, brief words, often brought to approximate what is expressed by metaphor or simile) ⁽¹⁾.

They are also language structures whose expressions and meanings have been exaggeratingly intensified ⁽²⁾. And it was known as “the common saying that was said in a specific incident and in a special story, but it was on the tongues, and it came to be used for any situation similar to that incident in which it was said” ⁽³⁾. The ancients excelled in giving proverbs because they reflect their mood and do not require an understanding of the world and its affairs. Moreover, they do not require a broad imagination, or to evoke the experiences and destinies of nations ⁽⁴⁾.

And the proverb is (what people of different groups accept its wording and meaning until they spoke of it among themselves, in prosperity and adversity, turned around with it from the absurd, reached with it to distant demands, and they used it to relieve anguish and worries, and it is one of the most wise speech) ⁽⁵⁾. As the proverb is part of the cultural ground of both the creator and the recipient, it has acquired its nobility and quality from the common roots between it and the ancient culture ⁽⁶⁾. Moreover, (the proverb is a central saying that descended from the predecessors as a summary of a set of experiences and features. It is an expression of the life of nations with its history, men, environment and perceptions, and it is therefore a strong echo of many aspects of life). ⁽⁷⁾

The literatures of all nations are hardly devoid of proverbs because they stem from their scientific experiences, as they reflect their view of life, death, the unseen and beliefs⁽⁸⁾. It has been said that the proverb (is the argument, and it is true because it is invoked as it will be shown in its usefulness).⁽⁹⁾

The poets derive from the proverb the lesson that the incident in which the proverb was said tells them, so the poet relies on (the short hint, leaving the mind of the listener to link the proverb to the story to understand the meaning intended by the poet)⁽¹⁰⁾.

This motivated the poetesses to refer to proverbs and benefit from them and take them as one of the tributaries of their cultural reference. This shows us the extent of their extensive knowledge and deep knowledge of Arabic literature, both poetry and prose.

In this context, we note that Sa'dabint Al-Shamrdal invokes the proverb (may your mother be bereft of you as you sprawled over a barren land)⁽¹¹⁾, which is said for those who seek what is useless⁽¹²⁾, to express her deep sorrow for the loss of her brother Asaad, who was killed by the Bahz tribe of Bani Salim in her saying⁽¹³⁾:

Bahz killed him by surprise, now they are stronger

And thus submissive have become my people.

By killing Asaad, Bahz's status rose at the expense of her people. Therefore, she addresses him by saying that he should not patch morals while leaving Asaad pierced by spears. The poet transferred the proverb to the space of the text to give it inspiration and a broader influence in the mind of the recipient and his intellectual perceptions and worked to test the effectiveness of the proverb, the moral brevity and the pictorial condensation that it contains within the new cultural context of the produced text and supplemented it with a suggestive expressive energy stemming from the cultural situation of the poetic text creator.

The spread of proverbs among people contributes to the shaping of one of the aspects of the richness of the poetic text and then its openness to broader connotations that meet the poet's psychological and emotional needs and enrich his/her poetic experience. In this context, we find Al-Khansabint Zuhair bin Abi Salma invoking the images of the proverb (Much ominous than Qadar)⁽¹⁴⁾ or (Much ominous than Ad's red man)⁽¹⁵⁾ in her saying:⁽¹⁶⁾

He met his destiny just like

Qadar had never been immortalized

It is as if the poet wanted with this proverb to depict that the power of immortality is always above the power of survival, so she used this poetic image and its connotations to clarify the struggle that exists in man for the sake of immortality, because immortality is coming and there is no escape from it, as it came to these peoples who were the marvel of their time in tyranny and power. With this deduction, the poet extracted the sermon and the lesson from previous nations and was able to employ their literary culture in a new way, giving the poetic structure additional semantic dimensions and leaving its clear mark on the foundation of the poetic text.

Al-Kharnaqbint Badr also cites the proverb:

(The beautiful woman does not lack defamation) ⁽¹⁷⁾, in her saying ⁽¹⁸⁾:

Is there to tell Amr bin Hind

And the beautiful woman does not lack defamation

Just as you brought us out from a land of truth, in which you see a blessed man staying

The poet captured the significance of the proverb that no one is free of something to be reproached with (19) when Amr bin Hind, the tyrannical king of Hera, expelled the Bani Marthad from their land. Her creative text included an indication that the matter does not always agree with our hopes, and this she derives from the text of the proverb, and therefore she used it to express her feelings and to supplement and clarify her poetic experience in line with the nature of the poetic experience that she expresses.

In the same poem, the poet referred to another proverb, which is (If the cat was left it would have slumbered and slept) ⁽²⁰⁾, and it is said to someone who is forced to do something against his will ⁽²¹⁾. The poet says :⁽²²⁾

As the neighborhood girl said, when her vision sensed athreatening army
To her father and she showed him at night a sand grouse,

Do you not see the sand grouse, frequent? And if the it is left it would have slumbered and slept

Al-Kharang put itself in the place of Zarqa Al-Yamamah, warning her people about Amr bin Hind, and thesis an indication of the tyranny of Ibn Hind. The proverb is also said for one who becomes irritated ⁽²³⁾ and her invocation of the text of the proverb in the structure of poetic discourse supports the intentionality of the poetic text with suggestive and moral strength and semantic intensity in harmony with the psychological and emotional states, and raises the effectiveness of the text to the level of the event and illuminates her emotional experience with cultural data.

We also refer to what Al-Khansa said when she portrayed the loss of her brother Sakhr as a calamity and a state of loss that befell them ⁽²⁴⁾:

Today, we and others are like the teeth of donkeys

The poet derives from her cultural data the proverb (like the teeth of donkeys) ⁽²⁵⁾. This proverb is said to the people if they are similar in evil, then they are equal ⁽²⁶⁾, as the tribe that Sakhr cherished and dressed in the dress of prestige and pride among the tribes after his death became like other tribes, and the word (day) heralds the beginning of a time of humiliation that was equal in her eyes after losing her brother, so she gained additional poetic experience. The process of poetic creativity has been enriched with a suggestive energy that contributed to the formation of a new image that gave poetic performance aesthetic horizons and sensual pleasure.

The congruence in the poetic image may be clear between two experiments; The experience of the proverb (what is sweeter in this matter and what is much bitter) ⁽²⁷⁾, and the creative experience of Al-Khansaa in her saying ⁽²⁸⁾:

The day Sakhr left me is one in sorrow,

Full of sorrow and bitterness

The poet conveys to us her experience with time, quoting from the proverb, which enables the reader to discover the depths of that experience. Al-Khansa brings us closer to a reality she lived and submitted to, marveling at the order of life and its vicissitudes, as life is characterized by love and hardship. But since Sakhr left her, the poetess had not found life's sweetness or bitterness. Therefore, the creative talent was clearly manifested in the harmonization between the content of the proverb in word and meaning in its inherited image, and it was supplemented with a suggestive energy stemming from the cultural background of the creator of the poetic work.

Likewise, the poet invests the proverb (He who becomes powerful does injustice) ⁽²⁹⁾, meaning the one who overcomes a robber ⁽³⁰⁾, in her saying ⁽³¹⁾:

They were a protector to guard their people,

when the powerful does injustice

She wants to say that her two brothers and her husband were a protector that no one could defeat them in that age, for they were dear and generous in the time of (He who becomes powerful does injustice). Therefore, the proverb represented a cultural focal point on which the poetic text was based and gained semantic power, which gives the poetic experience a broader richness.

Umm Kulthum al-Amiriya invests in her lament for her brother, who was killed by Imam Ali in the Battle of the Trench, the proverb (The country's egg) ⁽³²⁾ when she says ⁽³³⁾:

If Amro's killer was not his killer, I would weep forever

But his killer is he who is not blamed, the egg of the country.

When the poet learned that the murderer of Amro is a competent and chivalrous man, she did not get angry, but rather praised him, seeking the text of the proverb and benefiting from its significance (that is, he is a noble individual that no one is like him, like an egg that is a trike alone, with no one else) ⁽³⁴⁾. Thus, the cultural context of the proverb contributed to shaping the semantic structure of the text and enriching the new text with additional semantic dimensions that fit with the poet's psychological state. Despite the poet's sadness, she is not angry, because the one who killed Amro ibn Wad was Imam Ali, who has no equal in honor and bravery.

Khawlabint Al-Azwar invokes the Arab proverb (Much ominous than the crow) ⁽³⁵⁾, as the Arabs are pessimistic about the crow because it does not fly over their houses unless they leave it, so she used the proverb (*) for pessimism. The poetess considered it a cultural and intellectual aid in structuring her poetic discourse in her saying ⁽³⁶⁾:

If I had known that it was the last meeting, we would have stood to say goodbye and said goodbye.

Is it not, O crow of separation, are you an informer, so do you herald the arrival of the

absent?

The poet reversed the content of the proverb. This bird, which is a symbol of doom, is expected to announce the news about her captured brother, and the poetess hopes that it will bring her the news she is waiting for. The new text reflects the significance of the proverb according to the requirements of the poet's subjective experience, and this indicates the awareness of the poetess in her dealings with the literary and cultural heritage in a manner appropriate to the dimensions of her emotional experience.

Laila Al-Akhiliya borrows from her cultural memory the significance of the proverb (faster than the teetotum) ⁽³⁷⁾ and its implications for describing the speed of the mare in her saying ⁽³⁸⁾:

Laila describes the horses and likens the sound of these horses running to the voice of the teetotum. The use of proverbs in constructing the poetic text undoubtedly indicates an original Arab culture and a serious examination of the nation's heritage in a deep way⁽³⁹⁾.

The poet also praised Al Mutarrif by referring to Abdullah bin Al-Zubayr in her saying ⁽⁴⁰⁾:

Do not invade eternity, Oral Al Mutrif, neither the oppressor nor the oppressed ever

The poet was inspired in the construction of her text by the proverb (Don't use your arm) ⁽⁴¹⁾ to form her satirical image tinged with irony and mockery, as it carries with it advice and warning not to confront her praised one, whether he is unjust or oppressed. Her investment of the proverb came as a suggestion to the satirized person of his weakness and his lack of courage and daring compared to the strength and severity of the one she praised. The text (the proverb) has played an effective role in clarifying the idea and giving it a broader impact in the mind of the recipient. Not every proverb is suitable to be the subject of a major literary work unless the writer can take the proverb as the beginning of his work and experience with the recipient his real experience and express it in a realistic way ⁽⁴²⁾.

Conclusion

The poetesses' inspiration by the text of the proverbs in the poetic weaving enriched their poetic language and gave them the ability to harmonize between the content of the proverb and its significance in both moral and semantic terms. Thus, the effects of the ideals fused in their poetry and granted it a moral flow on the suggestive and artistic levels.

Endnotes

1. The artistic image in the Qur'anic proverb, Dr. Muhammad Hussein Ali Al-Saghir, Dar Al-Rasheed Publishing, Baghdad, 1981, 62.
2. See: The detailed history of the Arabs before Islam, Dr. Jawad Ali, Dar Al-Ilm for Millions, 2nd Edition, Al-Nahda Library, Baghdad, 1978, 434.
3. The Book of Proverbs in the Prophetic Hadith, Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Jaafar bin Hayyan Al-Ansari, known as Abu Sheikh Al-Asbahani, (d. 369 A.H.) Edited by Dr. Abdul-Ali Abdul Hamid Hamid, Salafi House, 2nd Edition, Bombay, India, 1408 A.H. - 1987 A.D., 1 /10.
4. See: The Prince of Poetry in the Ancient Era (Amru' Al-Qays), Muhammad

- SalihSamak, Egypt's Renaissance House for Printing and Publishing, Cairo 1929, 119.
5. The Flowery Book in Linguistics, Abdul Rahman Jalal Al-Din Al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH). Explained and edited by: Muhammad Ahmed Gad Al-Mawla, Muhammad Abu Al-Fadl Ibrahim, Ali Muhammad Al-Bukhari, House of Heritage Library, 3rd floor, Cairo, 2/486.
 6. See: Proverbs in the Holy Qur'an, Sami Atef Al-Zain, Lebanese Book House, Beirut, 1, 1987, 27.
 7. Abdullah Al-Baradouni, His Life and Poetry, Ahmed Abdel Hamid Ismail, Center of Arab Civilization, 1, 1998, 83.
 8. See: Old Arabic Proverbs, Dr. Salam Ahmed Khalaf, International Publisher, Baghdad, 1, 2010, 10.
 9. Hills' Flowers in Proverbs and Wisdom, Al-Hassan bin Masoud bin Muhammad, Abu Ali Nour Al-Din Al-Yusi, (d. 1102 AH), edited by: Dr. Muhammad Hajji, Dr. Muhammad Al-Akhdar, House of Culture, Dar Al-Bayda, Morocco, 1, 1401 AH – 1981 AD, 1/20.
 10. Abu Tammam: His culture through his poetry, IbtisamMarhoon Al-Saffar, Ministry of Information, Directorate of Culture, 36-37.
 11. A Collection of Proverbs, Abu al-Fadl Ahmad ibn Ahmad al-Maidani, edited by: Abdullah Touma, Dar Sader, Lebanon, Beirut, 2002, 1/395.
 12. The same source.
 13. Poetry of the Pre-Islamic era (a critical study), RaghdaMardini, Dar Al-Fikr, 2002, 268, Bahzis one of the names of the Arabs and a living Bahz from BaniSulaym, The Arab Tongue byAbi al-Fadl Jamal al-Din Muhammad bin Makram Ibn Manzoor, material (return), Qom _ Iran Publishing Hawza Literature, 1405 AH, 5/314, Grandfather: Luck and Greatness, see: The Arab Tongue, 3/107, Humble: Submissive and humiliated, see: The Arab Tongue, 8/71.
 14. And he is Qadar bin Salif, the killer of the she-camel, and he became Qadar, an example of bad omen. It was said: Much ominousthanQadar, A Collection of Proverbs, 1/ 379. See: PublicizingProverbs, AbiHilal al-Askari, edited by: Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim, Abd al-Majid Qatamesh, The Modern Arab Corporation for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Madani Press, 1, 1384 AH, 1964 AD, 1/170 – 2/156.
 15. Collection of Proverbs, 1/379.
 16. Poetry of the Pre-Islamic Era, RaghdaMardini, 247.
 17. Collection of Proverbs, 2/213, Publicizing Proverbs, 2/398.
 18. Anthology of Al-KharnaqbintBadr, narrated by Abi Amr bin Al-Ala, explained and verified by: Yousry Abdul-Ghani Abdullah, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya, 1st Edition, Beirut_Lebanon, 1990, 52. Reprehensible, The Arab Tongue, 12/219, Grateful: Joy is joy, and the glee of a man is the envy of him, see: The Arab Tongue, 8/358, standing: position, The Arab Tongue, 12,496.
 19. And the story of this proverb is that Hubby bint Malik bin Amr Al-Adwaniyah was the most beautiful Arab woman, so her husband insulted her and was one of the kings of Ghassan.
 20. The origin of the proverb is that Attas bin Khalaj went out to confront Al-Rayyan, so they fought each other and then barricaded themselves. To camp in it, but Attas was aware of it, so he walked to him and stayed at night near the camp. However, his soldiers scared the sand grouse, thuspassed by Rayyan's soldiers, and when she saw them, she was sure that the enemy was close to them, otherwise the sand grouse

- would not have flown at such an hour, so she warned her people. Collection of Proverbs, 2/194.
21. The same source.
 22. Anthology of Al-Kharnaq: 52, Al-Tawatur, Al-Tataba': Mutawatirat: Successively, see: Lisan Al-Arab, 5/273.
 23. Lisan Al Arab, 15/189.
 24. Anthology of al-Khansa, explained by Thalab Abu al-Abbas Ahmed bin Yahya bin Sayar al-Shaibani (291 AH), edited by: Dr. Anwar Abu Swailem, Dar Ammar Publishing, 1st Edition, Jordan_Amman, 1988 AD, 333.
 25. They also said in the proverb if they slander the people: They are equal like the teeth of a donkey, that is, they do not prefer one another, and if all people were on the optimal path, you would not know the virtue of good people, Collection of Proverbs, 1/329.
 26. See: Explanation of the writer's literature, by Ibn Qutayba, Mawhib bin Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Al-Khader bin Al-Hassan, Abu Mansour Al-Jawaliqi (d. 540 AH), introduced byby: Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'I, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut, 139.
 27. That is, he did nothing, see: collection of proverbs, 2/290.
 28. Anthology of Al-Khansaa, 385.
 29. Collection of Proverbs, 2/275, and Publicizing Proverbs, 2/228.
 30. Proverbs, Zaid Al-Hashemi, Dar Saad Al-Din, Damascus, 1, 1423 AH, 1/241.
 31. Anthology of Al-Khansaa , 274.nAnd she gives an example of the only unique man who has no helper, he is called the egg of the country, that is, he is in his unity and singularity as an egg in a land devoid of its presence, Collection of Proverbs 1/97, Publicizing Proverbs 1/231.
 32. Poets in the Age of Prophecy, Dr. Muhammad Altunji, House of Knowledge for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1, 1423 AH – 2002 AD, 232.
 33. The Arab Tongue, 7/122.
 34. Collection of Proverbs, 1/559.
 35. (*) They hated giving that name for fear of rebuke and tirade, and they knew that it is clear-sighted and clear-eyed, until they said: It is clearer than the eye of the crow. See: Collection of Proverbs, 1/383.
 36. Poets in the Age of Prophecy, Dr. Muhammad Altunji, 64.
 37. Collection of Proverbs, 1/349, The Inquisitor in the Proverbs of the Arabs, by Jarallah Abu al-Qasim Mahmoud bin Omar al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH), Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut - Lebanon, 2, 1397 AH - 1977 AD, 1/161.
 38. Anthology of Layla Al-Akhiliya, investigation: Khalil Ibrahim Al-Attiyah, Jalil Al-Attiyah, Ministry of Culture and Guidance, 54, see: The Arab Tongue, 14/356, Teatotum: It is a stone, a stick or a perforated reed, imposed in the middle of it and then tightened with a thread, So when she turns, she hears a rustle, which the boys play with. See: The Arab Tongue, 9/61, and The Sufficient in Arabic Proverbs, 1/161.
 39. See: Elements of Artistic Creativity in Ibn Zaydoun's Poetry, FawziKhudair, Kuwait, 2004, 17.
 40. Anthology of Laila Al-Akhiliya, 109, see: Arab Tongue, 4/76, Qaroma: singular: Qarm: It is a camel stallion, see: Arab Tongue, 12/437.
 41. It is an example for someone who threatens others, and does not have the ability to carry out his promise, collection of proverbs 2/92.
 42. See: Forms of Expression in Popular Literature, Dr. Nabila Ibrahim, The Arab World Press, Egypt, 144.

References

- Abu Tammam: His culture through his poetry, Ibtisam Marhoon Al-Saffar, Ministry of Information, Directorate of Culture.
- Forms of expression in popular literature, Dr. Nabila Ibrahim, Arab World Press, Egypt.
- Proverbs, Zaid Al-Hashemi, Dar Saad Al-Din, Damascus, 1, 1423 AH.
- Ancient Arabic proverbs, Dr. Salam Ahmed Khalaf, International Publisher, Baghdad, 1, 2010.
- Proverbs in the Holy Qur'an, Sami Atef El-Zein, Lebanese Book House, Beirut, 1st edition, 1987.
- The Prince of Poetry in the Ancient Era (Amru' Al-Qays), Muhammad Salih Samak, Egypt's Renaissance House for Printing and Publishing, Cairo 1929.
- Collection of Proverbs, Abi Hilal Al-Askari, editor: Muhammad Abu Al-Fadl Ibrahim, Abdul Majeed Qatamish, Modern Arab Institution for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Madani Press, 1, 1384 AH, 1964 AD.
- Anthology of Al-Kharnaq Bint Badr, narrated by Abu Amr bin Al-Ala, explained and edited by: Yousry Abdel-Ghani Abdullah, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmia, 1st Edition, Beirut, Lebanon, 1990.
- Anthology of al-Khansa, explained by Thalab Abu al-Abbas Ahmed bin Yahya bin Sayyar al-Shaibani (291 AH), edited by: Dr. Anwar Abu Swailem, Dar Ammar Publishing, 1st floor, Jordan – Amman, 1988.
- Anthology of Laila Al-Akhiliya, edited by: Khalil Ibrahim Al-Attiyah, Jalil Al-Attiyah, Ministry of Culture and Guidance.
- Hills' Flowers in Proverbs and Wisdom, Al-Hasan bin Masoud bin Muhammad, Abu Ali Nour Al-Din Al-Yusi, (d. 1102 AH), edited by: Dr. Muhammad Hajji, Dr. Muhammad Al-Akhdar, House of Culture, Dar Al-Bayda, Morocco, 1, 1401 AH – 1981 AD.
- Poets in the Age of Prophecy, Dr. Muhammad Al-Tunji, Dar Al-Maarifa for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 1, 1423 AH – 2002 AD.
- Explanation of the writer's literature, by Ibn Qutaiba, Mawhib bin Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Al-Khader bin Al-Hassan, Abu Mansour Al-Jawaliqi (d. 540 AH), introduced by: Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafei, Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, Beirut.
- The Poetry of the Pre-Islamic Era (A Critical Study), Raghda Mardini, Dar Al-Fikr, 2002
- The artistic image in the Qur'anic proverb, Dr. Muhammad Hussein Ali Al-Saghir, Dar Al-Rasheed Publishing, Baghdad, 1981 AD.
- Abdullah Al-Baradouni: His Life and Poetry, Ahmed Abdel Hamid Ismail, The Center for Arab Civilization, 1, 1998.
- The Book of Proverbs in the Prophetic Hadith, Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Jaafar bin Hayyan Al-Ansari, known as Abu Sheikh Al-Asbahani, (d. 369 AH) Editor: Dr. Abdul Ali Abdul Hamid Hamid, The Salafi House, 2nd floor, Bombay, India, 1408 AH – 1987 AD.
- Arab Tongue, Abi al-Fadl Jamal al-Din Muhammad bin Makram Ibn Manzur, material (return), Qom – Iran, publishing Hawza literature, 1405 AH.
- Collection of Proverbs Abu Al-Fadl Ahmed bin Ahmed Al-Maidani, edited by: Abdullah Touma, Dar Sader, Lebanon, Beirut, 2002.
- The Flowery Book in Linguistics, Abdel Rahman Jalal Al-Din Al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH) edited by: Muhammad Ahmed Gad Al-Mawla, Muhammad Abu Al-Fadl Ibrahim, Ali Muhammad Al-Bukhari, Dar Al-Turath Library, 3rd floor, Cairo.
- The Investigator in the Proverbs of the Arabs, by Jarallah Abu al-Qasim Mahmoud bin Omar al-Zamakhshari (d. 538 AH), Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut – Lebanon, 2, 1397 AH – 1977 AD.
- Detailed history of the Arabs before Islam, Dr. Jawad Ali, Dar Al-Ilm for Millions, 2nd Edition, Al-Nahda Library, Baghdad, 1978.