

The Use of Beast Fables for Didactic Purposes in the Arabian Nights (One Thousand and One Nights)

By

Amal Salman Mashree

Qurna College of Education, Department of English, Basrah University, Iraq

Email: amal.mashree@uobasrah.edu.iq

Abstract

Animals occupy an important place in literature. They carry a rich variety of symbolic association often drawn from the past as the lamb, which serves as an important sacrificial animal in most of the religious rites in the world. Animals also serve as vehicles for religious allegory and moral instruction. Sometimes a collection of descriptions and interpretations of animals are used to convey and give a moral or a religious lesson. Man's ways have been developed to serve the requirement of various ages. Their aim is didactic, i.e., the moral is disguised in an entertaining way. Almost all literary works exist in order to entertain and to communicate something— ideas, morals, facts, or a sensation. The ultimate question of didacticism in a literary work is related to the hidden intent of the author or his ostensible purpose. Horace said in *Ars Poetica* that the primary goal of the artist is to instruct. The artist is didactic in intent and the purpose of the work produced is didactic because it has as its ultimate effect a meaning or a result outside itself except in the Art for Art's movement. This paper sheds light on the use of animals for didactic purposes in Arabic literary work 'the Arabian Nights (One Thousand and One Nights)' which is relevant not only to the literature of one nation but for all the tradition of literature.

Keywords: One Thousand and One Nights, Beast Fables, didactic purposes, Abbasid period, Political Didactic Messages.

I. Introduction

The early 'Abbasids were fortunate in the caliber of their Caliphs, especially when Harun al-Rashid came to the Caliphate in 786. His reign is now considered the most famous in the history of the 'Abbasids, partly because of the fictional role given him in the Thousand and One Nights, but also because his reign and those of his immediate successors marked the high point of the 'Abbasid period (Nicholson, 261).

The beginning of the ninth century witnessed the beginning of the Abbasid's loss of control over the Islamic world. Abdullah al-Ma'mun, Harun al-Rashid's son, had not been named successor to the Caliphate but instead his brother, Muhammad al-Amin succeeded. The brothers soon fell out, however, and al-Ma'mun seized the Caliphate in 813 (Ibid, 262). Al-Mu'tasim, who would later become Caliph (833-842), assembled a military force of slaves, called Mamluks. Many of the Mamluks were Turkish, who were famous for their horsemanship. By the middle of al-Wathiq's reign (842-47), al-Mu'tasim's son, the Mamluk army had completely replaced the Arabic and Persian army under the Caliph. Al-Mu'tasim abandoned Baghdad and founded a new city to the north called, Samarra, (= "The Spectator's Joy"). This introduced a new ethnic group in the Islamic world, the Mamluks, who would play a powerful role in the drama of power and decline in medieval Islam. After the Caliphate of al-Mu'tasim and that of his son, al-Wathiq, the centralized power of the Caliphate declined

centrifugally (Ibid, 163). The 'Abbasids remained as Caliphs until 1030, but they were only figureheads.

After only two hundred years in power, the unified cultural and political world of Islam broke down into many independent cultural and political units. Although the religious authority of the 'Abbasid Caliphate remained unchallenged, the next four centuries saw political power dispersed among a large number of independent states: Tahirids, Saffarids, Samanids, Buwayhids, Ziyarids, and Ghaznavids in the east; Hamdanids in Syria and northern Mesopotamia; and Tulunids, Ikhshidids, and Fatimids in Egypt (Ibid, 264-275).

Harun al-Rashid's reign (786-809) called the Golden Age of Islam. It was a period of unrivaled intellectual activity in all fields: science, technology, literature, biography, history, and linguistics (Gibb, 467). Al-Ma'mun energetically patronized Greek, Sanskrit and Arabic learning and altered the cultural and intellectual face of the Islamic Empire. He also established Bayt al-Hikma ("The House of Wisdom"). It was here that Hellenistic and Indian works made their way into Islamic culture through a series of translations (Nicholson, 359). Some Islamic philosophers incorporated into their culture the philosophical method of inquiry of the Hellenistic world. The works of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle were passed on to succeeding generations. This incorporation led to a new intellectual practice, *falasafa*, ("philosophy") based on principles of rational inquiry and to some extent empiricism (Goldziher, 94).

The cultural life developed and many works were composed to depict people's concerns of this age. One of these literary works is the *Thousand and one Nights*, which shows through different genres all scales of life especially throughout the fables to convey political, social, theological, and philosophical didactic messages.

II. Beast Fables in the Thousand and One Nights

The *Thousand and One Nights* or (ألف ليلة و ليلة) is popularly known as *The Arabian Nights*. It is "a storehouse of old prose and poetry in the early languages of the Arabian Peninsula" (*Arabian Nights*, 8). The Arabs from the earliest times enjoyed imaginative stories but the tales in *Thousand and One Nights* came also from India, Persia, China, and other Eastern countries (Filshinsky, 207). In later times, when Arab civilization had grown richer, the literary influence from other countries was much stronger. Readers usually feel attracted to the tales because of the variety of their contents. The stories comprise a very wide field: stories of Kings, Caliphs, Sultans and their Ministers, on the one hand and tales of common people on the other.

The *Thousand and One Nights* is an anonymous collection of tales but "the tales are anonymous for good reason: they are not the creations of individual men. Their origins are shrouded in the mists of time. They took shape only after much labour by thousands of narrators, writers and editors" (*Arabian Nights: A masterpiece of Arabic letters,*" 8). The organization of the tales is achieved by means of the frame story of Shahrazad, who is telling stories to save her own life and the lives of the other maidens in her country.

In the *Thousand and One Nights*, the stories represent the Islamic civilization from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries while others say that the period of time expands to the sixteenth century (Filshinsky, 207). The tales stretch from Cairo, across Arabia, to Damascus, Baghdad, and India. Many of the people in this huge area shared Islam as religion and the Arabic language as the language of the Holy Qur'an. There are also many shared cultural fundamentals, which followed the mingling of different cultures. The *Thousand and One Nights* is full of various

spiritual and worldly values. It teaches how to live a life in a world full of tyrannical and good rulers, cunning and good people, and lots of violence and mystical spiritual quests.

Arab authors compiled and unified the tales in *Thousand and One Nights* in the tenth century, giving it an entirely Arab character and placing its two main centers in Baghdad and Cairo (Suliman, 200). The book enjoyed great popularity throughout the Middle East where professional storytellers knew it chiefly through oral transmission. The first reference to the *Thousand and One Nights* is in *Muruj al-Dhahab wa Ma'adin al-Jawhar* ("The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems") by al-Mas'udi (896-956). He states that the original book is Persian called *Hazar Afsana* (Thousand Tales) (Al-Masa'awdi, 19). Ibn al-Nadim (d. 995 or 998) in *Kitab al-Fihrist* ("The Index") mentions *Hazar Afsana* and gives a resume of the frame-story. *Al-Fihrist* adds that Abu 'Abd Allah bin 'Abdus al-Djahshiyari (d. 942), the author of the *Book of the Viziers*, began to write a book in which he selected a thousand stories from the stories of the Arabs, the Persians, the Greek and other peoples. He collected four hundred and eighty stories, but he died before he had attained his purpose, i.e. to complete a thousand stories (Ibn al-Nadim, 180).

Thousand and One Nights came to Europe in the seventeenth century. The French scholar Jean Antoine Galland (1646-1715) published it for the first time. He knew the Orient and directed his attention to the great number of stories and fables told there. He began by translating *Sindbad the Sailor*. Then, he discovered that this was part of a collection of stories called the *Thousand and One Nights* (Goldziher, 89-90). After him, many scholars from different countries have found many MSS of different versions and translated them into their languages. The first complete Arabic text was printed in 1835 from MSS found in Egypt.

The tales of the *Thousand and One Nights* come from various places most importantly from three: the first group, including the frame-work, comprehends the fairy-tales from the Persian *Hazar Afsana*. The tales of the second group originate in Baghdad and the stories of the third were the work from Asiatic and Egyptian tales of local Egyptian composition in the twelfth-century. The final stages of the growing collection extend to the early sixteenth century (Filshtinsky, 209). The *Thousand and One Nights* includes different literary genres: fairy tales, romance, legends, rogue tales, humorous tales and didactic stories, fables and parables told by different narrators from different classes. They are wonderful examples of folk literature and its development through the telling and retelling of stories over a long period of time (Ibid, 208). The stories in the *Thousand and One Nights* are a combination of arguments and examples. Each argument or example fits its frame story and accomplishing a very important task by proving both the message and entertainment.

The main frame story creates the setting and motivation for all the stories contained in the *Thousand and One Nights*. King Shahraiyyar's wife betrays her husband with a slave; therefore, he kills her. He discovers that his brother's wife also betrays her husband with a slave. They go on a quest and find another woman who betrays a Jinni. King Shahraiyyar returns to his kingdom and swears to marry a new wife every night and kill her the next morning in order not to be cheated. Shahrazad tells her father that she will save all the girls and marry King Shahraiyyar. From this point, different tales are told by different storytellers to convey didactic messages and to entertain. Shahrazad uses different tales until King Shahraiyyar forgives her and all women. The stories have been successful in curing the King and saving the people (1:1-4) (*Arabian Nights: A masterpiece of Arabic letters*", 8).

The beast fables of the *Thousand and One Nights* deal with different matters: political, sociological, theological and philosophical. The fables are an imitation of the fables in *Kalila*

wa Dimna by Abdullah bin al-Mukaff' but Kalila wa Dimna is "only eclipsed by such tales from The Arabian Nights as 'The Donkey, the Ox and the Laborer' and 'The Birds, the Beasts and the Carpenter' (ibid: 9).

Fables are scattered in different parts in the Thousand and One Nights. The Tale of the Donkey, the Ox, and the Merchant (1: 6-7) serves as a prologue to the other fables. It explains the importance of fables in conveying a didactic message. Shahrazad tells her father, King Shahraiyyar's Minister, that she wants to marry the King and try to save more women from death. By the means of a fable, her loving father tries to advise her that her efforts may turn against her and instead of helping the other girls she will doom herself. The first fable, The Tale of the Donkey, the Ox, and the Merchant, is divided into two parts. The first part contains the advice of the Donkey to the Ox about his suffering from ill-treatment and the second part contains the advice of the Rooster to the Dog about the Merchant's wife.

Shahrazad's father tells the first sub-story of a Donkey, which persuades an Ox to stop feeding and act sick in order to avoid work. The Ox's owner is a Merchant. He understands animal language and tricks the Donkey by making him do the Ox's work; therefore, the Donkey suffers and the Ox has an easy life. Shahrazad's father tries to advise her not to put herself in the same place as the Donkey because if she fails in her plan, she will be executed (Al-Qalmawi, 203). This is the first didactic message in the Thousand and One Nights in which man must think of the consequences of his actions before committing himself to any issue.

On the other hand, her father contradicts himself because he gives another didactic message. In the same fable, the Donkey finds a means to escape his suffering by telling the Ox that the Merchant wants to slaughter him; therefore, he must return to work (Ibid, 204). Unconsciously, Shahrazad's father tells her that she will escape her ordeal if she uses her intelligence. Shahrazad succeeds in achieving her aim by telling King Shahraiyyar different tales to entertain and give him didactic messages.

In the second part of The Tale of the Donkey, the Ox, and the Merchant, those who have the gift of understanding the language of animals, must not announce it; otherwise, they will suffer death. While listening to the conversation between the Donkey and the Ox, the Merchant laughs. His wife feels offended. He tries to comfort her, but she refuses. In the end, he gathers all his relatives and prepares himself to tell her the truth. While doing his ablution before death, he listens to a conversation between his Dog and Rooster. The two animals, who are talking about his ordeal, give him a ludicrous solution. The Rooster, of Chanticleer's likeness, has fifty hens under his control while the Merchant has only one uncontrollable wife. The Rooster tells the Dog that the Merchant is weak in dealing with his only wife. He can beat his wife with sticks to make her stop asking him again about his gift and he will escape death. This fable explains that Man can learn something useful from the life of animals and that fables have an effect on people's life as the Merchant learns how to escape death with the help of animals (ibid). The writer compares the life of the Rooster to that of the Merchant and proves that the Rooster's way of dealing with his many wives is better than the Merchant's who surrenders to his wife's demands.

The other fables are divided into three groups: the Fables Concerning Birds consists of twelve fables, the fables in King Jali'ad of Hind and His Wazir Shimas; Followed by the History of King Wird Khan, Son of King Jali'ad, with His Women and Wazirs consists of eight fables, and The Tale of the King, His Son, His Concubine and the Seven Wazirs consists of two fables. These fables deal with different themes conveying different didactic messages about politics, social life, theology, and philosophy.

III. Political Didactic Messages

Several fables in the collection came from palace courtyards where sultans and noblemen create lofty themes and experiment with prose refinements (Al-Shahath, 36). The period between the tenth and the sixteenth centuries was a turbulent era. It marked the beginning of the decay of the 'Abbasid Empire. Some tales hint at these tribulations and others express them openly. Some fables, in the *Thousand and One Nights*, give a hint of some of the problems facing the representatives of aristocracy. In the fables, different animals represent the King. There is the King of Crows, the King of Birds, the King of Sea animals, and the Lion King of Wild beasts. The Whelp of a Lion represents the Prince, and the Lynx, the Wolf, and the Sparrow represent the King's ministers (Ibid, 43).

The theme of the just King and the cruel King is presented in *King Jali'ad of Hind and His Wazir Shimas*; Followed by the *History of King Wird Khan, Son of King Jali'ad, with His Women and Wazirs* (4:170) From the title of the tale, the fables are divided into three parts. The third part of the tale concerns the Indian King Wird Khan who neglects the welfare of his kingdom and occupies his time with his Harem. His Ministers feel angry. One of his faithful Ministers, Shimas, tells him a fable that portrays the ideal King and advises him of neglecting his duties. The *Tale of the Foxes and the Wolf* (4:175) tells a fable about a Wolf who is elected by Foxes to be their governor but he turns against them. They complain to the Lion King who punishes the Wolf severely and accomplishes justice among his subjects. This fable tends to describe the King and his obligations because the early 'Abbasid rulers tended to be in touch with their subjects. An opposite image of a good King is the tyrant Hawk in *The Crows and the Hawk* (4:140), who is elected by the Crows but he brings them destruction because he is not of their kind. In both fables, the narrators advise people to be careful in choosing their representatives showing them two opposite images of Kings.

The first part of the tale of *King Jali'ad of Hind and His Wazir Shimas* (4:135-50) presents long speeches by the Indian King Jali'ad's seven ministers on the qualifications of good Kings. Jali'ad is a just and good King who is loved by his subjects but he has no son. One day he has a vision. He sends for all the interpreters to interpret it. An Interpreter tells King Jali'ad that he will have a son but his son will be a tyrant King and ruin his kingdom. Then, he relates the fable of *The Tale of the Cat and the Mouse* (4:135) to show the bad fate of the tyrant King. A hungry Cat pretends to be sick and old and gives false oaths to a Mouse to enter into her hole. The Mouse, mercifully, agrees to let the Cat come in. When he has the control over all the openings of the hole, the Cat catches the Mouse and tortures her. A hunting Dog hears the noise, seizes the Cat and kills it. The Interpreter gives an advice to Kings that cruelty with their subjects is repaid and breaking oaths is a violation of his subjects' rights.

The King Jali'ad's dream comes true and his son becomes a tyrant. He executes all his good ministers and is near to suffer the same fate by the hand of some invaders. His enemy who wants to invade his kingdom threatens him but he finds no one to help him except his ex-Minister's young son. The Minister's son advises King Wird Khan to be just and work for the welfare of his kingdom and not only seek worldly pleasures. The King listens to his advice, becomes a good King, and defeats his enemy.

In *The Tale of Birds, Beasts, and the Carpenter* (2:21), the Prince is shown as an arrogant, rash, foolish, and envious. The fable also shows the struggle among the nobility at court on power. The Whelp of a Lion meets a Duck. Both of them have a vision warning them against the Son of Adam's cunning. The Lion King, the Stage, the Camel, and the Donkey, who

are strong animals, warn him of the confrontation with the Son of Adam. Arrogantly and without giving any heed to their warnings, he searches for the Son of Adam to kill him and avenge his cruelty against animals. Fearing the Whelp, the Son of Adam hides his real identity and pretends to be a Carpenter. He tells them that he is looking for the lynx, the Lion's Minister, to make him a shelter to protect him from the Son of Adam. Enviously, the Whelp orders the Carpenter to make him a shelter before the lynx. The Carpenter makes the Whelp a narrow box, nails the door while he is inside, and burns the Whelp alive. This fable shows part of the conflict among men of court especially between Ministers and Princes, the Whelp of the Lion and the Lynx. It is also an advice to Princes to be humble, to think of the consequences of any action before committing themselves, and to listen to good counselors. Man is shown as a tyrannical creature who maltreats animals. This is another indication to the cruelty of Man. He is also compared to a wily Fox: "يعطيك من طرف اللسان حلاوة/ويروغ منك كما يروغ الثعلب" (2:22). He is like the Fox because he uses different tricks to achieve his aims. In The Nun's Priest's Tale, the Rooster is shown as a vainglorious King among his mistresses of hens. He gives no heeds to his dream and falls under the flattery of the Fox as the Whelp falls under the flattery of the son of Adam. The Rooster tries to be the best in crowing even to be better than his father while the Whelp wants to have the best shelter before anybody else. When the Rooster closes his eyes to crow, he is captured by the Fox and when the Whelp enters the wooden box, he is killed by the son of Adam.

In The Tale of Foxes and the Wolf (4:175), a Minister advises a King not to be cruel and not to oppress his subjects because he will be treated in the same way. The fable tells the tale of Foxes who find the corpse of a Camel. Fearing that the strongest Fox will oppress the weak, they elect the Wolf to be their governor. They ask him to give them their portion everyday but the Wolf oppresses them and keeps the Camel to himself. The Foxes complain to the Lion about the Wolf's injustice. The Lion angrily tears the Wolf into pieces. The didactic message is that injustice is repaid.

These conflicts of power at court also affect the people's lives who have to flee from their land and live peacefully. In the second part of The Birds and Beasts and the Carpenter (2:25-6), the Peacock, his wife, the Duck, and the Hind escape from the Son of Adam's illtreatment. In Tale of the Water Fowl and The Tortoise, the Water Fowl finds the corpse of a dead man stabbed with spears and swords. This is an indication of conflicts and wars among men. He calls the man as an evil doer because human beings usually bring destruction to themselves. In this fable, the life of the human beings is similar to that of Birds of Prey. A flock of Vultures and Kites come around a corpse and eat it. Out of fear, the Water Fowl escapes. He bewails his exile from home (2:28-9). The conflicts among birds of the same kind represent the conflict among men at court that dominated the 'Abbasid Age and the following ages. This conflict is also shown in The Nun's Priest's Tale between King Richard II and the peasants. The peasants did not gain their rights but they were suffering from poverty and injustice.

In the Tale of the Wolf and the Fox (2:35), a conflict between the Fox and the Wolf represents the conflict among ministers. The Wolf is cruel and oppresses the Fox. The Fox tries to warn him about the bad consequences of oppressing others. The Wolf belittles the Fox and treats him as an inferior. The Wolf finds the Fox's advice insulting; therefore, both of them hide their enmity from the other and try to find a way to revenge. The fable is about prudence in confrontations between unequal powers. The Fox uses his intelligence to against the Wolf while the Wolf uses his strength against the Fox. The Fox keeps his tongue and works secretly. He apologizes for being rude to the Wolf. The Wolf threatens him with his strength. This shows some of the ministers' arrogance and cruelty in treating their opponents. The Fox does not forget the Wolf's insult and tries to find a way to revenge. When he finds a trap, the Fox tries

to make the Wolf fall in it. Farmers kill him as a punishment for his cruelty. In the Nun's Priest's Tale, the Rooster is captured by the Fox. He tries to escape; therefore, he tells the Fox that he can mock the people chasing him. The Fox is tricked and mocked by the Rooster as the Wolf who is mocked by the Fox in the end. Both of them, the Fox and the Rooster use prudence against unequal enemy.

The political didactic messages are very clear. The fables are framed with the tales of King Shahrayar and his wife Shahrazad who tries to advise him with tales in general and fables in particular and to entertain him. Her means is indirect in order not to make him feel insulted and give a haste sentence against her. Sometimes he laughs and expresses his amazement of the fables while in other times he expresses his regret and sympathy. Similarly, in the frame story of The Indian King Jali'ad and his son Wird Khan, King Jali'ad's Ministers console him by telling him fables and tales about him and his son. When his Son becomes a King, his Minister Shimas advises him throughout fables to be a just king and tells him indirectly about his obligations towards his kingdom.

IV. Social Didactic Messages

Fables are also meant to entertain and convey social didactic messages. In the beginning or at the end of each fable, a moral is presented in one way or another as, for example, a maxime, sententia, proverb, or exempla: "عبرة لمن يعتبر". The Thousand and One Nights reflects different cultural influences because it originates in different countries and in different periods of time (Zidan, 607). The fables are a miniature picture of society. Sir Richard F. Burton points out that the tales in the Thousand and One Nights "are a drama of Eastern life . . . They are a panorama which remains kenspeckle upon the mental retina" (Burton, 139). They are a mirror that reflects people's customs, trends, and values. The fables, in Thousand and One Nights, represent people's views about many social matters such as the position of women in society, the loss of customs and values, relationships among people especially friendship, classification of people, and their position in society.

The position of women is an important subject of debate in the Thousand and One Nights. On the one hand, many female slaves and concubines must obey men who own them. On the other hand, Shahrazad is a wise woman who cures King Shahrayar from his phobia and saves the life of many girls. There are different kinds of women in the Thousand and One Nights: faithful and faithless, clever and foolish, princess and slave. In an Islamic society, woman is man's equal not his inferior. This view is supposed to be reflected in the Thousand and One Nights but woman is mostly presented in a negative way. The changes and developments happened to society at that time were because of the expansion of the Abbasid Empire and one of them is the role of woman in society. The subordinate status of many Moslem women in Thousand and One Nights resulted from contacts with Non-Arab cultures which joined Islam. Customs like seclusion of women, the harem, and the eunuch were alien in Islam (Al-Sheeha, 4). Suheir al Qalamawi argues that woman's role had changed and the narrators' original attitude towards women can not be distinguished.²⁸ But the many cunning women in the Thousand and One Nights are very prominent (Al-Qalmawi, 297). This anti-feminist view is obvious from the beginning of the Thousand and One Nights. Most women in the tales are treacherous, not trustworthy, controlled by their sexual desires, exploiting their beauty to seduce men, pretend to be helpless and weak. Even the Queens and the Princesses are frequently slave-like, helpless women, who wait for a hero to rescue them (Ibid, 300). In The Tale of the Cat and the Mouse, women are fragile and weak. The Mouse tells the Cat that she cannot trust him, because a beautiful woman can never trust a bad man (4:138). Woman's

counsel is also unreliable as in the Duck's counsel to the Whelp of the Lion in *The Tale of the Birds, Beasts, and the Son of Adam* (2:22). The Duck advises the Whelp of the Lion to avenge the Son of Adam's malpractices against all animals. Although dreams warn the Duck and the Lion of an encounter with Man, and are warned again by other animals that suffer serfdom, the Lion listens to her advice and loses his life. This idea is repeated in *The Tale of the Tortoises and the Francolin* (4:172-3). King Wird Khan blames his wife for her bad counsel to kill all his ministers and counselors. He tells her the fable of a Francolin who forms a friendship with Tortoises. Fearing that he will leave them, the Tortoises advise him to trim his wings claiming that his wings are not useful for him: " ذو الأجنحة في غالب الأوقات لا راحة له ولكونه لا يناله من الخير ربع " ما يحصل له من المشقة وغاية المقصود للشخص الرفاهية والراحة ونحن قد جعل الله بيننا وبينك المحبة والألفة ونخشى (4:172). Suddenly, a Mongoose appears and seizes the Francolin. He loses his life because he cannot fly anymore. When he asks the Tortoises for help, they all hide in their shells. King Wird Khan also asks his wife to help him but she tells him that she is unable to help him because women are useless in wars: " وما عند النساء من الحيلة في الحروب والنساء لا قوة لهن ولا رأي لهن وإنما القوة والرأي والحيلة للرجال في مثل هذا الأمر (4:173). The King blames all women for being the source of man's pleasure and ruin. He reminds them that Eve had caused Adam's Fall from Paradise: " لا ألومكن أيتها النساء بل ألوم نفسي " وأودبها حيث لم أتذكر أنك الشهوة التي حصلت من أبنينا آدم لأجلها خرج ونسيت أنك أصل كل شر فأتعتكن بجهلي وخطأ رأيي وسوء تدبير (Ibid). In Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, women are the source of pleasure and, at the same time, bring man to his destruction. The narrator also blames Pertelote for Chanticleer's fall into the mouth of the Fox because she has advised him not to take his dream seriously. He also blames Chauntecleer because he has listened to his wife's advice forgetting that Eve was the cause of Adam's fall from Paradise (L. 3251-58). Chanticleer also mistranslates the Latin proverb from "women are men's ruin" to "women is men's pleasure" (L. 3164-66). Blaming all women and Eve in particular for the fall of Adam from Paradise reflects the influence of Christianity and Judaism.

The Tale of the King, His Son, His Concubine and the Seven Wazirs or Craft and Malice of Women (3:140) is a debate between the King's Concubine and his seven Ministers concerning women's malice. The question is whether women tempt men to do evil deeds or men exploit women to serve their interests. The King's Concubine defends women while the King's seven Ministers defend the Prince who is accused by the Concubine for seducing her. She is a liar because she has seduced the Prince. Therefore, his father wants to excute him for his insult. Each Minister tells a tale illustrating how women are the cause of man's destruction and the source of all his woes to advise the King not to kill his son while the King's Concubine tells a story showing the opposite. In *The Tale of the Two Pigeons* (3:143), told by the Concubine, the Male-Pigeon advises his wife to save some grains for winter. When summer comes, the dried grains shrink in size. The Male kills his wife suspecting her of having eaten the grains. The Male-Pigeon discovers his fault when the grains recover their size during a rain. He dies of grief for killing his innocent wife. This fable advises men not to judge women without a proper investigation.

Man is also shown as unfaithful in Chaucer's *The Squire's Tale*. In second part of *The Squire's Tale*, the Princess Canacee has a ring enables her to understand the language of birds. She finds a wounded Falcon, lamenting her lost beloved and hears the tale of her betrayal by a false lover. She sacrificed her life for his sake but he abandoned her for a Kite. The Falcon also compares her beloved to a bird who leaves his comfortable life and fine food for the sake of worms. She also advises Princess Canacee not to trust men because they are treacherous. Unfortunately, the last part of *The Squire's Tale* is not finished but the fable has the same theme as *The Tale of the Two Pigeons* in the *Thousand and One Nights*. The didactic message in *The*

Tale of the Two Pigeons is an irony because the tale, from the very beginning, is against women and the Concubine is shown as a tricky woman who seduces the prince and tries to revenge his insult by killing him by the hand of his father. In The Nun's Priest's Tale, the Nun's Priest blames woman for being responsible for all the evils in this world. Later he retracts his harangue against womanhood claiming that he had only reported the words of the Rooster and not his own. In the same tale, a Minister tells the King The Tale of the Confectioner, his Wife, and the Parrot (3:141). A Confectioner has a very beautiful wife and a Parrot, which in occasion, watches and guards her. This Parrot tells the Confectioner about what takes place in his absence. One day, the woman meets her lover while the parrot observes all things happen. The Confectioner, informed by the Parrot, rashly beats his wife with a painful beating. The Wife resolves to contrive the destruction of the Parrot. She makes a trick with her lover on the Parrot by counterfeiting a storm to happen at that night. When the Confectioner asks the Parrot, he tells him about the storm. Thinking that he is a liar, the Confectioner kills the Parrot because he thinks that he has utterly ruined his house. But his friend tells him he must investigate first of his wife's innocence. The husband knows about his wife's betrayal, now bitterly repents having killed the Parrot. This tale tells the craft and malice of women, which lead man to act in haste.

In Chaucer's The Maniple's Tale, there is almost the same fable, but instead of a Parrot, a Crow is punished. The great warrior and musician, Phoebus, loves his wife and he is extremely jealous. He also has a talking white Crow. Phoebus' wife has a secret lover and the Crow is a witness on this affair. The Crow tells Phoebus about his wife betrayal. He immediately kills her out of anger without investigation. When he repents his action, he punishes the Crow, depriving him from his beautiful voice and turning his white colour into black. In the tale, women are also compared to animals which return to their nature. Even if Man prepares to them a comfortable life, they prefer the lowly life as a bird, which prefers worms to fine food, or a cat, which prefers a mouse to fine meat. He also compares woman to a she-wolf because both of them have a bad nature, which prefers lowly wolves and men. The didactic messages in the two fables are the same, which are not to judge without investigation and not to talk in other people's matters. There is another didactic message, which is not to trust women.

Values like friendship, mutual help, brotherhood and gratitude seem disappearing because of the development of life and its complexities that they need to be celebrated in many fables. Friendship is recommended in the Thousand and One Nights. Fables present two kinds of friendship. They celebrate the friendship based on good will and brotherhood and condemn a friendship based on self-interest. In The Tale of the Cat and the Crow (4:141), there is a strong friendship between a Cat and a Crow. A Leopard endangers the Cat's life. Risking his life, the Crow tempts some Dogs to follow him pretending to have a broken wing. The Crow endangers his life for the safety of his friend. He calms down the Cat telling him: "إنما تلتمس الأخوان عند الحاجة" (Ibid). In The Tale of the Crow and the Fox (2: 35), the fable criticizes a friendship based on self-interest. A Fox tries to serve his own interests pretending to be the Crow's friend. He reminds him of some important values as neighbourly relations and brotherhood. He tries to tempt him with flattery and sweet words. Suspecting his intention, the Crow tells him that there can be no friendship between natural enemies because the Fox is the eater and he is the eaten. The Crow refuses the Fox's friendship and dismisses him. He is not deceived by the Fox's cunning and flattery. In The Nun's Priest's Tale, the Fox tries to deceive the Rooster, Chanticleer, telling him that he used to be his father's friend but in reality, he wants to achieve his interests. The Rooster, unlike the Crow, is deceived by the Fox's flattery. Chanticleer learns the lesson in the end while the Crow, from the very beginning, is aware of this

kind of false friendship. The Tale of the Falcon and the Partridge teaches that bad people should not be trusted as the Falcon, who tells the Partridge that he has brought some grain for him, while he actually wants to eat him. The Partridge is easily tricked by the sweet words and pays his life. This same theme is repeated in The Tale of the Cat and the Mouse (4:141).

In The Tale of the Flee and the Mouse (2:36), a Mouse shelters a Flee and saves her from killing by a Merchant. The Flee tries to repay the Mouse's hospitality by helping her to get the Merchant's pieces of gold. The theme of hospitality is also celebrated in The Tale of the Water Fowl and the Tortoise (2:28) where the Tortoise warmly welcomes the Water Fowl and tries to give him solace and support in his exile.

Ingratitude is castigated in two fables: The Tale of the Man and the Snake (2:37) and The Tale of the Cat and the Mouse (4:141). In the former fable, a Snake escapes from a Charmer. A passer-by helps her in the hope of a reward but the Snake kills him with her poisonous bite instead. The Tale of the Cat and the Mouse tells the fable of a Mouse who pities a Cat and shelters him from rain and cold but the Cat returns goodness with evil and tries to eat the Mouse, which is finally saved for her good intentions.

These are the main themes, which accompanied with social didactic messages to celebrate beautiful ones and encourage them and to condemn the bad ones.

V. Theological and Philosophical Didactic Messages

The rapid development in the 'Abbasid era in all fields of life made people's life in the cities more comfortable. A luxurious life and many pleasures made many people ignore Islamic values and principles. The literature of the Age reflected these changes and urged man to uphold the good old values and leave the new bad ways of life, which lead him to his doom. Some writers of the Age were very much fascinated by the new ways of life and they reflected them in their works. They praised and recommended people to seize the day. Moralists writers opposed this new trend and condemned Man for his evil deeds and his disregard to prepare for the afterlife. The Fables in Thousand and One Nights advise Man to leave this new way of life and return to the good path (Ameen, 100).

In the Thousand and One Nights, preaching exists in most of the fables. Sometimes a whole fable is dedicated to religious preaching as The Tale of the Fish and the Crab (4:140). The Fish suffer from a drought. They lose hope and go to their King, the Crab, to ask his advice. In a long religious speech, the Crab blames them for their doubts and despair of God's mercy. He also explains to them that God appoints to each of His creatures an allotted provision. He advises them to be patient, put their trust in God, and pray for Him to deliver them from their difficulties: " والرأي عندي أنه لا يكون أحسن من الطلب من الله تعالى فينبغي أن يكون كل واحد منا يصلح سريره " مع ربه في سره وعلايته ويدعوا الله أن يخلصنا وينقذنا من الشدائد لأن الله تعالى لا يخييب رجاء من توكل عليه ولا يرد "طلب من توكل إليه" (4:141).

In The Tale of the Spider and the Wind (4:146-7), the fable encourages people never to lose hope in God and to be patient in times of distress. God sends the Wind to try a Spider and test her gratitude and patience. The Spider always thanks God for having a good house and a peaceful life. Suddenly a Wind takes her to another place. She thanks God again for her safety but upbraids the Wind for doing so. The Wind promises the Spider that she will bring her again to her place but leaves her for a long time. In the end, she is taken again to her dwelling-place. The narrator admonishes people to be patient because God tests His creatures in order to strengthen their powers of patience. The Tale of the Two Crows and the Snake (2:141) warns

evildoers that God will punish them while the grateful people, who trust and rely on His justice, are rewarded. The Kite kills the Snake because she occupies the Crows' nest and kills their chicks. The Crows console each other and thank God because He vouchsafes their safety and soundness of body: "نشكر الله تعالى الذي نجانا وخلصنا من هذه الآفة وما أحرمتنا من الزاد في هذه السنة لأن الله تعالى لا يقطع رجاءنا فنشكره على ما من علينا من السلامة وصحة أبداننا وليس لنا إتكال إلا عليه وإذا أراد الله وعشنا إلى (2:141). "العام المقبل عوض الله علينا نتاجنا.

Fables remind people not to forget praising and praying God because these practices save them from falling in sins and keep them safe. In The Tale of Birds and Beasts and the Son of Adam (2:26), the Duck is captured by the Son of Adam because she neglects praising God and busies herself with worldly fears. The Peahen says to a Hind that the Duck died because she has neglected to glorify God. All creatures of God glorify Him and who neglects the formula of praise will be punished: "قد علمت يقيناً أن ما قتلها غير تركها التسبيح، ولقد قلت لها: إني أخاف " (2:26). عليك من تركك التسبيح لأن كل ما خلقه الله يسبحه فإن غفل عن التسبيح عوقب بهلاكه." The Tale of the Water Fowl and the Tortoise (2:28) and The Tale of the Sparrow and the Peacock (2:40-1) have the same previous theme. These fables do not teach the principles of a religion but describe the religious feelings of the characters towards their Creator (Al-Qalmawi, 158).

There are other fables celebrate virtues like contentment, patience, righteousness, and faith in God. The Tale of the Wild Ass and the Jackal (4:150) advises people to be contented with what God allots them and not to seek more. The Minister says that the happiest man is the one who is contented with the portion which God allots to him. Everyone who gives Him thanks for that which He has established he will be rewarded. He also regards those who seek more than their due as ungrateful. A Jackal meets another Jackal, who tells him about the quarry he got. He claims that he has found a Wild Ass, eaten his heart, and is full of meat since that day. The other Jackal envies his fellow. The envious Jackal finds a Wild Ass killed with an arrow in the heart but he does not notice it. The Jackal tears open the Wild Ass's belly to find the heart. He swallows it but the forked head of the arrow strikes deep in his gullet and kills him. The narrator admonishes Man to be content with whatever God has allotted to him and thank Him: "ينبغي للإنسان أن يرضى بما قسمه الله له، ويشكر نعمه ولا يقطع رجاءه من مولاه" (4:151).

Other fables deal with the belief that some dreams foretell Man's future. They either warn him about some future misfortune or announce good news. In The Tale of Birds, Beasts, and the Son of Adam (2:21), the Whelp of the Lion and the Duck have the same dream. Their dream is that they are talking to the Son of Adam but they can not distinguish his shape. A voice warns them not to encounter him for they will fall in his trap. This voice compares the Son of Adam to the cunning Fox: "يعطيك من طرف اللسان حلاوة \ ويروغ منك كما يروغ الثعلب" (2:22). The Duck and the Lion do not listen to the warning in their dreams. The Son of Adam kills them both as their dream had predicted (2:24, 26). In The Nun's Priest's Tale, a Rooster and a Hen discuss this matter, because the Rooster has dreamt of an orange dog-like animal with a black snout that seized and killed him but he does not recognize the Fox. In the debate about dreams, the Hen tells the Rooster that eating too much is the cause of many nightmares while he believes that they are warnings from the divinity. In the end of the two fables, the dreams appear to have offered genuine warnings of future events.

The subject of Destiny, Fate, or Predestination has preoccupied philosophers of all ages. It is an important thread running through the fables of the **Thousand and One Nights**. Most Muslims believe in God's supreme omnipotence and the predestination of Man's fortunes. The unlimited faith in God's omnipotence must not be seen apart from the Arab's susceptibility to the art of story-telling because the medieval Arabs' taste for story-telling goes hand in hand with his admiration for God's supreme power. In The Tale of the Crab and the Fish (4:140), the Crab

advises the Fish that they must not burden themselves with concern for a thing which is in God's secret. He also recommends them to await patiently what Allah will do with them: فالرأي أن نصبر: وننتظر ما يفعله الله بنا فإن كان يحصل لنا موت على العادة استرحنا وإن كان يحصل لنا ما يوجب الهرب هربنا ورحنا من (4:140). This faith helps Muslims to be patient under suffering of any kind, and submissive to fate. This expresses the ideal of a good Muslim, who submits to God's will.

The fables in *Thousand and One Nights* show that man submits to the will of God, his life is predestined and he is driven to his fate, which is drawn to him as in *The Tale of the Birds and Beasts*, and the *Son of Adam*. The *Son of Adam* tells the *Whelp of the Lion* when he captured him that caution is useless to him when Fate has upset him: "علم يا كلب البر أنك وقعت فيما " (2:24). The *Duck* also answers the *Peahen*, when the latter tells her that the *Son of Adam* can not come to their Island, that she fears lest some calamity should come upon her because no one runs away of fate: "أخاف أن يطرقني طارق والقضاء " (2:25). When the sailors capture her, she remarks that no caution saves her from her Fate: "لا ينفعلك عنه أبى " (2:26). In *The Tale of the Peacock and the Sparrow* (2:40-1), two birds are fated to fall in the *Fowler's net*. Although the *Sparrow* has warned the other birds of this net, put near his nest, his caution does not help him because he also falls in the net: "ولم ينفعني الحذر من القدر فلا مفر من القضاء للمحاذر " (2:41). In like manner in *The Tale of the Water Fowl and the Tortoise*, the *Water Fowl* also escapes from the birds of prey. When he has thought that he is safe, his fate drives him to fall in the claws of a hungry *Hawk* and his caution does not help him when his life comes to an end (2:29). Predestination has also been mentioned in *The Nun's Preist's Tale* but there is a question whether *Man's* life is predestined or he has a free will. The question is raised when the *Rooster's dream* proves to be true when he encounters with the *Fox* and this means that the *Rooster's* life is predestined. But the *Rooster* is able to change his fate when he tricks the *Fox* and this shows that he has a free will. But the third question is in between which is the *Rooster* acts out of necessity.

VI. Conclusion

The use of beast fables for didactic teachings cannot be summed up in a few pages. Animals are used in different genres as a vehicle to convey a message and most obviously in fables. A fable is a short or long tale in verse or prose conveys a didactic message attached at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. Animals constitute the major characters in fables but human beings and inanimate object are also used. Fables are not connected with a specific civilization or people. New evidences are found everyday showing that fables are one of the most ancient genres in world literature especially in Arabic literature.

Arabic literature contains many fragments of beast fables in different books. The fables in the *Thousand and One Nights* follow the same lineage concerning the themes and the didactic messages. The fables in the *Nights* are used as concrete examples to objectify such virtues as courage, fortitude, endurance, and determination. They also show the dark side of *Man* represented as a wily *Fox* or *Jackal*, a treacherous *Wolf*, a mean *Snake*, ...etc. Theological and philosophical matters constitute most fables. In some fables, animals are preachers, in others they express their submission to God's will. Dreams are also discussed as a means to warn people of dangers to come.

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