

STYLISTIC DEVICES IN “PAND-NĀMEH” BY SAADI SHIRAZI

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Abstract: While “Būstān” and “Gulistān” remain the most extensively studied works of Saadi Shirazi, his didactic poem “Pand-nāmeḥ” (Book of Counsel) offers a comparatively underexplored field for stylistic investigation. This paper analyzes the principal stylistic devices employed in “Pand-nāmeḥ”, focusing on aphoristic compression, rhetorical parallelism, antithesis, metaphorical construction, allegorical exemplification, and Qur’anic intertextuality. Drawing upon established scholarship in Persian classical rhetoric (balāghat), the study demonstrates that Saadi’s persuasive authority in this work derives from the deliberate synthesis of ethical instruction and aesthetic refinement. The analysis shows that “Pand-nāmeḥ” reflects the rhetorical ideals of 13th-century Persian didactic poetics and constitutes an integral component of Saadi’s literary corpus.

Keywords: Saadi Shirazi, Pand-nāmeḥ, Persian classical literature, balāghat, stylistic devices, didactic poetry, metaphor, antithesis, intertextuality, rhetorical analysis.

Saadi Shirazi (c. 1210–1292) occupies a central position in the canon of classical Persian literature. Educated in Baghdad at the Nizamiyya institution, Saadi mastered Arabic rhetoric, Islamic jurisprudence, and literary sciences, which profoundly shaped his stylistic formation. Although his reputation primarily rests upon “Būstān” (1257) and “Gulistān” (1258), the didactic poem “Pand-nāmeḥ”, preserved in his “Kulliyāt”, reflects the same intellectual maturity in a more compressed advisory format. Unlike the narrative structure of “Būstān” or the mixed prose-verse design of “Gulistān”, “Pand-nāmeḥ” is constructed almost entirely as direct ethical exhortation. This structural simplicity foregrounds rhetorical technique. The absence of extended storytelling shifts

emphasis from plot to expression, making stylistic devices central to persuasion. The poem's didactic orientation corresponds to the classical Persian tradition of ethical instruction, where aesthetic beauty strengthens moral authority. One of the most prominent stylistic features of "Pand-nāmeḥ" is aphoristic compression, closely related to the rhetorical concept of "ījāz"(brevity with semantic fullness). Saadi condenses complex ethical doctrines into metrically balanced distichs, often expressing universal truths in a single compact formulation. This density enhances memorability, aligning with the oral transmission culture of medieval Persian society. According to classical rhetorical theory, brevity increases impact because meaning appears concentrated rather than diluted. In "Pand-nāmeḥ", concision functions not merely as ornament but as epistemological precision: the form mirrors the clarity of moral insight. Antithesis (tazād) operates as a principal structural mechanism. Saadi consistently juxtaposes opposing ethical categories such as justice and tyranny, knowledge and ignorance, humility and arrogance, generosity and avarice. Through semantic polarity, moral evaluation becomes immediately intelligible. In Persian "balāghat", antithesis sharpens conceptual boundaries and intensifies meaning through contrast [4]. In "Pand-nāmeḥ", it organizes entire sequences of counsel, enabling Saadi to construct ethical reasoning through binary opposition. This technique reflects broader Islamic philosophical traditions, where ethical clarity often emerges through dialectical contrast. Metaphorical construction ("isti'āra") further reinforces didactic persuasion. Abstract ethical notions are rendered tangible through imagery drawn from nature, daily life, and Qur'anic symbolism. The fleeting nature of worldly existence is represented through caravan imagery; knowledge appears as light dispelling darkness; the purified heart is likened to a polished mirror reflecting truth. Such metaphors participate in long-established symbolic systems within Islamic thought. By translating abstraction into sensory imagery, Saadi activates cognitive and emotional engagement simultaneously. The

metaphor of light, in particular, resonates with Qur'anic imagery (notably the "Light Verse," Qur'an 24:35), demonstrating how symbolic tradition enhances rhetorical authority. Intertextual resonance constitutes another key stylistic dimension. Although "Pand-nāmeḥ" does not rely heavily on direct quotation, it subtly incorporates Qur'anic diction and conceptual structures through the rhetorical device known as "iqtibās". This integration elevates the stylistic register and situates the poem within a sacred ethical framework. Medieval Persian poets frequently adopted Qur'anic language to reinforce legitimacy and align poetic discourse with divine authority. Saadi's mastery lies in the seamlessness of this borrowing; scriptural echoes remain implicit, enhancing gravitas without disrupting poetic flow. Parallelism and rhythmic symmetry also play a central role in the poem's persuasive design. Balanced syntactic structures across hemistichs create formal harmony and reinforce thematic contrast. This symmetry contributes to musicality while simultaneously clarifying logical relationships between ideas. In classical Persian poetics, structural equilibrium was associated with aesthetic perfection [4]. In "Pand-nāmeḥ", parallel constructions not only beautify expression but function pedagogically, aiding memorization and reinforcing ethical dualities. Furthermore, occasional allegorical references appear within the advisory discourse. Although the poem lacks extended narrative episodes, brief illustrative allusions function as exempla. These compressed allegories connect abstract instruction to recognizable human experience, aligning with medieval Islamic pedagogical traditions in which moral education frequently relied upon symbolic exemplification. Even in its most concise passages, the poem retains an implicit narrative logic beneath its aphoristic surface.

From a stylistic perspective, the coherence of "Pand-nāmeḥ" emerges from the integration of these devices. Aphoristic brevity intensifies authority; antithesis clarifies ethical boundaries; metaphor concretizes abstraction; intertextuality legitimizes

discourse; parallelism ensures rhythmic harmony; allegory anchors moral reflection in experiential imagery. Rather than serving as isolated ornaments, these devices operate in coordinated interaction, producing a unified rhetorical architecture. This synthesis reflects the intellectual climate of 13th-century Persian literary culture, in which ethical philosophy, Islamic scholarship, and poetic artistry were deeply interconnected. As noted by modern scholars of Persian literature, medieval didactic poetry functioned simultaneously as moral instruction and aesthetic achievement. Within this framework, “Pand-nāmeḥ” exemplifies how rhetorical refinement enhances ethical persuasion. In conclusion, the stylistic examination of “Pand-nāmeḥ” confirms its significance within the broader corpus of Saadi Shirazi. The poem demonstrates that Saadi’s mastery extended beyond narrative eloquence to highly concentrated advisory discourse. Through systematic deployment of classical rhetorical devices grounded in the theory of “balāghat”, he achieved a harmonious fusion of didactic clarity and poetic elegance. A closer scholarly engagement with “Pand-nāmeḥ” thus contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Saadi’s literary legacy and the broader tradition of medieval Persian ethical poetics.

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