

**AESTHETICS OF SIMILARITY IMAGES IN NAHJ AL-BALAGHA - THE
CHAPTER OF WISDOM AND PREACHING - AS A MODEL**

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to link the functions of aesthetic rhetoric with the functions of guidance and admonition. It is known that wisdom or admonition often relies on clear, direct speech in order to achieve the goal of benefit and understanding. As such, it includes linguistic elements that the reader cannot equivocate in terms of verbal or conceptual comprehension. Obscurity or ambiguity forms a cognitive barrier that prevents the reader from perceiving the goal of wisdom and the benefit of admonition. However, in the words of the imam, we find a beautiful solution to this problem. His wisdom and admonitions are profound yet accessible, with the guidance function that does not require mysterious meanings aligned with the aesthetic function that elevates wisdom or admonition to a double-effect level. The imam's wisdom and admonitions aim for a beautiful understanding by the reader, and thus, he intentionally creates a context of speech that is full of beauty without losing its guidance function. Moreover, he uses the potentials of rhetorical system in concise phrases that allow the reader to explore its depth, making the reader a partner in producing the intended meaning of wisdom or admonition. This deepens the reader's understanding and realization of its basic goal.

1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that wisdom or sermon often employs clear and direct speech in order to achieve the ultimate goals of benefit and comprehension. They have defined rhetoric in various ways, but they almost agree that the eloquence of speech is its conformity to the circumstances, combined with its fluency. Thus, they link fluency with rhetoric, and seek to perceive the miraculous nature of the Quran through its eloquence and fluency, guided by the timeless rhetorical saying (each situation has its own suitable speech). Thus, the aesthetic judgments that the Arabs have bestowed on various types of speech are closely linked to the rhetoric and fluency of that speech. The "Nahj al-Balagha," which comprises the collection of speeches and writings of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (may Allah honor his face), is

considered one of the most important books that demonstrates the role of rhetorical formation in elevating the level of speech. The Imam possessed a unique combination of rhetorical and eloquent attributes that has not been equaled by any other figure throughout history.

This is evident in his speeches, letters, rulings, and sermons that are distributed throughout the book. We can say that Nahj al-Balagha is a fertile field for aesthetic rhetorical studies that cannot be exhausted no matter how much research is done. It is always worthy of multiple readings that reveal its rhetoric, explore its beauty, and delve into its depth. Thus, our research entitled "The Aesthetics of Similarity Figures in Nahj al-Balagha - The Chapter of Rulings and Sermons as a Model" was conducted.

The importance and rationale of this research can be summarized as follows:

On the aesthetic level: the study of literary aesthetic elements is accompanied by an investigation into the functions that the text assumes as a linguistic intermediary between the author and the reader. Indeed, artistic beauty can build a bridge between the author's intention and the reader's understanding, making it both a means and an end in itself.

At the aesthetic level, the research into literary aesthetic elements is accompanied by a study of the functions that the text performs as a linguistic mediator between the author and the reader. The artistic beauty of the text can build a bridge between the author's intention and the reader's understanding, and thus, beauty becomes both a means and an end. At the rhetorical level, rhetoric plays a central role in the architecture of literary texts, especially through its ability to express meaning indirectly. The text departs from direct, ordinary language as it moves away from the zero level of rhetoric in discourse. Therefore, rhetoric occupies a prestigious position in stylistic studies that approach texts from a rhetorical, syntactic, morphological, and phonetic perspective to reveal their aesthetic qualities. This is particularly true in terms of their effectiveness in creating a state of similarity or adjacency between the elements of the image (the science of eloquence). Thus, rhetorical formation is the fundamental factor that grants the text its literary and aesthetic qualities.

At the textual level, the choice of research (the rhetorical approach) as a textual material for studying the aesthetics of rhetorical composition is based on the high artistic value of the words of the Imam, which are described as "below the speech of the Creator and above the speech of creatures."

2. Simile Images

Simile in language is representation, as stated in the Arabic language: "Al-Shibh, Al-Shaba, and Al-Shabieh: the likeness, and the plural is Ashbah. The most similar thing to

something is its likeness" [1]. As a term, there have been various approaches by ancient rhetoricians, where IbnRushd al-Qayrawani sees that "simile is the attribute of a thing with what is close to it and similar to it from one or many aspects, not from all aspects, because if it matches it completely, it would be the same thing" [2]. Al-Khateeb al-Qazwini says: "Simile is the indication of sharing one thing with another in meaning". Thus, rhetorical simile is based on sharing, which requires similarity between the two parties, which necessitates logical proportionality between them, "because a thing is only compared to another if it is close to it or resembles its meaning, so if it resembles it in most of its conditions, the simile is correct and appropriate [3].

The purposes of simile can be summarized as follows [4]:

- Expressing the possibility of the existence of the thing being compared, when it is strange or unfamiliar to the listener, and the strangeness cannot be removed except by mentioning something similar to it.
- Describing the condition of the thing being compared, when it is unknown or unspecified before the comparison, and the simile provides a description.
- Indicating the degree of the quality of the thing being compared, when it is known generally before the comparison, and the simile is used to express the degree of this quality in terms of strength, weakness, increase, or decrease.
- Confirming the condition of the thing being compared in the mind of the listener, and strengthening their perception of it, especially when what is attributed to the thing being compared requires clarification or emphasis with an example.
- Embellishing the thing being compared by seeking a comparison that has a good image or meaning that the speaker desires, and this purpose is often used in praise, eulogy, and boasting.
- Disparaging the thing being compared when it is genuinely or artificially ugly, by presenting a comparison that is even uglier to repel the listener from it, and this purpose is often used in invective.

The research will attempt to examine the aesthetics of similes in the speech of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), starting from the division of similes based on their components and their elements, and then the study will focus on a specific paragraph dedicated to the symbolic simile because of its unique aesthetic importance.

3. Simile as Considering its Two Parts

The division of similes based on their components involves looking at the two parts of the simile in terms of sensory and intellectual aspects. The two components of the simile may be perceptible and can be perceived through one of the five senses, or they may be rational and can be perceived through the mind. This includes things that are realized mentally, such as opinion, hope, knowledge, and courage, and also includes things that are imaginary, which do not exist in whole or in part in reality. Lastly, it includes emotional aspects that are perceived through the subconscious, such as joy, hunger, and thirst. The simile may be rational and the object of comparison may be perceptible or vice versa [5].

One example of this is found in the saying of Imam Ali, peace be upon him, when he stated, "Fear is accompanied by disappointment, modesty by deprivation, and opportunities pass like clouds, so seize opportunities for goodness" [6]. The comparison between the passing of opportunities and clouds is made, calling for the seizing of opportunities for good. This comparison aims to connect the intellectual meaning with the sensory meaning, providing an approximation of the swift movement of traffic from the reader's mind. The reader envisions the movement of clouds through their visual sense, then links it to the movement of intellectual opportunities, leading to an aesthetic understanding that is based on sensory perception of the intellectual matter.

In this type of categorization of similes, we find a diversity in the two sides of the comparison, either in both or in one of them. Thus, we can identify the following types of similes based on their two sides:

The wrapped simile: "It involves gathering each side of the comparison along with its like, such as gathering the likened with the likened and the likened-to with the likened-to, with the likened objects being mentioned first and then followed by the objects that they are likened to" [5], as in the saying of Imam Ali (peace be upon him): "I advise you with five things; if you strike the humps of the camels for them, they will be fit for that: no one among you should hope for anything except from his Lord, nor fear anything except his sins; no one should feel ashamed when asked about what he does not know to say 'I do not know'; and no one should be ashamed when he does not know something to learn it. And you should have patience, for indeed patience is like the head of the body in faith, and there is no good in a body that has no head, nor in faith that has no patience" [6].

The observer here witnesses in the simile of patience and faith on one hand, and the head and body on the other hand. In this way, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) combines rational similes with each other, then comes to sensory similes with each other as well. He does not stop

there, but goes on to explain the absence of good from the body in the absence of the head, and applies that to the absence of good from faith in the absence of patience. The visual image becomes clear through the representation of the multiple mental with the multiple sensory, within a simile that aims to compare them in order to arrive at a conclusion that associates faith with patience in a mandatory association, like the association of the body with the head.

The differentiated analogy is the collection of all things that have been compared. For example, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, "Patience is a protective covering and intellect is a decisive sword. Cover up your character flaws with patience and fight against your desires with your intellect" [6]. Here, patience is compared to a protective covering that hides character flaws according to the patient's tolerance for harm and their ability to endure adversity. Similarly, the intellect is compared to a decisive sword that puts an end to following one's desires, and curbs a person's tendency to act impulsively through good management and thoughtful consideration of the consequences. The purpose of this differentiated analogy is to justify the subsequent advice by the Imam, who urges people to cover up their character flaws with patience, and to fight against their desires with intellect. Here, we can observe the beauty of the relationship between reason (patience and intellect) and sensory experience (protective covering and sword) and their role in creating a clear image that elevates the reader's level of understanding and perception, through the well-known principle that sensory experiences lead to intellectual understanding.

The concept of analogy in this context refers to the use of multiple comparisons to describe a concept, as exemplified by the saying of the Imam (peace be upon him): "Verily, the world and the Hereafter are two enemies that are unequal and two paths that are different. Whoever loves the world and takes it as his friend, will hate the Hereafter and be its enemy. They are like the east and the west, and everything in between. The closer one gets to one, the farther away he is from the other, and they are two opposing enemies." The Imam compares the world and the Hereafter to two unequal enemies, two different paths, the east and the west, and two opposing enemies, thereby emphasizing the differences between them. While the Imam could have used one analogy, he chose to use multiple analogies to strengthen the idea, bringing it to different levels of comparison, which reinforces his belief that seeking the Hereafter and turning away from the world is the ultimate goal.

4. Considering the components of simile

It is well known that there are four components of a simile: the object of comparison and the object compared, which are the two ends of the comparison; the point of comparison, which is the shared attribute between the two objects; and the simile tool, which is the term that indicates the comparison and connects the object of comparison to the object compared. A complete simile contains all four of these components, such as in the statement made by Imam Ali (peace be upon him) to his son Hasan (peace be upon him), "...beware of befriending a liar, for he is like a mirage that makes the distant seem near and the near seem distant"[6]. Here, the liar is compared to a mirage using the simile tool (the letter "kaf"), while also highlighting the point of comparison between them (the distortion of distance). In this context, it was necessary to mention all four components for aesthetic and semantic reasons, which can be understood through the comparison and convergence criteria in the simile.

The mention of the tool here serves to distinguish between the two parts of the analogy, which necessitates a comparison between them. Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani argues that analogy requires a comparison between two distinct parts that share the same attribute or judgment. This means that "analogy implies difference, not similarity, in the sense that the two parts of the analogy, even if they have multiple common attributes, do not overlap, interact or unite with each other, but rather remain distinct and separate" [7]. In other words, analogy creates a coalition between differences, not a union. In the words of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), the liar is not the mirage, but they share the same attributes. Here, the concept of approximation that emerges from the shared attributes is manifested.

The Imam (peace be upon him) used a simile to describe the Sultan, saying "The companion of the Sultan is like the rider of a lion: envied for his position, yet more knowledgeable about his location." Using the tool of comparison (the letter Kaf), the simile likens the companion of the Sultan to the rider of a lion, and then the shared quality between the two is clarified. The rider of the lion is envied by people for his position, and they aspire to attain his status for its prestige. However, he is more knowledgeable about his location because of his fear and caution. Although he fears for his safety on the lion's back, he is also afraid of being assassinated. Similarly, the companion of the Sultan is honored by his proximity and companionship, but he is not secure in his position since he is also fearful and cautious. Therefore, all the components of the simile are mentioned to enhance the expressive value of the speech, which would not have been achieved if the shared quality between the two had been omitted. The simile guides the understanding towards the intended destination of the

comparison, and it creates an aesthetic effect by mentioning this imaginary aspect. Then, it is represented in the mind as a reality, leading to the desired perception and understanding by combining imagination with reality.

The confirmed simile, "which its tool has been deleted" [5], is used to indicate the strength of similarity, so that the compared and the compared-to become equivalent in the judgment of the same thing [8]. This is like the saying of Imam Ali (peace be upon him): "The tongue is like a snake, if you let it loose, it will bite you" [6]. The tongue is compared to a snake, without mentioning the simile tool between them, implying that they are aligned in the effect that the mentioned similarity shows. If the snake is left without constraints, it will tend to bite, and likewise, the tongue, if left without ethical standards, the words that come out of it may hurt the feelings of others. Thus, the absence of the simile tool serves the image in terms of the breadth of coalition between the two sides of the simile, then the mentioned similarity is used to deepen this coalition by clarifying the common attribute between them. The aesthetic goal is to show the impact of hurtful speech on people's emotions, and that is why Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) simile is based on deleting the tool and focusing on the mentioned similarity that demonstrates this moral effect in a sensory way that seeks to praise silence when harmful words are spoken. Therefore, the speech of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and other scholars in praise of silence is directed at those who misuse speech, causing great crimes in matters of religion and worldly affairs [9].

General simile: This is when the similarity aspect of a comparison is omitted, as in the saying of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) to a man who was seeking to harm his enemy at his own expense: "You are like someone who stabs himself to kill his opponent behind him." This man is compared to someone who stabs himself to kill the person behind him, and the person behind him is referred to as "his opponent," and the similarity aspect is omitted, which allows the reader to use their imagination to visualize this aspect in their mind. The reader conjures up a picture of the man who stabs himself in order to deliver the stab to the rider behind him, killing himself before he kills his opponent. Here, the simile rises to a rhetorical level that makes the reader a partner in interpretation, as the act of harming oneself in order to harm an enemy contains an implied similarity aspect. Thus, the purpose of this simile is indirectly conveyed to the reader in an evocative way, far removed from preaching.

"The Allegory of Representation (al-tashbeeh al-tamtheeli) is a type of simile where the similarity is drawn from an extracted image from a multitude of possibilities," according to Abdulqahir Al-Jurjani. He believes that the Allegory of Representation is the most superior form of simile because it requires interpretation to reveal its hidden meanings and convey its

intended message. He states, "When two things are compared to one another, it can be done in two ways: the first is to make the comparison clear and does not require interpretation, while the second is to make the comparison cryptic and requires interpretation." Al-Jurjani reserved the term "allegory of representation" for this second type of comparison. Therefore, the recipient of the message plays an important role in revealing the beauty of the simile.

One type of figurative language is represented by simile, and according to Abd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, simile through representation is the most superior form of figurative language because of the interpretation it requires to reveal its hidden meaning. He states, "Know that when one thing is compared to another, it occurs in two ways: one is that it is self-evident and requires no interpretation, and the other is that the comparison requires interpretation." Al-Jurjani categorizes simile through representation as the second type, and thus gives the recipient an important role in revealing the aesthetics of the comparison. An example of this is found in the statement of Imam Ali (peace be upon him): "Beware of the cold in the beginning, and welcome it in the end, because it acts on the bodies like it acts on trees, in the beginning it burns and in the end it leaves." The Imam provides advice through a figurative representation, by comparing the effect of cold on bodies to that on trees, using a complex image that varies according to the time between the beginning and the end of the cold. By examining this image, we can say that the initial cold affects the bodies with heat, which harms them when the weather changes from hot to cold, while at the end, the cold touches the bodies after they have become accustomed to it, and it is lighter and more beneficial. This is similar to the effect of cold on trees, where it causes them to shed their leaves in the beginning, but they regain them in the end as they welcome the spring. This comparison is made through a representation simile, which activates the role of the reader in approaching the complex comparison (the effect of cold on trees), and applying it to the compared complex (the effect of cold on bodies), within a figurative representation that extracts the face of the similarity from a variety of sources.

The metaphorical comparison is "what was common between the two parties is not apparent in the metaphor itself, and therefore requires interpretation and imagination to extract it from it." The common attribute in Imam Ali's (peace be upon him) speech is realized in trees because they are visible to the eye, but it is not realized in bodies themselves. Therefore, a complex image was used to reveal the effect of cold on bodies based on its visible effect on trees. This relies on the effectiveness of imagination, which elevates the beauty and eloquence of the image.

One example of figurative representation that is rich in beauty is the saying of Imam Ali (peace be upon him), "O Kumayl, advise your loved ones not to strive for the fulfillment of their desires at the expense of others, nor to seek something from someone who is asleep. By Him whose hearing is vast and who hears all voices, no one entrusts his heart to joy without God creating for him some gentleness of that joy. When something harmful approaches him, he runs towards it like water runs in a stream, until he drives it away from him, just like a stranger is driven away from a herd of camels".

Before delving into the aesthetics of representative analogy here, it is necessary to examine the text as a whole in order to arrive at the benefits and purpose of this analogy. The Imam (peace be upon him) addresses his companion Kameel, urging him to advise his family to continue doing good deeds, to bring joy to people's hearts by showing kindness and doing good, and to fulfill their needs. These actions will result in Allah's kindness and favor towards those who follow them. When calamity befalls them, this kindness will help ward it off. The expression of warding off calamity is represented through a dual aspect analogy, where the kindness is compared to running towards the calamity like water running down a slope, and the repulsion of calamity is compared to a herder driving away a camel that does not belong to him, with the comparison highlighting the speed of disappearance and the purification from impurities. Thus, the soul that is enveloped in Allah's kindness becomes capable of overcoming difficulties and at the same time is purified from impurities.

The use of simile has succeeded in creating aesthetic relationships between the components of the figurative images, serving their intended purpose. Simile builds bridges between sensory and rational elements, seeking to clarify the meaning on one hand and exaggerating it on the other. In both cases, the figurative images acquire a beauty based on their novelty and wonder, which encourages the reader to understand the relationships between the sensory and rational elements aesthetically, leading to their interaction with them.

5. Conclusion

The conclusion can summarize the main findings of the research as follows:

- The figurative dimension in the rulings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was profound in its significance and eloquence, and the similes were used for purposes of advice, guidance, and admonition.
- The diagnosis in the rulings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) was enriched with stylistic meaning, as he depicted abstract and spiritual ideas through concrete and visible images to make them more accessible to the recipient's mind and understanding.

- The rulings of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) were characterized by representational values, as the proverbs illustrated the events that gave rise to them in different ways that were consistent with reality and distinct from convention.

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