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Some aspects of discourse analysis in Fawa'id al-Fu'ad

Abstract

South Asia is linguistically and culturally a pluralistic region where not only different languages of the region coexist and affect each other, but, more importantly, foreign languages also interact and at times get acculturated. The early Persian literature that came to India already had the impact of mysticism. A significant text of that time is the Fawa'id al-Fu'adwhich contains conversations of the great sufi Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya. This text spread the message of humanism, love and benevolence and was revered by the Sultans of Delhi as well as by both muslim and non-muslim populations. It indirectly communicated through parables and stories which related to the Muslim as well as the Hindu worlds.

The present paper will focus on the Indo-Persian mystical and sufistic elements with special reference to the English translation of Nizamuddin Auliya's Fawa'id al-Fu'ad. And also, it will try to look at the art of story telling, the use of the poetic medium etc as they emerge through English translations of a text like Fawa'id al-Fu'ad or through some other nature and function, the focus on poetry will view the poetic structures used as well as look at some problems that arise in the act of translation. The overall attempt is to the view the area of synthesis of Indian and Persian traditions that had led to the vicreation of very vibrant forms in India which in turn have influenced and are still influencing generations of people.

Key words: linguistics, discourse, Fawa'id al-Fu'ad, Nizamuddin Auliya, Sufism

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Introduction

The Fawa'id al-Fu'ad in a unique text for it contains an exactly dated record of the discourses (malfoozat) of the great Indian Sufi Sheikh Nizam ud-din Auliya (1242-1325 AD). This discourse is a remarkable one for it provides us with the discourses/conversations of Sheikh Nizam ud-din as recorded by Amir Hasan Sijzi Dehalvi and seen and approved by the Sheikh himself. The result was the perfection of a new lively and realistic genre known as the 'malfuz' (discourse/utterances) in which the narrator/author displays a remarkable sense of 'negative capability' in the Keatsian sense in order to record without any intrusion the discourse of another person. The resulting discourse presents before us the working of the sufi mind of Sheikh Nizam ud-din. Since the Fawa'id al-Fu'ad is a construct in language that becomes necessary to look at the linguistics of the discourse in order understand and appreciate fully the perspectives of this remarkable text.

Language and Discourse

Language is a medium of communication and it functions as a system of signs. The linguistic sign, as conceived by Ferdinand de Saussure in the early part of the twentieth century (cf. Saussure 1974), consists of a form that is indivisibly linked to a concept that in societal use functions as a sign. As s system of signs language is the meaning, i.e. there could be words or sentences that signify specific meanings. This means that form cannot be separated from meaning in any communication. It is language as a sign system that creates discourse in contexts.

The title Fawa'id al-Fu'ad (Morals for the Heart) tells us that the overall discourse is used is in the context of 'morals' and these are contextualized in a world of beliefs and faith, i.e. the 'heart'. Given the context of beliefs and faith certain signs with their signification are created, and there is a distinct pattern in such a created discourse. The total discourse is divided into five fascicles or parts, perhaps due to chronological convenience. However, the invariant factors that provide structure to this discourse are narration, the functional levels of the narrator and the narratee, the major significations created along with some peculiar uses of language. Some of these major features that structure this discourse will be briefly discussed in the remaining part of this paper.

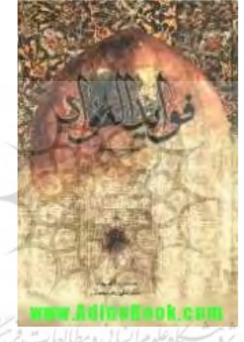## Contextualization of language in Fawa'id al-Fu'ad

The first fascicle in the beginning states that the "essence of the Unseen, which adorn the One beyond doubt, derive from that treasure-house of affirmation, that storage-bin of certitude, the upright master, he whose name (i.e. Prophet Mohammad)…" (Awliya 1992: 81). Next, the discourse is contextualized as having been heard from that "Candle of the angelic assembly", i.e. from Sheikh Nizam-ud-din (ibid). The aim of the discourse is to benefit the heart of the spiritually aroused.Given the context of unquestioned faith, the recording of every assembly begins with the narrator/recorder obtaining the benefit of 'kissing' the feet or hands of the "king of the universe and the well spring of compassion" (ibid), or by using such expressions that exude total faith. Thus, in the beginning of Fascicle II the Sheikh is referred to as the "Pole of the Poles on earth, the seal of the saints in both the world" (Awliya 1992:128)etc; as "pearl scatterer, the tongue of the gem disperser, the true master" (Awliya 1992: 185) etc. in the beginning of Fascicle III; as the "munificent master, the sovereign of the domain of divine secrets, the unquestioned king of spiritual masters…The Nizam of Truth, of Guidance, and of Faith" (Awliya 1992: 213) etc. in beginning of Fascicle IV; and as the "master of mercies and generosity, the source of the secrets of subtleties, the revealer of the treasures of truths, the prince of saints…" (Awliya 1992: 325) etc. in the beginning of Fascicle V. At the end of the 5th Fascicle he thanks God Almighty for helping him in the collection of the 'fragrant scents of the spiritual offerings' collected during a particular span of time (Awliya 1992: 370).

It is within this encasement of beliefs and faith that begin and end the text that the recorded discourse is structured.

Major strategy of discourse

The discourse is mainly created through anecdotes taken from the life of the Prophet or from those of the lives of numerous Sheikhs such as Sheikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani, Sheikh Baha-ud-din Zakariya, Sheikh Shihab ud-din Suhrawardi, Sheikh Qutb ud-din Bakhtiar Kaki, Sheikh Farid-ud-din etc. and other holy and pious men. Always there is a moral to be drawn from the anecdotes. For example, while admonishing his disciples against

prayers offered with a distracted mind, the Sheikh narrates the story of Sheikh Hasan Afghan, who having heard the call for prayers in the bazaar, stopped to offer his prayers. On finishing his prayers he came to the lmam and told him in a low respectful voice: "Respected Sir, you began the prayers and I fell in with you. You went from here to Delhi, bought some slaves, and then returned to Multan. Next you went to Khurasan with these slaves. I got my neck twisted trying to catch up with you. What has all this to do with prayer?" Awliya 1992: 90). The implication is clear, that one must pray with total devotion.

The text is full of such anecdotes told with great simplicity. The narration, of course, is direct most of the time, e.g. while talking about "Misers who hoard their wealth" (Awliya 1992: 137). The Sheikh mentions persons who spend all the dirams that they earn by the end of the day, while there are others who desire still more. Of course his advice is that "True comfort comes from expending gold and silver" (ibid), and the real purpose for amassing should be for the benefit of others.

Issues that emerge from discourse

There are numerous issues that emerge from the discourse. A brief discussions of some major issues is presented below.

The most important one being of complete love, devotion and trust in God Almighty, in Rasul and in the Sheikh. Peace and amity will prevail if one lives for God. The sublimation of desires and the rejection of materialistic attractions are emphasized. If one has the true intention (niyya) to be immersed in God then this affects not only one's limbs but ones complete being (Awliya 1992: 259). Further, death is seen as a sequel to unqualified love, that fana (annihilation) is equivalent to the effacement of self, surrender to the beloved, who is the Transcendental Creator, i.e. God. Beyond death is baqa, i.e. permanence (Awliya 1992: 154). Prayers of all types, i.e. zikr (remember), dhikr (thinking) (Awliya: 118, 331), bekr (new thinking), fikr (main thinking) and fasting, repentance and forgiveness are repeatedly emphasized.

There are also numerous discussions about the Sama' (Awliya 1992: 118, 132, 212, 336-38, 350-51), whether it should be performed or not. The Sheikh permitted *Sama'* provided its aim was to link oneself with the Creator. Sama' induces *wajd* (ecstasy) (Ibid: 118), a delight and inner comfort (Ibid: 212) and is viewed as of two types: invasive and noninvasive. The invasive sama' creates agitation in the body, it however cannot be explained. The noninvasive sama', on the other hand, draws one outside one's self and links the self to some other transcendental realm (Ibid: 212). The Sheikh says, "sama' is the movement of the heart. If that movement is due to remembering God then it is beneficial, but if the heart is full of corruption then sama' is forbidden" (Ibid: 358).

An important phenomenon that occurs again and again is the unquestioned allegiance to the Sheikh by a disciple. This phenomenon is called tahkim, ie a voluntary arbitration where a disciple forswears his own authority and accepts the authority of his Sheikh as arbiter (hakim) in all that concerns him (Awliya 1992: 249). This implies complete obedience on the part of the disciple.

Sheikh Nizam-ud-din is also firmly believed in pacifism and non-violence. Violence for him has created more problems while forgiveness and large-heartedness provides true happiness. "If some man places a thorn in your way", he said, "and you place another in his way, there will be thorns everywhere" (Awliya 1992:180). He advised his disciples to be good even to his enemies. He believed totally in forgiveness. One day when a person reported to him: "People speak ill of you from the pulpits and elsewhere. We cannot bear hearing it any longer." The Sheikh replied:

"I forgive them all; you, too, should forgive them" (Awliya 1992: 190). Forgiveness rather than retribution is the real key to peace and happiness.

The Sheikh's attitude towards other religions is also humanistic. There are instances in Fawa'id al-Fu'ad when some Hindus are mentioned. There are two instances when the Hindu is shown as a slayer (Awliya 1992: 156-167) but on other occasions he has spoken highly of upright people even amongst the Hindus. For example in the face of Ameer Hasan Sijzi's sadness over not receiving his wages in time the Sheikh narrates the story of an urban Brahman whose wealth was seized by the city magistrate. When asked how he could still be happy, the Brahman replied "With me still is my sacred thread (zunnar)", i.e., his faith. Narrating another incident the Sheikh tells that Khwaja Hamid Suwali used to say about an upright Hindu that "This man is a saint" (Awliya 1992: 159). In another instance about the destruction of Lahore the Sheikh narrated that the bad Muslim traders of Lahore inflated their prices when they went to trade with the Hindu traders of Gujarat. The Sheikh narrates that "The Hindus of that region were not used to such practices. When they sold goods they fixed a fair price and stuck to that price" (Awliya 1992: 216). Since people with such practices cannot thrive for long Lahore was reduced to rubble by the Mongols even before the above mentioned traders reached home.

Though Fawa'id al-Fu'ad is essentially an Islamic text it does not subscribe to any violence. It berates the ills among some Muslims and praises the uprightness amongst some non-Muslims too. It believes in the conversions to Islam through upright example and persuasion.

Levels of narrators and narratees

Every narration must have a narrator and a corresponding narratee. For example, there may be a narrator addressing his readers or audience and there may be another narrator (character) in the narration who narrates something to another narratee (another character) etc. In Fawa'id al-Fu'ad three levels of narrators can be found as shown in the figure below:

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Narrator$_1$ →(Narrator$_2$)→ ((Narrator$_3$) → (Narratee$_3$)) → (Narratee$_2$) → Narratee$_1$

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For example, in Assembly 32 of Fascicle II, the Narrator 1, i.e. Amir Hasan Sijzi narrates : "I obtained the good fortune of kissing his feet before the congregational prayer….". Here Narratee1 is the reader/audience of the discourse. The next sentence is: "He told a story about Renouncing Worldliness". Here the 'he' refers to Sheikh Nizam ud-din, who goes on to say:

"Once the Prophet – peace be upon him – declared: 'The dervish is given the choice, either you opt to have the world and all that is in it or the hereafter and all that has been prepared for you'. The dervish replied: 'I choose the hereafter and all that has been prepared for me there' (Awliya 1992: 175).

'Once the Prophet – peace be upon him – declared …' and 'The dervish replied: "I choose …" (ibid) are parts of the narration of Narrator 2 (the Sheikh) addressed to the Narratee2 (his audience). The words of the Prophet comprise Narrator3 addressed to his listeners (Narratee3). When the dervish replies he becomes Narrator3 while the Prophet becomes Narratee3 and so on. Thus almost all anecdotes have 2 or 3 levels of narrators and narrates. This provides a frame of reference to study the complexity of narrative structures in Fawa'id al-Fu'ad.

Use of Paradoxical expressions

The paradoxical expressions lend the discourse a philosophical touch for the reader is made to interpret. For instance in Assembly 7 of Fascicle III, in a conversation about the Invocatory Prayers, one those present asked: "what does it mean, the tradition which declares: 'He who persists in invocatory prayer is cursed, while who desists from it is also cursed." This tradition relates to People of the Book. It was reported to the Prophet that a certain Jew was reciting many invocative prayers (tamkhitha). The Prophet on hearing this said - "he who persists in invocatory prayer is doomed", and when his response was reported, that he had ceased to say invocatory prayers, the Prophet said – "He who desists from invocatory prayers is also doomed." This is directly related to the cause of the prayers (Awliya 1992: 196-97).

Another example occurs in Assembly 24 of Fascicle II, regarding renouncing worldliness. Shiekh Nizam ud-din says " Real wisdom is this,

that the bequester leave all his property to one who has already left the world!" (Awliya 1992: 163). The implication of this paradoxical statement is that property should be left to one who has no greed, who in turn will use it for the good of others.

Sense of Time

Language not only has its own order where words phrases and clauses etc. have their own arrangement but also that it orders reality in its own way. It provides the facility of recording subjective facts and then to re-objectify them etc. A sense of time when built into language deviates from the ordinary linear flow of time. Narratives being art forms in language, involve, firstly, the reading process itself that spreads over a passage of time, for we read a word or a passage at a time. Such a reading occurs in the present and one can have an idea of it from the bulk of the work. However, narrative or structural time is different. It is the total time taken to relate the events, however ordered. For example, in Fawa'id al-Fu'ad the time span as mentioned in the beginning of the discourses reveals that the span period of the discourses is approximately 14 years. In most narratives the natural order of events is not like the 'external' chronological order of history, but is an 'internal' psychological phenomenon linked with a sense of time. The vents may begin from the beginning as in short stories, or in the middle as in most epics, or in the end as in some modern fiction. Further, within narrative time there may be chunks of flash-backs or flash-forwards. In Fawa'id al Fu'ad the narrative concerning the lives of saints or the Prophet are like flash-backs. These help in in giving the sense of time rather than the real time.

Conclusion

The Fawa'id al Fu'ad is a remarkable text. It is amongst the first documents that can be said to be a record of a 'real' discourse recorded almost seven hundred years ago. Ameer Hasan Sijzi Dehlavi. Sijzi through his faithful recording provides us a rare glimpse into the working mind of the sufi saint Nizam-ud-din Awliya. The text reveals the virtues of Islam mainly through the narration of anecdotes. It particularly highlights the total selfless perspective of the Sufis and the Saints. The text also provides us with a rare glimpse of the minds and the society of the contemporary times.

It may be said that the Fawa'id al Fu'ad is a complex malfuz that needs to be studied in greater detail in order to unfold more hidden layers of meaning. There are numerous other strands that need to be picked up and an analysis pertaining to all these will require much space than envisaged here.

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