



## Comparative Analysis of Simile in Theosophical Verses of Bustan and Theosophical Poems of Motanabbi

Majid Khosravi<sup>1,\*</sup>, Ahmad Lamei Giv<sup>2</sup> and Mohammad Behnamfar<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Persian Language and Literature, Birjand University, Birjand, IRAN

<sup>2</sup>Dept. of Arabic Language and Literature, Birjand University, Birjand, IRAN

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### Abstract

*Simile is one of the greatest and most fundamental expressions which considerably fantasize poems. The present study descriptively-analytically and comparatively discussed and statistically analyzed simile in theosophical verses of Bustan and theosophical poems of Motanabbi in terms of sides of comparison, sensibility or intellectuality, singularity or collectiveness, point of comparison. Although Saadi and Motanabbi both used different types of simile, they are statistically different in terms of using simile. Totally, 311 figures of speech were extracted from theosophical verses of Bustan. Of this, 97 (31%) were simile. From theosophical poems of Motanabbi, 112 figures of speech were also extracted of which 43 (38%) were simile; this indicates that Motanabbi tended more to use simile. In addition, results show that Saadi used singular, eloquent, explicit and non-complex similes in most cases; while Motanabbi most used implicit, restricted or collective, complex and inexplicit similes.*

**Keywords:** Bustan of Saadi, theosophical poems of Motanabbi, simile, comparative rhetoric, deductive literature.

### Introduction

Saadi Shirazi is not only famous in Iran, but also among scholars of other nations. His best-known work, SaadiNameh or so-called Bustan, is the most important Persian work in which scholars and literates of different nations have been interested. 'Bustan is a combination of theology, mysticism, theosophy and ethics and life directives with eloquent and expressive wordings. Bustan is a poem as strong as scientific and juridical regulations, as fluent as prose and as clear as daily dialogues of people'. Those who study Saadi and his devotees constantly consider Bustan as an ethical and educational book also known as 'favorable position of Saadi' on the other word, dominance of meaning inhibited many readers of Saadi's works from scrutinizing artistic beauties of Bustan. It is noteworthy that there is no study conducted independently on simile in theosophical verses of Bustan.

Motanabbi is also a theosophist poet. There are few numbers of poets similar to him in theosophical poems, particularly during Abbasi era (4<sup>th</sup> century). A large part of Motanabbi's poems is either theosophical and allegorical or semi-theosophical. This is why they say: 'theosophy is abundant in Motanabbi's poems and scattered throughout his odes'<sup>2</sup>; so that, 'it can be observed and touched sometimes in a fragment, sometimes in a couplet and sometimes in a hemistich'<sup>3</sup>. Critics of Arabic literature wrote valuable and worthy of praise works on Motanabbi and various multilayer dimensions of his literary, political, religious, ethical even psychological character. Through these works, they discovered differently hidden aspects of his artistic and literary ingenuity. However, there is only one study, 'figures of speech

in Motanabbi', conducted on simile and generally technical imageries of his poem in the field of artistic and literary creation and creativity. In this study, Ali Akbar Mohseni, as the author, reviewed figures of speech in whole poems of Motanabbi including elegy, epic, theosophy, eulogy, lampoon, etc.). Motanabbi's theosophical poems are reviewed in the last section of this valuable study in which figures of speech are briefly noted due to high workload. Although fraction of simile is not more than a few lines here, there is no other study based on comparison, analysis and adaptation of simile in theosophical verses of Bustan and theosophical poems of Motanabbi.

By comparing rhetorical points of Persian and Arabic literature, one is able to identify secrets of the discourse and literary beauty of wordings and take advantage of instants and delicacies existing in great literary verses and pros. In general, 'strengths and shortcomings will be determined and the best way for a more expressive and eloquent discourse will be selected when words of others are comparatively analysed'<sup>4</sup>. It is also noteworthy that 'the most important measure to identify creativity and innovation of theosophist poets such as Motanabbi and Saadi- of whom theosophical concepts underlies their poems- is identification and expressive analysis of poetic and artistic imageries of their poems. Otherwise, it is not possible to recognize real dignity as well as the extent to which they were influenced by their predecessors or they influenced on their descendants'<sup>5</sup>. Since Saadi was almost under influence of Motanabbi to compose his great work and since simile played an essentially important role in expressing their (particularly Saadi) theosophical concepts, authors decided to discover poetic beauties of Saadi and Motanabbi in relation to simile as well as

their similarities and differences in using simile by descriptive-analytic and comparative review and analysis of simile in theosophical verses of Bustan and theosophical poems of Motanabbi.

Before starting the main discussion, it is important to consider two things: 1) Bustan of Saadi and Divan of Motanabbi are notably different in total of theosophical verses; that is, only 350 out of 5578 verses of Motanabbi (<10%) refer to theosophical concepts; 112 figures of speech, of which 43 (38%) were simile, were extracted from these 350 theosophical verses. While, there are far more theosophical verses in Bustan of Saadi including 4011 verses. On the other word, 'the reader observes nothing but theosophy and advice in Bustan of Saadi; most authors studying Saadi also agree that theosophy and advice are dominant throughout the Bustan. Therefore, one should not look for something other than theosophical concepts'<sup>6</sup>. By reviewing Bustan, authors also found the same result. From total of theosophical verses of Bustan, 311 figures of speech were extracted of which 97 (31%) were simile. Thus, Saadi and Motanabbi are not comparable at all for numbers of theosophical concepts. Therefore, the authors first reviewed simile in theosophical verses of both poets, separately; then, they calculated the statistics in percentage. Finally, they compared percentages to prevent incorrect measurement due to the large statistical gap between numbers of theosophical verses. 2) It is noteworthy that the present study is a very scientific research; that is, although all similes existing in theosophical verses of Bustan and theosophical poems of Motanabbi were reviewed, only those similes with highest significance were included in the study. Nevertheless, the statistics and percentages include all similies.

**Metonymy, a Fancy Tool:** Fancy is the spirit and heart of a literary phenomenon, particularly poetry. Any literary phenomenon is mainly related to poetic fancy and imageries; this is why, discussion on fancy in the poetry is the discussion on the nature of poetry. In fact, 'a regularly simple discourse audible from anyone remains from an effectively desirable poetry without fancy'<sup>7</sup>.

Simile, as a rhetoric technique, underlies many poems. Among discussions of eloquence, simile is special prominent, because simile also underlies metonymy. By simile, the poet communicates nature and beyond by which he forms his intellectual structure: 'Mental form of the poem suggests the poet's concentration of all creative power at the moment of creation of poetry'<sup>8</sup>. Simile plays an essential role in figurative speech: 'simile is the central core of most poetic imaginations; various figures of speech as well as different types of simile are derived from the same similarity which is discovered by imagination of the poet'<sup>9</sup>. In summary: 'simile is the best way to express mimesis and to imitate the nature and to realize'<sup>10</sup>. The main purpose of this study is to review the most prominent similes found in theosophical poems of Saadi and Motanabbi to detect the similarities and differences of these two poets in terms of simile.

## Comparative Analysis of Simile in Theosophical Verses of Bustan and Theosophical Poems of Motanabbi

Saadi and Motanabbi, as any other outstanding poet, demonstrated their art not only in their poems but also in using simile, as an important element for poetic imagination. Statistically, the most frequent similes used by Saadi include emphatic and précis similes (each 92%); while, literary and aesthetically, the most frequent simile is intellectual to sensible simile (which was used as additional eloquent by Saadi). Statistically, the most frequent similes used by Motanabbi include précis simile (86%); while, literary and aesthetically, the best implicit similes as well as allegorical simile can be found in theosophical poems of Motanabbi. Now, this study reviews the most important similes found in theosophical verses of Bustan and theosophical poems of Motanabbi.

**Intellectual and Sensible Sides of Comparison:** The most frequently used simile in theosophical verses of Bustan is 'intellectual to sensible' simile in terms of intellectual or emotional sides of the comparison. Obviously, there are 74 'intellectual to sensible' (76%) and 19 'sensible to sensible' (20%) similes in theosophical verses of Bustan. In addition, there are 2 'intellectual to intellectual' and 2 'sensible to intellectual' similes (each 2%). There are no 'fanciful' and 'illusory' similes in theosophical verses of Bustan. Therefore, it can be concluded that Saadi used simile in terms of intellectual or sensible sides of the comparison as follows, respectively: i. intellectual to sensible, ii. sensible to sensible, iii. intellectual to intellectual and iv. sensible to intellectual.

The most frequently used simile by Motanabbi is also 'intellectual to sensible' simile; however, they are statistical differences between Saadi and Motanabbi who used 22 'intellectual to sensible' (51%), 14 'intellectual to intellectual' (33%), 6 'sensible to sensible' (14%) and 1 'sensible to intellectual' (2%) similes. As Saadi, Motanabbi did not use 'fanciful' and 'illusory' similes. Therefore, Motanabbi used simile in terms of intellectual or sensible sides of the comparison as follows, respectively: i. intellectual to sensible, ii. intellectual to intellectual, iii. sensible to sensible and iv. sensible to intellectual.

**Intellectual-to-Sensible Simile:** As noted previously, Saadi and Motanabbi mostly used intellectual to sensible simile. Their effort to objectify subjectivities demonstrate their art. In other words, they well recognized that virtues such as humility, charity, fulfillment, contentment and silence and iniquities such as greed, envy, hatred and injustice (which are intellectual and subjective) could only be expressed by simulating to sensible and objective things to have the most influence on the audience.

where, 'beneficence' as a subjective and intellectual phenomenon is likened to 'charm' as a sensible concept. The

poet, here, well demonstrates the value of beneficence using a magnificent comparison<sup>16</sup>.

[Weakness in love is like poison in the honey which is concealed. It seems gourmet to eat it from ignorance, but the pleasure is death.]

Here, the intellectual likened is 'Weakness in love' which is likened to sensible 'poison in the honey'<sup>16</sup>.

**Sensible-to-Sensible Simile:** Saadi uses more sensible to sensible simile than Motanabbi does. In general, similes used by Motanabbi have an intellectual likened, except a few; he rarely likens a sensible to an intellectual or sensible. This is probably because of the environment he lived in. Motanabbi lived in an era when jealousy, greed, taunt, gossip, hatred and hypocrisy were common. Naturally, a wise poet like Motanabbi could not ignore this. Therefore, he stimulates iniquities to sensible things by which the audience can recognize their implausibility. This is also true for virtues.

where, 'Peasant' is likened to 'stump' and 'king' to 'tree' which are all sensible<sup>16</sup>.

[Surely familiar people are like predators which openly or with a plan kill each other.]

Motanabbi likens 'familiar people' to 'predators' which are both sensible<sup>16</sup>.

**Intellectual-to-Intellectual Simile:** In intellectual-to-intellectual simile, both sides of the comparison are intellectual and subjective. Some rhetoric authors believe that: 'practically, this simile should not exist; because no clear point of comparison can be perceived. Thus, the point of comparison needs to be clear or the intellectual thing to which a thing is likened has a very popular descriptor'<sup>11</sup>.

There are only 2 intellectual-to-intellectual similes (2%) used by Saadi; these two are in the form of additional eloquent:

where, 'Laziness' and 'Inexistence' are likened to 'Paradise' and 'Hell' which are intellectual.

[A long life is like a short life which terminates and remaining life is life a passed life.]

Motanabbi likens 'long life' to 'short life' which are both intellectual<sup>16</sup>.

**Singular, Restricted and Collective Sides of Comparison:** The most frequently used simile in theosophical verses of Bustan is 'singular to singular' simile in terms of singular, restricted or collective sides of the comparison. Obviously, there are 64 'singular to singular' (66%) followed by 16 'collective to collective' (17%), 7 'restricted to singular' (7%), 6 'restricted to

restricted' (6%) and 4 'singular to restricted' (4%) similes in theosophical verses of Bustan. There are no 'singular to collective' and 'restricted to collective', 'collective to singular' and 'collective to restricted' similes in theosophical verses of Bustan. Unlike Saadi, the most frequently used similes by Motanabbi is 'restricted to restricted' simile. Motanabbi used 15 'restricted to restricted' (35%), 13 'collective to collective' (30%), 7 'singular to singular' (16%), 4 'singular to restricted' (9.5%) and 4 'restricted to singular' (9.5%) similes. As Saadi, Motanabbi did not use 'singular to collective' and 'restricted to collective', 'collective to singular' and 'collective to restricted' similes.

**Singular-to-Singular Simile:** The most frequently used simile by Saadi is singular-to-singular simile in terms of sides of the comparison, because Saadi frequently used additional eloquent, so that most of the singular-to-singular similes used by Saadi are additional eloquent; while Motanabbi did not tend to use this simile more than Saadi. Motanabbi tended to use restricted sides of comparison. Nevertheless, Motanabbi sometimes used singular-to-singular simile to express his theosophical concepts.

where, 'Peasant' is likened to 'Tree' which are both singular<sup>16</sup>.  
[I experienced that whim fire is stronger than Ghazi fire (a tree known as fire) and does not die while its flames constantly increase.]

where, 'whim' is likened to 'fire' which are both singular<sup>16</sup>.

**Collective-to-Collective Simile:** Both sides of the comparison are collective in collective-to-collective simile. In other words, 'both sides of the comparison are made by several interrelated things which seem as a single thing in whole'<sup>12</sup>.

Collective-to-collective simile is the finest simile used moderately by Saadi and Motanabbi. It is noteworthy that the point of comparison is intellectual in both Saadi and Motanabbi, except for a few. This is why the audience may not first recognize these similes. In other words, recognition of these similes requires careful consideration.

Where, the collective 'Honest and malicious' is likened to the collective 'Ant and tub'. The point of comparison is 'lack of influence on other things'. As the ant which is not able to penetrate in the tub, the malicious person is not able to influence on the honest person<sup>16</sup>.

[One may not achieve whatever he wishes, as the winds which may blow to the direction which passengers do not wish for.]

Where, the poet likens collective 'unpleasant life' to the collective 'blowing winds to the direction which passengers do not wish for'. The point of comparison is 'demanding something and not achieving that'<sup>16</sup>.

**Restricted-to-Restricted Simile:** The most frequently used simile by Saadi is restricted-to-restricted simile in terms of sides

of the comparison. as noted earlier, Motanabbi tend to use restricted simile more than Saadi<sup>16</sup>. In Bustan of Saadi see “the end of whom exaggerates in peace is alike the end of whom exaggerates in war”<sup>16</sup>. where, ‘the end of peace exaggerator’ is likened to ‘the end of war exaggerated’<sup>16</sup>.

**Absolute Simile:** According to Glossary of Rhetorical Terms and Development: ‘absolute simile is to liken an object to another unconditionally’. There are 79 (81%) and 20 (47%) absolute similes used by Saadi and Motanabbi, respectively.

Where, ‘Service’ is likened to ‘Wicket’. The poet used no condition for this simile. See Bustan of Saadi “Let your soul take advantage of the world before the body and soul separate, because these two neighbors of life house will be separated”. Where, Motanabbi unconditionally likened ‘life’ to a ‘house’ as an additional eloquent<sup>16</sup>.

**Implicit Simile:** Implicit simile refers to a hidden simile in which no simile structure seems to exist but what the speaker means is simile. Saadi and Motanabbi used 9 and 16 implicit simile, respectively, in their theosophical poems. Apparently, implicit similes used by Motanabbi are more prominent than that of Saadi. By implicit simile, Motanabbi artily likens an intellectual collective to a sensible collective. In fact, he explains the intellectual form by the sensible form. It is noteworthy that the conditions of his era can be recognized by these similes. In other words, implicit similes used by Motanabbi reflect the conditions of his period.

Where, Saadi implicitly and indirectly likens the ‘Cruel’ to ‘beefy sheep’. See Bustan of Saadi “A lazy one is easily contemptible; the dead one will not be hurt”; where, ‘contemptibility of a lazy’ is indirectly likened to ‘a dead not being hurt’<sup>16</sup>.

**Individuals, Composition and Diversity of Point of Comparison:** There are some differences between Saadi and Motanabbi in this regard. The mostly frequent point of comparison used by both poets is ‘singular’; however, they are significantly different in terms of frequency. There are 81 (84%) singular and 16 (16%) collective points of comparison in similes used by Saadi in his theosophical poems. As noted earlier, Motanabbi preferred singular point of comparison but in a moderate way. There are 28 (65%) singular, 14 (33%) collective and 1 (2%) multiple points of comparison in similes used by Motanabbi in his theosophical poems.

**Singular Point of comparison:** As noted previously, the most similes used by Saadi contain singular points of comparison. where, the point of comparison is ‘Worthlessness’ which is singular. See Bustan of Saadi “And putting forgiveness in the position of sword is harmful for magnanimity as placing the sword in the position of forgiveness”; where, ‘harmfulness’ is point of comparison.

**Collective Point of Comparison:** Collective point of comparison is the most artistic point. Although collective points are less used by Saadi and Motanabbi in their theosophical

poems, the similes made by them using collective point of comparison are far better than their similes using singular point of comparison. Where, the point of comparison is ‘good and bad being alongside’ which is collective. See Bustan of Saadi “Oh, prison; be whatever you want to be. I am ready for death and I am patient. Although I reside in you as a worthless place, the precious pearl resides in the valueless shell”. Where, the poet likens ‘himself in the prison’ to ‘a pearl in the shell’. The point of comparison is ‘being something valuable inside a worthless thing’ which is collective.

**Allegorical Simile:** There are various discussions on allegorical simile in terms of point of comparison, intellectuality and sensibility, individuals and composition of sides. According to point of comparison, some rhetoric scholars believe that allegorical simile is a kind of simile in which ‘point of comparison is captured by interpretation and explanation’<sup>13</sup> or ‘the point of comparison is adopted from several things’<sup>12</sup>. While considering the allegorical simile as the most artistic type of simile, Kazazi<sup>14</sup> believes that ‘point of comparison in allegorical simile is an attribute adopted by several things; several poetic links between two sides of comparison create a point of comparison which underlies the allegorical simile’<sup>14</sup>. According to individuals and composition of sides of comparison, some scholars believe that ‘in allegorical simile, the thing which some other thing is likened to must be allegorical; the likened thing is a collective intellectual which is likened to a collective sensible thing’<sup>11</sup>. There is a theory that allegorical simile is ‘the same singular-to-collective simile which is prevalent and well-known and allegory is often expressed as collective-to-collective simile’<sup>16</sup>.

Saadi and Motanabbi<sup>16</sup> used 13 and 15 allegorical similes, respectively, for their theosophical concepts. Allegorical simile is the technique to express theosophical implications; because theosophical concepts are not simple, developed or single, they can not be expressed by simple imageries. Where, the sensible ‘The Grape is not growing from tamarisk’ is an argument for the intellectual ‘No good is expected from bad’ and the point of comparison is ‘Proportionality between actions and results’. See Bustan of Saadi “Surely, one can achieve dignity as much as his tolerance as any camel with packsaddle will not be fast like a strong camel”. where, the intellectual ‘achieving dignity relative to tolerance’ is likened to sensible ‘dissimilarity of a camel with packsaddle to a fast strong camel’. The point of comparison is ‘not judging things by their appearance’.

**Reduction of Sides and Points of the Comparison:** Saadi used 84 (87%) eloquent simile of which 53 are additional and 31 are non-additional eloquent similes. There are some differences between Saadi and Motanabbi in this regard. First, Motanabbi used less eloquent simile (29 or 67%); second, he used more non-additional eloquent than additional one. He used 25 non-additional and 4 additional eloquent similes.

**Additional Eloquent Simile:** There are three additional eloquent similes. Obviously, Saadi expresses the concept of ‘happiness accompanies by difficulty’ by three additional

eloquent similes. See Bustan of Saadi "one sees the courage and generosity paths; but his nature directs him"<sup>16</sup>; where, the poet likens 'courage and generosity' to 'path' by no point of comparison.

**Non-Additional Eloquent Simile:** Most similes used by Motanabbi are non-additional eloquent similes by which he extremely exaggerate, because the claim of equality is more strong than the claim of similarity; where, 'heart' is likened to 'secret prison' "each day is a new adventure for you and the path of dignity is in the same place"; where, 'each day' is likened to 'new adventure'.

## Conclusion

Saadi and Motanabbi both used simile moderately; in some cases, however, theosophical concepts limits the use of simile; because theosophical poems are less emotional than other forms. Hence, the integration of intellectual arguments and emotional arguments is difficult.

The most frequent simile in terms of intellectual or sensible sides of comparison is 'intellectual-to-sensible' simile (76% Saadi and 51% Motanabbi), followed by 20% sensible-to-sensible simile in Bustan and 33% intellectual-to-intellectual simile in Motanabbi. The most frequent simile in terms of singular or restricted or collective sides of comparison is singular-to-singular simile in Bustan (66%) and restricted-to-restricted simile in Motanabbi (35%). Saadi and Motanabbi used 'collective-to-collective' simile moderately. Saadi and Motanabbi are different in using absolute simile. They are 81% and 47% absolute simile in Bustan and Motanabbi, respectively. This gap indicates that theosophical concepts expressed by Saadi using simile are more inclusive. In other words, Motanabbi restricts his similes in most cases; thus, his concepts are more limited than theosophical concepts of Saadi. Saadi and Motanabbi used 'implicit' simile moderately; however, implicit similes used by Motanabbi are more prominent than those of Saadi. By implicit simile, Motanabbi likens a collective intellectual to a collective sensible by which he explains the intellectual form to the audience. The most frequently used point by both poets is 'singular point of comparison' (84% Saadi and 65% Motanabbi). It is noteworthy that their similes by collective point of comparison are better than their similes by singular point of comparison. Allegorical simile is a proper form to express theosophical concepts. In terms of reducing sides and points of comparison, 87% and 67% of Saadi and Motanabbi, respectively, are eloquent. Saadi used more additional eloquent and Motanabbi used more non-additional eloquent similes.

In conclusion, similes used by Saadi are singular, eloquent, explicit and non-complex in most cases; while similes used by Motanabbi are implicit, restricted or collective, complex and

implicit in most cases. Saadi uses parody to cheer the audience reading theosophical discussion; while Motanabbi uses parody to vilify the world and envious. Similes used by Saadi are simple, beautiful and prominent because his similes maintain their rhetorical strength. Similes used by Motanabbi are also new because he wisely integrates intellectual and emotional elements to capture the open horizon of images. The only criticism to similes used by Saadi and Motanabbi is that the color which plays an essential role in developing the imageries is not represented in their similes.

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