

Arabic Fairy-tales: An Analysis of Hatim Tai's Story within Propp's Model

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Abstract: The research aims to investigate the Arabic folklore "HatimTai" to reveal its constructive elements at narrative levels. Propp's narrative model is exercised as a theoretical framework. It's a qualitative study and a descriptive method is applied. The selected Tale has all the constructive elements introduced by Propp. Some functions are replicated more than two or three times. This world class story deals with ethics and morality. The research will be helpful for the future researchers who desire to conduct research on cultural folklores in Pakistani or other contexts.

Keywords: Fairytales, Hatim Tai, Propp's model, Narration, Folklores

1. Introduction

According to Story (2012), a story can be a 'series of events'. Events merge together and the whole series of actions generate a well-knitted story. Stories, basically, express values and engage people so that they forget themselves, and imagine themselves at the place of characters at emotional and intellectual levels. They feel sympathy for them as well.

There is a long history of storytelling. Ancient people told stories to each other to kill the time or spend their leisure time. After that, these stories were written down for the purpose of preservation. Now these are preserved both in oral and written forms. The current research will take into account the Arabian story, 'Hatim Tai'.

Mesopotamia (in present Iraq) is called "the cradle of civilization" and is an area in western Asia around the River Tigris and the River Euphrates in Iraq, where, in ancient times, the world's first cities were built and several important ancient civilizations developed. The Arab culture has a long history. They made developments in almost all the fields e.g. poetry, mathematics and literature etc. A positive image of Arab's and their culture are represented through the literature. Nowadays, there is a great misunderstanding about Arab's and their culture. Hollywood is presenting them as villains and depicting them as terrorists. In promoting this confusion, the media is also playing its vital role (Al-Hazza, 2006). So to say, a soft image of Arabs can be yielded through their cultural

stories. This research will be helpful to bring about a positive change regarding the image of the Arab culture. This project will give the readers an idea about valor, hospitality and generosity of *Hatim* who he showed for the poor.

The current research will evaluate the format of Arabic folklore on international standards according to the criteria of the selected model. This story is selected because it is equally popular in Pakistan, Iran, India etc. Examples of *Hatim's* generosity are given in routine discussions in these cultures and communities. Fazal (1989) argues that I observed in Pakistan that there is no cultural difference among the people they have the same faith. They are same in their clothes, foods, politics, education and even every aspect of their life (Hawke & Adelaide, 2011). So this story is equally popular in the above-mentioned communities and is also a part of their culture.

As far as basic characteristics of these stories are concerned, folktales have supernatural elements. As Lloyd (1995) describes, people create the identities about places, actions, people and even about some words which have supernatural powers and functions. These supernatural characteristics have also been accepted by most of the folklorists. This intended folklore has the supernatural element as well.

Propp suggested that every narrative has eight different character types; however, only seven characters are available

to fairytale-tellers. These character types are as follows:

- a) *The villain* who fights the hero in some way.
- b) *The dispatcher*: character who makes the villain's evil known and sends the hero off.
- c) *The (magical) helper*: helps the hero in the quest.
- d1) *The princess or prize* (and/or her father): the hero deserves her throughout the story but is unable to marry her because of an unfair evil, usually because of the villain. The hero's journey is often ended when he marries the princess, thereby beating the villain and resulting in a "happily ever after" moment.
- d2) *Her father* gives the task to the hero, identifies the false hero, and marries the hero, often sought for during the narrative. Propp noted that functionally, the princess and the father cannot be clearly distinguished.
- e) *The donor*: prepares the hero or gives the hero some magical object.
- f) *The hero or victim/seeker hero*: reacts to the donor, weds the princess.
- g) *False hero*: takes credit for the hero's actions or tries to marry the princess.

The analysis of Propp's model has not been applied by any researchers to this story to investigate whether this model is applicable and adept on Arabic Fairy tales or not. The present study will fill this gap to recognize these stories as world class stories like *Cinderella* and *Harry Potter* on which this model has been employed. In the Subcontinent, this model is applied by an Indian researcher Fatima Syeda (2013) on '*Heerr waris shah*' who discusses the language of *Waris Shah* at a narrative level. Future researchers will be able to inspect the validity of this model on other Fairy tales and to make them celebrated, noted and legendary worldwide.

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to

- bring into light the possibilities of Propp's model application on Arabic Fairytale
- highlight the certain format of Arabic fairytales;
- and pinpoint the interesting features of fairytales.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the main purpose of the research and the scope of the study, the researchers would try to find logical answers to the following research questions

- a) What are the possibilities of the application of Propp's model on the famous Arabic Fairytale (Hatim Tai)?
- b) What is the certain format of Arabic fairytales?
- c) What makes fairy tales really intriguing?

2. Literature Review

History describes that people of the Subcontinent adopted Arab's culture. According to Seljuq (2005), Islam was introduced in the Subcontinent in 712 AD when a small ship of Arabs' businessmen was looted. In this tragedy, many people were murdered and the rest of the others were captured.

At that time, *Hajjaj sent Mohammad Bin Qasim* to attack and solve the problem of Muslim prisoners. *Mohammad Bin Qasim* defeated *Raja Daher* and after that Islamic rules were introduced in this region. Many Sufis and saints were also brought into the Subcontinent for preaching by *Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi* and they taught Islam very well. Thus, the subcontinent's masses started to become Muslims and they adopted the beliefs and religious culture of Arabs. They consider Muslim conquerors of the Subcontinent as their heroes and that's why Arab's culture is dear to them.

Henceforth, Indian Muslims adopted the way of life of Arabs because it was according to their religion. It is also dear to them because people have association with Arabic language. Beseiso et al. (2010) contend that Prophet (PBUH) preached in Arabic language throughout His life. It is also the language of Quran.

According to Singh (2011), Punjab is rich in its folklore. Everyday activities of people are narrated through Punjabi poetry. This poetry is transmitted from one generation to another generation orally. Even folklores of Punjab also hold a great popularity. Kokab & Ajmal (2012) state that the feeling of love is deep-rooted in Punjabi culture in Pakistan. The famous love stories of Punjab *Heer Ranjha* narrated by Syed Waris Shah, *Anar Kali & Saleem* by Taj Haider, *Saiful-Ul-Muluuky* Mian Muhammad Baksh and a worth-noting folklore of *Sohni Mahival: a tale of star crossed lovers*, immortalized by the poet (Fazal Shah) which bring into light *Kumhar* (pottery) culture of Punjab (Syed, 2009). Somehow, all these stories teach morality, ethics and cultural values. Without the help of modern technology and media, these stories were preserved in the hearts of the native people and were passed from one generation to another generation.

Molt (2012) reports the criticism on the Propp's model by Levi-Strauss who doubts about the validity of folklores due to the fact that they have been transmitted orally. So that, the model neglects tone, mode and other linguistic characteristics. He supports structuralism model rather than narrative. However, narrative model is preferred by numerous researchers because it bestows freedom to the story writer to create a story.

The research done in Korea supported the Propp's narrative model. Kang (1983) postulates that, considering its functions, writing will be divided into four types. First one is narrative and it looks easy. In writing, it's better to adopt narrative method, because it is close to the writer's experiences.

Another researcher who strongly supports Propp's model and vis-à-vis criticizes structuralism approach through psychological dimension is Szilas (2003) in which it is argued that there are three layers of any drama. First layer is a discourse layer, in which some messages are conveyed. In comparison, this approach is totally neglected by the structuralism and there is no new model of narrations provided by the psychologists.

According to Structuralist approach, writer cannot produce creative work due to the limitations of strict structures. So, this problem has been solved by Vladimir Propp, an outstanding member of the Russian formalist group. His "*Morphology of*

the Folklore” presents a luminous example of the traditional formalist method applied to the structural analysis of the tales. He divides these stories according to their function instead of following a set of structural rules. Propp offered this model in

1928 and he applied it on 101 Russian folklores. Propp (1973) and Falconer (2005) enlighten and propose that there are thirty one constructive elements in a folklore. These elements are listed as following;

Table 1. Thirty one constructive elements of a folktale by Propp.

1.Absentation	2.Interdiction	3.Violation of interdiction
4.Reconnaissance	5.Delivery	6. Trickery
7. Complicity	8. Villainy	9. Mediation
10. Beginning counter action	11. Departure	12. First function of the donor
13. Hero's reaction	14. Receipt of a magical agent	15. Guidance
16. Struggle	17. Branding	18. Victory
19. Liquidation	20. Return	21. Pursuit
22. Rescue	23. Unrecognized arrival	24. Unfounded claims
25. Difficult task	26. Solution	27. Recognition
28. Exposure	29. Transfiguration	30. Punishment
31. Wedding		

Kang (1983) opines that narrative describes morphology due to the fact that all the components of folklore relate with each other as a whole. That's why morphology is utilized to narrate these stories. The question also arises here that how a model according to the culture of Russia is applicable on other cultural folklores. He tactfully answers this question as *constant values of the folklores are recurrent functions*. Folklores contain a theme and a message for readers and listeners. These are not just for aesthetic purposes. There are some moral values which are rooted in all cultures and due to the similarity in cultural values, these models are applicable from one culture to another culture.

3. Research Methodology

It is a qualitative study. The Arabic folklore '*Hatim Tai*' is analyzed to investigate narrative level as posited and distinguished by Propp and he divides tales into a series of events and defines the functions in a tale. Data will be analyzed from Indian drama "*Hatim*" produced by *Subhash Sagar* and *Prem Sagar*. It was on aired on *Star Plus* and it is available in market in DVD forms well.

4. Data Analysis (Narrative Situations)

The story is analyzed based on Propp's Thirty-one functions as follows:

1. *Absentation*: First function is about absence when a member of a family leaves home. It is not necessarily the hero of the story all the time rather it can be any character otherwise. *Jasmeen*, who is the lover of *Hatim*, leaves home with her guard and family friends and evil forces try to harm her. Here, the hero *Hatim* is introduced and he saves *Jasmeen*.

2. *Delivery*: In the fifth action, villain attains information about the sufferer. In the first volume, *Dajjal* asks from a palmist how to gain all supernatural powers of the world. He is suggested to marry with *Rajkumari Sunnena*. She has all the powers of goodness. After marrying with *Sunnena*, both evil and goodness forces will be combined and he could lead the world easily in the future. Then *Dajjal* decides to marry with

Sonnena at any cost.

3. *Reconnaissance*: According to this element, intended victim asks questions. *Dajjal* comes in *Sunnena*'s home to marry with her, she and her brother ask about his arrival.

4. *Trickery*: In the sixth function, the villain deceives the victim. He tries to possess the belongings, and confidence of the victim. When *Sunnena* does not agree to marry with *Dajjal*, he converts her brother (*Sooraj*) into a statue. He gives her a limit of time of 'seven months' otherwise no one will be able to covert him again into a human being.

5. *Mediation*: 'Misfortune is known to the hero'. When *Vishal* (*Sunnena*'s lover) comes in *Hatim*'s home, he listens to a call for a help.

6. *Interdiction*: It is the situation of to be and not to be, when *Vishal* comes in *Hatim*'s home and requests him to help the brother of *Raj kumara Sunena*. Marriage ceremony of *Hatim* goes on at that time. His father advises him to carry on this ceremony, but *Jasmeen*'s father allows him to go and expresses that it's more important to save the world from destruction instead of *Hatim*'s marriage.

7. *Violation of interdiction*: *Hatim* decides at first to finish *Dajjal* then to get married. All contradictions of to be and not to be are resolved.

8. *Beginnings counter action*: The counter action starts when *Hatim* decides to combat with the villain.

9. *Departure*: 'Hero agrees to act according to the counter action'. *Hatim* leaves home with the best wishes of all.

10. *Difficult task*: There are difficult tasks for hero. He had to answer seven Questions which are unrevealed to covert *Sunnena*'s brother into a normal human being.

11. *Branding*: 'Hero is branded'. He can receive a ring or a scarf. Hero can be wounded or marked. In the second volume, *Hatim* receives *Chamatkare* 'supernatural' sword. *Pani ka jin* (the ghost of water) gives him a map to reach in *Sultan Azlaf*'s castle. In the twelfth volume, *Nadira* gives him an eye drop and says that it will help you in the future.

12. *Receipt of a magical agent*: In the eleventh volume, magical sword is given to *Hatim* to save the *Mokizo*, who is among seven noble magicians and helps the hero.

13. *Guidance*: The Hero acquires the use of magical agents'.

When *Hatim* goes in quest of the first question, some evil powers attack him. At that time, he learns the use of magical power and the magical circles of the sword save his life.

14. *First function of the donor*: In the eighth volume, *Hatim* is tested to bring back the ring and to break the spell.

15. *Hero's reaction*: The hero reacts according to the instructions of the future donor. For *Hatim*, the first donor is '*pani ka jin*', (the ghost of water). He gives him a map to search the palace of *Ajlaf* for his first question.

16. *Villainy*: The villain harms the family member and imprisons her. Many times *Jasmeen* was in the prison of enemies. On one occasion, she goes to help *Hatim* but she becomes a prisoner there. In the seventeenth volume, *Dajjal* kidnaps *Jasmeen* and left her in the reign of *Shakeela* (devotee of *Dajal*) and she keeps her in a bubble cage.

17. *Complicity*: 'The victim gives support to enemy unconsciously'. When *Hatim* was on his mission, due to the spell of *Batila* (devotee of *Dajjal*), he does not act upon the suggestions of his guard (*Hobo*).

18. *Pursuit*: After the impression of both, hero is tried to be killed in the seventeenth volume when *Dajjal* tries to give *Hatim*'s soul to the evil forces and requests to accept it as a gift to make it a part of the evil forces.

19. *Rescue*: Here, *Hatim* is rescued by *Hobo*. He brings back his soul.

20. *Unfounded claims*: In the seventeenth volume, *Dajjal* presents unfounded claims to *Hatim* that the next day will be the first day of his governance and he will marry with *Sunnena*. There will be no decline to his powers. In the fourth and the

fifth volumes, the villain also asserts that it's the fate of *Hatim* to face and suffer a defeat and I shall win this battle.

21. *Struggle*: Then there is a direct combat between *Hatim* and *Dajjal* in the seventeenth volume. The final combat between them again takes place in the forty-fifth volume. *Hatim* says that tonight will be the last night of *Sonnena*'s grief.

22. *Unrecognized arrival*: Once, *Hatim* comes home before solving the last question.

23. *Liquidation of Lack*: In this function, the initial misfortune is resolved. In the forty six volume, *Hatim* discovers the answer of all the seven questions and converts *Sooraj* back into a human being.

24. *Victory*: The Villain is defeated and his all evil powers are totally demolished. *Hatim* talks to *Dajjal* and says: "look here, now goodness will spread in your castle and your evil sword won't protect you. I am thankful to my God that he gave me a chance to fight for goodness".

25. *Return*: Then the hero returns home and it is an unexpected arrival.

In the next functions as follows, solutions are there because people recognize the hero and the false hero. *Dajjal* met to his punishment and he is killed. *Hatim* is in his new dress which shows his transfiguration and new appearance. At the end, *Hatim* marries with *Jasmeen*. There were many actions which were repeated.

26. *Solution*; 27. *Recognition*; 28. *Exposure*; 29. *Punishment*; 30. *Transfiguration*; 31. *Wedding*.

Table 2. Repeated actions in the story.

<i>Hatim</i> agrees to act upon many counter actions.	<i>Hatim</i> was tested many times.	He receives many donors.	Two times combat between hero and villain.
Hero is branded with sword, eye drop and map.	There are a number of difficult tasks for hero.	False hero makes a number of false claims, to marry, to defeat <i>Hatim</i> and to achieve all supernatural powers.	Hero is tried to be killed by many people, <i>Dajjal</i> , Pasha etc.

There is difference in the order of the functions of the story. The construction of *Hatim Tai*'s story is as follows:

Table 3. The order of the functions of the story.

1. Absentation	2. Delivery	3. Reconnaissance	4. Trickery
5. Mediation	6. Interdiction	7. Violation of interdiction	8. Beginning of counter action
9. Departure	10. Difficult task	11. Branding	12. Reception of magical agent
13. Guidance	14. First function of donor	15. Hero's reaction	16. Villainy
17. Complicity	18. Pursuit	19. Rescue	20. Unfolded claims
21. struggle	22. Unrecognized arrival	23. Liquidation	24. Victory
25. Return	26. Solution	27. Recognition	28. Exposure
29. Punishment	30. Transfiguration	31. Wedding	

5. Conclusion

Arabic folklore *Hatim Tai* is also a world class story, if it is judged according to the narrative model of Propp. There is the alteration into the order of the story but as Propp declares the order can vary in various tales. All functions of the story are well knitted and create interest for the readers and listeners. The study paves the way for future researchers to validate this model by applying it on other cultural fairytales at narrative

level to recognize them among world class stories.

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