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## The Aesthetics in the Poems of Patience of Imam Shafi'i Rahimahullah

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### Abstract

Aesthetics is regarded as the finest value in a piece of literature that is not only measured through its explicit expressions, but also includes the implicit expressions. Each element involved that makes the literature so artistic is bonded to each other to explain the purpose intended. Therefore, the study of Imam Shafi'i poetry was carried out to show these elements. This matter is important because Imam Shafi'i is a knowledgeable icon that dominated the field of *fiqh* (Jurisprudence) and poetry. However, majority of people know him as a *faqih* (Jurist) rather than a poet, but in fact, Arabic literature is one of the areas mastered by him. His skills in the field of Arabic language were and are also recognised by the scholars of the past and the present, respectively. This study used qualitative methods to make a content analysis study design. Data were collected from poem verses related with patience, then these data were subsequently analysed from the perspective of their aesthetics. The results showed that the background and life experience of Imam Shafi'i were closely related to the aesthetics in his poetry. He also used expressions that are characterised as *balaghah* (Eloquence), such as *taqdim* (Putting forward), *ta'khir* (Delaying), *majaz* (Figurative speech), and *ijaz* (concise), which reinforced the aesthetic values.

**Keywords:** Aesthetics, Imam Shafi'i, Patience, Poetry, Balaghah

### Introduction

The study of language is not only limited to the study of syntax or morphology; instead, it extends to the study of whether the meaning of a phrase is expressed or implied. This matter is interesting to analyse because readers generally well perceive the beautiful expressions found in literature. Each element in the aesthetics should be linked to each other by the poet to produce beautiful and interesting verses of poetry. The poems of an eminent scholar, who was competent in all branches of Arabic language knowledge, Imam Shafi'i, met the characteristics of a high-grade poetry. Besides his own school of Fiqh that the majority of the population in Malaysia follows, he has also left a rich literature that proves his pre-eminence of the Arabic language, which is the Diwan of Imam Shafi'i.

## Methods

Research findings are presented from deduction analysis on data gained from scholarly documents related to the concept of esthetics. The primary sources come from related manuscripts discussing the topics of *balaghah* and Arabic Morphology. Secondary sources consist of journals, books, articles, and other related materials. All of these materials are discussed thoroughly in this paper using content, deductive, and inductive analysis.

## Problem Statement

The Arabic words are divided into two types, *manzum* (structured) and *manthur* (dispersed). In terms of significance, every *manzum* is better than *manthur*, as a *manthur* may sound beautiful but is unable to attract attention. Scholars agree that the *manthur* words are numerous in the Arab community, but it lacks charm. It cannot be compared with the *manzum* in terms of numbers, but the *manzum* is best in quality (Ibn Rashiq, 1981). Poetry with *manzum* characteristics comes in an organised form and contains rhythm and pace. On the other hand, prosed are categorised as *manthur* because they do not contain the features above.

It is a human nature to express what is in the heart or the mind, whether it is good or bad. To portray this, poems are created as a way to describe what is buried inside the heart. When the expression of the heart is organised in the form of beautiful words and added to a pleasing rhyme, then the result is an attractive verse of poetry that is able to leave a lasting impression on its followers. When the aesthetic value in a poem is appreciated, it will help people to be more joyful, happy, and calm. In literature, aesthetics must be present because of the artistic nature of literature. The artistry of it covers many aspects including language, thought, and expression techniques used (Arbai'e Sujud and Madiawati Mamat @ Mustaffa, 2011). Nik Safiah Karim believes that one of the forms of its artistry is language, which becomes a means to express thoughts and feelings through the structure of words and sentences (Arbai'e Sujud, 1999). Hence, verses in a poem must be examined one by one to find the aesthetic value contained therein.

Ideas in the mind cannot be translated without using appropriate words, whereas the purpose will only exist in the mind with the presence of language. Thus, the artistry of the literature is closely associated with the poet's language skills and his expression's flexibility and *sighah* (form). These factors are important to present an interesting piece of work, intertwined with the artist's imagination (Chorian, 1997). Based on these criteria, it is appropriate to analyse the aesthetic values in the poems of Imam Shafi'i. His ability was recognised by Azhari (n.d.) in compiling his work related to the odd *lafz* (pronunciation) of Shafi'i. He found that Imam Shafii was very knowledgeable, with a sharp *basirah* (Insight), clever in explaining the meanings, and had an eloquent speech and a sound *lafz*.

## Aesthetics in Literature

The aesthetic aspect or artistry is one of the fundamentals in the world of literature. Since the old times, the aesthetic aspect has become the charm and magic to the audience. The concept of aesthetics assesses the literary text with reference to the aspect of artistry and strength. Aesthetics is a sense of artistry, joy, and happiness that refers to something valuable and useful. Along with a dazzling enjoyment or a breathtaking seen that quickly captures the feeling and etches the mind. In

the art of literature, when discussing artistry, it will always refer to the beauty associated with the effect of the writer's language. The way the writer digests, blends, and processes his work also highlights the sense of artistry (Mana Sikana, 2009).

According to the theory of artistry, the artistry of a fine literature generally should account for about two aspects, external or physical and internal or content. The external artistry revolves around the aspect of language, the order of ideas, the choice of the roles, the background and time. The internal artistry is also about the effect and the purpose behind the creation of the work, which eventually leads to the good impression of the audience (Hazami Jahari, 2014). The portrait of the exquisiteness or the artistry of a work can be judged by the words and verses composed by the poet in his distinctive design by using all branches of the language knowledge such as *dilalah* (Connotation), *majaz* (Figure of speech), antonyms, synonyms, *muqabalah* (Comparison), *jinās* (Counterparts), and so on (Qatt, 1988). Clearly, poets use whatever means possible including *balaghah* (eloquence) to produce works that have an aesthetic impression.

### **Background Imam Shafi'i**

He is Muhammad ibn Idris ibn al-'Abbas bin Uthman bin Shafi bin al-Saib bin Ubayd bin Abd Yazid bin Hashim bin Abd al-Muttalib bin Abd Manaf (Asbahani, 1974). He descended from Bani Hashim by relating with the Prophet SAW in his fourth grandfather, Abd Manaf. Sayyid (1984: 24) states that his surname is Abu Abdullah, while his *kunya* (nickname) is al-Muttalib, al-Qurashi, al-Hashimi, and al-Makki. He was born in 150 A.H. (767 A.D.) in Gaza, Palestine. He had the opportunity to acquire knowledge from many scholars of his time. His teachers came from diverse backgrounds. Among them are experts in Hadith, Shi'ite, and Mu'tazili affiliates, and scholars of Mazahib who are of different opinions. This is a key factor for his credibility in all branches of knowledge. Rabi bin Sulayman, one of Imam Shafi'i students in Baghdad, reported he died on a Friday night, on the last day of the month of Rajab 204 A.H. (819 A.D.) in Egypt at the age of 54 years old (Nawawi, 2007).

### **Poetry in the Arab Society**

In terms of terminology, Qudamah bin Jafar defines poetry as words that have *wazn* (Weight) and *Qafiyah* (Rhyme) along with meaning (Ihsan Abbas, 1983). This definition is detailed by Ibn Rashiq (1981) that a poem consists of four things namely expression, *wazn*, purpose, and *Qafiyah*. There are also words that have *wazn* and *Qafiyah* but are not considered poetry, such as verses of the Quran, the Hadith of the Prophet SAW and so on, because they are not created for that purpose.

Poetry is very deep in the hearts of the Arabs because of its position as the third source of Arabic literature after the Quran and Sunnah. The Arabs record every piece of their life history in poetry. When the Prophet began his Da'wah (Islamic preaching), it was not strange that he was accused of being a poet. Umar bin al-Khattab said, "One's best compositions are of verses of poetry, delivered to meet his needs. They are able to soften the hearts of the noble and turn the hearts of the wicked." One of the Abbasid Caliphs, Abd- al-Malik bin Marwan, always reminded his children's literature teacher to teach them poetry for a nobler life, distant from human trials (Ibn Abd Rabbih, 1983).

### Imam Shafi'i Poetry

Imam Shafi'i had his own view regarding poetry. That is evident when he said, "A poem is the type of words that is arranged. Some are good and some are bad." (Zuhayli, 1996). However, he declined to pursue his interest in poetry and decided to pursue the field of Fiqh. Most of his poems are focused on wisdom, advice and guidance, which are presented in a form that is easily understood, summarised, and in simple words and clear sentences. There is no long qasidah (Poems) because the poems are spontaneously delivered. In order to defend the legacy of the Arabic literature, especially poetry, scholars have worked diligently collecting the verses of Imam Shafi'i poetry to be studied and analysed.

### Aesthetics in the Poems of Patience of Imam Shafi'i

Patience is a very important trait in a person. According to Jeannot Abdul Karim and Khairul Anuar Rezo (2012), among the values contained in the Malay community's social norms of behaviour are patience, respect and gratitude, of which they are catalysts for harmony and unity. Patience is a praiseworthy trait that teaches people how to face calamities with complete courteousness. This disciplining is important because blessings and calamities come from Allah SWT. His gracious has the only authority to give blessings to his slaves and also to take it back. Patience is divided into three types; patient when doing compulsory and obligatory matters, patient in leaving forbidden and prohibited matters, and patience when facing calamities (Badr 2001). Patience is *wajib* (Mandatory) by *ijtima'* (consensus), and because faith is divided into two parts, half of it is patient and the other half is gratitude (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1996). One of Imam Shafi'i's poems about patience:

a. Shitaywi (2003) cited the poem verses by Imam Shafi'i:

وَلَا تَجْرَعُ لِحَادِثَةِ اللَّيَالِي      فَمَا لِخَوَادِثِ الدُّنْيَا بَقَاءُ

Interpretation:

Do not be distressed by the disasters that always strike, because the calamities of this world are not permanent.

The term *Jaz'* in the poem literally means to cut a rope in the middle (Abyari 1985), which is an antonym for patience (Razi, 1999). In terms of terminology, it means the expression of sorrow following the impact of the disaster that strikes (Abu Bilal al-'Askari 1990). *Jaz'* is more specific than *huzn* (Sorrow) because it is not only about grief but also about the disturbed emotions and somebody's demoralisation when facing of calamities (Raghib al- Asfahani 1992).

*Hadithah* means accident, while *al-Layali*, even though it only means night, but what it really means is night and also day. Its aesthetic value, Imam Shafi'i used *majaz mursal* (Synecdoche) that contains '*alaqah juziyyah* (Partial correlation) because the night is considered a part of the day. The selection of *jaz'* to associate it with *al-Layali* is quite accurate, because if people were to be tested by disaster at night, they would be more anxious. At this time, people are usually less prepared to face any bad possibilities as they are resting and about to sleep. Allah SWT says in surah al-Saba (78: 11):

And We have made the night (with its darkness) as a dress (that protects).

Because man fears the events that happens at night, thus, it is very appropriate when Allah SWT honours the night of al-Qadr, where some of its characteristics, according to Abu Muslim, it is freed from strong winds, lightning, and so forth (Razi, 1999). The appearance of *Hadithah* in a singular form as *muḍaf* (Annex) to *al-Layali*, and *Hawaadith* (Accidents) in a plural form to *al-Dunya* shows that

man does not need to feel anxious with temporary night calamities. This is because the calamities of this world would not last. It is also observed the *musnad* (Backed) of لحوادث الدنيا comes before the *musnad ilayh* (Backed to) بقاء with the aim of *takhsis* (Specialisation) because of the temporary character of the world. This life is temporary pleasure, entertainment, food, and drink (Qurtubi, 1964).

b. Bahjat (1999) quotes this poem by Imam Shafi'i:

فَإِنَّ رُسُوبَ الْعِلْمِ فِي نَفَرَاتِهِ      تَصَبَّرْ عَلَى مُرِّ الْجَفَا مِنْ مُعَلِّمٍ  
تَجَرَّعَ ذَلِكَ الْجَهْلُ طُولَ حَيَاتِهِ      وَمَنْ لَمْ يَذُقْ مُرَّ التَّعَلُّمِ سَاعَةً

Interpretation:

Be patient with the teacher's strictness. Indeed, the treasures of knowledge are contained in his unpleasant actions.

For anyone who does not taste the bitterness of acquiring knowledge, he will taste the humiliation of ignorance all his life.

Imam Shafi'i showed that the word *tasabbar* does not only mean patience, but also connotes swallowing the bitterness, facing difficulties, and the need for practice. Eventually, with repetition, it will turn into a habit (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1989). This choice of word is very accurate, because on the same stanza, he mentioned that the attitude of a teacher is somewhat bitter. At the same time, students similarly need to take time to adapt to the attitudes of teachers that will eventually create a feeling of interest. The study by Lee (1991), as quoted by Abu Noor Erma & Leong Kwan Eu (2014), found that interest and attitude play an important role in influencing the student's achievement and willingness to learn. This will result in the students excelling in the matters they are interested to study.

*Talim*, as defined by Syed Hossein Nasr (1997), is the process of transferring knowledge from a teacher to his students (Ab. Halim Tamuri & Mohamad Khairul Azman, 2010). More specifically, Hilah (2012) defines it as any activity that affects the students in any way that makes it easier for them to learn. This shows that it can happen anywhere and it is not limited to the classroom only. Therefore, anyone can act as a *muallim* (Teacher). Hence, Imam Shafi'i chose this word, displayed in the form *nakirah* (Indefinite noun), to show that students should be patient with the difficulties of any teacher for the sake of knowledge. Teachers play an important role in teaching, which is not only to impart knowledge to students, but they are also responsible for improving their own mastery and influence. *Rusub* (Precipitation) means to reach or sink to the bottom (Ibrahim Mustafa et al., 1980). This reflects how dreadful a student's suffering is in acquiring knowledge just to get its gist.

*Yadhuq* (Tastes) in the second stanza is in the form of *majaz*, which means to test something like food by tasting it (Ibn Faris, 2002). This act necessitates the use of mouth, and if the food were unpleasant, it could be thrown away. For the term ignorance, Imam Shafi'i chose the word *tajarru'*, which means sipping liquids such as drinks in a hurry or all at once (Ibn Manzur, 1993). In that way, it makes what is drunk to go directly into the stomach. This means that learning difficulties is a matter that can be controlled, in contrast to ignorance that might be difficult to treat.

This advice of Shafi'i Imam came from his own experience, that he himself was obedient to his teachers. During his lifetime, he had the chance to study with Muslim bin Khalid al-Zanji, Sufyan bin 'Uyaynah, Sa'id bin Salim al-Qaddah, and Dawud bin 'Abdul Rahman al-'Attar while he was in Makkah. Among his teachers in Madinah were Malik bin Anas, Ibrahim ibn Sa'd al-Ansari, and Ibrahim bin Yahya. While he was studying in Yemen, his teachers were Umar bin Abi Salamah, Yahya bin Hassan and Hisham bin Yusuf al-Qadi. Once, Imam Shafi'i travelled to Yemen to seek work. As he was already popular in Makkah and Madinah, he was appointed to a small position in the judiciary. The Yemeni government was impressed with him, and that made his popularity spread. When Sufyan bin 'Uyaynah knew about his popularity, he advised Imam Shafi'i, "The news of your popularity has reached me. You are actually doing your best, but still not as complete as how it was entrusted by Allah SWT to you. You should consider revising it again" (Ibn 'Adiyy, 1997). The advice had left a lasting impression on Imam Shafi'i, so much that he left his position.

At the beginning, Imam Shafi'i was interested in poetry and Arabic history. But, later he changed his interest towards Fiqh. One of the causes of this change was his meeting with one of his teachers, Muslim bin Khalid al-Zanji on his way to study Arabic literature. Muslim said to him, "O young man, where did you come?" Imam Shafi'i answered, "From Makkah." Muslim asked again, "Where is your house?" He replied, "In the village of al-Khif." After that, Muslim asked "From which *qabilah* (Tribe) are you from?" He replied, "Abd Manaf." Muslim said, "Bakh! Bakh! (An expression of a positive sense of surprise) Allah has glorified you in this world and the hereafter. It would be wonderful if you use your capabilities in fiqh" (Nawawi, 2007).

c. Shitaywi (2003) cites these verses by Imam Shafi'i:

مَنْ يَتَمَنَّى الْعُمُرَ فَلْيَدْرِغْ      صَبْرًا عَلَى فَقْدِ أَحِبَّائِهِ

Interpretation:

Anyone who expects a long life, he should endure the loss of his beloved.

According to Abu al-Ahmad bin Yahya, *tamanniyy* means speech to oneself, which can either be expressed or spoken in the heart about things that happened or not. It can also be defined as making a request to Allah SWT (Azhar, 2001). Its use is perfect because the goal line of humans in having a long life may be submitted only to God Almighty. This couplet also has the element of *Ijaz al-hadhf* when the word *al-'umr* is featured without *Ism Sifah*. It should be known as *al-'umr al-Tawil*, which is eliminated for an overview.

The word *ادَّرَعَ* means wearing an armour. This reflects the enormity of the role of patience in one's self, to the degree where the one who is patient is believed to be secured in steel armour, and who is capable of defending himself from improper actions. According to Ibn Uthaymin (2003), there are people who feel as if Allah SWT is unjust towards them with these calamities. While their tongues utter harsh words and curses, their hands are slapping their faces, tearing their clothes or knocking their heads. Acts like these do not get rewarded, but instead spawn sins.

Imam Shafi'i has endured difficult moments in life when his father died soon after his birth, which made him grow as an orphan (Imami, n.d.). While he was studying in Madinah, his teacher Malik bin Anas passed away. Their relationship was very close because Shafi'i learned Imam Malik's book, *al-Muwatta'* and managed to memorise it in nine days. While he was reading *al-Muwatta'* in front of

Imam Malik, he, as the author, was impressed by the eloquence and fluency of Imam Shafi'i, despite his age at the time of only thirteen years old (Ibn 'Asakir 1995). Interestingly, his beloved teacher's death did not discourage him. After the martyrdom of Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i returned to Makkah. There, he began to establish a new methodology for its own *madrakah*. It turned out that his travels in seeking knowledge were employed to gather the hadith and Fiqh of wide views that were utterly countless.

In actual fact, a man's lifespan is prescribed by Allah SWT since he is in the womb. When death comes, it will not be delayed or rushed for a second. However, extreme grief over the loss of a loved one can lead to extreme depression that eventually will lead to the decline of a person's health. If this situation is allowed to continue, it could bring the risk of death. A review by Intan Nurhaila Meor Safari et al. (2011) shows the state of social change contributes to the existence of an increase in health problems, including mental psychological and illnesses. All of this is said to be causing mental stress, depression, and anxiety.

d. Shitaywi (2003) cites the verses of poems by Imam Shafi'i:

وَمَا الدَّهْرُ إِلَّا هَكَذَا فَاصْطَبِرْ لَهُ      رَزِيَّةَ مَالٍ أَوْ فِرَاقُ حَبِيبٍ

Interpretation:

Time is only as such, face it with patience, the calamity is on wealth or a separation from a loved one.

The word *Dahr* means a long period (Zabidi 1984). It also means the date and time that is part and parcel of a man's life (Shahatah h.th.). The phrase (وما الدهر إلا هكذا) contains *qasr*, where the poet specifies that are no other forms of life, except how we see it. In other words, calamities on the property and separation of a loved one are faced by everyone in this world. *Istabara* is synonymous with *sabara* (patience), but it is more robust than that, without the feeling of boredom or anger (Ibn 'Ashur, 1984). This means that people who are tested with both the aforementioned, should strengthen their spirits, be determined, and not to blame fate.

The mentioning of *رزية مال* first and before *فراق حبيب* is because it has its own purpose. There are at least five verses in the Quran that talk about jihad that precedes the matter of the wealth as compared to life. According to Sharbasi (2004), man loves more and is more obsessed in spending his wealth as compared to his soul. In addition, people should gradually start with the jihad of wealth. Here, Imam Shafi'i recommends that man should discipline himself to be patient, starting with the loss of wealth the separation from the loved ones.

Imam Shafi'i is no exception in facing of the mentioned calamities. After his father died, he lived with his mother, Fatimah al-Azdiyyah in poverty. However, due to his strong spirit, when he was two years old, his mother moved to Hijaz and then to Makkah. His mother took this step in order to preserve the traceability of his offspring (Hamawi 1993). Other than that, Imam Shafi'i admitted that his stomach was never full for sixteen years, as a belly full of food will make the body heavy, cause sleepiness, harden the heart, reduce ingenuity, and weaken the strength to worship (Ibn Abi Hatim 2003). This was maybe due to a very simple life coupled with unparalleled piety.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, we can conclude that:



- i. The poetry of Imam Shafi'i contains the words *صبر*, *اصطبر*, and *تصبر*, each of which contains its own purposes. The beauty of poetry is revealed when every verb in the phrase comes differently according to the purpose and khita (Speech).
- ii. The poetry skills of Imam Shafi'i are apparent in the verses of the poems by a high aesthetic value, as he was an authorised scholar of Arabic, and is recognised as being authoritative by his partners, teachers, and students.
- iii. The backgrounds and experiences of life are among the factors pushing Imam Shafi'i's poetry to express loads of wisdom and instruction.
- iv. Imam Shafi'i's authority in jurisprudence made his poetry parallel with the objectives of Islam and certain branches of knowledge.
- v. Educators could take the verses of Imam Shafi'i poetry for *istishhad* (proofs) as an addition for the examples that are obtained from available reference books.

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