

The Tell-tale Patterns of Fantasy and History in *Dastan* Narratives: A Dialectical Perspective in *Hoshruba*

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ABSTRACT: *Despite the absurdly demonstrated actions and events of Dastan narratives, there is a dialectical relationship between reality and imagination or between history and fantasy. The ongoing conflict between the enigmatic and mythical characters of Hoshruba and the historically real figures creates a compelling narrative in Dastan. This epic story depicts the adventures of Amir Hamza and his commanders across various locations of Indo-Islamic civilization. Amir Hamza and his allies wage war against the entirely fictional characters of Hoshruba, a realm filled with powerful magic and mesmerizing enchantments. As a result, the dynamic relationship between these opposing forces leads to a series of exciting actions and events. Amid the brutal battles, there is also a captivating love story between the brave heroes of Amir Hamza's camp and the alluring princesses of Hoshruba. These romances are fostered through seduction, cunning tricks, and clever traps. The research aims to examine how the interplay of imagination contributes to the Hoshruba narrative discourse and influences the course of events in the overall structure of Dastan, Hoshruba, the Land and Tilism.*

Keywords: Dynamics and Dialectics, Narrative Discourse, Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism, Interplay of Imagination.

Introduction

The term “dialectic,” as defined in various dictionaries, refers to the art of examining or discussing the truth of opinions, finding out what is true by considering opposing theories, and understanding how the two aspects relate to each other and influence each other in a situation. In philosophy, dialectics has a broader meaning, as the Greek philosopher Plato demonstrates in his Republic. Raymond Williams traces the origin and development of dialectics in Western epistemology, describing it as the art of formal thought or discourse designed to discover the truth of all things through disputation. “Within the philosophical tradition, the interdependent relationship between essence and existence is also dialectical in nature and shapes the nature of interpretation in Western discursive practices”. (Williams 107) Ontologically, dialectics is a dialogic process, a scientific method in philosophy, in which two opposing or parallel approaches are contrasted and cross-examined to demonstrate the productive value of their coexistence in a particular context. Plato's Republic is an example of a dialectical method in Greek philosophy, which uses a dialogue between two parallel propositions to arrive at the truth. (Silverman 200)

Plato's sequel to Republic establishes a rich heritage in the Greek philosophical tradition of the dialectical method, which involves a dialogue between two opposing propositions in the search for truth. Julie A. Maybee explains that the “Greek philosopher Plato” presents his philosophical argument through a dynamic exchange or discussion, typically involving Socrates as a participant and his interlocutors as the other people or groups with whom he engages in conversation. (Julie 71) However, it is in the hands of the German philosopher Hegel that the concept of dialects has been qualitatively theorized with much thought-provoking illustration. Besides his purely philosophical investigations and theories, Hegel's philosophical analysis of Greek tragedy is also dialectically presented to draw a coexistence of equally justifiable approaches, notions, collisions, and positions (Drakakis & Liebler 201).

Hegel, before Marx, strengthened his discourse through his dialectical method but, at the same time, he debated upon the nature of imagination

dialectically in his philosophical discussions on the phenomenology of spirit, time-place union, modern subjectivism and skepticism. Why the dialectic of imagination in Hegel's philosophy is of fundamental character, Jennifer N. Bates discovers it [the dialectic of imagination] "as the dovetailing of space and time, as the inward zing and externalizing of intuitions, recollections, and meaningful reproductions, that sets the scene for phenomenological existence and its history." (Bates 2012)

To understand the intricate connection between literature and the world in which it exists, one can argue that the entire universe and our reality; which includes civilizations, societies, and cultures; is viewed through the lens of opposing forces, refutations, controversial politics, and internal paradoxes. Furthermore, various forms of oxymoron, irony, and contradiction contribute to this understanding. Literature, regardless of whether it is based on social psychological realism, dystopian themes, or ideologically popular modes of creation, serves primarily to reflect extraordinary, unconventional, and abnormal human conditions, behaviors, and actions. By exploiting clashes and contradictions, it presents the reader with ambiguous situations, dilemmas, and predicaments and thus engages in a dialogic and polemical narrative discourse. Within these structurally established counterforces, a dialectical relationship exists that allows the reader not only to decipher the nature of these clashes but also to discover unexpected new meanings for themselves through rationality. For instance, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* reflects a dialectical relationship between the promisingly opposite principles, the Apollonian and the Dionysian (Cox 09).

In order to substantiate the themes of resistance, transgression, and nemesis, human imagination has as evidently, as radically, played a high-yielding role in discursive practices. Behind the tragic dynamics of Greek tragedy, arguably, it is the synthetic power of human imagination that personifies the character-destiny or the hubris-nemesis altercations through dialectical mimesis (Wittbecker 71). Besides, the literary genres existing in the entire tradition of literature(s) are the human experiences diversely re-presented through an interdependent and intersubjective relationship between the author's imagination and (most often) the given

circumstance of human life. Though an imaginatively artistic picture of life conditioned with ‘laws of probability and possibility,’ (Winkler 117) literature does rely on human emotions, events, and experiences from real life for establishing a sustainable verisimilitude. Similarly, without the creative workings of imagination, the writers fail to foreground their desired themes and techniques through the kinetics of fictional experiences. It is through this faculty of mind the writers cultivate their ideologies and highlight different cultural experiences by applying a befitting art of characterization may there be a talismanic, anthropomorphic, or allegorical setting. In short, whether it is the symbolic, psychological, or gothic nature of any other popular fictional text, the synchronizing role of creative imagination makes the juxtaposition of fantasy and reality possible in the narrative discourse of fictional texts.

Imagination, as a matter of fiction, has to ensure culturally popular creative experiences since it works dialogically to consolidate a dialectical relationship between fantasy and reality. The phenomenon of fantasy, however, is also considered as opposite to the empirical conditions of human beings (Westkott 77); therefore, it connotes an uncertain signification in literary experiences with reference to contemporary modes of interpretation; it “[fantasy] is a good taste for the fundamental transaction between writer and reader because it asserts that both writer and reader know to be false. Rather than telling a story that could happen in the present or could have happened in the historical past, a fantasy writer offers an explicitly impossible narrative” (Attebery 91).

This is, structurally, an abstract understanding of fantasy—a rationalist approach, but denies the make-believe dynamics of metaphysics and supernatural in the theologically fantasized popular narratives. Since all signs and symbols of fantasy are politically motivated, the culturally entertaining kinship between the reader and the writer, what Žižek thinks, is more intersubjective than critical (Žižek & Wood 12). In the societies which lack skepticism, dogmatism overwhelmingly interpellates the subjects to control their explanations and interpretations of literary texts. In the presence of this ideological order— “an endoxal thinking—a

common sense or public opinion,” as observed by Allan (2004, 89) in his study on Roland Barthes, all linguistic, grammatical or semiotic relationships are mythically naturalized. The other than established meanings are only possible when the interaction of readers with literary texts is not ideologically harmonized. Most of the literary texts take their convenient birth out of this cultural logic or endoxal thinking of their cultural contexts. For example, the epics and legends of tribal culture echoed the very truth that was embedded in their fictional experiences overtly or covertly.

Attebery is right in his approach when the epistemological space for the dialectical reasoning is denied to the public. A philosophically critical interpretation of a fictional text, on the other hand, shows its hermeneutical concerns with its intended ontological structures—the basic suspicious questions what Barthes has based on why, when and where that are applied to decode a literary or fictional text in his *S/Z* (Selden 89). This debate can further be explained through the dialectical relationships between fantasy and social reality expressed by the romantic poet John Keats in his poem “Ode to a Nightingale”: “Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well, As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf.” (Keats Np) Agreeably, across the globe, the human conscious is determined through the consequential fabrication of “deceptive elves” if not pre-existing in discursive practices. So, either it is fancy or fantasy, it has the potential to “cheat” common human beings including creative consciousness “so well” if the elusive figures, freaks, ghosts, phantasmic phantoms and “deceiving elves” are entertained through the practical application of a talismanic trance—Coleridge’s theory, “Willing Suspension of Disbelief” (Kivy 11).

From a dialectical perspective, it can be argued that despite the ideological connections between fantasy and metaphysics, the tangible concerns of the physical world are constantly in conflict or dialogue with what is perceived as metaphysical and supernatural. An objective attempt to critically analyze popular fictional texts containing supernatural elements ensures the inclusion and thorough examination of opposing concepts and the interplay between physical and metaphysical narrative

patterns. Creative writers, as carriers of a particular system of meaning - a semiotic and symbolic framework that already exists in their cultural narratives - must adhere to the basic principles of complementarity that underline the significant value of different tropes and symbols in fables and allegories. To enhance the fictional character of their stories, these novelists cleverly use these figurative and narrative additions. From a narratological perspective, the allegorical representation of the two dialectical dualities – hare and tortoise – in the fable “Pride Hath a Fall” is not a matter of belief, but rather a structural necessity.

Anthropomorphic narratives mark their validity in popular fables and allegories, insofar as they become dialectical in animating different approaches and, in doing so, they prove to be an integral part of fictional realism. On account of these reasons—the structural necessities and polarities, the dialectics in literary criticism, has proved to be as much a matter of structural necessity as of fictional reality.

During the imaginative period of Greek epics, the stories were rooted in the basic truths of Greek mythology. As an integral part of these stories, mythology was used to create a framework of supernatural authority and organization. Yet the conflict between preordained fate and human will in Greek tragedies serves as a resonant expression of the interplay between imagination and reason. The inherent value of imagination, even in Homer's epic tales, seems to rely heavily on misfortunes that are primarily human in nature. Although the characters he portrays are entirely fictional, the incorporation of everyday realism remains an indispensable aspect of his fictional world. (De Jong 35).

After the phenomenological expansion of the Western Renaissance, the literary texts of the Elizabethan era identify and determine the cultural paradoxes - the ancient thesis - Christian faith and its opposite - freedom. Marlowe's tragedies illustrate this imaginative ambivalence through a dialectical interdependence and unity of theocentrism and homocentrism, determinism and free will, protagonism and antagonism, or in other words, between submission and emancipation. Similarly, Milton's epic “Paradise Lost” incorporates the dynamism of Christian imagination due

to a dialectically drawn equation between imagination and humanity's religious history. Historically, with the rise of religious teachings, the metaphorical, metonymic, and symbolic systems in literary texts were heavily influenced by these teachings and ultimately the secular tradition of fantasy remained on the margins of humanity. In the first place, religion gave humanity awareness of the cycle of virtues and the devil; The former reflects his ideological connection with God Almighty and the latter structurally connects people with Lucifer, *Iblees*, or Satan.

The equation between two eternal cycles has long been recognized in religious cultures as either a structural reality or a structural necessity. From a pragmatic perspective, the distinction between vice and virtue in literary works symbolizes an ongoing struggle aimed at deterring individuals from acts of transgression and subversion. This argument, when viewed from a philosophical perspective, gains credibility when examining the plight of characters such as Faust or Doctor Faustus, whose stories often revolve around the theme of the Turn Nemesis.

To support our theory on the dialectics and dynamics of imagination, it can be argued that, regardless of any ideological implications in the dramatized and fictionalized narratives of Faust or other fictional texts, the presence of normative patterns of imagination is the basis of their cultural narrative and psychological dynamics. Whether depicted through mimetic (dramatic) or diegetic art (narrative), the literary imagination serves to idealize and amplify the contradictory forces at play—the acts of transgression and their consequences, the downfall.

The thematic connections between religion and literature are as old as the history of human submission to the ideological desire of grand narratives and myths. Filmer observes explicit connections between religion and fantasy in literary texts and holds that “Religious fantasy in literature enables us to view the mundane world in a new light, seeing in it the wonders which caused the ancestors of humanity to make up stories about the existence of gods who created the world and its inhabitants, and who might be in some way involved in the determination of human destiny” (52). Scholarly essays on the thematic kinship between religion and

literary experiences have been written in the book *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Religion* edited by Knight that incorporates almost all the salient features of this ideologically imaginative connection. Like other religious civilizations and societies, Indo-Islamic discursive practices, in the united Hindustan, too, incorporated Islamic ideals and ideas for ideological ends and the evil—the other had to be defeated antithetically to establish the age-old culturally narcissist manifestos, especially in the age of colonially hegemonic practices on local people.

During the reign of *Mughal* King Akbar from 1556 to 1605, his era was known for promoting cultural harmony and unity in Hindustan, despite rivalries with his enemies. Similar to other pre-capitalist periods, this period capitalized on its narrative diversity through the celebration of various cultural festivals and activities. During this period, Persianized courtly discourse began to incorporate the adventures of Amir Hamza in episodic form. The concept of caliphate played a dynamic role in merging the Arabic, Persian and Urdu versions of Amir Hamza's legendary stories, as the character and his adventures symbolized both the vast geographical extent and political intricacies of the region. As a result, the Muslim tradition of the *Dastan* narrative flourished both ideologically and aesthetically in the creative landscape of the *Mughals* and Muslim Hindustan. Regarding the origin and development of this genre, Murad states:

Regardless of where the story first came from, it continued to be a popular *dastan* for centuries, existing in multiple languages across the Indian subcontinent and Arabia, traveling storytellers carrying it across borders in Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Turkish, Pashto, and Hindi. The Persian version was finally committed to paper in a massive, illustrated tome, probably in 1562, under the commission of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (about half of its remaining 100 pages are—of course—in the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum, the rest in Vienna). The Urdu version was printed in 1801 and translated much, much later by Musharraf Ali Farooqi in 2007. (Murad 2003)

Murad's article highlights the narrative significance of dastan culture in the Islamic empire(s). We can easily infer from different readings on Dastan how dialectically the fantasy of one culture pervades into another and eventually becomes the structural necessity of its imagination. (Murad 31) The ideological links among Muslim cultures, across ethnic boundaries, facilitated the dastan to become the most celebrated narrative practice in the pre and postcolonial Hindustan. In his "Introduction" to *Hoshruha*, the Land and the *Tilism*, Farooqi discovers the narrative connections between history and the Indo-Islamic fantasy—the tradition of dastan in the following words:

The Adventures of Amir Hamza originated in Arabia in the seventh century to commemorate the brave deeds of Prophet Muhammad's uncle, Amir Hamza. In the course of its travels in the Middle East and Central Asia, this story incorporated many local fictions and histories and became an entirely fictitious legend. Then, sometimes between the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries, *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* found its way to India. (Farooqi 41)

Farooqi's "introduction" to the narrative classics of Hoshruha comprehensively explains and sums up the evolution of dastan—from Dastan-e-Amir Hamza to its mind-boggling sequel *Tilism-e-Hoshruha* in Hindustan. At the same time it highlights how the intertextual relations of dastan narratives intensify its ideological and empirical bindings with Persian and Arabic cultures. About the longitudinal and latitudinal acceptance of epic narratives of *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza* in Hindustan Marcus observes:

Although this version was written in the language of the Mughal Empire, the Muslim Empire that ruled over an area that stretched from what's now present-day Pakistan to as far south as Calcutta, the story predates the empire by a few hundred years. For while the Mughal empire was at its zenith of cultural enlightenment and achievement from the mid-15th century to the mid-17th century, it is claimed that versions of *The Adventures of Amir Hamza* have been told since as early as the seventh century CE.

Marcus' studies of dastan imply the substantial existence of the language of the The Mughal Empire played a significant role in promoting the development of *Dastan* culture in Hindustan. While the ideology behind this patronage has certain meanings, it is the cultural factors rooted in pre-capitalist modes of production, storytelling, and entertainment that have truly driven the promotion of *Dastan*. In a time before the daily lives of common people were dominated by the fast-paced capitalist world, there were numerous opportunities for the people of Hindustan to come together and tell stories, both long and succinct, that encompassed their cherished themes and aesthetics. *Dastan's* existence is not tied to the rigid clock tower schedules that were prevalent in most colonized states. Instead, it represents a time and space deeply rooted in agriculture and celebrating harmony and unity among the ordinary people of Muslim cultures. Before they were compiled and published by the Naval Kishore Press in Lucknow during the British Raj, *Dastan* tales were passed down orally through generations within the Indo-Islamic civilization and celebrated. This tradition continued until the early 20th century when the final episode was composed and printed, coinciding with a period of cultural crisis in colonial capitalist Hindustan. Without cultural togetherness, agrarian zeal and zest and of course to much extent, the egalitarian approach, the people of Hindustan would have stayed unable to materialize their dastans into what Dalrymple considers as “an unprecedented size, absorbing whole oral libraries of Indian myths and legends” (91).

Written in 46 volumes, the epic tradition of dastan has a justification for such a massive narrative structure of *razm* (battle), *bazm* (gathering), *sahiri* (sorcery), *husn-o-ishq* (beauty and love), enchantment, talisman and trickery (*ayyari*) in the ideological contexts of Indo-Islamic discursive practices (Khan 15). The entire voluminous corpus of dastan revolves around the legendary character Amir Hamza who consolidates the major events through his insightful decisions. His character has been delineated dialectically for the sake of fictionality itself and of course for the interest of the Hindustani audience or readership. An unending chain of mind-boggling events and mighty characters in dastan necessitated an epic hero with matchless skills and decisive actions.

Evidently, the character of Amir Hamza has served this ideological purpose befittingly. Well-known in Islamic history, he has bravely participated in battles against his enemies in Mecca and sacrificed his life in battlefield. Of all the epic heroes in the early Islamic history who devoted their lives for the cause of Islam, it is Amir Hamza who has proved to be the centre of interest among the *dastango* of Arabian and Persian tradition and lastly among the narrators of pre-colonial and colonial united Hindustan. It is owing to his fiction-friendly persona that he has been embraced openheartedly from the very first episode of ‘dastan to the last dastan-go of Delhi Mir Baqir 1850-1928’ (Farooqi 24). On account of the fictional space in his character, he has been relentlessly celebrated in the colossal narrative aesthetics of dastan. His chivalrous presence in dastan not only does result into the gravity and velocity of events but also cultivates the dynamics of Islamic fantasy in narrative experiences.

For an endless chain of mighty villains, the charismatic character of Amir Hamza has proved to be a fictional character of historical importance. Whatever the reason behind the origin of this *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza* may be, the dynamic character of human imagination has made the grandeur of epic narrative possible in the tell-tale tradition indo-Islamic civilization. Regarding the character of Amir Hamza Murad writes:

One version of its origin story claims that the hero Amir Hamza was based on Hamza bin Abdul Muttalib, a man renowned for his bravery and valour, the uncle of the prophet Muhammad. The historical Hamza died in 625AD, and some say it was his courage that caused storytellers of the region to create this fantastic tale about him, adding familiar characters and folk tales to the story. Another source claimed the dastan—a heroic epic that was the heart of the ancient oral tradition, with Persian stories being popular in Arabia even during the advent of Islam—was created by seven wise men of the Abbasid dynasty in 750AD to cure the delirium of one of their caliphs. It seems that back then, the wise knew and respected how much power good stories can have. (Murad 2003)

Being an epic hero of a narrative age, the historical personality of Amir Hamza, has an endless fictional appeal for his audience across the sectarian barriers. It is his chivalrously characterized attributes in dastan that differentiate him from his historical self. History, as a matter of fact, relies on historical causes and effects whereas fiction based on fantasy is often conditioned with supernaturally structured myths and plots. Dialectically, the dastan hosts a harmonious blend of history and fiction, religious and secular norms, ideological sanctities and sacrileges, taboos and transgressions, traditional Islamic and local Hindustani cultural values which make it a diversely intertextual epic of 'contesting values.' "The plurality of cultural values and traditions depicted in the narratives," concludes Shirazi "makes it a hybrid of contesting values and traditions (19). Between these contesting values also, marks the gravity of dialectics endorsing the possible conflicts and clashes. From the very outset of the dastan *Hoshrubā*, the dynamics of the narrator's imagination are expressed in the following words: "The deft fingers of narrators weave this splendid legend with the golden thread of sorcery and spread it out thus, before marveling eyes" (Farooqi 33).

The opening lines of the first chapter of *Dastan* present a compelling exploration of fantasy. In *Dastan Hoshrubā's* narrative, there is a manifestation of dialectical imagination that shows the interplay of history and fantasy. This convergence serves to glorify a series of macabre events and love situations. As the protagonist, Amir Hamza, breaks away from reality, his fictional persona emerges as a beloved and gallant figure who embarks on an extensive journey that spans numerous pages through the subcontinent's storytelling traditions. The story begins with Emperor Naushervan's dream, a fantastic vision that heralds the invasion of the Empire and the accidental birth of Amir Hamza in Mecca.

Hearing the auspicious news, Naushervan sent Buzurjmehr to Mecca in anticipation of Hamza's birth to declare the boy the emperor's protégé. On the day Hamza was born to the chieftain of a tribe, two other boys, named Amar and Muqabil were also born in Mecca. Buzurjmehr predicted from occult foreknowledge that they would be Hamza's trusted

companions. He foretold that Amar would become a devious trickster and Muqabil a matchless archer (Farooqi 33).

The paragraph clearly shows that the beginning of the epic story is linked to the birth of Amir Hamza in Mecca. This birth symbolizes the desire to bring to life the narrative dynamics in the unfolding events. The emotional and poetic beginning of the story sets the stage for the imaginative narrative in “Hoshrubā, the Land and Tilism.” Emperor Naushervan, also known as Naushervan Adil, is a historical figure known for promoting justice in Persia in the mid-6th century AD. However, in *Dastan-e Amir Hamza* he is portrayed as Amir Hamza's father-in-law (Farooqi 429). This relationship is purely fictional, as Persian kings maintained a distance from social interactions and Islamic teachings in the early days of Islam. Nevertheless, these fictional connections bring together characters of royal descent. The ideological significance of the connection between these two characters lies in how the storytellers of Hindustan idealized their historical connections with the Arab and Persian realms of power. Viewed from a dialectical perspective, this relationship highlights the grandeur of the past Islamic civilization as the backdrop to the entire fictional narrative of the *Dastan*.

Hoshrubā, the name mentioned in the title *Dastan-e-Hoshrubā*, is a fictional empire of talismanic and gothic structures or sorcery and black magic built by Afrasiyab and his mighty sorcerers and sorceresses. Opposite to the powerful characters of Islamic civilization, these sorcerers and magicians have established their Faith—the antithesis parallel to the thesis of Islam that privileges the masters of sorcery and occult practices. We can see in the following paragraph how, in describing the eerie atmosphere of *Hoshrubā*, the narrative imagination of the storytellers works in the beginning of the grand story of *Hoshrubā*:

We are told that at the bottom of the untold past, a group of sorcerers met to create a *Tilism* or magical world by using occult sciences to infuse inanimate matter with the spirits of planetary and cosmic forces. In *Tilism*, the sorcerers exercised powers that defied the laws of God and the

physical world. They created illusions, transferred spirits between bodies, transmuted matter, made talismans, and configured and exploited Earth's inherent physical forces to create extraordinary marvels. Once *Tilism* was created, sorcerers named it Hoshruba. A sorcerer named Lachin ruled Hoshruba in its early years. Then one of his deputies, the cunning sorcerer Afrasiyab, deposed his master and usurped the throne. Afrasiyab became the Emperor of Hoshruba and Master of the *Tilism* (34).

This and the subsequent descriptions of different places and characters of Hoshruba occur differently from the cardinal happenings—the basic narrative structures signifying a parallel mode of narration. However, seen through a dialectical lens, their textual occurrences betray the criss-cross patterns of creatively dynamic imagination of dastangos. The paragraph also becomes evidence of Afrasiyab's contrivances and wicked accomplishments in his pursuit of the mighty powers of black magic. On account of his diabolically thrilling designs, the narrative actions are intensified: "Afrasiyab and his Sorceress wife, Empress Heyrat, ruled over Hoshruba's three regions: *Zahir* the Manifest, *Batin* the Hidden and *Zulmat*, the Dark" (Farooqi 37).

Amir Hamza has extraordinary powers, while Afrasiyab has the ability to move between three regions in Hoshruba. Whenever Afrasiyab's name is invoked in *Tilism*, his magic alerts him to the summons. His actions reflect his good fortune as he always carries the Book of *Sumeri* with him for protection. Afrasiyab commands magical birds, who obey him based on their training. The ongoing conflict between the two camps symbolizes the eternal struggle between virtue, represented by the Amir Hamza camp, and vice, embodied by the Afrasiyab camp. Both camps are presented with different hierarchies and commands. The followers of the true faith worship God, while the sorcerers in Hoshruba worship the false god *Laqa*. Commanders on both sides are characterized by a culture of respect and dignity that sets them apart from others.

The heroes of the Amir Hamza's camp participate in battles and wars to assert their truths, demonstrating bravery and loyalty to their names and beliefs. Surprisingly, despite their bravery on the battlefield, these heroes

fall in love with princesses from *Hoshruba*. The princesses return their love and are fascinated by the beauty and charm of true faith. The romantic aspirations of these heroes were taken up by the Hindustani dastangos and gave a dialectical dimension to their stories. This romantic involvement proves detrimental to *Afrasiyab* and *Laqa's* plans, as newcomers such as *Mahjabeen*, *Bahar* and *Mahrugh*-Magic Eye begin to question the ideological order of the *Afrasiyab* camp. As a result, *Hoshruba* becomes vulnerable to attacks from the powerful Amir Hamza camp, leading to the triumph of the True Faith in various parts of *Hoshruba*.

The ideological clash between opposite camps results in the dynamics of narrative imagination owing to which the plot of the dastan progresses with a felicitous velocity for the ultimate nemesis. With the progression of the story, the strategies have to be changed according to the situation. That is the reason the diviners in Amir Hamza's camp have to contrive new plans to counter the vile attacks of sorcerers and sorceresses:

The diviners drew lots of perception on the board of introspection and drew the horoscope, studied the manifestations of the year, the signs of the zodiac, and the lines of the geomancy. After intense study and much contemplation and reflection, they raised their heads and said, "O illustrious lord, Prince Badiuz Zaman is alive and safe. However, he is caught in the power of evil sorcerers and lies powerless and helpless in severe internment. The corpse that was brought before you was an effigy made of lentil flour. If you recite the most Great Name on water and sprinkle it on the corpse, the power of our Creator will be manifested" (10).

The previous discussion highlighted that *Hoshruba* presents a dialectical relationship between good and evil in its various sections. The portrayal of good and evil across a wide range of characters is a remarkable achievement. The narratives skillfully represent the semantic values associated with these characters, almost as if the entire semantic field revolves around their roles. This demonstrates the narrators' expertise, interest, and skill in character development. The selection and

arrangement of linguistic elements in her characterization reveal the depth of her imagination. For example, the word “Bahar” in Persian and Urdu both means “spring”. The character of Princess Bahar is aptly designed to reflect the joyful and vibrant essence of spring in the subcontinent.

The next day when the Sovereign of the heavens appeared on the throne of the sky with his parasol of golden rays, the magic bugle was sounded for the march and the army started on its journey. Princess Bahar ascended her throne, bouquets were placed before her, a cloud shadowed the throne and a light pleasant drizzle followed her conveyance. As her throne passed by, flowerbeds sprang up and the flowers bloomed in greeting. Her attendants held a golden canopy above her head. Magic fairies appeared in the air and squirted each other with paints while singing the songs of Holi (p. 176).

The phrase "Sovereign of the Heavens" symbolizes Afrasiyab's draculous nature, as he exudes an atmosphere of impressive magical ability from his abode. As a character who embodies witchcraft, he turns out to be the height of human imagination. When Amir Hamza advances a thesis, dialectically speaking, he serves as a counterforce to all divine powers within the Hamza camp. Just as diabolical as Lucifer and Beelzebub, he maintains the vitality of his characters and drives the actions of this mythical empire. Although some princesses deviate from his plans and fall in love with brave heroes from the Amir Hamza camp, he is undeterred and successfully controls his anger. By creating this starkly contrasting figure, the entire thesis of Muslim fantasy in *Hoshrubā* is solidified. After mastering his influence over the sorcerers and sorceresses, he begins his mission, exercising his will according to the wishes of *Hoshrubā's* narrators. To withstand the challenges of the Muslim Empire's commanders and deceivers, he strengthens his occult arts with unwavering confidence in his knowledge of black magic.

Having strong conviction in his resourceful *zambil* and other preternaturally operating appliances, he can venture into haunting and perilous situations; he is, paradoxically, qualified in causing harassment to the young sorceresses and in a lively mood can frighten and intimidate

them; to reach his ends; he can blackmail them without any prick of conscience and in rage or revenge; he is as eager as a predator in breaking the neck of his enemies malignantly. Even, in violating and transgressing the religious and gender boundaries, as Pirzada (2017) observes, he will never be ashamed of his deeds. He makes the best use of all the supernatural elements bestowed upon him in his fights and tricks against his rivals. A short paragraph from the dastan *Hoshruha* covers the actantial value of his instruments:

Also among them, the cape of invisibility had such properties that when Amar wore it he could see everyone but none could see him. The Net of Ilyas had the miracle that it could carry a thing even if weighed millions of tons, and make it feel as light as a small stone. Wherever Amar raised Daniyal's Tent and took shelter underneath, none was able to capture him, and anyone who entered it was caught and hung upside down. And when he wore the dev-jama, it changed seven colours from green to red to yellow et cetera. (p. 11)

The paragraph is a vivid manifestation of Islamic fantasy since it reflects Amar's spiritually productive connection with the supernatural sources of power and domination. The miraculous chain of gifts that proves to be a strong defensive wall against his enemies includes Net of Ilyas, Daniyal's Tent, the Greatest Name, Cape of invisibility, Water Flask, Conch Shell and Egg of Oblivion, etc. and, of course (22) The concept of dialectical irony discussed by Brown aims to establish an objective truth freed from the unbalanced structure of reality. The symbolic meaning of the fictionalized elements attributed to Amar Ayyar disappears alongside the narrator's one-dimensional truth, paradoxically undermining the effectiveness of the opposing camps' occult practices such as amulets and charms. In an ideological sense, the dominant symbolic order in *Hoshruha* operates consciously or unconsciously, directly, or indirectly, through a series of events and actions.

The residents of *Hoshruha* strive to protect their magically constructed empire for fear of being overwhelmed by the ongoing war. However, the politics of the eternal binary comprising the sacred and the profane are

ideologically expressed through the Dastangos as they contradict the totalitarian intentions of the Apollonian Sacred Order. It is evident that the narrators understood the need to establish a strong binary relationship characterized by contradictory forces within the narratives in order for the dialectical dispute to have a meaningful existence. Lord *Laqa* and the Emperor of Hoshruba, Afrasiyab have stayed unassailable on account of their will to stay strong. Amar Ayyar, the central character and the custodian of the fictionally religious values, among the mighty tricksters of Amir Hamza camp, is a perfect antithesis to all witchcraft and other occult practices like sorcery, necromancy, wizardry, and spells of Hoshruba. Therefore, of consequential significance are the scuffles and confrontations between the sorcerers and sorceresses of *Hoshruba* and the master tricksters of Amir Hamza Camp. It is important to note that the narrators of *Dastan* fictional texts make best use of their creative or imaginative competence and performance in expressing the wizardry battles between Amar Ayyar and his opponents:

When Amar saw him coming, he shouted, “look who is behind you” Amar got closer and hit Sarsar with an egg of oblivion as she turned. He caught Sarsar in his arms as she sank unconscious to the ground and put and put her into the *zambil*. He tried to run away but the sorcerer was already on his head and recited a spell that made Amar’s feet stick to the ground (p. 320).

In the last sentence of this passage, Amar Ayyar is ambushed and falls into a trap. However, this trap is short-lived as his fellow con artists come to his aid, leading to his revival in the following episode. Likewise, Sarsar, the cleverest of all the trickster girls in Afrasiyab's camp, is outwitted by Amar Ayyar despite her valiant efforts. This use of tricks and entanglements in the narrative serves to maintain the characters' drive in their endeavors. The romantic escapades and conflicts continue until the end of Hoshruba. Through the use of the trick-and-trap narrative technique, the characters in Hoshruba remain engaged in their pursuits, with the dynamics of narrative imagination driving their motivations., the Land and the Tilism book 1.

Conclusion

Written in prose, the eight volumes of *Tilism-e-Hoshruba* serve as a magical sequel to the exciting adventures of the brave heroes of *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*. With its lively storytelling, this Dastan is one of the greatest epics in the world. Originally written in classical Urdu, it showcases the storytelling art of Hindustani storytellers known as dastangos (Nadeem, 2017). Through translations, it has not only become accessible to Western scholarship but has also found its way into the humanities departments of national universities. Each volume offers multiple levels of meaning and invites students to explore different avenues of research using different theoretical frameworks. Building on existing literary criticism of the Dastan tales, our study addresses the imaginative dialectics that bring to life the astonishing exploits and captivating romances of Hoshruba, the land of Tilism. In order to conduct our research dialectically, we considered it necessary to fuse philosophy and literary criticism. The outcome of our research has been extremely fruitful in uncovering the intricate interconnections within Hoshruba's narrative discourse

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