



مانده زان لعل ریزه لختي گرد  
هر يکي زان قراضه چيزي کرد  
A small round gem had remained of it, Each borrowed a thing from it,  
من از آن خرده چون گهر سنجي  
بر تراشيدم اين چنين گنجي  
From that tiny piece of jewelry, I carved out such a treasure  
تا بزرگان چو نقد کار کنند  
از همه نقدش اختيار کنند  
So the great men would see the work, And write its critiques in all accounts  
آنچ ازو نیم گفته بُد، گفتم  
گوهر نیم سفته را سفتم  
What was unsaid in it, I have said fully, I carved the half-carved gem  
وآنچ دیدم که راست بود و درست  
ماندمش هم بر آن قرار نخست  
What I saw true and proper, I kept on the first account  
جهد کردم که در چنين ترکیب  
باشد آرايشي ز نقش غريب  
I tried such in a composition, To be an order of the strange image  
باز جستم زنامه هاي نهران  
که پراکنده بود گرد جهان  
گفتمش گفتني که بپسندد  
نه که خود زیرکان بر او خندد  
I searched the hidden letters again, Which were cast around the globe  
I gave an account which would be accepted, Nothing the clever men would laugh about,  
(Nizami, 2005, p. 15)

With respect to the words of Nizami, it is possible to seek the origins of his stories, especially the ones quoted in 'the seven domes', in other literary works before his time and find the allegorical similarity and correspondence.

In investigating the origins of the story of Good and Evil developed by Nizami, we find a similar story in the 'Arabian Nights' entitled as 'Abughir' and 'Abusir' which corresponds in structure, development and purpose to the story of Thursday by Nizami as the clash of good and evil has been used in that story as well. In the story of Good and Evil, the dual clash manifests itself very well and even the symbol of 'tree' that is central to all cultures has two branches in the story. Evil blinds Good in the role of the devil and steals his natural essence. Perhaps, his blindness indicates his negligence as he had to lose his physical eyes to be able to open the eyes of his heart and soul.<sup>1</sup>

There are different views about the origin and source of the Arabian Nights<sup>ii</sup>. Some have considered that it has a Hindu origin in Mahabharata and Ramayana. Others have thought that it has an Arabic (probably Syrian and Egyptian) origin and some even think that it has been an offshoot of Hellenic fantasies which have been conveyed to Arabs through the Persians over the course of time. With regard to the Persian nature of the first story (i.e. the basic story), some have considered it to be rooted in Persian culture and the 'One Thousand Myths of Persia'. The book was first translated by Antoin Galland<sup>iii</sup> through a compilation of various oral and written sources and oriental stories. "In the following years, new translations of the Arabian Nights were presented. The last case was translated and published in French by Charles Mardus between 1899 and 1904." (Ghanipoor Malekshah et al. 2009, p. 63).

What is noteworthy here is the Persian translation of the Arabian Nights which is available now and the first translation was done by Abdul-Teyf Tasooji at the time of Mohammad Shah of Qajar dynasty in 1261 (Eghlidi, 2008, p. 11). The poems of the book were chosen and composed by Soroush Esfahani. He has been able to collect and include the best samples of Persian poetry from the books of great literary men in the story with a display of master skills (Mahjoob, 2004, p. 399).

Given the research which has been already performed, the scholars believe that the first basis of the Arabian Nights is the Persian book of 'One Thousand Myths' which has a Hindu origin and other stories have been added over time. Regardless of the reasons that led Nizami to express the story of 'Good' and 'Evil' in the Sandalgoon Dome in the words of the Chinese maid in this dome, this is one of the stories in which a false narration style has been used (Amiri Khorasani et al., 2008, p. 129). With the accurate and timely use of the element of mistake, the elimination of mistake and the punishment of the one committing the guilt, he has been able to complete the story in line with his objective.

The story quoted by the Chinese maid is about the clash between good and evil. These are the elements at war since the creation of Man in this world with the contrast of light and darkness. Such contrasts have been used commonly in stories and narrations and have been undoubtedly noted before and after Nizami (Ahmadnezhad, 1989, p. 44).

In the classification of such stories, the story of Good and Evil is the one which is known as the Traveler's Story, Good and Evil, or the Two Brothers. Such stories consist of two parts and the main point of the first part is the blindness of one character (that is, the good and virtuous protagonist of the story) (Omid Salar, 1991, p. 743).

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyze and examine the similarities between the story of Good and Evil from Nizami's Seven Domes and the story of Abughir and Abusir from the Arabian Nights to know whether these two stories are related or not, or whether they have the same origin.

### The synopsis of the story of Good and Evil of the Sandalwood Dome

Two young men named 'Good' and 'Evil' set out a journey and each prepare the foods for the journey. Good consumes his food unwisely but Evil keeps it.

این غله می درود و آن می کاشت  
خیر می خورد و شر نگه می داشت  
Good ate the food and Evil kept it, One reaped the harvest and one sowed,  
(Nizami, 2005, p. 243)

The two characters come across a hot and dry desert. The Good struggles with thirst as he has drunk his water and is about to die. He asks Evil for some water and gives his two fiery gems to Evil to have some water in return.

آتشم را بکش به لختی آب  
گفت: مردم ز تشنگی، دریاب  
Help, I am dying with thirst, he said, End my thirst with some water  
یا به همت بخش یا بفروش  
شربت می آب از آن زلال نوش  
A sherbet of water from that clear drink, Either sell or give with generosity  
گوهرم را به آب خود بنواز  
این دو گوهر در آب خویش انداز  
Drop these two gems in your water, Tune my life with your drink  
(Ibid, p. 245)

Nevertheless, Evil who is a sinister-looking and devilish man would give him water only to gouge out his eyes and, as Good prefers blindness to death, he acts unwisely again and leaves his eyes to Evil for some water. Evil gouges his eyes out, steals his clothes and jewels and abandons him bleeding without any water.

A nomadic Kurdish girl who is herding the cattle nearby hears his groans and comes to help him. He puts back his eyes which are still warm in the eye sockets and takes him home. The girl's father speaks of a tree whose branches heal blindness and epilepsy.

باز بایست کرد برگ می چند  
گفت کز شاخ آن درخت بلند  
He said from the branches of that tall tree, A few leaves must be pulled out,  
سودن آنجا و تاب ازو سندن  
کوفتن برگ و آب ازو سندن  
Rubbing the leaves to take the juice, Rubbing on to take its life  
یاقتی دیده روشنایی باز  
گر چنین مرهمی گرفتی ساز  
If you take such a medicine, Your eyes shall see the light again  
(Ibid, p. 250)

The Kurdish girl makes a medicine out of the branches of that tree, rubs on Good's eyes, and looks after him until he regains his eyesight. After this recovery, Good begins to serve the man and, when he sees his worthiness, he allows him to marry his daughter. Then, Good takes some of the healing leaves and travels back to his own homeland with the Kurdish girl. On his way, he cures a king's daughter who suffers from epilepsy and a Minister's daughter who has become blind with smallpox with the leaves of the healing tree. He marries both of them and gains abundant wealth and properties. After some time, Good comes across Evil and recognizes him. He orders that Evil must be brought to see him. When Good asks his name, he introduces himself as the annunciator.

ای خواهد سر تو بر تو گریست  
گفت خیرش: بگو که نام تو چیست؟  
The Good said, tell me thy name! Your head shall cry over your destiny  
در همه کارنامه ام هنری  
گفت نامم میسر سفری  
The name is the harbinger of journey, There are many arts in my possession  
(Ibid, p. 261).

Having recognized Evil, Good reminds him of what happened between them. Evil begs Good to forgive him as his name suggests that he cannot do anything except good deeds. Good forgives him but the Kurd kills him for his evil and sinister nature and takes back the jewels he had stolen to Good.

### The synopsis of the story of Abughir and Abusir in the Arabian Nights

A dyer named Abughir and a hairdresser named Abusir set out a journey hoping for a better life and work. Abughir is a dishonest, deceitful and evil man and Abusir is a virtuous, honest and kind man.

They make a friendship bond and promise that the one who has an income would help the other and give him food so long as he has no job. Abusir begins to work as a hairdresser on the ship. With the money he gets for his work, he obtains food for Abughir who is a lazy gourmand. He eats and sleeps with the excuse of seasickness. The voyage came to an end like this and they went to a city and rented a room in a caravanserai. Abughir continued his laziness and Abusir worked as a hairdresser in the city and brought him food until he became ill and

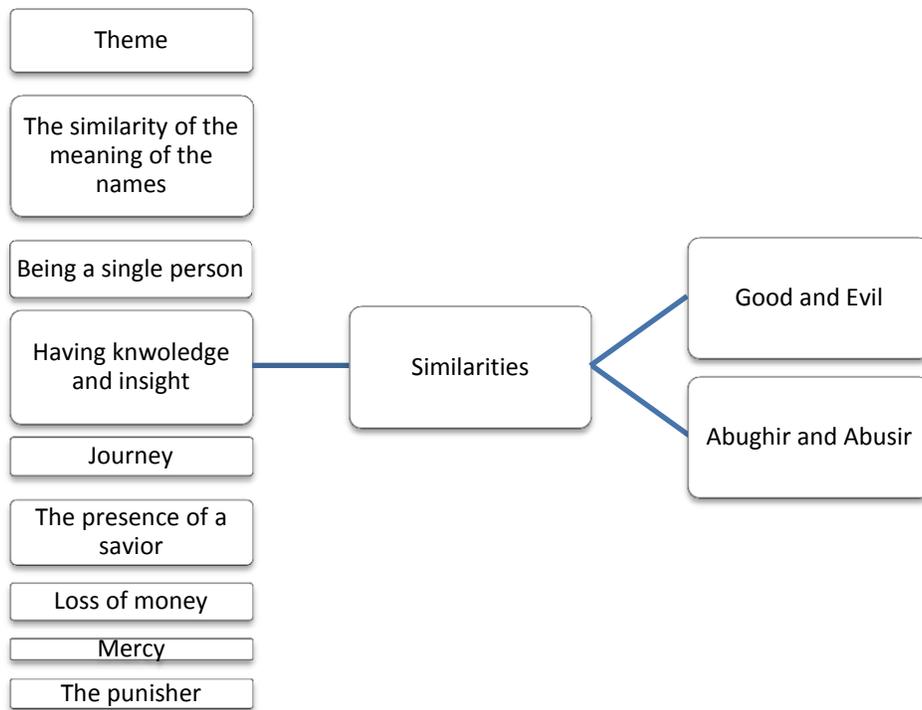
could not work anymore. After four days, when his illness got worse, Abughir took his money and clothes and abandoned him in his closed room. He bought extravagant clothes for himself and goes to the market. As his trade was dying clothes, and the people of that city did not know any color other than white and blue, he sets up a dying workshop and makes a lot of money and becomes wealthy.

Abusir learns about Abughir's trade after being saved by a guard at the caravanserai and goes to him hoping he would help him but Abughir beats him, keeps him away, and accuses him of theft.

Abusir goes around the city in despair and realizes that there is no bathhouse in that city. As he is a hairdresser, he takes advantage of this chance to build the king's bathhouse with his help and get abundant wealth. Abughir goes to his bathhouse and is treated respectfully by him. He is jealous of Abusir who is in a superior position and tries to have him murdered by plotting against him and making slanderous claims before the king.

The king orders that Abusir must be killed and says that he must be put in a sack full of dry lime and be thrown in the sea by his token. The man who was in charge of killing Abusir, saved him as he had treated him kindly once before and helped him stay on an island. He puts a rock in the sack instead. When the king wanted to give the signal to throw the sack in the sea, his ring dropped in the water. As he was fishing on the island, Abusir finds the king's ring inside a fish and returns the ring to the king when he becomes aware of its value. When the king realizes the truth in Abusir's words, he gives an order to have Abughir executed. Abughir begs for mercy and Abusir forgives him as he has a good nature but the king refuses to pardon him for his ill nature and his misdeeds. He orders that he must be put in a sack full of dry lime and be thrown in the sea. At the end of the story, Abusir returns to his hometown and builds a shrine for Abughir after taking his body from the water and burying him.

**The similarities of the story of Good and Evil and Abughir and Abusir**



**The similarities of the story of Good and Evil and the story of Abughir and Abusir**

In what follows, we will discuss some of the pivotal similarities of these two allegories which have appeared with minor discrepancies in terms of their theme, the meaning of names, the journey, the presence of a savior, mercy, etc.

**Theme**

The first logical sense that one can infer from these two stories is the clash between the evil and good men and the victory of the good. This constitutes the theme of many Persian myths, legends and allegories.

The good and evil conflict resembles the clash of forces within Man. Mankind has been fully aware of the existence of these internal drives and their undeniable struggle. In this regard, the ancient example is the fight between Ahura-Mazda and the Ahreman (Demon).

The story of Abughir and Abusir is “an instructive story based on the essential Manavi contrast between good and evil. In the end, the good is awarded and the evil is punished.” (Satari, 1989, p. 251). The same contrast is well-illustrated in Nizami’s story of Good and Evil and the Good is ultimately victorious.

### **The semantic similarity of the names**

The names of the main characters in these two stories are the primary and the most obvious indication of the theme. In the sixth dome, Nizami introduces the characters of his stories in this way:

نام این خیر و نام آن شر بود

فعل هر يك به نام در خور بود

This one as Good and the other as Evil, Their deeds are known by their names  
(Nizami, 2005, p. 243).

In the story of Abughir and Abusir from the Arabian Nights, Abughir is a dyer who is introduced as a dishonest, deceitful, evil and ill-natured man. He has no shame in committing unspeakable evil whereas Abusir is the character whose response to Abughir presents nothing but virtue, goodness and honesty throughout the story<sup>iv</sup>. In both stories, the narrators have chosen suitable names for the adventures and have been able to illustrate the theme and structure of these stories very well. Good signifies benevolence and evil indicates malevolence. In the story, the misdeeds committed by Evil such as refusing to give him some water, making him blind, and stealing his jewels are obvious examples of his malevolence and evil. On the other hand, the proper deeds performed by “Good” such as curing the epilepsy of the king’s daughter and the blindness of the Minister’s daughter and forgiving Evil are among his benevolent acts which correspond to his name.

With an investigation of the literal roots of ‘Abughir’ and ‘Abusir’, we understand that Abughir is a compound proper noun made up of ‘Abu’ and ‘Ghir’ which represent darkness and Abusir is short for ‘Abasir’ which is the quality of someone who has vision and eyesight and has been presented as ‘Abusir’ in the story.

In this story, the deeds performed by Abughir illustrate all the manifestations of evil and show his dark and somber nature. He is a lazy gourmand who deceives his friend all the time, steals his money when he is ill, abandons him hungry and thirsty, beats him when he is needy, keeps him away, and ultimately uses a slanderous language to plot against him with the king and have him killed.

In contrast, Abusir who represents kindness, benevolence and virtue shows these qualities in his deeds and works every day and provides for him as he has made a promise to him. He forgives Abughir and holds him dearly. He returns king’s missing ring due to his ever-lasting honesty and benevolence and when the king decides to punish Abughir, he forgives him and buries him after his death.

### **Being the representation of a single person**

In both stories, Good and Evil and Abughir and Abusir are symbols of one person. As in the story of Thursday by Nizami, the clash between good and evil is “the clash of a shadow which is the realm of the subconscious and the fight between the two existential extremes of Man in his path towards integrity and elevation when he finally reaches the status of unity and perfection.” (Mousavi et al., 2008, p. 95). In this story, Good can be symbolic of self-awareness and Evil symbolizes the subconscious.

In the story of Abughir and Abusir in the Arabian Nights, they represent the self-awareness and the subconscious of a single person which means that they are one person and complement or fight each other so that they can be harmonious at last.” (Satari, 1989, p. 252). In this story, the clash and conflict occur within a person and “characterize the clash and conflict of the soul and matter in one body. Their journey which also indicates individuality is a very mysterious path aiming a higher place” (Ibid).

### **The holder of knowledge and insight**

Abusir literally means the one who has vision and knowledge. Good loses his eyes due to his negligence in this story. Perhaps, he was preordained to lose his eyes to be able to open the eyes of his heart and gain awareness and awakening.

### **The journey**

In both stories, the plot begins with a journey. In this journey, the main characters of the story have the same conditions. Good and Evil are both young and are from the same land. Likewise, the characters in the story from the Arabian Nights are both paupers and needy and set out in search of a better life.

In these stories, the journey creates the grounds on which the true nature of Evil and Abughir are manifested and, in the same journey, the clash and contrast between good and evil begins which is the theme of both allegories.

### **The presence of a savior**

In Nizami's story, after Good was blinded by Evil, a Kurdish girl finds him by chance and cures his eyes. Moreover, in the story from the Arabian Nights, a caretaker saves Abusir who has been abandoned to die of thirst and hunger. The caretaker looks after him for two months until he recovers from his illness. In both cases, the ill characters (i.e. Good and Abusir) are saved by a savior. The Kurdish girl and the caretaker are the saviors who come to their aid and stay by their side in their fight against evil.

### **The loss of money**

In both stories, Good and Abusir have lost their belongings as in the story narrated by Nizami, Evil steals the clothing and jewels which belong to Good and abandons him bleeding in a hot and dry desert and Good comes within an inch of death. In the story from the Arabian Nights, Abughir steals Abusir's money and abandons him to die of thirst and hunger in a closed room and he struggles with death as well.

### **Mercy**

When Good and Abusir come to power and reach a high status, as their names suggest, they show nothing save mercy and compassion and forgive the deceits and sins of their companions. After Evil goes to see Good (who is now a king), Good recognizes him and reminds him of his misdeeds. Evil begs for his mercy and says that he should behave kindly as he was named 'Good' and he forgives him when he remembers this point.

کرد حالی ز کشتن آزادش

خیر کان نکته رفت بر یادش

As Good was reminded of this point, He quickly made him free of death,  
(Nizami, 2005, p. 262)

In the story of the Arabian Nights, when the king realizes the nature of Abughir and decides to punish him, Abusir says "pardon him for my sake, as I forgave him for whatever he has done to me." (Eghlidi, 2007, p. 123).

### **The punisher**

In both stories, evil is followed by punishment and this punishment which is death is consummated by someone else. In the story of Good and Evil, once Good forgives Evil, the Kurd punishes him and decapitates Evil as malevolence is in his nature.

تیغ زد و ز قفا برید شرش

کرد خونخواه رفت بر اثرش

The Kurd went after him seeking vengeance, He drew his sword and cut off his evil,

تو شری، جز شرت نیاید پیش

گفت: گر خیر هست خیر اندیش

He said, if Good is well-intentioned, You are Evil and you offer nothing but evil  
(Nizami, 2005, p. 262)

In the Arabian nights, once Abughir is forgiven by Abusir, the king punishes him for his misdeeds and orders that he must be put in a sack full of lime and be thrown in the sea. The king and the Kurd play a supportive role at the end of the story, so that Good and Abusir can realize the true nature of their companions and know them as they are. The king and the Kurd open their eyes to the nature of Abughir and Evil and finally punish them on account of their heinous qualities as they are destined to perish.

We base our arguments with respect to what was discussed in the body of this article and the date "Seven Beauties" was completed by Nizami on Ramadan 14<sup>th</sup> 539 and by comparing this to the date of the story of Abughir and Abusir which according to Andre Michael "has been created at the beginning of the seventeenth century which is after the establishment of Al-Osman's rule in Egypt in 1517." (Satari, 1989, p. 251).

Furthermore, with regard to the historical discrepancies in the date of Nizami's story and the story of the Arabian Night and, according to the opinion held by Victor Shawn who believes that the story of Abughir and Abusir might have been written by a creative and skilled writer who has disseminated it separately (ibid, p. 80), it can be asserted that the origin of the story of Good and Evil cannot be found in the Arabian Nights and, conversely, Nizami's story can be imagined as an origin for the story of Abughir and Abusir in the Arabian Nights.

## **CONCLUSION**

Regarding the allegorical and narrative similarities and especially the theme of these stories which is based upon the clash of good and evil and the contrast between these elements and respecting the narrative elements which have been repeated in both cases in an evolutionary fashion, it can be maintained that these two works have

the same thematic origin. Nevertheless, as regards the question whether the story in the Arabian Nights can be imagined as the source of Nizami's story, we may assert that the answer to this question cannot be affirmative by considering the reasons including the time it was added to the stories of the Arabian Nights which was 1517 and the possibility that this story might have been added by an Egyptian writer along with some other stories. The story of Good and Evil developed by Nizami was composed years before the story of Abughir and Abusir from the Arabian Nights. However, we might argue that Nizami's story might have been a model and origin for the writer of the story from the Arabian Nights or the origin of these two stories must be traced in ancient literary texts.

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<sup>i</sup> Khajeh Gir, Alireza, Atabaki, Leila (2012). The symbolic semantics of the Seven Domes in the Seven Beauties by Nizami. The Quarterly Journal of Religious Art and Literature. To be published.

<sup>ii</sup> The detailed account of these views can be found in the valuable introduction to "the enchantment of Shahrzad". R. K. Setari, (1989) pp. 1 – 101.

<sup>iii</sup> Antoin Gallan (1646 – 1715)

<sup>iv</sup> To read the complete story of Abughir and Abusir, R. K. Eghlidi, Ebrahim (2007). The voyage stories, Tehran, Center, p. 90.