Structuralism and Dastan Narratives: Axes of Knowledge, Desire and Power in *Hoshruba*

Farrukh Nadeem

Department of English | International Islamic University Islamabad

farrukh.nadeem@iiu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This article takes a structuralist approach to understand *dastan* which is a classical storytelling genre in in the subcontinent. Being a text of popular culture, the dastan constitutes popular actions such as sorcery, chivalry, trickery, seduction, charms, magic, adventure, battles, and murders; but, at the same time, the line of demarcation between 'virtue' and 'vice' reflects the nexus of ideological signifiers underlying the narrative patterns of the text. Seen through Greimas' narrative model, the text manifests three sets of binary oppositions (a) subject versus object, (b) sender versus receiver and (c) helper versus opponent. In line with the Greimasean trinity of 'knowledge (communication),' 'desire' and 'power,' the narrative discourse of dastan, *Hoshruba*, appears as a text of deeper significance. In this actantial model the subject is asked or ordered to accomplish the task by the sender which is an axis of transmission or knowledge. On the axis of desire, the subject pursues the object. Faced with an opponent, he finds a helper who is the axis of power working in narrative patterns. Along these lines, the 'subject' of *Hoshruba* is Amir Hamza Camp (including Asad, Amar Ayyar and fellow tricksters) and its 'object' is the sacred mission to materialise a decisive crackdown on transgressors (characters and settings) of Hoshruba. The ideology—to accomplish the sacred mission—stays with the sender and characters such as Amir Hamza, Asad, Amar Ayyar and neophytes are receivers (of benefits). The tricksters play the role of helpers, whereas the Emperor Afrasiyab and his followers, who oppose them in the story, act as opponents. The analysis addresses the structural, semantic and ideological values of narrative patterns found in *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*.

Keywords: Narrative analysis, dastan *Hoshruba*, structuralism, ideology, knowledge, power, desire

Of all the marvels of pre-colonial Indo-Islamic discursive practices that attracted even colonial eyes and ears in the 19th century, the narrative competence of *dastangos* (storytellers) stands uniquely significant. Generations after generations celebrated the tradition of its narrative exuberance until the emergence of modern modes of expression in the early 20th century British Raj. Owing to the fascinating tradition of dastan, it was, according to the Asaduddin's thought-provoking essay on the evolution of the genre of novel in Hindustan, deliberated upon to be preserved by transforming it from oral to written culture in British India at Munshi Naval Kishore Press, Lakhnow (117). What makes dastan distinguished in tell-tale traditions, all over the world, is its colossal narrative structure hosting an intriguingly interesting environment of battles and romances, gruesome scenes of bloodshed and exotic descriptions of female characters, spine-chilling thrills, cavorting and gambolling beloveds well versed in coquetry as described in the introduction to *Hoshruba* by Musharraf Ali Farooqi and, above all, in their seductively passionate moves and crafty bewitching flirting, all contributing to the organic grandeur of its narrative structure. Including 8,000 pages of dastan *Tilism-e Hoshruba* the sum total of dastan's loosely interconnected tales has been estimated at approximately 50,000 pages. Seen through the prism of impressionistic modes of criticism, the dastan appears to be an unchallenged world of fantasy, romance, charm, chivalry, temptation, trick-and-trap plots, seduction, looting, narrow escapes, scapegoats, expeditions, adventure, suspense, murder, thrills, and occult activities. All these diversely presented narrative elements reflect the imaginative magnificence of dastan culture, but at the subtext level, they prove to be ideologically political classics—the artefactual products of Hindustani bourgeois imagination and fantasy. It is through these debates on the relationships between fictional texts and contexts that the reader can appreciate how, at subtext levels, the narrative behaviour of popular texts reflects structurally organised truths with clear ideological politics in romances, expeditions, battles and thrills. Similarly, traditionally disenfranchised critical tools to analyse contextual determinants or, in other words, cultural contexts of dastan have to be co-opted by the literary critics interested in debating dastan texts particularly those who carry out research through the semiotic, deconstructive and dialectically materialistic modes of criticism; for, they know that any lopsidedness in interpretation, politically delimits the possibilities of it. It becomes structurally significant when some supernatural agency is seen as controlling the patterns of narratives in widely celebrated fictions like dastan. Of much significance to understanding is the dictum that postclassical criticism on

the narrative discourse of any fictional text, by juxtaposing poetics and politics, questions the a-political organisation of thematic and cultural signifiers—the choice and chain of fantasised signs, in all discursive practices whether they are Shakespearean ghosts, Coleridge's gothic aesthetics, Mary Shelley's monster in *Frankenstein*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the phantasmagorical apparitions in Rowling's *Harry Potter* or outlandishly sketched creatures in *Hoshruba*. The omnipresence of such mysterious concerns and characters in various literature, directly or indirectly, affects the narrative behaviour in fictions, besides manifesting an uncanny but meaningful relationship with power structures.

Fantasy and ideology are often understood as separate entities in fictional texts but they are (un)consciously blended or fused together in such an urbane way that they appear as a *chemical compound*. We can understand this creative mechanism through an applicable phrase chemical compound, which was, according to Basil Willey, introduced by the romantic poet and critic Coleridge in his *Biographia Literaria*. Owing to the overwhelmingly creative power of the imagination, Willey explains, "the ingredients lose their separate properties in a new substance" (16). The narrators integrate an indispensable relationship between their double-edged desire—to fascinate and to instruct (ideologically) in fairy and folktales. The friendly play between fantasy and reality results into the extension of an imaginative space "within which," argues Slavoj Žižek in his book *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, "the particular effects of signification take place" (138). In his essay "Narrative, Culture, and Mind," Jerome Bruner calls this situation as *narrative verisimilitude* (45). Fantasies or fairytales are massively constructed on the contours of the phantasmic signs that signify what Žižek calls *ideological jouissance* (pleasure).

Through an intertextual kinship with *Dastan-e-Amir Hamza*, the *dastangos* (storytellers) execute an ideological nexus between power and control. The power in this dastan, with all its characteristics and manifestations, goes neither unestablished nor unprivileged. The signs of ideological desire, yielded through discursive contexts, are pledged accomplishments and rewards. While powerful as an ideology, all minor and major signs in the dastan *Hoshruba*, too, working through rhetorico-discursive devices, reciprocate the contextualised imagery of phantasmic and chivalrous tales and myths. Bakhtin's friend and Russian Marxist critic, Voloshinov, also identifies ideological links between semiotics and discursive practices in his book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. This cultural study is of much productive value in locating the dialectical and material value of signs and symbols exploited by *dastangos*. Voloshinov sums up the debate

on the nature and ideological function of signs by affirming that all signs, textual or cultural, are primarily ideological:

> A sign does not simply exist as a part of reality—it reflects and refracts another reality. Therefore, it may distort that reality or be true to it, or may perceive it from a special point of view, and so forth. Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation (i.e., whether it is true, false, correct, fair, good, etc.). The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of signs. They equate with one another. Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. Everything ideological possesses semiotic value. (10)

In light of Voloshinov's interpretation of cultural signs, it can be explained that all signs, despite possessing aesthetic value in dastan, entail their respective ideologies and political motives. It is, therefore, the inoffensiveness of signs and the innocence of imagination and fantasy in *Hoshruba* that are important to demystify. "After Althusser–indeed, after Marx—," questions Forest Pyle in his book *The Ideology of Imagination*, "how can we imagine a product of language or activity of mind that would not be ideological?" (3). Unlike the traditional Urdu literary criticism of dastan, this make-believe fantasy has to be critically analysed by considering it as an institutionally and ritually manoeuvered operation of the imagination. The elements of fantasy in *Hoshruba,* are the signs the narrators enjoy ideologically as narrators, all over the world, are known by the system of cultural signs they keep. In the post-modern world of multifaceted interpretative interests, our prose (*Hoshrubesque* in particular) needs to be repositioned from a a *readerly* to a *writerly* paradigm so as to investigate, hermeneutically, the fantasies of the classics. In order to do that Pyle suggests, "make [possible] intersections between imagination and ideology"(3). The massive appeal of *Tilism-e-Hoshruba* to the public, in the (pre- and post-)colonial eras, lies in the fact that through evoking phantasmic seductions, the narrators succeeded in disseminating the ultra-desired fictional demographics to culturally homogenised readers of their classes. That is the reason why the conventionally determined reading of such fictional texts has hardly ever debated any understanding and interpretation beyond the desired relationships between words and meanings. With reference to the phantasmic order in globally known popular fictions, in general, and *Hoshrubesque*, in particular, the question of interpretative univocality has stayed surprisingly unsettled. However, post-poststructuralist tools of interpretation, particularly in English and Urdu, tend to establish the liberation of the signified from the meaning-making interpretation that is ideologically desired in the subcontinent literary tradition.

Narratology, since its inception, has drawn a narrative kinship between the modes of narration and interpretation. Fundamental critical praxis, from

the Russian formalism to the postclassical modes of narratology, avows a semio-narrative analysis of all foregrounded fictional texts irrespective of their ideology, politics, popularity and literariness. A structuralist mode of analysis, aims to discover the fundamental principles of a narrative discourse, whereas the poststructuralist approach incorporates diversity in its modes of interpretation or, in terms of semiotics, signification, ideology, subjectivity, gender, race, class, identity, desire and power. Between these two approaches appears the sociology of fictional texts that necessitates an analytically but dialectically interpretative procedure to examine the role of culturally material and intertextual contexts, such as the tools and modes of production that determine the positions of cultural signs in fictional texts. Despite being a purely structuralist approach, Greimasean analysis implicates the investigation of class struggle, ideology and power relations similar to Marxist literary criticism. It is owing to the duality of this model that the appeal for its application to dastan narrative discourse becomes experientially significant. Like his contemporary structuralists, Greimas was also interested in classifying narrative patterns, actions and functions at both the micro- and macro-levels. Besides, the theoretical investigation in anthropology by Levi-Strauss, in the 1960s and '70s, reinforced the existing structuralist modes of enquiry, making the field of narratology analytically diverse, experiential and applicatory. In his *Fairy Tale*, Andrew Teverson states:

> Influenced by Levi-Strauss, subsequent structuralist analysts of the folk and fairy tale have offered modifications of Propp's system along these lines. A. G Greimas, in *Semantique Structurale* (1966; Structural Semantics), resembles Propp's 'spheres of action', which he re-indentifies as six actants, into paired oppositions, and on the basis of these oppositions develops an 'actantial model' that arranges narrative around three axes: the axis of desire in which the 'subject' (the hero) seeks for the 'object'(the sought-for person); the axis of power in which the helper seeks to assist in the subject's attainment of the object whilst the 'opponent' seeks to retard it; and the axis of knowledge in which the 'sender' dispatches the subject on his quest for the object whilst the 'receiver' becomes the beneficiary of this process. (106)

Teverson has substantiated his argument on the relevance of narrative models in contemporary criticism on fictional texts particularly those which fall into the category of fairy tales. The discussion not only withstands pre-narratological and pre-semiotic impressionistic modes of analysis but also eclectically includes an indispensable kinship between structures of fictional texts and their possible semantic value, along with other different narrative angles and perspectives for evaluation of the structural patterns of fairy tales. Of no less value stands the critical evaluation of dastan in light of the significance of narrative models in

the contemporary world. Teverson's statement validates this research since it, semiotically, explains how, through his actantial model[1], Greimas explores three axes called axis of knowledge, desire and power, (as shown below) effectuate a consequential coordination between structure and signification in a fictional text.

KNOWLEDGE

Sender ——————— Object ————————►Receiver

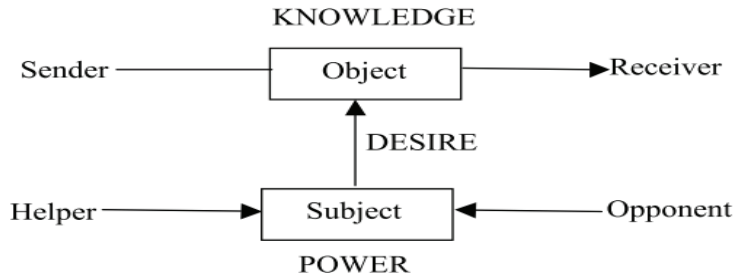DESIRE

Helper ——————► Subject ◄——————— Opponent

POWER

Diagram 1

Although it is a structuralist model, the constituents of narrative modes explicated in the above diagram reflect the interdependence of class structures more than mere structuralist units. "In its simplest and most useful version," Herman and Vervaeck explain:

> This model consists of six roles and actants. There is a subject, who carries out the action and who strives for a specific object. This quest is inspired and provoked by a destinateur, whom we will call sender. Greimas calls the agent who benefits from the quest, the receiver. The agent who assists in the quest is the helper, while the agent who thwarts it is the opponent. (53)

> In this way, all these actants are seen as being conditioned by binary relationships, such as *subject* and *object*, *sender* and *receiver*, *helper* and *opponent*. To elaborate his actantial model Greimas himself not only draws an actantial parallelism between two ideologies but also designs actantial positions in his book *Structural Semantics:*

> Thus, with great simplification, it could be said that for a learned philosopher of the classical age the relationship of desire would be specified, by a semic investment, as the desire of knowing, and the actants of his drama of knowledge would be distributed more or less in the following manner:
> Subject: Philosopher
> Object: World
> Sender: God
> Receiver: Mankind
> Opponent: Matter
> Helper: Mind
> In the same way, Marxist ideology as expressed by a militant could be distributed, thanks to its desire to help man, in parallel fashion:

[1.] http://compendium.kosawese.net/term/actantial-model-greimas/

Subject: Man
Object: Classless Society
Sender: History
Receiver: Mankind
Opponent: Bourgeois Class
Helper: Working Class. (208)

The Greimasean hypothesised model has further been elaborated with reference to a perceptible relationship between ideology and historical materialism in *Towards Semiotics of Ideology* by Carlos Reis. Since ideology contingently necessitates cultural and material relations in collective discursive practices, the fictional relations in literary texts, too, express these relationships in their cultural contexts. Most often and particularly in traditional ideological fictions, the Greimasean scheme of actions is visible, but in psychological novels and in fiction with strains of existential angst, the actions of anti-heroes are either minimised or become too dubious to be analysed with reference to structuralist or actantial functionality. Contrary to this, popular fiction, as explained by Barthes in his structuralist activity, compromises readerly texts relying heavily on *distributive functions* which are in Barthesian terms *cardinals* and *catalysers* (93). Critics, like Michael Toolan and Alan Palmer, are of the opinion that Barthesian distributional functions inaugurate and consolidate what the Greimasean model accounts for with actantial activity. In dastan narratives, the actantiality of the narrative is conditioned by the velocity of cardinals and catalysers, making it apropos field of narrative investigation. It is with reference to such non-traditional but qualitatively pragmatic tools of investigation that the narrative competence of the fantasised texts like dastans proves to be highly productive. With respect to the application of this model, Herman and Vervaeck claim:

> This story structure has the advantage of being simple and generally applicable. It can literally be applied to every narrative text. For instance, the Marxist philosophy of history can be represented with the terms offered by Greimas. Its subject is humanity and its object the classless society. History is the sender and humanity (or at least the proletariat) the receiver. The proletariat is the helper as well, whereas the capitalists play the role of the opponent. (53)

All literary texts, in Marxist theorisation of discursive practices, are by-products of human activities in their cultural and historical contexts. Relationships organised semiotically in fictional texts epitomise cultural and historical relationships in a particular ideological context. Owing to this inclusive narrative attitude, the systematisation of narrative texts, on the one hand and their institutionalisation, on the other, have become the central critical debate in critical, cultural and literary debates held at various levels in academia. According to these discussions,

signs, whether they are abstract or concrete, even in folktales and particularly in dastan narratives, are to be taken not only as combinatory units but also as contextually signifying values that cultivate relative, relational and ideological signification in the narrative discourse of fictional texts. Similarly, these signs, projecting and debating simultaneously structural as well as social values, question the purely formalist investigation of fictional texts. To sum up the debate, they play a reciprocatory role between narratives and sociology—a systemised ideology. Working on these lines, the sociology of narrative grammar in dastan has been examined. Teverson elaborates this kinship between narratology and sociology in his *Fairy Tale* in the following words:

> The historical approach to fairy tales in the twentieth and twenty first centuries cannot be understood independently of Marxist cultural theory. Marxist thinking about the materiality of culture underwrites the historicist argument that folk narratives are products of their social and political contexts; it also gives rise to the view that folk narratives and fairy tales are ideological battle grounds upon which the hegemonic discourses of those with cultural history may either be inscribed or contested. (127)

The sociology of dastan, as a whole, draws a vivid but ideological line of demarcation between two eternalised cycles, virtuous and vicious. The arch rival camps of Amir Hamza and Afrasiyab are seen conditioned with power structures feeding at the ideological desires of control and hegemony. In the entire narrative discourse, the role of the omniscient narrator is also ideological since he has idealised and centralised one and satirised and marginalised the other. With utmost care, martyrdom of any of the superheroes is avoided, whereas the merciless killing of many of 'the others' is legitimised and ultimately justified. The role of narrative modes becomes indispensable when there is a question over the nature of narrative structures that pattern the succession of events affecting a pre-destined signified i.e., the ideological meaning. Since meaning and signification with reference to the Greimasean model—as debated in the *Semiotics of Discourse* by Jacques Fontanille and in the *Handbook of Semiotics* by Noth Winfried—are determined through the structures themselves, the narrative in dastan substantiates itself as a deliberated pursuit—an ideologically articulated signification or a process of signification. Therefore, the Greimasean narrative model is necessary to evaluate how, in parallel ways, superstructuralist meanings are escorted in the narrative structures of *Hoshruba*. It can also be observed that unlike pure formalist activity, there lies the co-existence of syntax and semantics in Greimas's actantial model which distinctly designates that structural analysis cannot be essentialised as a meaningless activity. In accordance with the Greimasean views discussed in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* that "meanings are

produced in a particular context," (522) the culture of power structures in British India proves to have immense implications. Second, the critical observation of Herman and Vervaeck in their theory into practice treatise *A Handbook of Narrative Analysis* supports my research that the theorisation of any literary text, be it with reference to Marxism, postcolonialism or poststructuralism, is possible with Greimas's narrative model. Negotiating such interpretative values, structural analysis of the narrative discourse of *Hoshruba,* translated by Musharraf Ali Farooqi has been deliberated in this paper.

The application of this model to *Hoshruba* implies the interdependence of binary relationships i.e. *subject* and *object*, *sender* and *receiver* and *helper* and *opponent*. In the backdrop of *Hoshruba*, it is the ideology of the Hamza camp that motivates and materialises the entire chain of actions. These actions are illustrated through a *fabula* of hasty sequences and consequences. Surprisingly, the theme of nemesis, too, is lopsidedly ideological—the persistently foregrounded evil has to be punished and the predetermined virtue, on the other hand, rewarded. Hence, the question of cultural and ideological spatiality becomes more significant in contemporary critical debates, for power flourishes on the spatial encroachment of the other. All the actions deliberated in the narrative discourse remain as the stable signifiers of encroachment of that particular space, which pledges the [troubled] existence of *Hoshruba* characters. Only the destabilised and delocalised—the neophytes will be spared, since they succumb and surrender to the overwhelming will for power of the Hamza camp. In this way, under the guise of narrative exuberance, the ideological will for volition and violence celebrates the experience of conquest over Hoshruba. Subjects like Amir Hamza himself and companions such as Asad, Amar Ayyar and his fellow tricksters are all seen as striving to obtain their object, which is primarily the conquest of Hoshruba. On the way to their sacred mission, they face opponents like sorcerers, sorceresses, beautiful princesses and, lastly, their arch rivals, the false god Laqa and the emperor Afrasiyab. On many expeditions, Amar Ayyar single-handedly succeeds in boggling the minds of the sorcerers and sorceresses and, eventually, experiences the same situations, but ultimately he stands victorious, cuts the throats of his rivals and celebrates his loots. On both sides there is a strong nexus of actants in the form of helpers. For instance, sorcerers and sorceresses use black magic, magical birds, nets, dragons and snakes to encounter the invasions and attacks from the Hamza camp. In the same way, we have the actants, frequently employed by the Hamza camp, including horses, swords, the net of Ilyas, zambil, a cape of invisibility, a conch shell, eggs of oblivion, Daniyal's tent, the singing and

speed of the characters. Amir Hamza himself has been blessed with many kinds of supernatural gifts which help him in warfare. Therefore, in order to understand and interpret the functions and roles of the different characters in Hoshruba, the Greimasean narrative model proves to be quintessentially productive. "Greimas' actantial narrative model," holds Onodera Susumu, "schematically shows [the] functions and roles characters perform in narrative". The actantial facets serve their senders, and in the narrative discourse of dastan *Hoshruba*, it is the central power of ideology which remains as the ultimate beneficiary of all pursuits. For the sake of eternal salvation—heaven and to gratify the eternal[ised] desire for wealth, the *destinataire* (receivers) carry out the mission of the *destinateur* (the sender). (The sub-textual signification hesitates to rely on surface meanings, particularly with reference to popular ideological texts). Both the king and the absolute form of ideology pledge to the *subject* rewards in the form of wealth and salvation. In accordance with Susumu's observation that "in a text where God sends the Savior to save humanity to give them happiness, the *destinataire* is humanity," the narrative discourse of *Hoshruba* primarily epitomises the conquest of Hoshruba as a sacred mission. The nature of the battle between two opposing forces (the sacred and the profane) and the presence of Amir Hamza endorses the sanctity of romantic adventures. Ironically, the opposition is doomed to impugn the sanctity of the mission by violating, transgressing and subverting what the former ideology takes as true faith in this fictional text. Like many of the tribal epics, the narrative competence of dastangos (storytellers of colonial and precolonial Hindustan) is also conditioned by the glorification of the power structures that establish far-reaching relationships between transgression and nemesis. The significance of Greimas's structuralist model lies in its analytical process that examines an interdependent relationship between culturally ideological heroism and the predestined fallibility of antagonists. Greimas' trinity of axes, in this context, incorporates the kinship of these six ideological actants in *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*.

I. Axis of knowledge (Ideology) and Transmission: Sender versus Receiver

At the communicative level, the axis of knowledge and its transmission, according to the Greimasean narrative model, is conditioned by the binary of the sender and the receiver in fictional texts. This "sender-receiver axis" has been summed up by Patrice Pavis, in *Dictionary of Theatre: Terms, Concepts and Analysis*, as a mechanism that "controls the values, hence Ideology" (5). In this relationship, first of all, it is the subjective position of the authorship, or in the view of Greimas, explained by

Pavis, the act of *discursive instance*, that communicates its own 'ideological making' in the discursive practices of its sociocultural spatiality. The author of a narrative text like dastan, secondly, being a privileged connection between ideology and society, materialises the age-old desire of his tradition. Placing himself at the convincing order and declaring himself the master of his knowledge, he is seen operating his aesthetically ideological discourse and finally addressing his audience or addressees (receivers) through the world of make-believe narratives. The established concept of the author, as Foucault believes, "constitutes the privileged moment of individualisation in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences" (174). For Foucault, the trinity of ideology, power and discourse determines the world as a text of concomitant substance. Quintessentially, the textual environment of *Hoshruba* epitomises this kinship in its entire narrative discourse.

In the narrative structures of *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*, the sender, in the first place, is the ideological centre that inspires the creative consciousness of the authors to conceive the succession of events in the organic form of dastan. Second, it is the Indo-Islamic world that takes pride in its narrative competence and performance and, third, it is the work of an ideological imagination that deliberates cartographic actions and functions in various episodes of *Hoshruba*. The receiver, here, is either members of the Amir Hamza camp or an [abstract] ideological and cultural space where the sights and sounds of such ideological narratives leave deep impressions. The 50,000 page acceptability of dastan substantiates the velocity of aestheticised power and its communicative gimmicks in the sociopolitical scenario of narrators. The following poetic expression, *ab initio*, reflects the [ideological position] of the narrator(s) in the narrative discourse of *Hoshruba*:

> Sing O minstrel for my cup of life brims over
> Under the nine vaults of heaven
> From the revolutions of cosmos I intone like the pipe
> At the fate of Jamshed and the Fortunes of Kaikhusru
> The master of discourse intricate and obscure
> Has masterly adorned the lovely bride of the narrative. (3)

Similarly the ideologically authorial position can be vividly seen communicating or transmitting the background knowledge of the tale, *Hoshruba*. The political nexus between the 'dream' and its subsequent 'interpretation' marks the line of demarcation between the desired conquest of one and the defeat of the other throughout a succession of the events:

> The deft fingers of narrators weave this splendid legend with the golden
> thread of sorcery and spread it out thus, before marveling eyes. Emperor

> Naushervan of Persia dreamt one night that a crow coming from the East flew off with his crown, then a hawk flew in from the West, killed the crow and restored him his crown. In the morning he asked the interpretation of this dream from his minister, Buzurjmehr, who was singularly adept in all occult arts. Buzurjmehr made his calculations and replied that in the future a raider named Hashsham from the eastern city of Khaibar would defeat the emperor's army and capture his crown and throne. A warrior named Hamza from the western city of Mecca would then appear on the scene and would kill the raider and restore the regalia to the emperor. (xxxiii)

This short anecdote itself denotes, symbolically, the polarity of power structures—the hawk stands for the licensed power structures and the opponent, the crow, personifies the intruder. The entire subsequent narrative structure follows the same binary relationship—the battle between virtue and vice and their metonymical forms, like the Hamza camp and the Afrasiyab Camp. It is not only the narrator-narratee relationship that embodies the Greimasean axis of knowledge and transmission but also the sender-receiver nexus in the entire network of stories of *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*. An efficaciously hierarchic chain of agents manifests metonymic relationships among the agents in the stories and vows to protect the empire from demons. They serve as dispatchers and the dispatched, or in other words senders and receivers respectively. The idea of the multiplicity of this agency can be explained and exemplified through the following narration:

> Meanwhile, the foretold rebellion of demons was underway in the enchanted land of Mount Qaf. Emperor Shahpal *sent for Hamza to subdue* the rebellious demons. While Amir Hamza was away, Amar Ayyar countered the intrigues and plots hatched by Bakhtak and his son, Bakhtiarak. He defended his camp against Naushervan's armies and kept them from carrying away Mehr-Nigar. During his destined eighteen-year stay in Mount Qaf, Amir Hamza quelled the rebellion of the demons, married Aasman Peri and had a daughter with her. After spending eighteen years in Mount Qaf, Amir Hamza finally returned and married Mehr-Nigar. He married several other women and fairies besides and had many sons and grandsons. (xxxv)

To personify this (sacred) heroism, an entire chain of agents, including King Saad, Ameer Hamza, Asad, Amar Ayyar and his fellow tricksters, has been motivated and launched against the arch enemy, the Afrasiyab camp. We can see, in the following episode, how the roles of senders demonstrate a metonymical relationship in a power structure:

> King Saad turned his gaze toward his commander-in-chief, Amir Hamza, who ordered the trickster, Amar Ayyar, to send for the camp commander, Aadi, and have the advance camp dispatched toward Mount Agate. Platoons, troopers mounted on Arabian horses and countless foot-soldiers began marching toward mount Agate with majestic mien. (5)

King Saad sends for Amir Hamza and, to accomplish the mission, Amir Hamza sends for Amar Ayyar, who carries out and executes the commands and receives the expected rewards from his commanders. Jewels and gold are gifted to Amar Ayyar for his mighty skills in executing his crafty but promising moves. Owing to the everlasting blissfulness in the missionary lives of commanders, the translation of their ideological dreams into reality has been well-characterised with a vanquishing syntax:

> All the lamentations and weeping in the camp ceased and everyone celebrated the news. Amir Hamza *sent for* Amar Ayyar and, after conferring much gold and jewels upon him, *deputed him to find* the whereabouts of the illustrious prince. (10)

All the protagonists or characters discussed here are seen as idealised in the *Hoshruba* and have their respective roles to perform in the stories but they fall, broadly, into the same category, the sender-receiver axis. The words in italics indicate this narrative progression in *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*.

> The news spread in the women's quarter that *prince Asad was going away* to secure Prince Badiuz Zaman's release. Princess Gardiya Bano, his maternal grandmother, broke into tears upon hearing the news of his planned departure. All the wives of Amir Hamza blessed prince Asad by tying gold pieces pledged to Imam Zamin to his arm. They *sent him away* with their good wishes, reciting the prayer to ward off the evil eye. (63)

In the entire narrative structure of Hoshruba the ritualisation of such axes can be observed. "The subject-object axis," explains Palvis in *Dictionary of Theatre*, "traces the trajectory of action and the quest of the hero or protagonist. It is strewn with obstacles that the subject must overcome in order to advance. It is the axis of desire" (5).

II. Axis of desire: Subject versus Object

The word desire, at both denotative and connotative levels, signifies a motivated but channelised action carried out by the subjects of a particular narrative discourse. In psychoanalysed quarters of poststructuralism, desires are analysed as constructed channels. In literary and fictional texts, ideological, ethnic and cultural narratives are carried out through syntactically desired actions. The syntax of dastan *Hoshruba*, itself, is a textual desire. It is through persuasively ideological expressions that cultural desires are naturalised, discursively, and fraternised with missionary archetypes which later develop as clear obligatory targets. Framing the desire projected in literary texts with cultural contexts, Andrew Bennet and Nicholas Royle state: "Thinking about desire in literary texts—about representations of desire—inevitably opens on to questions of historical context" (179). With reference to Greimas's actantial model, Yoshihisa Kashima explains

in an essay "Culture, Narrative and Human Motivation" published in *Motivation and Culture* thus:

> Greimas's analysis highlights two of the properties of narrative that are central to the examination of a cultural basis of human motivation. First, narratives describe an actor's goal directed activities. According to Greimas's analysis, in describing [the] subject's pursuit of [an] object, a narrative defines a goal and a corresponding desire, as well as the ways in which one may attain the goal (or fail to attain it) and a variety of factors that may facilitate or hinder the movement toward the goal (helpers and opponents). A story embodies a package of information about how to achieve what goal (or how not to achieve what goal). (19)

Desires, being determinants of discursive truths in a particular narrative discourse, epitomise structured motivations for desired targets. Whether the desire of a subject of a state is reciprocated or not, nevertheless, this desire does not remain unaccomplished in the folk tales and narratives of *Hoshruba*, for the epic tale, *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*, involves a reciprocal process through scintillating the graphics of possible targets. The Greimasean modality of the 'axis of desire' has been illustrated with its application to popular tales like *Cinderella*:

> The modalities of the axis of desire are "wanting" (will) and "having to" (duty). Subject and Object are created together, interdependent, with the state of wanting-to-be and wanting-to-do initiating the becoming of the Subject as such. The Subject begins in a condition of separation (disjunction) from the Object of Value. The syntax of the narrative develops as transformation, a mediation, bringing the Subject into conjunction with the Object. This process is characterised as a practical syllogism: Major premise = the desire; Minor = the means; Conclusion = the action. Cinderella desires to have a life, to be loved and respected, and the event of the royal ball incarnates this desire[2].

Heroic subjects, such as Amir Hamza, Prince Asad, Prince Badiuzman, Amar Ayyar, Prince Alam Shah, Prince Hashim, Prince Saad and tricksters, collectively and teleologically, mark the signs of 'wanting-to-be' and 'wanting-to-do,' hence the axis of desire. Their missions, launched in pursuits of their the objects of desire, signify the unconditional abeyance to their structurally governed centres and ideological orders. They are directed towards an object, and that is the tracking down and conquest of Hoshruba, a land of mystery and magnificent treasures gifted with gorgeous female figures and romance. The hunting activity in the very beginning of the dastan becomes not only the symbolic act of hunting the opponent down but also the harbinger of the nature of its narrative successions:

> The eminent prince began hunting in the plains with his equipage and retinue, occupying his gaze with the pleasant air of the land and the mountains. Suddenly a fawn appeared near the river bank, cavorting and gamboling like

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[2.] http://emeragency.electracy.org/content/greimas-narrative

a frolicsome beloved well-versed in coquetry. (8)

Beguiled by his desire, the prince falls victim to the traps of the emperor's mighty magic. There are many instances in which characters are painted with vulnerable traits. Their desirous will to accomplish their mission is slowed down by a network of seductive impediments. However, they are rescued through mysterious acts and the chivalrously sensational combats of the helpers. Ultimately, the desire of the Hamza camp is conspicuously materialised through the crafty actions of Amar Ayyar:

> Amar retired to a secluded corner where he took off his cape of invisibility and disguised himself as a beautiful damsel. The false damsel put on a luxurious address, adorned herself with gold and jewels, and came before Afrasiyab. She gracefully greeted the Emperor of Hoshruba who was stunned by her ravishing beauty and allure. Finally Afrasiyab asked, "O rosebud of the garden of elegance, who are you and what has brought you here today?" The false damsel answered coquettishly, "O Emperor, your slave girl is in love with you and her heart finds no solace." Afrasiyab took her by the hand and seated her beside him. (248)

III. Axis of Power: Helper versus Opponent

This modality marks the oppositional strengths, competence and performance of protagonists and antagonists in *Hoshruba* narratives. The major characters in the camp of Amir Hamza are seen helping their friends and fighting their foes throughout their missions. Second, they make best use of their skills, tricks, divine gifts and prayers. This help can be classified into two categories, spiritual and material. But there is a third kind—occult practices, which become very productive in multiplying powers after Princess Mahjabeen, Mahrukh magic Eye and Princess Bahar change their loyalties and embrace the "True Faith" of the Amir Hamza camp. The axis of power, in the Greimasean model, implies how the shapes and kinds of power are incorporated in a fictional text like *Hoshruba, the Land and the Tilism*:

> Amir Hamza recited the *Most Great Name* over the water and sprinkled it on the corpse, it returned to its origins—a flour effigy. Amir Hamza bowed his head in gratitude before God and gave thanks to Him who sent the news that his son was alive. He bestowed robes of honour on the diviners and had the effigy thrown away. (10)

Keeping in view the narrative pace of folk tales, Roland Barthes rightly drew a line of demarcation between functional and indicial texts in his essay "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," published in his *Image Music Text*. This lexis of functionality, which annexes the Greimasean actantial pattern, can be easily traced in the narrative discourse of *Hoshruba*. This actantial velocity actualised through the protagonists, ideologically designates the desire to execute the

'blessed' powers of the Hamza camp. Amar Ayyar and his fellow tricksters remain vigilant in the skirmishes and battles against the sorcerers and sorceresses of Hoshruba, and if one of them, accidentally, falls victim to the crafty moves of the opponents, the other appears to rescue him as soon as possible:

> Amar's son, Chalak, had also entered Mount Agate, secretly following Amar in disguise so that in the event of his father's capture, he might rescue his release. When Chalak witnessed the royal retainers hiring labourers to carry Ijlal's effects to the garden, he disguised himself as a laborer and offered his services. Pearl-strung canopies, tents, ceiling cloths and other such paraphernalia were being sent to the garden on laborers' shoulders and carts. Chalak was also given a carpet to carry there. (41)

Amar Ayyar makes best use of his zambil throughout his promising adventures in *Tilism-e Hoshruba*. His ever-open zambil materialises his desire to harm his rivals by relentlessly lynching them and looting their belongings. In every stage of his expeditions, he remains a loyal helper for his masters and ferocious to his enemies who dare to stop him from carrying out his designs and actions. Similarly, at every stage of his conquest, it is his zambil with ever-engulfing desires that causes heavy losses to his enemies:

> Amar Ayyar arrived in a forest made of silver where for miles on end, silver grew instead of grass. Amar said to himself, I wish I could stuff this whole forest into my *zambil*, Alas, I cannot. There is nothing I can do about it, and no way for me to uproot this whole jungle. Then it occurred to Amar to cut all the grass he could and carry it away in his *zambil*. He took out a scythe from the *zambil* and started cutting grass hurriedly. He kept looking around lest someone should catch him in the act. (92)

Against the occult backdrop of sorcery in *Hoshruba*, the characters of Hamza's camp have been provided with ornaments with maximum powers. Amar Ayyar, executing dexterity in his pursuits, disguises himself befittingly, and accomplishes his mission, but, at times, owing to the impending dangers in the course of his action, he has to camouflage or hide himself from the sight of his opponents: "When Amar heard the sparrow announce his name, he immediately put on his *cape of invisibility*"(95).

Similarly, in all the episodes of *Hoshruba*, the characters remain watchful of their surroundings lest the enemy, by taking advantage of their negligence in battle, causes irreparable loss. That is why, according to the situation, Amar Ayyar, in various situations, exercises his (in)visible powers: "Seeing him approach, the false damsel threw the *Net of Ilyas* and caught him" (101).

In the game of trick and triumph, sometimes, these characters are hunted down and consequently imprisoned. In such critical moments, the death of the opponent pledges the freedom of the protagonists, but this execution of death is

carried out through the timely help from the fellow tricksters and arch heroes: "Death brought release to Amar Ayyar and the three tricksters. Qiran saluted Amar Ayyar, who praised him. Amar and [the] other tricksters again returned to the wilderness and proceeded in different directions" (107).

The systematic arrangement of choices and chains of signs in the dastan *Hoshruba* necessitates the usage of multiple tools from both classical and postclassical paradigms of narratology. It is owing to the application of varieties in structuralist and poststructuralist tools that the epic narratives of *Hoshruba* find diversity in interpretation. Narratives are primarily structures before they become the disputed and differentiated cantons of signification and interpretation. With reference to this juxtaposition of form and meaning, the Greimasean phrase *Structural Semantics* becomes more relevant in analysing the narrative discourse of fictional texts. To hunt and to be hunted down, in either epic/folk tales or in modern short stories, executes ideological values in relation to human activities. The classification of actants in the Greimasean narrative model into axes of knowledge, desire and power never essentialises any grammatical determinism; it is open to all contextual approaches to embed a narrative kinship between structuralism and many other possible modes of interpretation.

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