

Sadigova R.National Museum of Azerbaijan Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi
of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences**THE HEALING POWER OF THE ARTISTIC WORD:
“ALFIYYA AND SHALFIYYA”**

The purpose of the article is to provide information about the works of art that were formed in the ancient Eastern world, have a medical function, and are dedicated to the intimate relationship between men and women. The history of books written on this subject goes back to ancient times. Oriental scholars and thinkers, who always valued the word, approached it not only as a literary figure, but also as a means of healing. They have addressed the most important issue for man, and have succeeded in treating a disease known as lust weakness through fiction. Among such works, “Alfiya and Shalfiya”, which appeared in Iran in the XI century, can be considered especially noteworthy. This work, written for Togan Shah, the son of the Seljuk ruler Alp Arslan, has not lost its interest in modern times. In our research, we are talking about the sources that provide preliminary information about the main image of “Alfiya and Shalfiya”, which is based on real historical figures. It is also said that although it is very old in terms of subject matter, it was written by the Iranian poet Azragi in the 11th century, and interesting facts preserved in the sources are mentioned in this regard. The work we are talking about is in the style of “A Thousand and One Nights” Tales and consists of legends and stories narrated by the main character. In addition to being the main character, Shalfiya is also a direct participant in these legends. The article touches on the principles of structure and content of these stories. The fact that the work is based on such an ancient theme as “science al-bah” requires its deeper study. In this regard, the article highlights several authoritative sources on the subject, such as the use of “Alfiya and Shalfiya” in the literature of other eastern peoples, the similarity with the works created in this style. There are also the names of a number of prominent writers and philosophers who addressed the subject of “science al-bah” in ancient and medieval times. The article also focuses on the level of interest of the literary example in modern times for the reader, and touches on its medical benefits. It is known that the role and effect of treatment, which is widespread today, such as bibliotherapy, is undeniable. Alfiyya and Shalfiyya are approached from this point of view, and the psychological impact of the work on the reader is clarified.

Key words: “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya”, fairy-tale, science of passion, Katib Chalabi, Togan shah, Abu Bakr Zaynuddin Azraki, “The Thousand and one night”, bibliotherapy.

Introduction. Texts written in Egyptian papyri several thousand years ago, the works of ancient Greek and Eastern philosophers and physicians prove that the first attempts were made to use art for therapeutic purposes. The great thinker Aristotle (fourth century BC) claimed that literature and art healed, and under the influence of works of art created a doctrine called “catharsis” on the cleansing of spiritual and physical defects. Rammals and shamans, pranksters and priests in the past used music, dances and effective words (artistic recitation) for healing – to affect the human body and soul. (ТӘБАБӘТ ВӘ ӘДӘБ). At the entrance to the library belonging to the Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II, a plaque was hung: “The Case of the Spirit” [17, p. 4]. The wise physicians of the ancient East said: “A doctor has three tools in his hand: one is a word, one is a grass, and one is a knife”. It is no coincidence that the word “word”

is mentioned in the first place! The purpose of this article is to provide information about the healing power of literature, which is the art of speech, especially in the ancient Eastern world, and works of art that have a medical function for a certain readership.

The reasons for man’s creation, thoughts about his/her existence, inner feelings and excitement, and deep love have always been among the main questions on the minds of scientists and writers. However, the physical relationship between men and women has not gone unnoticed. The history of books written on this subject goes back to ancient times. For the first time in India, this field was addressed, and works on “science al-bah” began to be written. These early books, which appeared in the I–V centuries AD, are considered to be ancient treatises on the art of love, covering a wide range of topics, from the moment a man and a woman meet, to marriage traditions,

wedding customs, and the characteristics of religious families [1, p. 296]. This tradition was continued in the following periods and “Ananga Ranga” appeared. Ananga Ranga was founded by Kalyana Malla in the 15th and 16th centuries and was dedicated to Lad Khan, the son of Ahmad Khan Lodin, the ruler of India. Researchers characterize the main idea of this work, which is translated as “Ladder of Love”, with its social nature, and say that the main purpose of the author in writing it was to further strengthen the family.

Attitude to the subject of science al-bah in ancient and medieval oriental literature. Elm al-bah (Arabic for the science of love or passion) is a science that deals with the treatment of this disease through tales and stories that exaggerate the theme of love and passion in addition to various strengthening drugs to eliminate the weak lust, foods that have a positive effect, spices that increase the power of taste (pleasure), ointments [7; 8]. In general, ancient and medieval scholars, both Eastern and Western, have in one way or another touched upon the subject of science al-bah, although there is definitely a section in this field in his works, Islamic scholars, in particular, have approached this issue not only from a medical but also from a religious point of view. It should be noted that since science is accepted as a branch of al-bah medicine, scientists have freely expressed their views in this field without hesitation [7, p. 8–9]. The number of works written on the subject in modern times is remarkably small. However, early and medieval Islamic thinkers and commentators, realizing the necessity of the subject, turned to the subject of science al-bah in order to regulate intimate relations between husband and wife, and in particular to eliminate certain diseases that men suffer from. The relationship between men and women was not left out of the Prophet Muhammad’s attention, and in his famous “Farewell Sermon” he expressed a guiding attitude towards it. A prominent figure in 15th century Arabic-Muslim literature, the commentator al-Suyuti, in his book *Al-bah fi-l-hukmi-n-nabiyyi* (The Prophet’s Thoughts on the Art of Passion), clarified through the prism of theologian [1, p. 296].

A prominent figure of the Middle Ages, the world-famous physician Abu Ali ibn Sina (980–1037) took a medical approach to the subject of science al-bah and wrote a valuable work in Arabic containing various advice and medicines to strengthen the weak lust. He benefited from the works of ancient philosophers and medical scientists such as Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Palladium, as well as gained deep

knowledge in this field through his personal experiences [2, p. 456].

According to research, one of the first independent scholars to write this work was the Persian writer Samawal bin Yahya al-Maghribi (12th century) [1, p. 295–296]. The first part of his work “*Nuzhatu-l-ashab fi muasharati-l-ahbab*” (“Friendly walk in the relationship between husband and wife”) is entirely devoted to the science of al-baha.

Shaykh Abdul-Rahm ibn Nasr Shirazi’s contemporary, al-Maghribi fi *Asrar-il-nikah* (Explanation of the Secrets of Marriage), is one of the examples mentioned above. Although the original of the work is in Arabic, it has been translated into Persian under the title “*Kanzu-l-asrar*” (“Treasure of Secrets”) [1, p. 296].

One of the ancient works written on this subject is “*Kabusname*” translated from Persian into Turkish by Merjimak Ahmad in honor of Sultan Murad II. According to historical sources, this work, written by an author named Keykavus in the late 11th century, reflects the author’s advice to his son. In particular, the subject of science al-bah, which we have discussed in Chapter 15, has been extensively covered, and a number of important issues have been clarified [13].

Bahnama, written by Dwarf Mahmud during the Ottoman Empire in the 18th century, is one of the most notable examples in the field of al-bah. Here, the author spoke about the secret relationship between men and women during the Ottoman period, its advantages and disadvantages, as well as interesting ideas about the criteria of women’s beauty.

The place of “Alfiya and Shalfiya” in oriental literature. In the above examples, we see that the “science of passion” is treated more medically. However, there are works in Eastern literature that delve from the medical field; the result is a literary work, not a scientific work.

Among such works, “Alfiya and Shalfiya” can be considered especially noteworthy. Alfiyya and Shalfiyya, which are considered to be a kind of counterpart to the works on science al-bah in ancient India, have not lost their interest in Iran even today. This book is full of interesting miniatures dedicated to the intimate relationship between a man and a woman. The miniature paintings reflected here are one of the earliest examples of traditional fine art [1, p. 294].

The name of the work “Alfiya and Shalfiya” is directly related to its content. Thus, ancient Iranian writers interpret the title of the work as “The story of a woman with a thousand lovers”. Because the word “alfiyya” means “thousand” in Arabic [1, p. 295].

In general, the subject of this work has its roots in India. Thus, in the eighth century, a prominent Arab scholar, Jahiz Alfiyya, presented her as a real historical figure; he considers her to be an experienced scholar of his time, the best connoisseur of the relationship between man and woman. He even said that he admired Alfiya and that, like Jahiz himself, he reported only information based on personal experience, and that he had the knowledge he had acquired through direct observation of real events [6].

As can be seen, the reason for the creation of “Alfiya and Shalfiyya”, which is based on real events, is connected with the name of a real historical figure. The seventeenth-century Ottoman historian and geographer Haji Khalifa (1609–1657), known as Katib Chalabi, mentions books written in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish in the al-bah section of his encyclopedia “Kashfu-l-zunun an asami-l-kutub wa-l-funun”, which provides information on various sciences. “In the past, there was a king who suffered from the weakness of lust. Although the doctors of his time tried to treat him with drugs and ointments, they could not achieve their desires and were helpless in the face of this disease. After that, fairy tales are made for him from a woman named Alfiya. The protagonist of these tales begins to openly narrate the various moments of her life with a thousand men with whom she had an affair, which eventually leads to the restoration of the power of the king” [7]. The real identity of the mentioned king is confirmed in the book “History of Persian and Tajik literature” by the famous Czech philologist and orientalist Jan Ripka. Thus, the scholar states: “Shamsadov and Abul Favaris Togan, the son of Alp Arslan, the sultan of the Great Seljuk state, were the rulers of Khorasan during the reign of his father. It was at this time that the Persian poet Abu Bakr Zeynuddin Azraki (d. 1072) became famous as a powerful psalmist. Togan Shah loved Azraki very much and always corresponded with him. The poet, in turn, often wrote hymns to him. Azraki also wrote “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya” in Persian and dedicated it to Togan Shah” [5, p. 192–193]. This information is also very important in terms of when and by whom the work was written.

Interestingly, one of the pictures in the same work is dedicated to the story of a ruler who was weakened by lust: “<...> The spring of youth has blossomed and reached the age of manhood. But over time, the sultan realized that he was helpless. The truth had upset him. He wanted a maid from among the maids <...> But what is the use?! His soul had committed suicide” [8].

In general, medieval authors make different claims as to whether the work in question belongs to Azraki’s pen. According to thinkers such as Afi, Jami, and Khandamir, Azraki took an obscene book of prose called “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya”, composed it and loaded it with pictures. According to Dovletshah, Navai and others, Azraki wrote this work himself and presented it to Toganshah. Modern scholars have not been able to reach a consensus on this issue. While many agree that Azraki wrote the poem himself, A. E. Krimskiy, I. S. Braginskiy, Z. Safo, Yan Ripka and a number of other scientists believe that the Seljuk poet took a ready-made theme that existed before the 11th century and copied it into the poem, adding only pictures of himself [15]. In any case, the second version seems more reasonable. Because the 8th century Arab scholar Cahiz, as mentioned above, gives information about the existence of a woman named Alfiyya, Ibn al-Nadim, a tenth-century Arabic literary critic, states in his book *Al-Fahrist* that Alfiyya and Shalfiyya are available in Hindi, Arabic and Persian. In addition, Azraki’s contemporaries, the historian Abulfaz Beyhagi and the poet Manuchohri, mention this work in prose [15].

Clearly, this is a story told by a woman named Alfiya about entertainment. The Ottoman scholar Ibn Kamal Pasha (d. 1534) gives a brief account of the content of “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya” in the second volume of his work “Rujuu-sh-sheikh and sibah fi-l-quwwa ala-l-bah” written at the request of Sultan Salim: “Alfiya explains 60 forms of love. He speaks about these forms as if in a fairy tale. He does not sleep, nor does he let his partner sleep” [6].

Indeed, if we look at the design and structure of the book “Alfiya and Shalfiyya”, we can see that it consists of bright and colorful miniatures depicting various forms of love. The artist was able to convey the essence of the work to the reader at first sight by creating different male images in each form and the image of Alfie in almost all images in the same face and clothes (especially in the same pants) [8]. The explanation of the pictures is given by Alfiya in her own language; It is as if small tales are told about the profession of the opposite party (master, musician, baker, etc.), how he met them and various moments of love.

The principle of structure of the work (consisting of a collection of fairy tales), traditionally called “Alfiyya” (alfiyya also means a poem consisting of a thousand poems in Arabic) makes it one of the works created under the influence of “A Thousand and One Nights”. As we know, in “Tales of a Thousand and One Nights” it is possible to come

across quite obvious scenes. However, “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya” appeared through the exaggeration, more detailed and explanatory narration of the scenes of this ancient Arab monument, full of love, passion and entertainment. The fact that the work is not intended for a wide readership, and sometimes even arouses disgust in people, and so on. It can be considered a failed translation of “A Thousand and One Nights’ Tales”. Speaking of the principle of structure, it should be noted that in “A Thousand and One Nights” tales are “nights” (1’st night, 2’nd night etc.), And in “Alfiya and Shalfiya” “pictures” (1’st my picture, my 2’nd picture etc.).

There are a number of features that distinguish “Alfiya and Shalfiya”, which is close to “A Thousand and One Nights” in terms of subject matter and artistic features, from its predecessor. “Tales of a Thousand and One Nights” is a literary example of the epic genre, and from time to time pieces of poetry are given from the language of this or that hero in order to strengthen the idea. However, Azraki Hiravi, a Seljuk court poet, composed the poem “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya” in the form of a masnavi, reciting a theme that existed before him [15]. In “A Thousand and One Nights”, Shahrizad tells interesting tales of different content, while here Alfiya talks about only one topic. While in each of the tales that make up “A Thousand and One Nights” a separate main character is formed, in “Alfiya and Shalfiya” the main character is always Alfiya herself, and the changing characters are her counterparts. Also, unlike its predecessor, there are no magical elements, supernatural forces, demons or talismans. The work is about real life events.

In general, the work describes in detail how and where Alfiya met her friends and the moments she spent with them. However, this woman’s spiritual life, world of excitement and thoughts remain in the background against the background of the depiction of real boards. The reader cannot be aware of Alfiya’s inner turmoil and psychological state. Of course, this is directly related to the reason and purpose of the work. It would not be right to load this work with a description of deep emotions and difficult psychological situations, which was created to treat a disease known as lust weakness. On the contrary, the author has managed to increase the impact of the work by describing physical relationships directly, in simple language, in all their nakedness. In doing so, he encourages his reader not to think, but to feel, to feel. The protagonist is interested in only one thing: to reveal all the possible physical equality between a man and a woman, both for himself and for the reader. Here the feelings of pleasure are expressed so clearly and vividly that it

is impossible not to admire the language of the work. The feelings and emotions experienced by both Alfiya and the other characters are skillfully conveyed to the reader; influencing him, as if separating him from this world, brings to life the colorful scenes of love before his eyes.

Although it may seem obscene from the outside when it comes to the cause and content of the work, it was in fact a very serious problem for the king and his dynasty, who were always in dire need of a successor. Doctors, physicians, and thinkers have found an effective way to solve this problem by relying on their own experience: “It is said that the best of slaves and concubines were chosen and hidden for the treatment of a king suffering from a weak lust. At that moment, the king, who was standing behind the curtain, watched them from the outside, so that his former strength was restored. In general, looking at the mating of animals also has a positive effect on this disease. However, the power of human influence is stronger and more healing. This is one of the fields of medical science. One of the first books written on this subject is “Alfiyya and Shalfiyya” [7; 8]. Apparently, this method of treatment gave rise to the work we are talking about, and a collection of fairy tales decorated with male and female illustrations began to be used for therapeutic purposes. It should also be noted that the terms and terms used in that book have been omitted and subsequently expressed as such in most of the works written on the subject [4, p. 305].

It also mentions the names of useful plants, as in the traditional works on science al-bah; Alfiya often mentions coriander, saying: “The aroma of coriander in food is more appetizing and intoxicating” [8].

When talking about the medical significance of the work, we must not forget its social significance. Thus, the work is not intended only for men. Ibn Kamal Pasha narrates: “A group of women came to him (i.e., Alfiyya) for advice and asked him to find his way into the hearts of men and share their experiences of gaining true love and making men happy” [6]. It is clear from this that the work deals with one of the main conditions of the family – the regulation and strengthening of secret relationships between men and women; they are educated and enlightened in this field.

“Alfiya and Shalfiya” has become not only an example of fiction, but also a part of fine arts. Thus, according to the 11th century historian Abulfaz Beyhaqi, Mahmud Ghaznavi’s son Amir Masud built a palace in Herat for rest without his father’s knowledge and decorated the walls with pictures from this book. The rumors of this house spread everywhere,

and when Mahmud Ghaznavi found out about it, he sent a messenger to check the information. However, Masud manages to delete the pictures in time until the courier arrives [2, p. 456; 1, p. 295; 3, p. 445].

Result. Eternal love, a sharp mind that overcomes every difficulty, courage, and so on. In contrast to the traditional “Tales of a Thousand and One Nights”, which glorify such human qualities and the victory of good over evil in general, *Alfiyya* and *Shalfiyya*, a work of Persian literature, presents the intimate relationship between a man and a woman.

Distinguished by the variety of genres and styles, ancient oriental poetry has gone beyond traditional themes and enriched its richness through works on topics that require some courage. Every doctor and physician, eminent scholar and writer who has created a significant literary or scientific example has considered it important to touch upon the subject of science al-bah. Unfortunately, in modern times there are very few attempts to write works in this field that meet modern requirements. However, it has become necessary to write works that educate teenagers, young people and newlyweds in accordance with their age and position. Believing in the power of applause and cursing, desire and evil, and the negative and positive energy bestowed by

the word in general, ancient Eastern thinkers sought to solve a problem of great importance to man, and succeeded in curing the disease known as lust weakness through fiction. In fact, the connection between medicine and literature has always puzzled scientists and philosophers. In the words of Turkish writer Nazan Bekiroglu: “The connection between these two systems of knowledge, the main purpose of which is to understand man, is multifaceted; the image of the patient and the subject of disease in the literature, the influence of writers on this or that disease, the doctors who are writers, the fact that literature is one of the ways to healing” [18] as well as the power of the word.

It is no coincidence that bibliotherapy, which has its roots in ancient times, is still highly valued today. Numerous scientists and researchers have defended their dissertations on the therapeutic effects of reading on humans. “A Book Like Medicine” by modern British bibliotherapists Ella Bertoud and Susan Elderkin. *Emergency Literary Aid A – Z* helps the reader to benefit more easily from bibliotherapy, depending on his/her mood and illness. We would like to conclude with a quote from that book: “Whatever your illness, we offer you the simplest treatment – read a book” [16, p. 6].

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Садігова Р. ЛІКУВАЛЬНА СИЛА МИСТЕЦЬКОГО СЛОВА: «АЛФІЯ І ШАЛФІЯ»

Мета статті – надати інформацію про витвори мистецтва, що сформувались у давньосхідному світі, мають медичну функцію та присвячені інтимним стосункам між чоловіками та жінками. Історія книг, написаних на цю тему, сягає глибокої давнини. Східні вчені та мислителі, які завжди цінували слово, підходили до нього не лише як до літературного складника, а й як до засобу зцілення. Вони вирішили найважливіше для людини питання і досягли успіху в лікуванні хвороби, відомої як хтивість, за допомогою художньої літератури. Серед таких творів на особливу увагу заслуговує «Альфія і Шалфія», що з'явився в Ірані в XI столітті. Цей твір, написаний для Тогана-шаха, сина правителя сельджуків Альпа Арслана, цікавий і в наш час. У нашому дослідженні ми говоримо про джерела, які надають попередню інформацію про основний образ «Альфії та Шалфії», який базується на реальних історичних постатях. Зазначено, що він дуже давній за тематикою, його написав іранський поет Азрагі в XI столітті, щодо цього згадуються цікаві факти, що збереглися у джерелах. Твір, про який ми говоримо, виконаний у стилі казок «Тисяча і одну ніч» і складається з легенд та історій, переказаних головним героєм. Окрім головного героя, Шалфія також є безпосереднім учасником цих легенд. У статті висвітлено принципи структури та змісту цих історій. Оскільки робота базується на такій давній темі, як «наука аль-бах», потрібне її більш глибоке вивчення. У зв'язку із цим у статті висвітлено кілька авторитетних джерел із цього питання, наприклад використання «Альфії та Шалфії» у літературі інших східних народів, схожість із творами, написаними в цьому стилі. Є також імена низки видатних письменників і філософів, які звертались до теми «науки аль-бах» в античні та середньовічні часи. Стаття також зосереджується на інтересі сучасних читачів до висвітленої теми, медичних переваг її вивчення. Відомо, що роль і бібліотерапії нині незаперечні. З такого погляду з'ясовується психологічний вплив «Альфії та Шалфії» на читача.

Ключові слова: «Альфійя і Шалфійя», казка, наука про пристрасть, Катіб Чалабі, Тоган-шах, Абу Бакр Зайнуддін Азракі, «Тисяча і одна ніч», бібліотерапія.