

A Comparative Analysis of the Conceptualization of the Heart in the Lyric Poems of Attar and Hafez

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Introduction

The concept of “heart” is one of the most central concepts in Persian mystical and lyrical literature; a word that has acquired a multifaceted meaning in various linguistic, philosophical, psychological, and mystical fields. In classical Persian texts, “heart” plays a role not only as a physiological organ, but also as the center of emotion, intuition, inspiration, knowledge, and even truth. Especially in the ghazal, which is a vessel for expressing inner and spiritual experiences, the concept of heart has found a prominent place and is at the center of many metaphors and linguistic structures. Therefore, analyzing the conceptualization of the heart in Persian poetry can lead to a deeper understanding of the language, thought, and mystical imagination of Iranians. Among Persian-speaking poets, Attar Neyshabouri and Hafez Shirazi are among the most prominent, each of whom has processed the concept of heart in their poetic world with a distinctive approach. From the perspective of cognitive linguistics, the heart in the Persian tradition is the axis of the formation of a network of conceptual metaphors. In general, the heart in Persian culture is a reflection of ontological, psychological, epistemological and aesthetic complexities. In the theory of “conceptual metaphor” by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), the human mind operates in such a way that it understands and expresses complex, abstract and intangible concepts such as love, time, death, soul, or heart through simpler, more objective and experiential structures.

A review of the research background shows that although numerous works have analyzed mystical concepts in Persian poetry, few studies have specifically and comparatively analyzed the heart in the lyrical works of these two poets. Several studies have been conducted on the conceptualization of body parts in Persian: Sharifian and Ardebili (2011) have shown that “heart” in colloquial language is a conceptual foundation for expressing the linguistic, social, and emotional experiences of Persian speakers. Mazepova (2013) in a comparative study of Persian and Ukrainian analyzed the heart with seven conceptualizations (vessel, fire, matter, object, bird, living being, and human) and considered the similarities between the two languages as evidence of the same intellectual system. Mirhosseini and Kanani (2010) in Mersad al-Ebad identified the main metaphors “heart is matter,” “heart is place,” and “heart is man,” and emphasized the abundance of the domain of origin of place. In summary, there is still a lack of space in

Persian studies for a systematic analysis of heart metaphors, relying on precise textual examples and within a semantic framework.

The present study is a qualitative study, of a descriptive-analytical type and based on a cognitive semantics approach. The main aim of the research is to discover and explain how the word “heart” is perceived, described, and conceptually represented in the mystical Ghazals of two prominent poets of Persian literature, namely Attar Neyshaburi and Hafez Shirazi, from the perspective of conceptual metaphors. The theoretical framework of this study is based on the theory of conceptual metaphor, which was first proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1980). The research population consists of all the ghazals in the Divan of Hafez and Divan of Attar. The data of this study were collected in a library format.

Findings

The conceptualization of the heart in Persian mystical poetry often takes place in the context of embodiment, the poet’s lived experience, and cultural beliefs. For a better understanding of the conceptual structure and metaphorical patterns, the table on the next page presents all the main categories, subcategories, subcategories, and codes extracted from the poems in an integrated and aggregated manner. The following table shows a comprehensive overview of the process of content analysis and classification of concepts related to “heart”:

Aggregate structure of categories related to the conceptualization of the heart in the ghazals of Attar and Hafez

Codes and Labels	Subcategories	Intermediate Categories	Main Categories
Likened to cup, full or empty of wine	Cup of wine		
		Vessel	Del is body and substance
Conceptualizations of del			
Likened to censer, flames rising from del, full or empty of fire	Vessel of fire (censer)		
Having blood, full or empty of blood	Vessel of blood		
Full of speech	Vessel of speech		
Full or empty of love	Vessel of love		
Full or empty of pain	Vessel of pain		
Full or empty of sorrow and grief and sadness	Vessel of sorrow and grief		
Having or full of hope and regret	Vessel of hope and regret		
Full of patience and composure	Vessel of patience and composure		
Full of expectation	Vessel of expectation		
Likened del to mirror, has a dark back, becomes clouded and dusty, reflects the opposite, can be polished, likened to glass, breaks.		Mirror and glass	
Taken or stolen, taken away, plundered, carried off as		Valuable stealable	

Codes and Labels	Subcategories	Intermediate Categories	Main Categories
booty, lost in gambling, lost, given or entrusted to someone, can be returned, searched for, found, kept by someone, cared for, placed on something or taken or removed from something.		object	
Likened to stone, hard and solid, likened to flint stone.		Stone	
Likened to tablet, role or writing registered on it, role or writing erased from it.		Tablet	
Likened to fire, hot and fervent and burning, has smoke,		Fire and hot body	
Likened to house, has door, corner, window and vault, becomes ruined, becomes built, becomes the dwelling of the beloved.		House	Del is a place
House and place for affection and love.	Place of love and affection		
	House of emotions		
House and place for feeling sorrow and grief.	Place of sorrow		
Likened to alley		Alley and street	
Likened to secluded place		Seclusion	
Likened to tower		Tower	
Likened to ruin or treasure house, place of treasure, is ruined.		Ruin and treasure house	
Place full of idols.		Idol house	
Likened to Kaaba or sanctuary, accepts pilgrims, has a guard		Kaaba and sanctuary	
Likened to region, likened to kingdom, being conquered	Region and territory		
	Natural place		
Likened to garden, likened to desert	Garden and desert		
Likened to sea, can be drowned in, wavy and tumultuous, having pearls and jewels	Sea		
Used to express center, interior, depth, root, origin, inner, implicit, or inside anything		Center and middle	
Having bottom, being narrow		Well	
Having human tools or features, performing human actions and behaviors, interacting with human or an element conceptualized as human, being addressed		Human	Del is a living being
Being hunted and captured, falls into trap, flees and escapes, is bound, has rein and bridle.	Deer		
		Animal	
Likened to butterfly, falling into fire, heedless of candle and fire	Butterfly		
Bringing head to water	Fish		
Likened to fly	Fly		
Likened to bird, captivity in cage, soaring and flight, having claw, being hunted and trapped, pecking seeds	Bird		
Likened to Simurgh	Simurgh		
Likened to nightingale	Nightingale		
Likened to small bird, being small bird, becoming falcon's prey	Small bird		
Likened to pigeon, accompanying the sanctuary, becoming hawk's prey	Pigeon		

Codes and Labels	Subcategories	Intermediate Categories	Main Categories
Can be uprooted		Plant	
Opposition to self, expressing human wholeness, expressing unity, opposition to soul, invisible, immortality, referring to mystics in combinations "people of del" and "owner of del", possibility of being alive or dead for human, becoming sad or happy, possibility of attraction and pull		Soul and spirit	Del is an abstract entity
Being place of thought and awareness, place of remembering and forgetting, place of imagination and fancy, being thought and reflection, having capability of understanding and receiving, used for agreement and consensus, achieving madness in absence of del, accompanying religion, expressing calm and composure or agitation of mind, place of human desires and goals		Mind and thought	
Displaying essence and existential nature of human, is center of intuition, has unity in multiplicity, has direct connection with God.		Existence	
Innermost part of existence, shows deep human emotions.		Depth of soul	
Likened to curtain, covering		Curtain and veil	
Likened to treasury of secrets, has door and key, place of secrets.		Treasury of secrets	
Expressing del as source of motivation, energy and power, opposition to phrases that convey fear.		Courage	
Likened to eye, has possibility of seeing, becoming blind, becoming sighted, bruising, has light and radiance.		Eye	Del is a bodily organ
Being stabbed and opened		Abdomen	
Being grilled, being roasted		Meat	
Has weakness and inability, wounded, injured and bloody, becomes sick, has remedy and is cured.		Body and physique	
Shape and appearance, weight, material and color are expressed, opens or closes, is narrow, is branched, is round, is thin, becomes upside down, light or heavy.		Conceptualization based on shape of del	

Based on the above table, the semantic structure of the heart in the poetry of Attar and Hafez can be explained in the form of six main areas: 1. The heart is a body; 2. The heart is a place; 3. The heart is a living being; 4. The heart is an abstract thing; 5. The heart is a body organ; 6. The external characteristics of the heart. In the following, these six areas are presented in a more sub-area:

a) The Heart Is a Body

Both poets depict the heart as a tangible and material object; the most important manifestations of this conceptualization are: the heart as a container; the heart as a mirror and glass; the heart as a valuable and abductable object; the heart as a stone; the heart as a tablet; the heart as fire and a hot body

b) The Heart Is a Place

One of the richest areas of conceptualization of the heart in the lyric poems of Attar and Hafez is its depiction as a place: the heart as a house; The heart as a hut and a hut; the heart as a tower; the heart as a retreat; the heart as a ruin and a treasure house; the heart as an idol house; the heart as the Kaaba and the sanctuary; the heart as a region, kingdom

and land; the heart as a garden and a desert; the heart as the sea; the heart as the center and the middle; the heart as a well.

c) The Heart Is a Living Being

In this conceptualization, the heart is not a passive body, but a living and dynamic being that can speak, fear, fight, or even die and come back to life. The most important sub-categories of this field are: the heart as a human being; the heart as an animal; the heart as a plant.

d) The Heart Is an Abstract Thing

In many of the ghazals of Attar and Hafez, the heart is neither a tangible body, nor a specific place, nor a living being, but is depicted on a more transcendent level as an abstract, subjective, and spiritual reality. The most important sub-categories of this field are: the heart as soul and spirit; the heart as mind and thought; the heart as existence and being; the heart as the depth of the soul; the heart as a curtain and veil; the heart as a repository of secrets; the heart as courage and bravery.

c) The Heart Is a Body Part

In this field, the heart is represented as a part of the body; an organ that is both physical and objective and has a direct connection with spiritual experiences. The most important sub-categories of this field are: the heart as eye; the heart as stomach; the heart as flesh; the heart as body and figure.

e) Heart and External Features

In some ghazals, the heart is represented based on external and formal features. In these metaphors, the heart is described as an object with physical attributes; the most important manifestations of this domain are: the heart being open and closed; the heart being thin; the heart being narrow and wide; the heart being light and heavy; the heart being round; the heart being branched.

Summary and Conclusion

A study of the conceptualizations of “heart” in the ghazals of Attar and Hafez showed that both poets have represented the heart in the form of six major domains (body, place, living being, abstract matter, body part, and external features). Both Attar and Hafez have used a diverse set of metaphors; the heart is present in the works of both poets as a container, mirror, house, ruin, Kaaba, sea, bird, plant, soul, repository of secrets, and so on. In both poems, the heart is a bridge between human love and divine knowledge. In language full of mystical passion, Attar introduces the heart as the arena of sacred conduct and experience. Hafez, however, recreates the heart in a more complex context. Hafez entrusts the heart to the “loving and wretched person” rather than the “mystical seeker.” The concept of “heart” in the lyric poems of Attar and Hafez is like a mirror that not only reflects their mystical and aesthetic thoughts, but also carries complex layers of worldview, language, lived experience, and cultural tradition. In Attar Neyshaburi’s poetry, the heart has a sacred, cosmic, and fundamental place. In contrast, the heart in Hafez’s lyric poems has a fluid, multifaceted, and more human structure. This research shows that the heart is not a purely individual or mystical concept, but rather a conceptual structure through which the entire intellectual system, aesthetics, mysticism, and poetic perception in the Persian tradition find meaning.

Keywords: Conceptual metaphor, comparative analysis, Hafez Shirazi, mystical poetry, Attar Neyshaburi, conceptualization of the heart.