The Literary Genre of Salavāt-khāni in Folk Literature

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Abstract

Similar to classic literature, there are several different literary genres in folk literature. Some of these genres belong only to folk literature, this is while others belong to both folk and classical literatures. It is an essential task to identify each one of these genres. Salavāt-khāni is one of the folk poetries which intend to recall the sanctity of the saints on different occasions by inviting the audience to salute the saints at certain moments. Poems of this type are usually classified according to the occasions they are being used. For instance, they are known as worksong, chavoshi, or sahari-khani, this is while each one of these examples belongs to a different genre. Consequently, the goal of this paper is to investigate the characteristics of Salavāt-khāni. To this end, generic studies are used to study the internal and external features, such as structure, content, mode, function, and the specific interaction between the orator and the audience. There are only a few cases of Salavāt-khāni which are recorded in manuscripts. However, these

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limited cases are enough to prove Salavāt-khāni as an autonomous literary genre according to its unique structure.

Keywords: *Salavāt-khānī and folk literature, Persian folk poetry and religious culture, literary genre of Salavāt-khānī , folk literature.*

Extended Abstract

1. **Introduction**

Salavāt-khānī is a lesser-known genre in folk literature, influenced by the practice of sending blessings in Islamic culture. This prayer originates from verse 56 of Surah Al-Ahzab, inviting Muslims to send blessings. Muslims often individually or collectively recite Salavāt at the beginning and end of events or during various activities. To add structure, rhythm, and diversity, poems have been composed, inviting each other to send blessings through these verses. Salavāt-khānī is performed for blessing and seeking intercession from religious leaders in various ceremonies and activities, especially at their commencement or conclusion. In Salavāt-khānī, someone with a good voice recites poems praising the Prophet and religious leaders, inviting others to send blessings. In response, others also recite Salavāt loudly. For instance:

Bargushā kām-i zabān tā ki tu dārī harakāt / Farq-i sar tā bi kaf-i pāy-i Muhammad Salavāt

(Open your mouth as long as you're alive, / Send blessings on Muhammad from head to sole) (Mu'ayyid Muhsinī, 2002, p. 267)

Salavāt-khānī, influenced by its performance contexts, is often categorized under different titles, such as worksong, Chāvushī, eulogy, or Saharī-khānī. However, Salavāt-khānī is an independent genre that is recited and performed alongside other poems in various situations. In this article, we take a genre-based look at Salavāt-khānī, aiming to answer the question of how Salavāt-khānī is a genre of poetry and what characteristics it possesses, considering genre studies.

2. Literature Review

In exploring the literary genre of Salavāt-khānī, only three articles are available. Jāvīd's (2013) article enumerates various types of Salavāt-

khānī and introduces their rhythm and musical performance. However, Javid's definition of Salavāt-khānī is broader than the current study, encompassing some supplications and Arabic invocations. The second article is by Pārsāpūr and Karamī (2018), presenting Salavāt-khānī as an independent genre in "Formal Literature." The third article by Khudābandilū (2019) in the *Encyclopedia of Iranian Folklore* introduces Salavāt-khānī under the category of oral literature. However, none of these sources have adopted a genre-based approach and have not examined the textual and contextual components of this literary genre.

3. Methodology
In Genre Studies, both textual and contextual elements are examined. Therefore, in identifying and introducing the genre of Salavāt-khānī, we investigate textual elements (common narratives, meter, rhyme, form, language features, literary structure, and content), contextual elements (context, function, audience), and the origin of these poems.

4. Results
Salavāt-khānī is a poetry genre in folk literature influenced by religious traditions and the prevalent practice of reciting blessings (Salavāt) among Muslims. In this poetic form, the leader engages in solo chanting and encourages the audience to send blessings. Approximately 45 independent and non-repetitive narratives of this poetry have emerged from various regions in Iran, with slight variations. The most common are two formats: Rubāʿī (quatrain) and Musammat (multiple poem). These are widely repeated across Iran, and examples are found throughout the country.

In Salavāt-khānī, the rhyme word or the refrain of the poem mostly consists of the word or the mention of "Salavāt." The reciter pauses during these moments, allowing the audience to respond by loudly sending blessings. The content of these poems includes praising Prophet Muhammad and the saints, listing their attributes and titles, expressing love and respect for them, cursing their enemies, and ultimately inviting the audience to send blessings. Salavāt-khānī is performed for blessings, seeking the intercession of the Imams, creating excitement or calmness in the gathering, and announcing the start or end of various ceremonies and activities such as agriculture, Chāvushī, mourning ceremonies for the Imams, Saharī- khānī (night prayers), Quran recitation, weddings, and Mulūdī (Imam's birthday celebration). Salavāt-khānī is deeply connected with the poetic form of Chāvushī,

and they are structurally intertwined. Chāvushī chanters often include Salavāt-khānī at the beginning and end of their discourse. Therefore, Salavāt-khānī is most commonly associated with Chāvushī. It's important to note that Salavāt-khānī is recited in various situations, and it may sometimes be confused with other forms of recitation such as worksong, Chāvushī, Saharī-khānī, and Mulūdī, etc. However, its unique structure allows it to be easily distinguished from other types of poetry.

In Salavāt-khānī, the most prevalent meters are prosodic, and the common forms include Mathnawi (couplet-poem), Rubāʿī (quatrain), Musammat (multiple poem), and Tak-biyt (single verse). Quatrains have a uniform structure, where they curse the enemies of religious leaders in the third hemistich and send blessings to the saints in the other hemistichs. Musammat, on the other hand, all include refrains, sending blessings to the Prophet in the refrain hemistichs. Another structural feature of Salavāt-khānī is the high frequency of hemistichs with the formula "to/upon + reference to one of the religious leaders + Salavāt," with a prosodic meter of "Mafā'ilun Fa'alātun Mafā'ilun Fa'alātun" or "Fa'alātun Fa'alātun Fa'alātun Fa'alātun." Salavāt-khānī poems are filled with irregularities and metric disruptions, and their poetic forms are confused. They are not particularly strong linguistically, rarely featuring colloquial and broken words, and their language falls between colloquial and formal.

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