

**An Investigation into the Impact of Religious Tendencies
on the Narrating Method of Commentary Stories
(An Emphasis on the Prominent Female Characters in Three
Commentaries *Tafsir Rawz al-Jinan*, *Jala' al-Azhan*, and *Minhaj
al-Sadeghin*)**

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the impact of religious tendencies on the narrative of commentary stories. The corpus includes the stories of three Persian Shiite commentaries, i.e., *Rowz al-Jinan*, *Jala' al-Azhan*, and *Minhaj al-Sadeghin*. Taking a qualitative content analysis and focusing on the methods of manifesting the characteristics of prominent women of Shia and Sunna sections in the narratives of the commentaries, this research tried to depict the manifestations of Shiite tendencies in each of the mentioned works. It also tried to explain the differences between the images and the impact of social and religious features of the periods in which the works have been written on the differences. The study showed that the differences in the manifestations of Shiite tendencies in the commentary narratives can be summarized in deletion, addition,

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and change of the text of the narratives. *Rowz al-Jinan* has been written in Sunni context, so the commentator had taken a peaceful coexistence and, as much as possible, avoided discussing sensitive issues and emphasized on the religious commonalities. *Gazor* and *Minhaj al-Sadeghin*, however, that have been written in a period that Shia dominated, added or highlighted some prominent Shiite personalities and their narratives. Moreover, the commenters have shown their own religious tendencies through changing or deleting some narratives on the prominent women of Sunni section or deleting the attributes and description of the women.

Keywords: *Interpretation of Rowz al-Jinan, Interpretation of Jala' al-Azhan, Interpretation of Minhaj al-Sadeghin, religious tendencies in Persian interpretations, narrative and storytelling in Persian interpretations.*

1, Introduction

Sometimes commentators take the role of a narrator. We can find cases that commentators impose their own ideology while interpreting the verses of the Holy Quran. The commentators might have been influenced by socio-political and religious relations and have consciously or unconsciously included their thoughts in the text. Some believe that there is no interpretation that is free from the influence of the vision and tendency of the narrator and commentator. This research based on the narratives of Abu al-Fotuh's commentary (6th lunar century). Moreover, two other similar commentaries, *Gazor* (8th lunar century) and *Minhaj al-Sadeghin* (10th lunar century) were examined. The similarity between the three interpretations is a common thing, but it seems that in terms of the representation of religious tendencies there is differences between among the late commentaries that is so significant to discover.

Research questions:

1. How is the narration trajectory of the commentators in three commentaries *Rowz al-Jinan*, *Jala' al-Azhan*, *Minhaj al-Sadeghin*?
2. What are the religious features of the period of producing the commentaries?
3. What are the representation differences of religious tendencies among the stories of these commentaries?

2. Literature Review

It should be stated at first that to the best of the knowledge of the researchers, there is no work that focuses on the impact of religious tendencies on the narratives of ancient Persian commentaries. However, there are many studies that, although their main focus is not on religious tendencies on commentary narratives, but they are analytical and somehow similar. Parsa (2014) introduced the commentaries in the 10th and 11th decades. He separately analyzed the structure and the commentary methodology, characteristics, and tendencies of the commentators. Aryan (2009) may be considered the first researcher who addressed the issue of women in commentaries. This researcher used the oldest Persian texts such as *Tafsir Tabari* and *Tarikh Tabari*, *Rowz al-Jinan*. In this research, Aryan (2009) only included the narratives in which prominent women played a role, although his method in the narrations is not analytical or critical. In addition, Hosseini (2017) explored the manifestations of misogyny in Persian poems, narratives, traditions, myths, and religious texts. In the section “misogyny in religious texts”, he focused on the holy texts, Islamic texts, verses of the Quran, and Islamic hadiths. His attitude towards the feminist criticism of Quranic verses is controversial. He analyzed the commentators’ misogynist narratives of the verses and explored the impacts of the incorrect interpretations in the poems as well. For this purpose, he provides some examples from the poems of Ohadi Maraghe’i, Sanaei, Molavi, Manouchehri, and Sa’di. Maybe one of the most similar studies is Moradi (2016) that classified commentators into three thought schools: traditional, fundamentalist, and modernist. His research was successful in manifesting commentators’ different ideations, but it did not address the reasons and quality of the differences. Moreover, his took a selective approach.

3. Methodology

Considering the aim of the study which was exploring the impact of religious tendencies on the narrating method of commentary stories, this study took qualitative content analysis as a method. The corpus of the study consisted of three commentaries: *Rowz al-Jinan*, *Jala’ al-Azhan*, *Minhaj al-Sadeghin*.

4. Results

This study showed that one of the most significant aspects of representing commentators’ religious tendencies has been manifested

in presenting religious personalities. The results showed that the character of Hazrat Fatima (PBUH) as the most prominent female character in Shia discourse as well as the characters of the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, especially Aisha, in the Sunni discourse, has resulted in a contrast that originates from the conflict between Shia and Sunni sections. Delving into the trajectory of the role of these characters and their presence in the narratives showed us the religious tendencies of the commentators. By comparing the attitudes towards the Qur'an that generally can be divided into surface and profound levels, we may reach at some roots of the Shiite beliefs. Exploring these works revealed that Abu al-Fotuh's attitudes towards women is moderate due to the lack of prejudices or the impossibility of representing prejudices. Abu al-Fotuh did not utter his religious tendencies but the two other commentators see the high meaning of woman in a specific sign and believe a spiritual and divine status for that women and marginalize others. In general, the differences in the manifestations of Shiite tendencies in narrating the stories can be summarized in deletion, addition, and change of the text of the narratives. Since *Rowz al-Jinan* had been written in Sunni context, the commentator tried to avoid focusing on sensitive issues. He instead focused on the religious commonalities between the two sections of the society. On the contrary, the writers of *Gazor* and *Minhaj al-Sadeghin* commentaries tried to highlight some prominent Shiite personalities and their narratives. Moreover, the commentators deleted some narratives on the prominent women of Sunni section or deleting their attributes and description, and this way they showed their own religious attitudes towards women.

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