



## A Study of the Literary and Fictional Aspects of Chapter 12 of Holy Quran Based on a Comparison of Two Books of *Bahr al-Mahabah fi Asrar al-Mavadahand Al-Settin Al-JamehLelataef Al-Basatin*

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### ABSTRACT

Undoubtedly, Holy Quran and its outstanding teachings are among the most influential factors in Iranian literature and this influence is more visible in didactic, lyric and allegorical works as compared to other literary styles. The second half of fifth century and sixth century of Hijra are regarded as the most important cultural and scientific eras in Iranian history. In these eras, numerous influential works were authored in the fields of Quranic exegesis and literature particularly its fictional aspect. Two books of *Bahr al-Mahabah fi Asrar al-Mavadah* halledgedly by AhamadGhazali and *Al-Settin Al-JamehLelataef Al-Basatin* written by Ahmad ibn Muhammad Tusi are among the mystical exegeses of the twelfth chapter of Holy Quran better known as the Chapter of Joseph. These works contain brilliant mystical interpretations of theosophical points of the Chapter of Joseph. One of them is in Arabic and the other is in Persian and both belong to the same historical era. The present study seeks to focus on the definitional, descriptive and historical aspects of the issue of exegesis, mysticism and fictional literature and make a comparison between these two books that have many similarities in their fictional narrative. It is needless to say that conducting a critical comparison of two exegeses of the same chapter of Holy Quran which have been both published in the same century and within the similar cultural atmosphere and with the same sufistic content is in itself an innovative enterprise. It is also evident that comparing these two texts in view of their stylistic and narratological specifications can serve as a pattern for anyone who is interested in the comparative studies of the texts.

**Key Words:** Comparison, Contrastive and Comparative Criticism, Mysticism and Sufism, The Story of Joseph, Narratology, Structural Analysis.

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### INTRODUCTION

Mysticism and sufism which flourished in Iran, specially in Khurasan, after the arrival of Islam, are the major leitmotif of our literary works and among the exegetical works, those texts which are of more colorful mystical bent enjoy more powerful literary aspects (whether in eloquency or in language or in artistic and literary creations, particularly in narrative and fictional aspects). On the other hand, the adventures of Prophet Joseph that have been related in Quran and other sacred books of other religions, have inspired numerous didactic and exegetical works of Sufis as well as their lyric and allegorical works due to their firm fictional action and influential narrative and mystical plot and containing such notions as love, enthusiasm, separation, suffering, friendship, patience, union and the like, and have been recreated by the creators of the mystical works. Joseph is the twelfth chapter of Holy Quran and relates the story of the Prophet Joseph that has had great influence on our literature. The story of Joseph particularly his romantic affair with the wife of Egypt's Aziz have served as the basis of many literary works. Moreover, numerous themes of this story have permeated into the literary works. The poetic and prosaic works that were created in fifth and sixth centuries, have established the basis of our golden literary age. Two books of *Bahr al-Mahbah fi Asrar al-*

*Mavadah* halledgedly by Abu al-Fath Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ghazali and *Al-Settin al-JamehLelataef al-Basatin* by Abubakr Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Tusi are among the interpretative and mystical works on the Chapter 12 – Joseph – of Holy Quran that have been authored in this era. Chapter 12 of Holy Quran contains the story of the Prophet Joseph that has had a comprehensive influence on our literature. The story of Joseph particularly his romantic affair with the wife of Potiphar Egypt's Aziz (the Captain of gaurds of Pharo's palace) has inspired numerous literary creations in Persia. Moreover, many themes and motifs of this story have permeated into the literary works.

The present essay seeks to compare the literary and fictional aspects of these two books that present narratives of the story of Joseph that have numerous similarities. Accordingly, we proceed to contrast the form, content, style, narrative qualities as well as mystical notions of these two works so as to reveal their common grounds and discrepancies. These contrastive comparisons will help us to provide answers for the following questions:

- 1- How much helpful is conducting a comparative study of the exegeses that are offered by these two books regarding the story of Joseph for better understanding of mystical notions in Divine Word?
- 2- Where do these two books stand among the similar existing Arabic and Persian mystical works in Iran?
- 3- What are the similarities and differences of these two narratives of the adventures of Joseph?

4- Since there are some doubts concerning the validity of attribution of Bahr al-Mahabah to Ahmad Ghazali and no information is available on the life of the author of Al-Jameh al-Settin, can we use the style and content similarities as a basis to demonstrate that the two works have been written by the same author ?

## 2- Theoretical Foundations of Research

### 2-1 -Mysticism and Sufism

There are various and sometimes opposing views regarding the terms mysticism and sufism. Many scholars have taken the two as different expressions of the same notion. Dr. ShafeiKadkani considers the two terms one and understands them as "artistic vision of theology and religion" (ShafeiKadkani, 2001: 12-13).

Mysticism is nothing but an artistic and aesthetic vision of theology and religion. From this perspective, there is no religion void of mystical vision (ShafeiKadkani, 2005: 15). Professor Mutahari interprets mysticism as a sociocultural phenomenon. Accordingly, its cultural aspect reveals itself in mysticism while the social aspect has to be sought for in sufism (Mutahari, 2005: 76).

### 2-2- Fiction in Quran

Storytelling or narration is the first human art in the field of language. Holy Quran has also taken advantage of this influential art. The importance of story in Holy Quran is as much as THE LORD has described himself as the narrator (Ayatollahi, 2007: 2).

In the sending down of this Koran, We will narrate to you (Prophet Muhammad) the best of narratives, of which you were previously unaware (Holy Quran, Chapter 12: 2).

We sent down of the Koran that which is a healing and a mercy to believers, but to the harmdoers it does not increase them, except in loss (Holy Quran, Chapter 17: 82).

Quran in its essence is a type of Book of Kings and through all of its aspects it seeks to provide a transcendent interpretation of the cosmos. Although Quran is not trying to relate stories and is not of a fictional language, it makes use of the most efficient narrative tools to convey its messages (Shujapoorian, 2013: 115).

The word qisas (Arabic word for stories) has been used for seven times in Holy Quran; six times in the verses and one time as the title of the twenty eighth chapter of Quran (Parvini, 2000: 90-91).

Of course, other alternative words have also been used in Quran that refer to the same meaning, i.e. story, like naba, hadith, mathal (Parvini, 2000: 118).

We may summarise the chief goals of Divine Presence from storytelling in the Holy Book as follows:

a) Providing Lessons and Advices:

Indeed, in their stories is a lesson for those of understanding ... (Chapter 12: 111).

b) Cordial Peace of Prophet and the Believers:

And all We relate to you of the tidings of the Messengers is that whereby We strengthen your heart (Chapter 11: 120).

c) Admonition and Keeping Away from the Corruption and Sins:

Tidings containing a deterrent have come to them (Chapter 54: 4).

Indeed, for he who fears the punishment of the Everlasting Life that is a sign (Chapter 11: 103).

d) Oneness of Religion and the Mission:

Indeed, this nation of yours is one nation, and I am Your Lord, therefore worship Me (Chapter 21: 92).

Generally speaking, we can divide Quranic stories into three major types: story of prophets, story of tribes and past events, and the stories of the events that have happened during the Holy Prophet of Islam's mission.

### 2-3 -Chapter 12 of Holy Quran (known as Joseph)

Joseph as one of the chapters of Holy Quran that contains a whole body of a story has always attracted the attention of the exegetes, commentators and storytellers. In most of Islamic exegetical works such as Tafsir-e Tabari, Kashf al-AsrarMeibodi, Roz al-Jinan and the like, this story and its side events have been discussed. Such works as Al-Jameh al-Settin or Hadaeq al-Haqaeq and Bahr al-Mahabah, have been exclusively authored as an exegesis of this story. Most of the hagiological works like the works by Thalabi, Abu EshaqNeishaburi, Esameel Ibn Kathir and Ravandi, the story of Joseph has been discussed and analysed (Shujapuryan, 2013: 116). The poets and literary thinkers – both in Persian and Arabic – have created brilliant lyric and allegorical works inspired by the story of Joseph .

Nihayah al-Ert by Al-Naviri is an interesting Arabic narrative of the story of Joseph and Zuleikha (Kazemi, 2012: 136). Accordingly, numerous articles and essays have been published on this story in contemporary times. However, two exegetical works that consist the focal point of the present study have been sorely neglected and less discussed by the scholars and researchers .

A) Kitab al-Settin al-JamehLelataef al-Basatin (knowns as Al-Jameh al-Settin (

This book is authored by Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Tusi. He was one of the distinguished Sufis of Khurasan. He shared the common belief and regarded voyeurism and pederasty as normal actions that cherish the beauties of Divinity as revealed on earth. Even he considered loving a creature an expression of one's love of the Creator. He was very dexterous in making similes and metaphors. The key notions of his literary thought consist of beauty, sleep, mystery, well, love, passion, reign, famine and allegory. He aligns the words of great figures of Sufism with the Divine Words of Quran and prophetic traditions .

There are five manuscripts of this book (Tusi, 2005, introduction: 14-21) and one edited version that has been published by Muhammad Roshan .

B) Bahr al-Mahabah fi Asrar al-Mavadah

This work has been attributed to Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ghazali who was a renowned theologian, jurisprudent and mystic from Khurasan in the second half of the fifth century. He is of a high stature in sufism .

There are ten manuscripts of this work (Badavi, 1997: 297) as well as two published versions. It has also been translated into Persian twice (cf. Chapter four, Bahr al-Mahabah).

Regardless of the allusions that have been made to the name of this book under the works of Ghazali no independent research is available on it neither in a thesis form nor in article form. Only NasrullahPurjavadi has alluded to the similarities of these two exegetical works in a cursory fashion (Purjavadi, 1980: 297) .

## METHODOLOGY

### 3-1 -Method

This research is focused on the mystical interpretation of Chapter 12 of Holy Quran that is commonly known as Joseph, based on a critical comparison of two books entitled Bahr al-Mahabah fi Asrar al-Mavadah and Al-Settin al-JamehLelataef al-Basatin. It also critically assays the mystical and exegetical methods of the two authors .

Then since,

- a) This research subject-matter has its roots in historical-literary-mystical past .
- b) It deals with the literary structures of both Arabic and Persian languages.
- c) It is concerned with the context of Divine Word and their interpretation .
- d) The form of these two works are studied from structural and comparative points of view .
- e) The exegetical-mystical content of these books are critically compared and assayed .

Accordingly, we have chosen the descriptive-historic-analytic method for this research. Of course, this analysis is conducted based on an intertextual and comparative basis .

### 3-2 -Data Collection Method

The necessary sources for this research that are all in written form, can be divided into three categories :

- a) Original texts of the two books (Bahr al-Mahabah and Al-Settin al-Jameh)
- b) Related books .
- c) Papers collected through two major websites of Comprehensive Portal of Humanities and Noor bank of papers .

### 3-3 -Data Analsi Method

The research data have been analysed based on the comparison of the original texts of the two books .

4- Comparing two books of Bahr al-Mahabah fi Asrar al-Mavadah and Al-Settin al-JamehLelataef al-Basatinin view of their Literary and Fictional Aspects

#### 4-1- The Story of Joseph

The chapter of Joseph in Quran is focused on the life story of Prophet Joseph that begins from his teenage dream and continues up until he joins his father Jacob in Egypt when he was in power.

An analysis of this story in Quran as well as its elements lead us to the following points:

- a) The story is eloquently related by an Omniscient Sage, i.e. the Lord God of Holy Quran. In both exegetical works the storyteller is described as a third person and not as an Omniscient Sage because the authors quote others to substantiate their own views; e.g. ... Some say that he was upright and his head touched Jacob's shoulder... (Ghazali, 1876: 5). ... Ibn Abbas says that he opened seven knots and the paradise was still... (Tusi, 2005: 314). This form of narration is more seen in Bahr al-Mahabah and Tusi does not refer to other people's views in relation of the story.

- b) Temporal and spatial structure of the story of Joseph in Quran is disconnected. Against the old style of storytelling Quran relates the story from its middle part with narration of a dialogue. The two exegeses have followed Quran in starting their discussions of the story and have begun the story from the middle. Of course, they have also referred to previous episodes wherever it was needed. In Quran nothing has been said regarding Joseph's age and his lifetime. The exact date of his imprisonment is not also clear. Holy Quran is only speaking of the given number of the years of famine and affluence according to Pharo's dream.

The final abode of Joseph in Egypt is the only place that is clearly noted in Quran.

Contrary to the narration of Quran, these two exegetical works have referred to the exact place and time in their discussions.

- c) In Holy Quran the characters have been mentioned in a general fashion without giving any account of the superficial specifications. In fact, God has only spoken of the necessary items and his intention was the core message of the story.

There is no sign of any given name but that of Joseph. Even Jacob is mentioned as Joseph's father and no one of the brothers – even Benjamin – is mentioned.

Other characters like Egypt's Aziz, the Wife of Egypt's Aziz, Bashir and two imprisoned young men who were Joseph's cellmates, are merely mentioned in this unclear general fashion.

In Jameh al-Settin and Bahr al-Mahabahbesides the names of Jacob and his two sons Judah and Benjamin as well as the names of Egypt's Aziz and his wife and others are mentioned with certain specifications.

One of the most influential personages of the story is Lord whose name has not been mentioned in Quran and there is no sign of him at all.

- d) Quran depicts the characters and events in an allusive fashion. Some allusions that have been made in Quran regarding the key characters of the story are as follows:

- 1- The jealousy of the brothers: say nothing of this vision to your brothers lest they should cunningly plot against you indeed (Holy Quran, Chapter 12: 5).

- 2- Joseph: so your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of visions (Chapter 12: 6).

- 3- Joseph is the beloved son of his father: They said: 'Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than ourselves, even though we are many. Truly, our father is obviously wrong (Chapter 12: 8).

- 4- Jacob is worried about Joseph: He said: It grieves me to let him go with you, for I fear lest the wolf should devour him when you are not paying attention to him (Chapter 12: 13).

- 5- The power and number of the brothers:They said: 'We are many, if a wolf devours him, then we are losers! (Chapter 12: 14).

- 6- The wife of Egypt's Aziz tries to seduce Joseph: And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him and closed the doors saying: 'Come! ' 'In Allah is my refuge! (Chapter 12: 23).

- 7- The beauty of Joseph: When she heard of their sly whispers, she sent for them and prepared a banquet. To each she gave a knife, (then called Joseph saying:) 'Come and attend to them. ' When they saw him, they were so taken with him that they cut their hands, and said: 'Allah save us! This is no mortal, he is no other but a noble angel! (Chapter 12: 31 cf. Ayatollahi, 2007: 13-14).

Thus these two writers have elaborated and expanded on the way that Quran relates the story and made it clearer.

#### 4-2- Comparative Assessment of the Narrtions of the Chapter of Joseph

Both books have followed the narration of Quran. Of course, there are some actions and narrative effects have been added to the main sotry line that we will turn to them in subsequent discussion;

#### Joseph's Dream

In both books it has been mentioned that it was midday and Joseph had slept while he put his head on his father's leg (Tusi, 2005: 60 cf. Ghazali, 1876: 5). Moreover, they have

brother referred to Jacob's irritation of Joseph's selfish statements of himself.

### Interpretation of Joseph's Dream

Jacob interpreted his son's dream for him. He says that the sun and the moon are Joseph's father and aunt and the stars are his brothers (Tusi, 2005: 68 cf. Ghazali, 1876: 6).

This interpretation has also been implicitly stated in the Holy Book (Hamadani, 27).

Joseph's aunt informs Joseph's brothers.

In Bahr al-Mahabah Joseph's aunt is called Simon's Mother who informed the brothers (Ghazali, 1876).

Jameh al-Settin speaks of this woman as Simon's Mother and the wife of Jacob (Tusi, 2005: 86).

Brothers ask about the dream.

In a similar narration it has been related in both books that the brothers went to Joseph to ask him to describe the details of his dream and since Joseph did not want to lie he told them the whole dream (Ghazali, 1876 cf. Tusi, 2005: 94).

### Brothers' Argument with Jacob

Joseph's brothers try to convince their father to take Joseph to the desert by themselves and Quran has shortly spoken of this argument but it has not said anything of the details (Ghazali, 1876 cf. Tusi 2005: 106).

### Play

In both exegeses we read that it is said in response to the brothers that there is no good in play. Bahr al-Mahabah attributes this word to Joseph while Jameh al-Settin attributes it to Jacob (Ghazali, 1876 cf. Tusi, 2005: 108).

### Preparation of Joseph

In a similar narration it is said that Jacob washes Joseph's face and combs his hairs and dresses Joseph with the shirt that Abraham was wearing it when he was thrown into the fire by Namrood (Ghazali 1876 cf. Tusi, 2005: 116).

### Joseph Is Harassed by Brothers

Joseph is beaten by all his brothers and both books have referred to this.

Jameh al-Settin writes that Simon intended to kill Joseph (Tusi, 2005: 125).

Both books say that Joseph returned his brothers spiteful actions with smiles and told them: I thought my ten brothers will help me in the desert but now I see that I was wrong and my hopes were all baseless (Tusi, 2005: 125).

In both exegeses we read that Judah protected Joseph and did not let the brothers to kill him.

### Bloody Shirt

When Jacob looked at the bloody shirt and did not see any sign of laceration on it he smiled (Tusi, 2005: 159).

This point has also been mentioned in the twenty-first section of Midrash (Khazaeli, 2001: 673).

### Bringing Joseph Out of the Pit

In both books it has been mentioned that Lord told one of his servants that if he finds Joseph he will give him half of his wealth and one of his daughters (Ghazali, 1876 cf. Tusi, 2005: 182-183).

Jameh al-Settin has mentioned the name of this servant as Bashir while Bahr al-Mahabah presents him as Boshra.

In both books it has been written that angels were flying over the pit in the form of birds and when the carvan reached the pit the camels and horses were uneasy.

The authors believe that Gabriel told Joseph to sit in the bucket so as to be pulled out.

### Selling Joseph

The brother saw Joseph and approached the carvan and told that this is our servant who had escaped. They threatened Joseph and made him silent and sold him to Lord by three conditions.

First, he is a thief; second, he is a runaway; third, he should be dressed with torn mat (Tusi, 2005: 192). In Bahr al-Mahabah another false accusation is made against Joseph: he sees false dreams (Ghazali, 1876).

### Joseph Says Goodbye to His Brothers

Joseph asks the lord to let him to say goodbye to his brothers. Joseph made the brothers cry with his sad goodbyes (Ghazali, 1876 cf. Tusi, 2005: 195).

### Joseph in Nablus

When Joseph crossed Nablus the people saw his beauties and broke the idols and became monotheists (Tusi, 2005: 214). In Bahr al-Mahabah we read that Joseph had a dialogue with the people (Ghazali, 1876).

In other city when the people saw Joseph's face they built an idol of him and became idolators. In Jameh al-Settin this city is named as Tripoli and in Bahr al-Mahabah it is named as Belsan.

### Arrival to Egypt

The story of Joseph's arrival to Egypt begins with the loud call of the herald (Tusi, 2005: 228).

The descriptions of the two books in this regard are long and have numerous differences. The similarities of these two narrations include the following:

Joseph enters a house and the house is filled with light.

A price is determined for visiting Joseph.

Thousands of people come to visit Joseph.

Thousands die of their passionate enthusiasm for visiting him.

Joseph is planned to be sold.

Ghazali offers more detailed descriptions of Joseph, his house and beauties (Ghazali, 1876: 57).

In Jameh al-Settin the number of people who have been gathered for visiting Joseph is estimated to be more than twenty five thousand and the number of dead ones is estimated to be almost fifteen thousand. But in Bahr al-Mahabah this number is less than five thousand (Tusi, 2005: 234-235).

### Dialogue of Zuleikha and Joseph

This has been also discussed in other exegetical works. In this dialogue Zuleikha praises Joseph's beauties and Joseph says that all these beauties are ephemeral. Joseph tries to remind death to her and distract her mind (Ghazali, 1876: 89 cf. Tusi, 2005: 300). Of course, the details of this dialogue are different in these two books. In Jameh al-Settin Zuleikha is said to be speaking of cheating, drinking and killing her husband but in Bahr al-Mahabah Zuleikha is depicted as a decent woman who seeks to convert to Joseph's religion.

### Zuleikha's Party

This party has been described in Jameh al-Settin in a detailed way. Even the number of women and the names of their tribes have been mentioned. The decorations of the party have also been depicted (Tusi, 2005: 352).

Ghazali only notes that the chairs had been decorated with emeralds and rubies. This is also noted in Jameh al-Settin.

Ghazali also speaks of the speech that Zuleikha gives in front of the women (Ghazali, 1876: 105).

**Joseph's Lashing in Prison**

Zuleikha orders the servants to lash Joseph in prison in a way that Zuleikha could hear his screams may she can be in peace. Moreover, when Joseph faints Gabriels comes down to him and teaches him the art of dream interpretation (Tusi, 1876: 111 cf. Ghazali, 2005: 391).

In Jameh al-Settin we read that Joseph was lashed in the garden and Zuleikha was watching him while he was in great pain and suffering with her maids.

**Nomadic Arab Visits Jacob**

The story of this visit has been related in Jameh al-Settin in a short form. The nomadic Arab enters the house of griefs and brings a message. Jacob asks him to give the address but Arab does not know any address (Tusi, 2005: 415).

Ghazali has described this visit in more detailed way. Accordingly, Arab sees Joseph's sister Dineh and when he reaches Jacob he was praying (Ghazali, 1876: 116).

The interesting point is that Jacob was praying for Arab to have an easy death.

**Joseph Is Released from the Prison**

Two points are necessary to be noted as to this releasment: First, Joseph asked the king to release all the inmates.

Second, Egypt was decorated upon Joseph's releasment (Tusi, 2005: 423-424 cf. Ghazali, 1876" 118).

In Bahr al-Mahabah this event has been described with more exaggerations.

**Joseph's Kingship**

Both books have spoken of it but in a contradicted fashion.

Ghazali says that when it was proven that Joseph is innocent and he got exonerated and released he toppled the king and he crowned as the new king (Ghazali, 1876: 119).

Tusi has said that after one year the king chose Joseph as his own replacement. In Jameh al-Settin a whole chapter has been devoted to the story of Joseph's kingship but there is no sign of this story in Bahr al-Mahabah (Tusi, 2005: 450-453).

**Zuleikha in Joseph's Way**

Joseph visited the neighborhoods and cities with a hundred thousand men, according to Bahr al-Mahabah, or with a thousand cavalries, according to Jameh al-Settin. Zuleikha who was now an old and disabled woman asked her maids to take her to Joseph's way (Ghazali, 1876: 124 cf. Tusi, 2005: 462). Ghazali say that Zuleikha screamed but Joseph did not hear him because she was still a pagan. But Tusi says that Joseph saw Zuleikha and treated her with compassion and send some people to help her.

**Joseph and Zuleikha Unite**

Ghazali's narration of this story in Bahr al-Mahabah is complete but Tusi has finished the story in Joseph and Zuleikha's visit. However there are several common propositions in both narrations;

Zuleikha meets Joseph and calls him loudly but Joseph does not respond to her. Gabriel informs Joseph of this call and Joseph turns to Zuleikha. Gabriel order him to fulfil her wishes. Joseph brings her youth back and makes her his wife and she begin to pray in a corner and does not meet Joseph. Joseph comes to her and she avoids him. After forty days Joseph goes to her and finds her virgin.

In Bahr al-Mahabah we read that Jacob marries them to each other. Joseph and Zuleikha live together for 37 years and God gave them eleven sons (Ghazali, 1876: 159).

In Jameh al-Settin we are told that Joseph asked Zuleikha to marry him for forty times via the previous King. In Tusi's

book Zuleikha is depicted as a saint who is a woman of God. Joseph and Zuleikha hold a great party after their marriage. They have two boys and one girl (Tusi, 2005: 469-471).

**Brothers Return Canaan**

Bahr al-Mahabah has spoken of this return with more details and even it has alluded to the appearance of Satan in the path of the brothers (Ghazali, 1876: 137).

Tusi has also spoken of their argument with their father over Benjamin's accompaniment. And Jacob asks them to promise him in written form that they will take care of their brother (Tusi, 2005: 495-497).

The only shared point of this narration is the brothers' satisfaction with people's treatment.

**Jacob's Letter to Joseph**

In Bahr al-Mahabah Simon is introduced as the scribe who has written the words of Jacob (Ghazali, 1876: 150).

In Jameh al-Settin Rubil is told to be the scribe (Tusi, 2005: 597).

The content of the letter is almost the same and in it the passions of the progeny of Abraham have been related. Jacob has also threatened the Aziz of Egypt that he will be cursed.

**Returning to Jacob**

God decided Jacob to die by his ancestors' graves; the story of Jacob's reunion with his son Joseph has been completely described in Bahr al-Mahabah and his reunion with his son has been estimated to be forty years (Ghazali, 1876: 161-163). In Tusi's narration there is no sign of the story of Jacob's death but it is said that Jacob was near Joseph for almost twenty four years (Tusi, 2005: 661).

Tusi relates the story of Jacob's union with his brother Isiah with whom he dies. Jacob's death is commemorated by Joseph and both books refer to it (ibid: 670-672).

**Joseph's Death**

In Jameh al-Settin Joseph's death has been described with details.

Joseph dies after three days mourning for his father Jacob. Joseph's death happens before the death of Zuleikha. He chooses Judah as his replacement. Zuleikha cut her hairs and mourned for Joseph. She cried for three days nonstop. God accepted Zuleikha's pray and let her to die and they both were buried together (Tusi, 2005: 682-685).

In Bahr al-Mahabah we read;

Joseph held three days mourning for Jacob and built a city upon God's order for the progeny of Jacob.

Zuleikha died in this city. Joseph prayed for her and hurried her in this city. Joseph was alive forty days after Zuleikha's death. He chose Ephraim as his own replacement. Ephraim prayed for his father and buried him in the middle of Qayyum river. Moses exhumed the body later and took it to Canaan and buried it there (Ghazali, 1876: 164-165).

**4-3- Ancillary Narrations and Stories**

Both books have used ancillary narrations within their exegeses to make the intended mystical points clearer and this has caused the two works to have more common attributes.

These narrations can be classified in three groups:

- a) The lifestory of the prophets which are more narrated in Jameh al-Settin.
- b) The sotry of the disciples of Holy Prophet and his successors.
- c) The story of mystics and Sufis.

### CONCLUSION

With a comparative study of two exegetical works on the mystical interpretation of Chapter 12 of Holy Quran, entitled *Jameh Al-Settin* by Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Tusi and *Bahr al-Mahabah* by Abu al-Fath Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ghazali, we found that the two writers were sunni Sufis from Khurasan. The mystical and religious views of these two authors are very close to each other and this can be shown by comparing these authors ideas regarding moral and mystical issues. We saw that they shared the same view regarding many subjects such as vision, intercession, love, and voyeurism. Even they have discussed numerous common sapiential issues in their exegeses of the stories of Joseph .

The writing style of the two works are very similar in many respects including from the point of view of general setting of the text. They have both recited the verses in a dispersed fashion. They have tried to interpret the verses based on mystical visions instead of referring to traditional sources and narrations. Even many of the narrations that the authors have recited in their works for demonstration of certain points are the same .

If we accept that *Bahr al-Mahbah* is written by Ahmad Ghazali then it is most likely that the latter book has been authored before *Jameh al-Settin* because many Arabic poems in Tusi's work have been already recited in *Al-Madhash* of Abdulrahman Ibn Khoori (ZandMuqaddam, 2014: 150). Since Ibn Khoori did not have good relations with Sufis it is less likely that he would have quoted some poems from a sufi work in Persian .

The book of *Al-Madhash* in final years of sixth century. Then if we assume that Tusi has quoted these poems from Ibn Khoori, we have to accept that *Jameh al-Settin* has been authored several years after 590 of Hijra or even in early seventh century. Accordingly, we can feasibly claim that Tusi had access to Ghazali's work and quoted the narrations and poems from it. However, we see that there are several narrations in Tusi's work that have been driven from other exegetical works for providing better understanding of the story of Joseph .

The differences and discrepancies that are explicitly seen in exegetical ideas of the two books show that the authors of the two works are not the same. The author of *Bahr al-Mahabah* is very professional in writing Arabic poems but in *Jameh al-Settin* all Arabic verses are driven from other works and the Persian verses are of several defects (Ibid: 39-40) .

Contrastive and comparative criticism of the two exegeses of the same chapter of Holy Quran which have been authored in the same century and within the same cultural conditions and with the same sufistic approach and of course in two different languages is as such an innovative enterprise. We hope that the students, professors and researchers who work on Iranian literature, theology, history, interpretation, myths and literary criticism are benefited from the results of this research.

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