

ILLUSTRATIONS OF RELIGIOUS BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS PRINTED BY THE INSTITUTE FOR THE INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS (CASE STUDY)

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Abstract

The expression of concept is an important part of depiction of a text, as all the elements are formed and assigned in proportion to each other in order to express the concept. Religious texts, having a high delicacy, make the work difficult for illustrators. They create frameworks that induce repetition in works of the illustrators, especially in religious books for children and young adults, which makes illustrators ignore illustration of such books. In this study we examined the nature of illustrations of religious books for children and young adults, and then provided a brief definition of religious literature. Finally, we reviewed and analyzed the illustrations in four religious books, as the most and least widely read religious books for children and young adults.

Keywords: Illustration, Illustration of Children and Young Adults' Books, Religious Literature.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Children's Book Illustrations

Children's book illustration is an independent aspect of art along children's literature that is perfectly targeted and well recognizes the reader. Illustrations, from art point of view, along with designation, are the two artistic sides of the book. On this basis, and from the view point of creation, Children's book illustration is intertwined with graphics. "Yet in terms of methods and tools it is part of painting art. Illustrations' achievements, while continuously associated with the book *text*, can independently be judged or continue its artistic life. However, the picture that an illustrator makes is always based on the storyline, although the book be full of images and empty of *text*" (Qayini, 1390: 40).

1.2 History of children's books illustrations in Iran

The first illustrated books in Iran were "Avesta" texts. Principally, illustration in Iran is tightly link with religion, as Manicheans boomed painting tradition in central Asia and around it with a specific focus on illustration of their religious texts.

Rich background of images on walls, stone engravings of the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid dynasties had a great influence on the emergence of medieval centuries' schools including Baghdad and Herat schools and etc. In this era, non-religious books like the literary, scientific, and so forth were also illustrated. The most famous Iranian illustrated books include *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (The Panchatantra) 330

AH, *Qabus Nameh* 483 AH, and *Samak-e 'Ayyār* in 7th century. With the spread of lithography in the last centuries, book printing and illustration entered a new period of its history. In Persian constitutional period, with the development and popularity of social media, illustration's presence and function became more serious and more general. Naturally, with development and prosperity of the new-style education and spread of western-style schools, illustrations for children's books and young adult became a necessity.

Illustrations for children's books at the present time has stepped up to a new stage. However, in the first decade of this period, a number of children's books such as the works of Jabbar Baghchehban were lithographed on brown paper, without cover and with clumsy images, more or less like the *maktab* books. Though, for some reasons children's books whether in publication and the appearance or in aspect, took another important step ahead. Jabbar Baghchehban published four lithographed books from 1307 to 1311, in all of which illustrations were linear, simple and clumsy. The name of the illustrator is in none of the books, but according to Baghchehban's children, the images, some of which were copies of foreign book pictures, were prepared by himself.

In 1340s, illustrating children's books in Iran has become a defined and classified branch. Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults was the center of many arts focused on children including illustration. Today, illustration in Iran has a special and different place in the world, and many of the new generation illustrators are working along with the past generation and is benefiting from their experiences. (See Mohammadi, 1384, vol. 7: 1075)

1.3 Important elements in the illustrations of books for children and young adults

In the illustration of children's books, characterization, color, and printing are the three essential elements and all three together can create a good image. There are times that the illustrator offers a beautiful and high quality piece of work but because of printing problems, the image quality will be affected, too.

Layout is also a very important step in preparing a good book for children in which selecting a proper paper and size will lead to a beautiful and impressive work. Book illustration is creating a set of images by which the children would be able to establish an easier and better relationship with the story.

Illustrations for children is a difficult job as they still do not know the key factors and cannot develop mental analysis of images.

An illustrator must have a comprehensive understanding of the child's language, mind, and behavior and constantly travel between his adulthood and childhood.

In addition to design and book illustration, an illustrator should also be familiar with the story, so that when a book or story is given to him, he'll be able to identify and select its important and impressive points.

Book illustrators need to consider several factors:

1. The age of the reader
2. Proper design
3. Layout
4. Proper use of colors

Selecting colors, combination of painting elements, and exaggerating some are things that reveal hidden aspects of a child's personality through his paintings for psychologists. This character recognition method of the child shows the importance of image in his mind.

In book illustrations, we should not use gaudy and shiny colors use, while brevity and carefully chosen colors makes it possible to bring the child's attention to the forms, situations and narrative theme of the story and keep him away from the magic of enchanting colors that will do no good for him.

Books that have no artistic characteristics kill child's thinking and imagination and impede his creativity and curiosity. (Picker Nick, 1381: 36)

There are points that should be considered in children's book illustration as follow:

1. Obviousness and clarity of the image and its conformity with the subject of the book is a very important issue.
2. Images must be tailored to the children's understanding.
3. Images must attract the children's attention and promote their creativity. For that attraction, the standards of beauty, simplicity and color are very effective.
4. Images must nurture children's imagination.
5. Theillustrator of children's books, complying with the technical and aesthetic principles, should create noteworthy images.
6. Character, beauty and life in images for children are in fact a part of their character, beauty and real life. (Qayini, 1390: 320-450)

Children find the best way to understand what they are learning by seeing the images. In fact creativity is injected to children by illustrating the books, and since it is a relative, floating, and growing issue, and will never expire, the importance and necessity of illustration and the needed attention over the past is crystal clear.

Images should be considered not only as a supplement to the text but rather as a step ahead of it. Even an image is sometimes so important that it can create a spark in the child's mind to create a book himself in the future.

To convey the correct message to the child one should associate a good image with the text. This is so important that it can flourish child's creativity and encourage him to study more. (Thomas, 1384: 14)

1.4 Religious literature

These are historical works, and the history is exclusively on religion. In other words, the history contains parts of background, creation, and evolution steps of a particular religion, from the first until its spread and whatever happened to it during history.

Religious and historical stories can be considered as realistic stories. Many religious and historical stories for children and teens can be considered as adventure stories. Firstly because the stories that focus on the mining of self and internal adventures, and in which external action and movement is secondary, are not interesting for this age group. Secondly all parts of the history are not appropriate to be converted to stories for this age group. The parts of history that could be interesting for this age group often contain significant and adventurous events and have tensions and excitements of an adventurous story. In addition, due to the fact that historical fiction includes outstanding events and characters, and has exceptional new atmospheres for the reader, they sometimes become as interesting as legends for kids. (Sarshar, 1377: 226-230)

2 THE PROBLEM

Illustration of books for children is a delicate, precise and complex art which can communicate in extremely different levels and leave a deep impact on the consciousness and conscience of a child. For many years children's book illustration was considered a simple and charmless category in art schools. (Mohammadi, 1384, vol. 5: 1112-1115)

Usually illustration is considered as a complex art and is mostly measured with the success it earned and its ability in translation and interpretation of the words into images or at least in the case of illustrated books for little children. The very book is forming a full and independent concept, a book that is created by an author and an illustrator, both of whom are the same person. This is where words and images can have a complex and delicate relationship with each other. (Thomas, 1384: 20)

Religious texts are somehow linked with religious doctrine. Such text creates both general and specific bonding for individuals. General bonding is due to the fact that the author and illustrator do not work together and the text and image do not complete each other. Specific bonding is because of the sanctity of religious concepts. These concepts have a sanctity that need illustration to keep this sacred aura or put it aside, both of which are problematic. (Sarshar, 1377: 222)

One of the things that should be considered in religious literature for children and young adults is illustrating religious books for them. The fact is that illustration for this particular field since it is directly associated with religion has many sensitivities that if not considered will lead to enormous potential misunderstandings. This has led to such illustrations being repetitive, which is another problem that imposes certain restrictions on the illustrator. Avoiding this repetition is possible but needs a great creativeness. On the other hand, what initially attracts children to the book is the illustration, which unfortunately has been taken for granted in religious books. (ibid., 221)

The present study has tried to analyze and critique four religious books for children, viz. *Bozorgtarin Dokhtare Donya* (The Greatest Daughter of Universe) by Seyed Mahdi Shojaei; *Aftab-e Afarinesh* (Creation's Sunshine) by Babak Nik Talab and Afsaneh Shabannejad; *Fasle Chidan* (Picking Season) by Mohsen Hejri; and *Oo (He)* by Mohsen Chini Forooshan, which are among the most read religious books for children and young adults.

3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. What are the features of illustration for young children?
2. Do the children's religious books illustrators satisfy their reader?
3. Is illustration of religious books like the rest of books?
4. What should be considered in illustration of religious books?

4 HISTORY OF STUDY

There are several books and articles about children's book illustration. The present study used them for criticism and analysis of images in the four selected books.

5 METHOD

Data was collected through library method in which several books and articles on the illustrations for children's books and young adults were studied and related and required material were collected, organized and sorted by taking notes. Then they were used in critical analysis of illustration in the four selected religious books for children.

6 ILLUSTRATIONS IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS' BOOKS

6.1 Bozorgtarin Dokhtare Donya (The Greatest Daughter of Universe)

Bozorgtarin Dokhtare Donya (The Greatest Daughter of Universe) is a narrative kind story of Hazrat Roqiyeh (SA), the younger daughter of Imam Hossain (AS) in the day of Ashura. The book is written for teens, where Seyed Mahdi Shojaei narrates a tragedy that every grief in the world looks like nothing compare to that. In this book, the author has a new look at heroisms of Hazrat Roqiyeh (SA) and has written her story with a new language of children.

The illustrator is not a mere follower of the author, he is a partner, who like the author has something important to tell, and sometimes plays a more important role, especially for this age group.

In children's book illustration, color is a decisive element, which is tremendous to express the sense of the text. The colors in addition to their beauty in a work, carry an information load, too.

The dominant colors in this book's pictures are purple and turquoise. In Islamic art turquoise color is well-known. Using this color the illustrator has tried to strengthen the effectiveness of the text and made it easier for the reader to communicate with the idea of the book. The application of the dominant color on all pages, except for the second and third pages of the cover cannot be a coincidence. Pictures of the book have beautified the world of the reader for better understanding and more joy. They have been able to tune the joy of text with taste of teen reader. Illustrator has been creative in designing. In contrast to the restrictions which the author has in writing, he has easily turned imagination into images. Pages 11, 12 and 20 are associated with imagination. The images create a sense of calmness, intimacy, and identification with the characters in the book for the reader.

6.2 Aftab-e Afarinesh (Creations Sunshine)

Aftab-e Afarinesh (Creation's Sunshine) is part of a fourteen-volume book series called *Negarane-Parvaneha* (Worried about Butterflies), a collection of ancient Persian poems about the Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (PBUH). The legacy of ancient Persian literature is full of admiration and praise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the Prophet of Mercy, and the Perfect Man. In the Persian poetry, from the beginning until now, no one hesitated in mentioning virtues and qualities of Mohammad, the prophet of kindness and light (PBUH). The prelude of most divans¹ and poetry collections of great poets are decorated with the name and praises of the last prophet (PBUH). These poems were collected by Babak Nik Talab and Afsaneh Shabannejad and the illustrated by Muhammad Ali Bani Assad.

As preface of the book shows, the Persian poets of the all eras always began their songs with praise of God and his Messenger and never have withheld mentioning the virtues of The Messenger of Kindness (PBUH).

This book is an introduction of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) in Persian literature. We can see poems of the great Persian poets like Hafez, Saadi, Attar, Rumi, Nezami, Rahman Jami, Mohtasham Kashani and many others in this book.

Along with the texts by such great and noble poets, the book illustrations are very rich and magnificent, too. The cover of the book with proper and influential layout and colors invites the reader to see an old religious book. The book titles, publisher's logo and the name of authors are designed as if they are lithographic. Thatchy color and texture of the background with blue color of the image in the middle, creates a stunning visual contrast. Modern, yet traditional lining has created an appropriate entrance for the book. Selections and designs of the first pages in the book indicates astuteness and creativity of the graphic designer. On the *Bismillah* (In the Name of God) page, colors are mature and warm. The title page is decorated with familiar and very common Islamic motifs, however the skillful designer has been able to

¹ a collection of Persian or Arabic poems (usually by one author)

reduce the repetitiveness of pages and creates an exciting contrast by adding images of small blue butterflies. A kind of middle page frame in the introduction page, the headers and the location of page numbers, all remind lithography printing style. Creative and interesting gestures have been made by subtle changes, for example, by placing the bird that can be found in the Islamic decorated dishes, in the middle of the traditional inscription.

Poems of the books often have a particular image. Images are sumptuous with different yet familiar designations and combinations. Eastern images are in their native general concepts. The use of collage technique, composition of images and color, colorings are artistic and creative and demonstrate illustrator's understanding of the poems' themes. The poems are in praise of or about The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and are not specifically written for children and young adults. The lyrics do not point out certain special characters (e.g. appearance, clothing or age). They do not describe a particular mood or location. Mostly, the central theme is expressed by metaphors and rich poetic images, which frees illustrator for making poetic fantasies. Maybe that's why the illustrations in this book are more successful and artistic than the same works in illustrator's repertoire.

Illustration for poem frees up the illustrator to compose and create his image based on the context and concept of the poetry. While in illustration for a story, the illustrator is required to consider all fictional and contextual relationships and select or change his technique or procedure based on them. In poetry, words and images are very important, while in a story plot and the story are important. Illustrator's proper understanding of the poetry, its function and theme have fundamental roles in creation of successful images. Understanding the story, due to specific descriptions and creation of situations, generally is easier than understanding different and sometimes hidden layers of poetry, which, contrary to popular belief, complicates the work of illustrator in illustrating poetry.

6.3 Fasle Chidan (Picking Season)

"Imam 'Ja'far ibn Muhammad Sadiq (AS)", the eighth infallible and sixth Imam of Shiites, was born in Rabi ul Awaal of year 80 or 83 H.A. in Medina. During his Imamate, using his God-given ability and knowledge, he tried to introduce real Islam to the Muslims and remove fake quotes and traditions from their minds. The number of students attending his Excellency's classes were estimated to be about 4,000 people, most of which were very great scientists who later on continued teaching Shiite jurisprudence and educations in different cities. Imam Sadiq (AS) faced the Abbasids' conspiracy at the end of his lifetime and was finally poisoned and martyred by command of Al-Mansur² at 25th Shawwal 148 AH. Fasle Chidan (Picking Season) covers the history and life of his Excellency in reviving the real tradition of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which is written for teenagers".

Fasle Chidan is the story of a young boy that has frustrated from his stern father and has run away from home, but not being unfamiliar with the desert he is lost, dehydrated, and facing his death. While he finds himself near death, Hisham bin Salem finds and saves him. Hisham not only saves his life, but also gives him a new faith. Later on the young boy realizes what the source of the whole liveliness in Hisham is, and once again he revives his faith.

"*Fasle Chidan*" is a work that guides the youth toward ongoing renewals in life. Life can get not repetitive if one has the courage to confront it, and meets people in his life that can make him change, and he himself has the essence for this change, too. A large book is very attractive for children at an early age. Large images in book alongside their own small size makes characters and what happens to them believable. Also their understanding of the story and images will be quicker and ultimately effective.

Perhaps it was better to choose a folio size (A4). In addition to the book size, the text also uses a large and well legible font size. Illustrations are not clear and do not lead to growth and creativity of young adults and wont attract them. The proper ratios of combining elements in a frame have not been met in some cases. For example, on page 9 of the book, the size of people's heads are larger than their trunk; or a man's horse is smaller than him; or a man's leg is much smaller than himself. In fact, the proportionality of characters' body parts has not been observed.

The images are a summary of several pages and have nothing to do with the page in front of or before them. However, since the book addresses teens there is no need to create so many pictures. For example, on page 13 Hisham explains about father, sister and the rice paddy but picture on the next page is something else and has nothing to do with the text.

On some pages, some elements are not complete. For example, on page 20 there is half of a horse or on page 25 the picture is not in the middle.

² Al-Mansur or Abu Ja'far Abdallah ibn Muhammad al-Mansur (95 AH – 158 AH, 714 AD – 775 AD), was the second Abbasid Caliph from 136 AH to 158 AH (754 AD – 775 AD)

Colors used in the images are dark and dead, even the color that is used for writing the text is pale. The use of dead color repels the reader, despite the beautiful and different story text. Although large and legible, the font is also not appropriate to this age group, it is perplexed and eye irritating. Line spaces are not good and despite the interesting text, it discourages the reader.

6.4 Oo (He)

The first examples of illustrations for children go back to after invention of writing and before foundation of printing industry. They were pictures of texts written especially for children. These images were for the children of the ruling class, or for those that had to learn religious and legislation beliefs and issues through stories and pictures. (Ebrahimi, 1367: 30)

The author of this book uses some elements such as the blowing wind, the apple that falls from a tree, the air that is everywhere, the human mind and soul or spirit and says that we do not see them, but we see His works and we feel Him. He has created human and nature. He is everywhere and is always with us; He is The Merciful God.

Coloring has messy textures and it makes gender seem harsh in elements which is in contrasts to the book's subject.

Another important point is that the cover and all of the pages are bordered in a black box which is in contrast with the concept of infinity of God. It also affects the color of images and makes them opaque. Images are very simple and understandable, and they seem appropriate for this age group; but they do not breed the growth of creativity and imagination of the reader.

Harmony is the most important factor in composition of a book. Visual elements in this book do not have a harmony in components. For example, due to the large font size used, the text lines in pages that have a text are not in a direction which, causes irregularities in the pages.

6.5 Conclusion

The use of imaginative images is one of the most effective and appropriate strategies to foster creativity in children and helping him to visualize and reinvent their mind in order to develop and evolve their soul.

In designing a book, that starts with selecting some options such as paper type, size, number of pages and printing method, and in which creating situations and characterization form based on the content and age group, in order to give the illustrated book pages as an end, one of the most important features is reading the images. It is a process that, before reading the book, directs the reader's attention toward characters and visual situations and mostly affects the reader in choosing his favorite book. This particularly is more tangible in the lower age groups. Unfortunately negligence occurs in illustration of religious books for children and young adults and it seems that illustrators do not pay the needed attention in illustration of religious stories.

Repetition is another drawback that imposes certain restrictions for religious illustration and avoiding this repetition is possible but needs a vast creativeness. These four books partly leave out the repetition in religious image but have some problems in other elements that are previously mentioned.

Finally, it should be said that *Bozorgtarin Dokhtare Donya* and *Aftab-e Afarinesh*, which have less technical drawbacks and which use bright colors and creative images, were more favorable than the other two books. *Oo* and *Fasle Chida*, despite their interesting subjects and thoughtful and new texts, discourage the reader due to their poor illustrations and use of dead and dull colors.

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