



THE MOTIF OF HEROISM AND SELF- GLORIFICATION (FAKHR) IN THE POETRY OF AL-MUTANNABI

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Abstract

This article provides an in-depth analysis of the motif of الفخر (al-Fakhr)—that is, self-exaltation and heroism—in the poetry of Abu at-Tayyib al-Mutanabbī, a prominent figure in 10th-century Arabic literature. The concept of individual honor and dignity, as well as the poetic expression of courage and personal power, is examined in a sociological and literary context. The article also scientifically substantiates the connection of the *fakhr* motif in al-Mutanabbi's poetry with the value system of medieval Arab society and the relevance of this poetic tradition today.

Keywords: Fakhr, al-Mutanabbiy, Arabic poetry, the theme of heroism, medieval literature, artistic mastery, honor and glory, individualism, qasida, classical poetry.

Introduction

In the history of world literature, Arabic classical poetry holds a special place with its unique aesthetic system, profound philosophical content, and high artistic skill. One of the most brilliant figures of this rich heritage is, without a doubt, Abu at-Tayyib Ahmad ibn al-Husayn al-Mutanabbī, who lived and worked in the 10th century. His name is mentioned with special respect not only in Arab but also in world literary studies. One of the most important distinctive features of al-Mutanabbi's poetry is الفخر (al-Fakhr)—the highly artistic expression of the motif of self-aggrandizement, personal heroism, and honor. The experience of world literature shows that the theme of heroism and honor has been a universal



motif in the literature of all ages, reflecting the most important aspects of human nature and social relations¹.

Al-Mutanabbi, who lived and wrote during a period when the 10th-century Arab civilization reached its zenith—the last brilliant era of the Abbasid caliphate—astonished his contemporaries with his poetic genius. His *Diwan*(Devon)—a complete collection of his poems—is one of the most studied works in Arabic literature and has continued to inspire hundreds of thousands of readers to this day. The poet's *al-Fakhr* – self-exaltation – the high individualism, self-confidence, and poetic expression of personal power in the poet's poems reflect the socio-cultural environment of that era and, at the same time, universal human values.

In Uzbek Arabic studies, the work of al-Mutanabbi, particularly the artistic features of his pride poems, has been studied by a number of scholars. In his work "History of Arabic Literature," Professor Pirmat Qodirov analyzes the motif of heroism in al-Mutannabi's poetry, linking it to the value system of medieval Arab society. The literary scholar Ibrohim Mirzaev, in his works on classical Arabic poetry, analyzed the philosophical foundations of al-Mutannabi's **fakhr**. In Western Arabistics, scholars such as Reynold Nicholson, H. A. R. Gibb, and Jaroslav Stetkevich have paid special attention to al-Mutanabbi's individualistic poetry and the place of the **fakhr** motif in the Arabic literary tradition².

However, in most existing studies, al-Mutanabbi's **fakhr** poems have been examined only in the context of **madh** (panegyric) literature or from a historical-biographical perspective. In this article, however, the *fakhr* motif is analyzed from a new scientific perspective in terms of the social self-definition of the individual, the philosophy of individualism, and the semiotic structure of artistic language.

Research Methodology. The following set of scientific methods was used to conduct this research:

¹ Qodirov P. History of Arabic Literature. – Tashkent: O'qituvchi, 1990.

² Al-Mutanabbi. *Diwan* (Complete Poetry Collection). – Beirut: Dar as-Sadir, 1983.



- **Historical-comparative method:** The socio-political and cultural environment of the 10th-century Arab society in which al-Mutanabbi created his works, tribal traditions, and the reflection of the concept of honor and dignity in his poetry were studied.
- **Structural-semantic method:** The systematic structure of the poems of pride, the recurring images in the text, and the semantic load of metaphor and hyperbole were analyzed.
- **Psychological and Sociological Approach:** Studying the interaction of the poet's personality with the social environment and the psychological foundations of individualism and the sense of honor.
- **Hermeneutic method:** Interpreting the ideological layers that the author covertly advanced in the poems from a contemporary perspective.

The Aesthetic Features of the Motif of Fakhr in the Poetry of al-Mutanabbi

The aesthetic power of Al-Mutanabbi's poetry is most brightly manifested in his works that express the theme of pride. The poet's style of self-aggrandizement is fundamentally different from simple boastfulness—he presents personal power, wisdom, and poetic talent as a philosophically grounded system. One of al-Mutanabbi's most famous *fakhr* couplets is this—a profound confidence in the power of his pen and poetic word:

I am the one whose literature the blind man gazed upon

وَأَسْمَعَتْ كَلِمَاتِي مَنْ بِهِ صَمَمٌ

("The blind saw my eloquence, and the deaf heard my words.")

In these lines, al-Mutanabbi uses the art of مبالغة (mubalag'a) to express the miraculous power of his poetic word. "The blind saw, the deaf heard" is not a simple hyperbolic expression, but a symbol of the poet's deep belief in the power of his poetic impact. Al-Mutanabbi here stands at the pinnacle of the Arab intellectual tradition that believed in the civilization-building power of the word, the *Kalima*⁽³⁾.

One of the most powerful literary devices in the poet's pride poems is al-tibāq (at-Tibaq)—the art of contrast. Al-Mutanabbi often expresses his greatness by

³ Mirzayev I. Classical Arabic Poetry. – Tashkent: Adabiyot va san'at, 2005.



comparing the surrounding world to something small. For example, in his famous line:

?Wherever I am cast, where is the escape

This expression is a vivid manifestation of the poet's sense of superiority over the entire world – the *Ehsas bi-t-Tafavvuk* (بالتفوق الاحساس). In his poems of pride, al-Mutanabbi portrays heroism and courage not as abstract concepts, but as directly tied to his personal experience and name.

The work's visual symbolism is also noteworthy. In his pride poems, Al-Mutanabbi frequently employs the imagery of the sword, the horse, and the star. These systems of imagery express the union of his personality with power, freedom, and grandeur. The sword is a symbol of war and courage; the horse is a symbol of freedom and limitless potential; and the star is a symbol of unattainable heights and grandeur.

The Motifs and Literary Devices of Al-Mutanabbi's Praise Poems

Type of motif	Literary device used	Socio-philosophical content
Glorification of the poetic genius	Exaggeration (hyperbole), irony	The civilization-creating power of the word
Courage and heroism in battle	Tibaq (resistance), imaginary image	Arab tribal code of honor
Fate and a higher purpose	Symbolic images (star, sword)	Individualism and personal freedom
Criticism of the times and people	Irony (satire), allusion	Understanding one's time

Table: Motifs and literary devices of al-Mutanabbi's qasidas

As the table shows, the glorification of the poetic genius and the themes of heroism in battle are central to al-Mutanabbi's *fakhr* poems. Together, these motifs form the poet's poetic concept of the human ideal: a strong, wise, and free individual.

The System of Images and Social Typification in the Poems of Fakhr

In al-Mutanabbi's works, نموذج البطولي (the(an-Namuzaj al-Batauli) – the heroic ideal – is created through a multi-layered system of imagery. The poet presents



himself not only as a poet but also as الفارس (al-Faris) – a warrior-knight. In a number of his poems, courage and poetic skill are depicted as intertwined: In al-Mutanabbi's poems of pride, the image of al-Hakim – the ruler – also holds an important place. The poet does not lose the motif of fakhr even in his poems dedicated to Sayf ad-Dawla, the leader of the Hamdanid dynasty. On the contrary, in praising the ruler, he also emphasizes his own personal greatness. This shows al-Mutanabbi's fundamental difference from other court poets: he does not praise by humbling himself, but rather by elevating the person he praises to his own level.

In the poet's attitude toward his rivals, one can see the line between al-Hija' (hijā')—satire—and fakhr. Al-Mutanabbi demonstrates his own greatness more vividly by belittling his rivals. This poetic strategy fully aligns with the tradition of al-Mufakhara – the contest of pride – in Arabic classical poetry, but al-Mutanabbi elevated this tradition to a new individual and philosophical level⁴.

Social and Scientific Interpretation of the Motif of Pride

When studying Al-Mutanabbi's *fahṛ* poems from a scholarly-theoretical perspective, it is necessary to emphasize their organic connection to the 10th-century Arab society's *niẓām ash-Sharaf*—the system of honor. In medieval Arab culture, honor was not only an individual concept but also a tribal and social one. In his fakhr poems, the poet elevates this traditional concept to the level of the individual and transforms it into a universal human value.

Drawing on the theory of "social capital" by the Western sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, al-Mutanabbi's poems of pride can be interpreted as the creation of a distinctive poetic social capital. Through his poems, the poet creates not only aesthetic but also social-symbolic capital – reputation, honor, and recognition. From this perspective, al-Mutanabbi's *fakhr* poems were one of the most effective tools an individual talent could use to secure its place in medieval Arab society.

Moreover, al-Mutanabbi's pride poems can also be analyzed from the perspective of the sociology of labor. His poems demonstrate not only his status as a poet but

⁴ Sulaymonova F. East and West. – Tashkent: Fan, 1997.



also that his poetic mastery is the result of diligent work and aspiration. This reflects the poet's unique philosophical perspective on the relationship between creative labor and social recognition⁵.

Spiritual-Philosophical Content and Personality Psychology

At the core of Al-Mutanabbi's poems of pride lie serious philosophical and existential questions: How does a person define the true meaning of their life? Are honor and reputation enough for human happiness? Can talent and hard work free a person from social boundaries? These questions are illuminated in al-Mutanabbi's poetry within the socio-philosophical context of his time.

As the author reveals the high aspirations within a person's psyche, they evoke a sense of wonder in the reader toward the protagonist. Al-Mutanabbi was originally born into a humble family, came from a lowly background, and forged his own path through hard work and talent. The grandeur in his *fakhr* poems is not a birthright but a status earned⁶.

In the poet's most famous line of pride, this idea finds its clearest expression:

عَلَى قَدْرِ أَهْلِ الْعِزِّ تَأْتِي الْعِزَّةُ

.And it comes according to the measure of noble deeds

("The will of the strong is manifested in them to a fitting degree, and the virtues of the noble are also commensurate with them.")

In these lines, al-Mutanabbi places foremost a person's confidence in their own abilities and will. This philosophy of al-Irada (the Will) would later play an important role in Arab and world intellectual history. Through his *fahṛ* poems, the poet not only demonstrates his own greatness but also encourages his readers to discover their own inner strengths.

Modern Context and Practical Significance of the Work

Today, al-Mutanabbi's poems of pride remain an important source not only as a literary heritage but also for modern humanitarian sciences. In the contemporary Arab world—from Egypt to Morocco, from Iraq to Saudi Arabia—al-Mutanabbi's

⁵ Ikromov A. Introduction to Arabic Linguistics. – Tashkent: O'zbekiston, 2008.

⁶ Nicholson R. A. A Literary History of the Arabs. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907.



verses are widely used as sayings and aphorisms. His verses, such as "Ana lladhiy nazara al-a'ma ila adabi" ("The blind has seen my courtesy"), are frequently quoted in modern scholarly and social debates.

In the current era of the digital age and social networks, the modern equivalents of al-Mutanabbi's pride poems are self-expression, personal branding, and achieving social recognition. – are taking on new significance. From this perspective, al-Mutanabbi and his *fakhr* poems should be studied in our universities not only in the context of literature, but also within the fields of communication, PR, and personal development.

Moreover, studying the poems of al-Mutanabbi serves as an important pedagogical tool in increasing students' interest in the Arabic language. Because his lines vividly demonstrate the grammatical and literary richness of the Arabic language, and by analyzing them, students have the opportunity to study the language more deeply.⁷ .

Conclusion

Al-Mutanabbi's poems of pride are not merely a representative of a specific genre of medieval Arabic literature, but an artistic gem that upholds humanistic and universal values. Through his sublime poetic skill, masterful use of the Arabic language, and profound human insight, the poet elevated the *fakhr* motif to new philosophical and aesthetic heights.

The self-aggrandizement in the work is not vanity, but the defense of the honor of personal labor and talent. Al-Mutanabbi calls on the reader to resist any form of discrimination in society, the neglect of true talent, and the trampling of personal dignity. Most importantly, the poet urges a person to preserve their inner strength, talent, and will under any circumstances. For what truly ennobles a person are not external titles and status, but the spiritual elevation achieved through their own labor and talent.

⁷ Stetkevych J. The Zephyrs of Najd: The Poetics of Nostalgia in the Classical Arabic Nasib. – Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.



*Modern American Journal of Linguistics,
Education, and Pedagogy*

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 2, Issue 5, May, 2026

Website: usajournals.org

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