

Fantastical Elements in Three Stories from The Arabian Nights



Student Name: Rubaiya Wahid

Student ID: 182013056

Department of English and Humanities

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Fantastical Elements in Three Stories from The Arabian Nights

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Student Name: Rubaiya Wahid

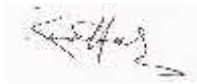
Student ID: 182013056

Thesis Supervisor: Kaiser Md. Hamidul Haq

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



Professor Kaiser Hamidul Haq, PhD

Bachelor of Arts in English

Professor

Department of English and Humanities

DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.

Rubaiya Wahid

Rubaiya Wahid

Student ID: 182013056

Department of English and Humanities

Dedication (optional)

I am sincerely grateful to my supervisor Kaiser Md. Hamidul Haq who guided me throughout this semester. His patience and constant support have enabled me to complete my work. I am really fortunate to get an opportunity to work under such an esteemed professor. Sir has made this journey less painful and frightening for me. His calmness and encouragement have given me hopes and strength to complete this tiring work. I have learnt a lot under his supervision. He has helped me develop my knowledge and have allowed me to widen my vision in multiple dimensions.

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of the fantastical elements in three of the most popular stories from the Arabian Nights or The Thousand and One Nights. The exploration of fantastical elements in literature by Tzvetan Todorov and the nature of folklore explained by Vladimir Propp form the theoretical framework of the dissertation. Those are discussed in the Introduction. The literature review gives an elaborate survey of available relevant critical material. The stories of Aladdin or The Magic Lamp, Alibaba and the Forty Thieves and Sindbad and his Seven Voyages are discussed in the three main chapters. These stories have been chosen because of the great popularity and also because they perfectly exemplify the use of fantastical elements. A conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

Introduction

The Arabian Nights, also known as The Thousand and One Nights, is one of the most widely read fantastic works of fiction. It is a composite work which consists of Indian, Persian and Arabic tales. Scholars assume that the stories were published between 8th to 14th century B.C. The stories were produced during the golden age of Islamic civilization. Till now, people all over the world admire the collection of stories present in the Arabian Nights. In the stories we find historical references, presence of celestial stuff, romantic elements, and of course readers get an opportunity to transfer themselves into a realm of fantasy where they encounter strange, marvelous and supernatural elements like genies, demons, magic carpet, magical lamps, etc. Fantasy does follow certain rules. After reading the marvels of the stories people can escape from reality and dwell in the fantastical world of peace and joy. It is one of the most popular and widely celebrated books of all times and many translations have been made by translators and scholars so that people across the world can taste the marvel and wonders of this book. Antoine Galland was the first French translator of the Arabian Nights. Burton was the most famous translator of the Arabian Nights and his work is accepted as the complete version of the Arabian Nights.

This is a book of richness where one needs to use their value judgement and understand the context before coming to a conclusion. “In the Arabian Nights, for example, the demons(jinn) can be harmful (in “The Fisherman and the Demon”) or helpful (in “Ala al-Din and The Magic Lamp)” (Ghazoul 16). “It is often difficult to decide under what genre to classify The Arabian Nights because of the richness and variety of its material. It has fantastic as well as realistic stories. It deals with erotic impulses as well as sublimated love. It has religious stories and detective stories. Some of its stories are of epical length and

others are short anecdotes” (Ghazoul 16). The plots in the stories are very complex and reach significant depths and therefore one needs to interpret and analyze extensively to get the real message from the ambiguous texts. According to Ghazoul, “It is, therefore, not so much a discovery as much as a process of recovery that one encounters in the tales of The Arabian Nights” (20). As Ghazoul says, “long, complicated stories are frequent in The Arabian Nights, and secret underground enclosures, forbidden doors, and fulfillment of magical wishes seem to be their typical motifs” (20). “There are peculiar problems in studying a body of fiction which is part literature and part folklore and partaking of the characteristics of both written and oral culture” (Irwin 151). We are unaware of the authors in the Nights. According to the Victorian essayist Leigh Hunt: ‘The Arabian Nights appeal to the sympathy of mankind with the supernatural world, with the unknown and the hazardous, with the possible and the remote. It fetches out the marvelous included in our common-places’ (qtd. in Irwin 151). “The Nights is, at best, only partly a collection of folk-tales. It is to a significant extent a deliberate literary composition, drawing on other, older literary compositions. Secondly, the Nights was compiled in the Semitic culture area” (Irwin 154).

The Theoretical Apparatus-

In order to analyze the fantastic elements in the cyclic stories in The Thousand and One Nights, various theoretical approaches from different theorists are utilized. The idea of the fantastic and the realm of fantasy are defined by different theorists in different ways. According to Irwin, “Most of the fantastic tales in the Nights resolve themselves into marvel-tales” (159).

Tzvetan Todorov is a Bulgarian and French literary theorist who is famously known for his theory of the fantastic. However, his theory of the fantastic does not essentially mean what we understand as fantasy in literature. In his book, *The Fantastic,- A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* he explains in detail what he means by the genre of the fantastic. The fantastic refers to that moment of hesitation when someone is unable to understand whether an object is real or supernatural. The fantastic lies in between two other literary genres that is the uncanny and the marvelous. “Uncanny” is originated from the German word *das unheimlich*. There is no English word found which is equivalent to the German word mentioned and as a result the word uncanny is used in English. Someone experiences the uncanny when an object is simultaneously strange and familiar. It is often characterized through the response of a character, such as fear or terror upon seeing something. On the other hand, marvelous refers to any supernatural thing which cannot be defined by the normal laws of nature and the character admits it to be supernatural.

According to Todorov, “The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (25). The fantastic moment lasts for a very short span of time. As Todorov says, “The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous” (25). The formula according to Todorov which puts together the spirit of the fantastic is, “I nearly reached the point of believing”: that is the formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic. Either total faith or total incredulity would lead us beyond the fantastic: it is hesitation which sustains its life” (31).

Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp was a Russian folklorist who analyzed and broke down the folk tales into basic units called morphemes. His book, *Morphology of the Folktale* describes in detail the basic elements which constitute the structure of a tale. He analyzed Russian folktales and came to

the conclusion that all folktales could be broken into its fundamental units. Folktales around the globe form a close connection and one tale could be found in other parts of the world as well. Propp's morphology can be used to understand the structure of any folktale. It would be helpful for readers to understand the stories after following his analysis which he described in the book mentioned. According to Propp, 31 narrative units form the structure of folk tales. He also proposes that 5 types of elements contribute in the construction of the tale. They are-

1. Functions of *dramatis personae*
2. Conjunctive elements (*ex machina*, announcement of misfortune, chance disclosure – mother calls hero loudly, etc.)
3. Motivations (reasons and aims of personages)
4. Forms of appearance of *dramatis personae* (the flying arrival of dragon, chance meeting with donor)
5. Attributive elements or accessories (witch's hut, long nose)

Propp divided the folktales or narratives into 4 spheres. The last sphere or the fourth sphere might be optional. This means some narratives may contain it and some may only comprise of 3 spheres. The first sphere consists of the Introduction. In this part the situation of the story is introduced to the readers. The main characters are introduced and the scene for the upcoming adventure is also made known to the readers. In order to introduce so many things chronologically and also logically certain steps are followed as the story progresses. They are absention, interdiction, violation, reconnaissance, delivery, trickery and complicity.

The second sphere consists of the body of the story. In this part the main story of the narrative unfolds where the hero leaves home for adventure or quest. In order to develop the body of the

story certain steps need to be fulfilled which would eventually lead the hero to travel for quest. They are villainy and lack, mediation, counteraction and departure.

The third sphere of the story consists of the donor sequence. In this part the hero thinks of how the possible solution can be reached to fulfill the lack. The hero accidentally meets a donor who provides the hero with some magical agent. This part independently can be considered as a complete story. To fulfill the above-mentioned task the narrative has to follow certain steps so that as a whole it can form a complete story of the third sphere. The steps are testing, reaction, acquisition, guidance, struggle, branding, victory and resolution.

The fourth sphere as mentioned earlier can be optional. In this final stage the hero returns from adventure and goes home. This part also follows certain steps in order to shape the structure of the folklore. They are return, pursuit, rescue, arrival, claim, task, solution, recognition, exposure, transfiguration, punishment and finally wedding.

Various scholars have defined the fantastic in various ways. For instance, Pierre-George Castez says, the fantastic is “a brutal intrusion of mystery into the framework of real life” (qtd. in Duggan 116). Sempere sees a “link between the fantastic and a ‘return’ of forgotten—even repressed—superstitions” (qtd. in Duggan 116). We can say that the Arabian Nights as a whole evokes hesitation which hints at the fantastic. Lane emphasized the fact that the Arab world believed in the supernatural and the existence of the genie.

According to Eric Rabkin, “The fantastic is a quality of astonishment that we feel when the ground rules are suddenly made to turn about 180. We recognize this reversal in the reactions of the characters, the statements of the narrators, and the implications of structure, all playing on and against our whole experience as people and readers” (qtd. in Raheb 43). According to

Rabkin, “when the anti- expected happens we are in the presence of the fantastic” (qtd. in Raheb 45).

Bettelheim interpret fairy tales “as Freudians interpret dreams, as having a latent as well as a manifest content” (qtd. in Irwin 163). Thus in ‘Sinbad the Seaman and Sinbad the Landsman’, the two Sindbad’s represent opposed parts of the human personality, for Sinbad the Landsman embodies the ego and Sinbad the Seaman the id, and, in a sense, Sinbad the Seaman’s adventures are the fantasies of the hard-working, landbound ego” (Irwin 163). In the frame narrative of the Nights, Scheherazade is seen as a psychoanalyst and her husband, King Shahriyar to be her patient. She tells him lots of stories as she believes that stories could turn out to be a means of his deliverance. According to Bettelheim, “No single story can accomplish it, for our psychological problems are much too complex and difficult of solution. Only a wide variety of fairy tales could provide the impetus for such a catharsis. It takes nearly three years of continued telling of fairy tales to free the king of his deep depression, to achieve his cure.’ Shahriyar is a disturbed id, while Scheherazade is a ‘superego-dominated ego” (qtd. in Irwin 163).

Chapter I

Literature Review

Before analyzing critically, the fantastic elements in *The Thousand and One Nights*, it is important for readers to know about the history and cultural context of the *Arabian Nights*. A brief introduction regarding the *Arabian Nights*, its origin, development during the course of time will enhance readers to get a good understanding of the tales. The journal article, “Poetic Logic in “*The Panchatantra and The Arabian Nights*” by Ferial Ghazoul gives us a brief idea about the *Arabian Nights*. Ghazoul says that there is a possibility that *The Panchatantra* and *The Arabian Nights* have a genetic relationship and firmly asserts the presence of elements of Indian literature in the folk tales of the *Arabian Nights*. According to Ghazoul, “both *The Panchatantra* and *The Arabian Nights* fall into the same narrative genre: a collection of tales within a framework story” (14). The stories are so rich and diverse that it often makes it difficult for the readers to decide that it falls under which specific genre. The stories very often include magical and fantastical elements like flying carpets, magic rings, genie, etc.

The journal article, “From Genie to Efreet: Fantastic Apparitions in the Tales of *The Arabian Nights*” by Anne E. Duggan gives us an idea about the most probable appearance of the genie found in all classics and also gives us a knowledge of the stereotypical Oriental perspectives of the genie. The genie is always a giant figure, with black skin and all powerful. It is also at the same time very helpful or in other words inoffensive. The genie is often found acting as slaves whose main goal is to fulfill the wishes of his master. According to Duggan, the genie “Featuring stereotypically Arab features and dark skin, the great genie who is simultaneously a slave and all-powerful nevertheless proves to be inoffensive” (113). Near the end of the

nineteenth century, the racialized look of the genie was shown by the Disney Studios. According to Peterson, “the potentially dangerous jinn of Arab folklore” were domesticated, becoming “the enslaved gift-giving genies of global folklore” (qtd.in Duggan 113). However, the history of the genie shows that it was not racialized from the very beginning of its appearance in the eighteenth century. According to Venuti, “it involves a process of domestication in which the foreign text is imprinted with values specific to the target-language culture” (qtd.in Duggan 113). The appearance of the genie in European culture is always considered and accepted as an exoticized Other and is always shown as that which terrifies. According to Duggan, “it is this terror that links the apparition of the genie to the mode or register of the fantastic” (113). The genie is often portrayed as a fantastic apparition and referred to as an otherworldly Other. According to Duggan, “Regardless of its specific form, however, the one aspect the genie maintains throughout its transformations in eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth century adaptations and illustrations of *The Nights* is the fear, associated with the fantastic, that the creature inspires in those before whom it appears”(114).

Jacques Cazotte's *Diable amoureux* (The Devil in Love, 1772) is the first fantastic tale in French literary history and is representative of the Arabian Nights, the genie and the fantastic (cited in Duggan, 114). According to Sempere, "there is a very clear correlation between oriental figures and the fantastic: because they are strange and mysterious for the reader, because they are often ambivalent and challenge the criteria of moral evaluation operating in the French tale, because, also, they are more often evil than French marvelous figures, they introduce into the narrative mild discomfort, which is at the origins of fantastic emotion"(qtd.in Duggan 115). Sempere further says “the genie evokes a ‘dark imaginary’ and bring to the fore

the problem of disorder: “that is, what is able to threaten the stability of society, of the individual, or of the State” (qtd.in Duggan 115).

This paper also gives us an idea about the difference between fantastic, marvelous and uncanny. According to Todorov, “The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect” (26). Todorov says that *The Arabian Nights* belong to the “exotic marvelous”. In this article we find some textual references which points out at the fantastic moments of the tales such as in *Aladdin*, etc. It also gives us an idea about the different visual representations of the genie which were transformed over time. The genie is always referred to as the exotic Other in the Orientalist perspective.

In the journal article, “Five Patterns of the Fantastic in an Arabic Saga”, Hani Al- Raheb discusses the five patterns of the fantastic which are time, place, action, characters and weapons. Before providing elaborate details regarding each element, he initially discusses about the Saga of Seif Ben Dhi Yazan present in the Arabic epic. Seif is the hero who escapes death narrowly from the hands of a cyclopean shaped figure, Atamtam. Seif is also known as the Beast of Wilderness and becomes astonished on encountering a peculiar cave in the middle of the forest. When he enters the cave, he sees Magus, “of horrific visage whose eyes emit flakes of fire” (qtd. in Raheb 42). He later learns from Magus that inside the cave exists an ancient treasure and it is kept in guard by jinns. There is also a talisman and it is shaped like a leather rod. Seif sets out to get the fantastic object which he later finds on the forehead of a great sage whose dead body lies on a bed of ivory. Each time as stated by Magus, Seif becomes astonished as he encounters the different fantastic elements. For instance, the enchanted cave

which is the fantastic place, the fantastic object which is the rod, the fantastic people which is the dead sage and the jinns.

The reversal which Rabkin talks about is also present in the The Saga of Seif Ben Dhi Yazan. In this saga we find double reversal. First is the reversal from factual to fantastic and the second reversal is from fantastic to factual. Initially the hero is astonished by the facts stated by Magus. The hero's state of astonishment makes the enchanted cave a fantastic place. Secondly, when the hero accepts the fantastic place as normal then the fantastic turns into factual.

Seif also encounters a fantastic palace in a fantastic time where he also finds fantastic creatures like jinn. According to Rabkin, "when the anti- expected happens we are in the presence of the fantastic" (qtd.in Raheb 45). Seif's response on encountering the peculiar objects can be considered fantastic as they produce a lot of anti-expected.

The first pattern of the fantastic is time. The fantastic time transcends human understanding of time. It begins with certain kind of oath or prophecy. The fantastic time is often accompanied by fantastic signs, fantastic objects, etc.

The second pattern is the fantastic place such as enchanted cave, enchanted palace, etc.

The third category is fantastic actions. It is often carried out by agents or objects.

The fourth pattern of the fantastic takes place in characters. It could be sages. Another internationally known character is the Prospero, in *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. We can also find powerful illustration of the fantastic in the book called *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Jinns are also referred to as fantastic agents. Jinns have their own realm, society, morality and restrictions. According to A. R. Salih, "Were they given material bodies we would have seen them among us" (qtd. in Raheb 51).

The fifth pattern includes weapons. The enchanted rod, the enchanted ring are few weapons that might exist in fantastic stories. For instance, in the Saga we see King Solomon's sword, which hits according to Solomon's wisdom present in it. According to Tzvetan Todorov, the whole Saga can be described as "The fantastic in its pure state" (qtd. in Duggan 53).

In *The Fantastic- A Structural Approach to Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov shares his theory of the fantastic. He makes a thin line of distinction between fantastic, uncanny and marvelous. According to Todorov, fantastic does not mean what we understand as fantasy literature. He explains that fantastic refers to that short period of uncertainty when someone hesitates to decide whether an object is real or supernatural. In other words, fantastic lies between two other literary genres that is the uncanny and the marvelous. In his book, he also defines the uncanny and the marvelous. Someone experiences the uncanny when an object is strange and familiar at the same time. On the other hand, an object is marvelous if we cannot define it by the normal laws of nature. This book helped me to clarify my idea regarding the fantastic genre and also enabled me to understand critically the genre of the uncanny and the marvelous.

The Morphology of the Folktale, by Vladimir Yakovlevich describes the basic elements which constitute the structure of a tale. His morphology helps us to understand the structure of any folk tales. He describes and explains that 31 narrative units form the structure of folk tales. After reading and understanding the classification of the folktales it was easier for me to understand the morphology of the folktales in the Arabian Nights. While reading Aladdin, Sindbad and Alibaba I could understand the structure of the developing narrative and how it is approaching towards climax gradually.

Robert Irwin in *The Arabian Nights- A Companion* gives us a sum of The Thousand and One Nights. It consists of anecdotes, moral fables, history, wonders, etc. Being a lover of The Arabian Nights, he shares different aspects and elements of Arabian Nights. In the chapter, “The Universe of Marvels”, he says that Jorge Luis Borges made a comparison between realistic novels and adventurous novels. According to Jorge Luis Borges, “they have a different order, ‘one based not on reason but on association and suggestion- the ancient light of magic” (qtd. in Irwin 128). The storyteller and the sorcerer know how to play with words and letters and know how it could produce an effect they want. “Knowledge of the name, the *mot juste*, can mean the difference between life and death” (Irwin 128). Alibaba could only save his life from the cave because he remembers the password “Open Sesame”. A person who knows how to study and manipulate words can comprehend the future as we can see in the story, “The History of Mohammed, Sultan of Cairo”. “Letter magic, *ilm al-huruf*, was one of the most important sub-sciences in Islamic occultism” (Irwin 128). In “The Story of the Sage and the Scholar”, we see that the sage has the knowledge and power to control letters and has the ability to exert control over jinns and made them perform supernatural activities. “The sorcerer who has mastered the art of illusion, *ilm al-simiyya*, is able to offer his customers and victims visions of what is not- that is, he has become a creator of fictions” (Irwin 129). According to Tanya Luhrmann, “Magical books encourage an embracing, dream-like absorption, a dissociated daydream of dragons, powers and higher realms. This sense of imaginative absorption, quite apart from any themes which it encompasses, is one of the most striking elements in magical fiction” (qtd. in Irwin 129). Cardinal Newman remarked in his autobiographical *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864): “I used to wish the Arabian Tales were true: my imagination ran on unknown influences, magic power and talismans” (qtd. in Irwin 129). Stories about magic and supernatural things have a

double aspect. They enthrall children and at the same time allow adults to know the social facts and reality. “The taste for the fantastic was so pronounced in the medieval Arab lands that it spawned a distinctive genre of literature, that of *aja’ib* (marvels), and books were written on the marvels of Egypt, of India and of the cosmos as a whole” (Irwin 130). This sort of books gave information about “stupendous monuments of antiquity, strange coincidences, the miraculous powers of certain plants, stones and animals, and feats of magic. Many of the marvels first found in ‘non-fiction’ works on cosmography eventually made their way into the *Nights*” (Irwin 131). Dream interpretation is one of the widely used techniques to reveal the secrets of the future. The dreams seen by the characters are expected to convey messages that might be true. “The medieval Muslim conceived himself to be living in a universe that was vertiginous in its vastness” (Irwin 149).

Burton observes: ‘Haunted houses [in the Middle East] are there tenanted by Ghuls, Jinns and a host of supernatural creatures; but not by ghosts proper; and a man may live for years in Arabia before he ever hears of the “Tayf”. Tayf may be translated as ‘ghost’. So, may *khayal*. But *tayf* also carries the sense of ‘fantasy’, and *khayal* that of ‘shadow’, both words implying that what is seen is not really there” (qtd. in Irwin 131).

Chapter II

Aladdin or the Magic Lamp

The story of Aladdin or the Magic Lamp is one of the most popular stories in the Arabian Nights. Even now, in the 21st century children read these stories with the same interest and delight as earlier generations. This is because of the fantasy that they find in these stories and the opportunity they get to escape in the realm of fantasy. The story takes place in China and the protagonist of the story is Aladdin, the son of Mustafa, the tailor. Aladdin who lives with his parents is a very notorious and disobedient child. His only business is to play with the small children in the streets. He is least interested to work. They lead a very humble life. After his father's demise Aladdin is only left with his mother.

The main story builds up as a magician from Africa reaches China and finds Aladdin appropriate to carry out his evil intentions. It is through geomancy that the magician comes to know about the magic lamp. "In the Nights, geomancy is the most widely employed means of discovering the unknown" (Irwin 136). The magician gains Aladdin and his mother's trust by claiming himself to be Aladdin's paternal uncle. After gaining their trust, he takes Aladdin to a faraway place between mountains. There the magician puts on fire and after reciting certain magical words the earth breaks open. This sight of earth cracking open astonishes Aladdin. Aladdin finds a big slab of stone with a ring attached to it, so that the lid can be pulled open. The magician instructs Aladdin to open the lid on his own and to go down the cave underneath. Aladdin as instructed by the magician, finds three rooms in the cave. As he passes the rooms carefully, he comes to an enchanted garden where he finds trees holding most beautiful and colorful fruits. After passing the garden, Aladdin comes to the most awaited spot. He climbs a flight of stairs and eventually finds the old lamp, which he blows out and carries it with him. Upon returning,

he picks as many fruits as possible of different colors without knowing it to be magnificent gems. “The white fruits were pearls; the shining, transparent one’s diamonds; the dark red were rubies; while the lighter red were spinel rubies; the green were emeralds; the blue turquoises; the violet amethysts; the light yellow were pale sapphires” (Lyons 1207). However, when he wants to come out of the cave, the magician betrays him and traps him in the cave. Aladdin is almost buried alive and scared of darkness stays in the cave for almost two days without any food and water to drink. When he loses hope of survival, he thinks to pray for the last time. At that moment, the ring on his hand given by the magician is rubbed off accidentally. Initially, a genie appears before him. It is a “jinni of enormous size and with a terrifying expression, who continued to grow until his head touched the roof of the chamber” (Lyons 1211). “The jinn (sing. jinn or genie) were thought of as supernatural creatures with bodies of flame. They were normally invisible” (Lyons 144). The jinni asks Aladdin what he wants. Aladdin, “has been overcome with terror and struck dumb at the sight of such an extraordinary apparition” (Lyons 1211). He asks the jinni to help him escape. Within a fraction of a second, Aladdin finds himself transported out of the cave and above the ground. Secondly, we find another apparition of the genie when Aladdin’s mother rubs the magic lamp. Instantly, another genie appears in a harsh voice and asks her about her wish. On seeing this apparition, “so great was her terror at the sight of the jinni’s hideous and frightening countenance that at the first words he uttered she fell down in a faint” (Lyons 1217). The magic lamp is very often used by Aladdin in case of lack of food or to find the solution of any problem that troubles him. In the story we see how Aladdin orders the genie to transport the marriage bed from the palace into Aladdin’s room. Princess, Badr-al-Budur’s “terror and astonishment at so surprising and unexpected an adventure had put her into such a state that Aladdin could not get a word out of her” (Lyons 1251). The genie by magic

helps Aladdin to marry the princess. The genie builds for Aladdin a marvelous enchanted palace studded with diamond, pearls and rubies. The palace is regarded as one of the wonders of the world in the story. “The sight of such a magnificent palace in a place that, the previous day, had neither materials nor foundations, astonished them most and they could not understand by what unheard-of miracle this had come about” (Lyons 1283). Aladdin was amazed to see, “the sights of the screens studded with diamonds, rubies and emeralds – jewels all so large and so perfectly proportioned” (Lyons 1287). Once again, we see the wicked craftsmanship of the magician who gets the magic lamp in disguise and transports the castle into Africa along with the princess. The transfer of the castle from China to Africa and again back to China is seen in the story as a pure fantasy. Throughout the story we see the action of different genies who serve to help Aladdin when he is in trouble. Finally, since Aladdin is a good Muslim and also a man of good intentions, he manages to rescue his wife and transport his castle back to China. He lives happily ever after with the princess and makes sure to keep the magic lamp safe with him.

We see that there are many fantastical elements and situations present throughout the story. The appearance of the genie and the terror which Aladdin and his mother faces initially on seeing the strange thing. According to Todorov, “the fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event” (25). The fantastic moment lasts for a very short span of time. As Todorov says, “The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous” (25). The fantastic moment also exists when the princess for the first time is astonished to see herself being transported away from the palace. She is totally surprised and is out of any logic or reasoning as to how it is possible to be transported in the air without seeing anyone. Similar is the situation with the Sultan when he

first sees that Aladdin's palace is no more in the same spot. At first, he thinks maybe he is wrong and it might be any problem with his vision or any mist that prevented him from seeing the palace. This is because it is beyond human logic and reasoning that a palace can be transported. There are also mention of events such as earth breaking open, rukh's egg, enchanted cave and garden. The trees in the enchanted garden bear fruits which are actually gems of different colors. With reference to *The Morphology of the Folktale*, by Vladimir Propp, we see that the tale is divided into four spheres. The first sphere consists of the Introduction which introduces the readers with the main characters, where the story takes place, etc. In Aladdin we find the first sphere which tells us that the story takes place in China and the main character is Aladdin. The second sphere deals with the body of the story. In Aladdin, we see the intrusion of a stranger in the form of a magician. He is considered the villain of the story. The third sphere is where the protagonist or the hero thinks how the solution of the problem could be reached. The hero accidentally meets a donor who provides the hero with a magical agent. In the tale, Aladdin is distressed with the fact that his palace gets transported and his beloved wife is missing. He is thinking of how to solve this problem. At that instant, he accidentally rubs the magical ring. A genie appears who takes Aladdin to Africa in front of his palace and his wife. In the fourth sphere, according to Propp the hero returns from adventure and goes home. Similarly, Aladdin after rescuing his wife goes back to China along with his palace which is transported by the genie of the magical lamp. Aladdin lives happily ever after with his wife in China.

"Aladdin, or the Wonderful Lamp", is surely the best known of all the Nights tales featuring a treasure-hunt" (Irwin 132).

Chapter III

The Seven Voyages of Sindbad

The seven voyages of Sindbad comprise one of the cyclic stories in The Thousand and One Nights. The seven voyages made by Sindbad include many magical and fantastical elements which arouses the curiosity of readers all over the world. It is one of the most popular stories in Arabian Nights. The story is about Sindbad, the sailor who makes seven voyages and later shares his experience with Sindbad, the porter and other persons in the assembly hall. Sindbad, the Sailor is the son of a rich merchant, whose father dies when he is very young. Due to Sindbad's reckless lifestyle he loses all his properties and later decides to voyage to earn money. The seven voyages enable Sindbad to earn huge amount of money. However, in his voyages he faces great hardships and struggles a lot. Each of his voyage is no less than a wonder due to the strange and fantastical elements he faces during the course of his journey.

FIRST VOYAGE-

Sindbad sells his properties to buy goods for trade and sets off to sea. During his journey with other merchants, he sails from one island to another. There they sell and buys goods, thus trading at a profit. One day, the ship anchors beside an island which looks like Paradise. Everyone enjoys the beauty of the island, washes pots, lit fires and cook food. The weather is also pleasant. All of a sudden, the master of the ship shouts to the crew members to run for their lives. It happens to be that it is not a real island. They are actually on a big fish which remained static for a long time. The lighting of fire makes the sleeping fish to move due to the heat it produces. Everyone runs for their lives. The big fish coming back to its senses dive deep into the sea, thus drowning many merchants including Sindbad. The following quotation, "This island is not a real one. It is a giant fish that has stayed motionless here in the middle of the sea until it has

become silted up with sand on which trees have grown over time so that it looks like an island” (Lyons 752), shows the fantastical element. According to Todorov, we can say that it is the moment of fantasy for Sindbad and the other crew members. They were in a state of astonishment to whether believe it or not. It is not possible for a fish to remain motionless and allow trees and other vegetations to grow on its body. However, Sindbad saves his life after swimming for a day and a night and comes to another island. All of a sudden Sindbad spots a strange creature. Going near it, he sees a mare tied to a tree. Later, from the inhabitants of the island he knows that they are the people of King Miharjan. It happens that each month during full moon they bring a mare from the King’s stables and ties it up. After that, “a stallion, one of the sea horses, scents the mare and comes out of the sea” (Lyons 755). After having sex with the mare, the sea stallion, wants to carry the mare into the sea but cannot. As the mare shouts and screams, the people hiding there scare the stallion away. The stallion leaves the mare pregnant. The colt which is produced is of huge price and adds to the wealth of the King. In the island of Kasil, Sindbad sees a strange fish that is “two hundred cubits in length and another with a face like that of an owl” (Lyons 759). After staying in that island for some time Sindbad finds his lost ship and sails back to Baghdad. After recounting all the wonders in the first voyage, he gives Sindbad, the porter hundred mithqals of gold.

Second Voyage-

As Sindbad sets out on his second voyage, he travels from one island to another, buying and selling goods. Upon reaching an island, which is full of trees with ripe fruits, birds singing, Sindbad goes on walking and exploring the island. After eating, he suddenly falls asleep and, in the meantime, loses the ship. The ship sails away with his goods leaving him in the island.

There is no inhabitant on the island. Suddenly Sindbad sees something strange at a distance. It is huge and white in color. It is “a white dome, very tall and with a large circumference” (Lyons 765). While examining it to have a shiny, polished surface with no doors, Sindbad becomes surprised thinking about it. All of a sudden, Sindbad sees a huge bird with big wings flying on the sky. It is so big that it covers the entire sun and Sindbad could identify the huge bird to be a rukh. The rukh feeds its chicks on elephants and Sindbad can understand that the dome is the rukh’s egg. The rukh lands on its egg, spread its wings and is fast asleep. In order to escape from this uninhabited island, he ties himself with the bird’s leg in the hope that it might drop him to a place near civilization. During daytime it flies off as Sindbad describes the scene, “with a loud cry it carried me up into the sky, soaring higher and higher until I thought that it must have reached the empyrean” (Lyons 766). This is a pure fantasy in the tale where a man flies into the sky suspended by the bird. The bird brings Sindbad on a high mountain peak. Sindbad walks down the mountain and on reaching the valley below, he is totally surprised at what the ground is composed off: “Its soil was composed of diamonds” (Lyons 767). As Sindbad comments, “The Valley of Diamonds are fantasies about the possibility of human flight; and, together with the flying carpet and the Ebony Horse, the rukh must be conceded a role in the imaginative prehistory of aviation” (Irwin 147). There are also huge snakes so big that it could easily swallow large elephants. The snakes come out only at night due to the fear of the rukh which carries them away in daylight. As it is night, Sindbad hides himself inside a cave for safety. All he can discover inside the cave is a huge snake sleeping over its egg. However, Sindbad is safe for the night and when he wakes up at day time, he is struck with even a greater surprise. He sees a large carcass fall in front of him from above. Sinbad then remembers the tale about the diamond mountain. It is said, “the only way the diamond traders can reach these is to

take and kill a sheep which they skin and cut up” (Lyons 768). The diamonds then stick to the flesh of the bird and when it is carried by a rukh on the mountain peak, the people collect the diamond from it. Sindbad like his previous voyage, ties himself to the carcass of the bird and is carried away on the mountain top by an eagle. Before tying himself up, he collects as many diamonds as he can in his pocket, belt and turban. When the inhabitants are collecting diamonds, they are astonished as well as scared at the sight of Sindbad. Sindbad is taken by the people to another island where there is an orchard. People can collect camphor for firewood. There he sees a strange animal, called rhinoceros. It is a “huge beast with a body larger than that of a camel, a herbivore with a single horn some ten cubits long in the center of its head containing what looks like the image of a man” (Lyons 771). Another fantastic thing to include is “this rhinoceros can carry a large elephant on its horn and go on pasturing in the island and on the shore without paying any attention to it” (Lyons 771). As the elephant will die, the heat will make the grease go down the rhinoceros’ eyes and it will go blind. Then the large rukh will carry the rhinoceros along with the elephant on its talons and will then provide its chicks with both the wild beast. Later Sindbad on finding a ship travels back to Baghdad. After recounting his second voyage to the porter, Sindbad, the Sailor gives hundred mithqals of gold to the porter. The second voyage of Sindbad contain lots of fantastical elements and his second voyage was more of a wonder than his first voyage.

Third Voyage-

Sindbad, the Sailor is sharing his experience of the third voyage with Sindbad, the porter and other people in the hall. Although having enough riches to sustain his life, he is again driven to sailing back to sea. He starts his journey from Baghdad with other merchants. They are all trading well and are happy until one day they are stuck in a noisy sea. The sea current and the

waves have unfortunately driven them to a mountain where strange creatures live. The creatures are ape-like folks. They have a hideous appearance and black hair. The language in which they talk is incomprehensible and they hate men. Everyone is afraid of their presence. “They have yellow eyes and black faces and are small, each being four spans in height” (Lyons 775). They gnaw the ropes of the ship, plunder everything and sail away with the ship leaving all the merchants stranded. The crew members along with Sindbad eat and drink in the near island and eventually finds a castle. To their utter amazement, they see cooking pots and bones all over the place. Since they are all tired, they fall fast asleep. They are all awoken by loud sound of thunder and it seems that the earth is shaking. They can see a strange, big creature in the shape of a man. His eyes are so red that it seems as if it is emitting fire. The creature has “tusks like those of a boar, a huge mouth like the top of a well, lips like those of a camel, which hung down over his chest, ears like large boats resting on his shoulders, and fingernails like the claws of a lion” (Lyons 776). This fantastical creature is so fearful that Sindbad and others are almost out of their senses in fear. The monster picks up one at a time to examine his food for supper. At last he picks the captain who is fat and healthy. He throws him on the ground and breaks his shoulder. After that he barbecues the whole body on a coal of fire. When the flesh is cooked, he dismembers every part of the man like a chicken and eats it. He also “tear the flesh with his fingernails and then to eat it” (Lyons 777). The beast then goes back to sleep. Sindbad loses many of his companions like this until one day they devise a plan to kill the beast. When the beast is sleeping, they take two iron spits and burn it until it is red hot. They then plunge it into the giant’s eyes with all their strength. This makes the monster give a loud, thunderous cry. The merchants then encounter two more monsters. Sindbad and his companions run for their lives and quickly board the ship. The other monsters throw large rocks on them killing all except

Sindbad and two others. Sindbad then reaches another island and encounters even more hideous sight. To his utter amazement, after getting up from sleep, he sees a huge snake. The snake eats one of Sindbad's companions. The snake, "swallowed his body as far as the shoulders, after which it gulped down the rest of him and we could hear his ribs cracking in its belly" (Lyons 781). However, Sindbad saves himself from the snake by encasing him from all sides. Later, he is rescued from the island by a ship and moves on to another island called al-Salahita. As Sindbad moves from island to island trading, one day he comes to Sind. In this place he sees many wonders. There he encounters two fishes, one in the appearance of a cow and another looking like a donkey. He also encounters a strange bird that lives in mollusc shell, and lays its egg on the surface of the sea. The bird rears its chicks on water and never comes on dry land. All these marvels Sindbad encounters on his third voyage. These are the fantastical things which we find in Sindbad's third voyage. According to Todorov, these are all supernatural things and cannot be explained by the normal laws of nature.

Fourth Voyage-

On the fourth voyage, Sindbad is again shipwrecked and somehow manages to save his life along with other companions and comes to a nearby island. They all eat fruits of the island and after exploring the place see a building at a distance. They see a group of naked men who take them to their king. Sindbad and others are offered strange foods which they have not seen before. Sindbad does not eat the strange foods but his companions who eat those foods start behaving abnormally. It seems that they are behaving like mad men. A naked man then brings coconut oil as drink and also pours it on their bodies. When they begin drinking the oil, "their eyes swivelled in their heads and they started to eat the food in an unnatural way" (Lyons 790).

Sindbad is worried about his life in the hands of the naked men. They are actually Magians and their king is a ghul. They provide new comers with strange foods, give them coconut oil to drink. After drinking and applying the oil on their body, they lose their senses and keep on eating more and more like savages. When they become fat, their throat is cut and provided to the king. They eat raw human flesh. Sindbad being skinny remains unnoticed by the Magians. Since Sindbad does not eat the food, he is in his senses and escapes. After suffering from seven days and seven nights, Sindbad see few people collecting peppercorns at a distance. They take Sindbad to their island and introduces him to their king. Sindbad losing everything, begins to stay in that island where he gets respect and is honored by everyone. Later, Sindbad marries a beautiful lady on King's request. Sindbad then comes to know about the strange custom of the place. The custom is, "when a wife dies, her husband is buried alive with her, while if the husband dies it is the wife who suffers this fate, so that neither partner may enjoy life after the death of the other" (Lyons 797). Sindbad is shocked to hear this and it is no sooner that his wife dies and he is lowered in the cave with his dead wife. Sindbad like others are given a jug of water and seven loaves of bread for his initial survival. Sindbad is moved by terror as he stays with his dead wife's corpse deep down inside the cave. He eats and drink very little for his survival. He sleeps on the bones of the dead people in the cave. In order to survive Sindbad does unusual things. One day a woman is lowered with her dead husband. In order to take her amount of food, Sindbad hit her hard with a dead man's shin bone and kills her. With her supply of food, he manages to survive a couple of more days. After a long time, Sindbad sees a ray of light in the cave and on following the light he sees a tunnel dug by wild beasts. He escapes from the tunnel to reach the mountain top. One day, he finds a ship while relaxing on the mountain top. The ship rescues him from the cave and before leaving Sindbad collects all precious stones,

jewels, necklaces, pearls, robes, etc from dead people's coffins. Sindbad then goes safely to Baghdad, his hometown. Each of the voyages of Sindbad is a marvel on its own. There are so many fantastical and supernatural things that Sindbad encounters in all of his journey.

Fifth Voyage-

Sindbad returns from his fourth voyage wealthier than ever before. He presents gifts to his neighbors, distributes alms and leads a luxurious life. After a few months his urge to return to sea is aroused and this time he starts from Basra with his own ship and merchandise. The journey is initially good as they travel from place to place with other merchants. One day they come to an island, where there are no inhabitants. The whole area is left barren. Without Sindbad even knowing, his crew members find a huge white thing lying on the island. It arises their curiosity. It is like a huge dome shape. Without knowing what it is they begin to throw stones on it. Later they can identify it to be a huge rukh's egg since on breaking they see a rukh's chick come out. They kill it and eat its flesh. Sindbad is informed by a crew later, identifies it to be a rukh's egg and shouts, "Don't do that or the rukh will come, sink our ship and destroy us" (Lyons 807). Before Sindbad could even finish his sentence, they are encircled by a rukh with a loud noise like thunder. Very soon it is joined by other rukhs who come to avenge the death of their mate's chick. The flock of rukh throw huge stones on their ship, which at last breaks the steering of the ship, breaking the ship and plunging all into the sea. Sindbad manages to save his life by holding a ship's timber and swimming for life until he reaches an island exhausted. While walking on that island in the next morning, Sindbad comes beside a stream where he sees "a fine-looking old man with a waist-wrapper made of leaves" (Lyons 809). Sindbad perceiving him to be a traveler like him, who is shipwrecked, greets him. On asking, why he is there, the stranger responds by making signs as if to say "Carry me from here on your shoulders to the other side

of the stream” (Lyons 809). Sindbad being a good Muslim agrees to help him thinking that God will reward him for his good deeds. After walking a long way Sindbad finds that instead of going down, he is wrapping his legs around Sindbad’s throat more tightly. Sindbad can see his legs are “black and rough as buffalo hide” (Lyons 810). Sindbad is afraid to see that the old man is nearly choking him to death by pressing his neck more tightly. At one time Sindbad loses consciousness and faints. The old man then hits him painfully on the back and shoulders until Sindbad regains consciousness and carries him again. This was going on for a long time. Each time Sindbad finds the man pressing more around his neck. Sindbad is like a prisoner and whenever he is slow, the old man beat him violently. Things become worse when the old man urinates and defecates on his shoulders. Sindbad, in order to fight his extreme exhaustion, prepares wine from the fruits in the forest which he takes in small amounts to gain back his strength. One day, the old man becomes interested in what Sindbad drinks, not knowing it to be wine and drinks the whole of it. On drinking, he becomes drunk and when he is fully unconscious his body relaxes and Sindbad unwinds his legs from his neck and throws him down. In fear of his revival, Sindbad strikes him dead with a large rock. Then Sindbad comes near the shore of that island. He sees a ship coming from the distance. The passengers board down the island and when they see Sindbad, they are greatly surprised to hear his story. They said, “The man who rode on your shoulders is called the Old Man of the Sea” (Lyons 812). Nobody can escape from the hands of the Old Man. Sindbad is then taken by the crew to the City of the Apes. Strange things happen in the City of Apes. At night, all inhabitants leave the city since apes come at night to eat. If they find any human, they kill them. The people would return to city in the morning. Sindbad being a stranger, accompanied them with their trade to sustain his livelihood. He carries pebbles in his bag and on throwing it to the apes, in return collects

coconut. Sindbad would later sell the coconuts to earn his living. After earning enough money, Sindbad boards on a ship and starts his journey back to Baghdad. On his journey he come across pearl beds. There he offers divers coconuts and in return they bring him large numbers of huge and valuable pearls. Sindbad then goes back to Baghdad making huge profits than before. Sindbad's fifth voyage also gives us descriptions of the fantastic world, where we encounter rukhs and their huge dome shaped eggs. The Old Man of the Sea and the City of Apes is no less than a glimpse of the fantastical world. The bed of pearls with enormous, valuable and sparkling pearls also arise fantasy in the readers.

Sixth Voyage-

Sindbad is in the sea for trading and is again shipwrecked. He along with his crew members come to an island which is full of shipwrecked belongings. Sindbad on exploring the island comes near a fresh water spring. In the middle of the spring, Sindbad sees "great numbers of gems of all sorts, precious stones, sapphires and huge pearls fit for Kings" (Lyons 821). "The land surrounding the spring sparkled because of the precious stones and other such things that it contained" (Lyons 821). The island also contains Chinese aloes, Qumari aloes, raw ambergris, etc. The survivors are suffering from stomach pains due to exposure to sea. Many of Sindbad's companions have died due to lack of food. Sindbad makes a small raft from Chinese and Qumari aloes and boards on it, in the hope that the stream will eventually take him to an inhabited place. With him he takes, "a store of precious stones, gems, cash and pearls as big as pebbles, together with other treasures from the island, as well as some good, pure, raw ambergris" (Lyons 823). The stream passes by an underground channel in the mountain. Sindbad is plunged into darkness and the stream is becoming broader and narrower alternately. Sindbad is so tired and terrified with fear that he falls asleep. When Sindbad wakes up, he finds himself near an island. He sees

Indians and Abyssinians but cannot understand their language. To Sindbad, “it was all a dream, as I was still suffering from the effects of the hardships that had overwhelmed me” (Lyons 825). The people take Sindbad to their King, who welcomes Sindbad warmly and allows him to stay. Sindbad, stayed there for some time where he is treated with respect until he returns to his own country, Baghdad.

Seventh Voyage-

Sindbad, as usual starts the journey in good health and safety. During his journey from sea to sea and island to island, he reaches a city named Madinat al- Sin. However, there is a strong wind followed by a storm and the ship is distracted in the sea. “The wind has driven us to the ultimate sea in the world” (Lyons 830). The captain opens a box and take a cotton bag from it. He takes out soil from it, make it wet with water and then sniffs it. He then takes out a small book and says, “it contained an astonishing revelation, the gist of which was that no one who came to this part of the world would escape from it with his life” (Lyons 831). He says, “in it there are enormous and hideous serpents which attack and swallow every ship that comes here together with all its contents” (Lyons 831). No sooner his words are over, the ship is raised up and strike down violently into the sea. They see a fish as huge as a mountain, its enormous size frightens them as it approaches near them. Then they can see more two monsters even bigger than the first one and all are encircling the ship from all sides. One of the fishes is about to swallow the ship when a strong wind tears the ship apart into pieces and all the crew members sink into the sea. Sindbad holds onto a timber and is swimming and struggling for life. This hardship goes on for two days until Sindbad comes near a large island. Sindbad eat fruits, drink from the streams and regains his health. He later makes a raft with woods which he collects from trees. He does not know that the woods are fine sandalwood. The raft takes Sindbad to a

well-built city. Sindbad is very weak and tired due to the struggles. He is received warmly by an old man who gives Sindbad food and clothing. Sinbad rests there for few days and come to know that the old man is a rich man of the town. He helps Sindbad to sell his raft in the market at a profitable prize since it is made of sandalwood. Sindbad sells it to the old man at a prize of 1,100 dinars. After getting married to his daughter, Sindbad is in possession of all the wealth the old man has. After the old man's death, Sindbad come to know about a strange characteristic of the towns people. Once a month all the male of the town can transform into a bird and fly high up in the sky. "When the first of the month arrived, their complexions changed as their appearance altered" (Lyons 838). Sindbad feeling curious, begs one of the towns men to carry him on a flight. According to Sindbad, "He flew so high with me on his shoulders that to my astonishment I heard the angels in the dome of heaven glorifying God" (Lyons 838). The strangest part is that when Sindbad hear the angels, he praises God and at that instant fire comes from Heaven and burns all birds. The townsmen become so angry with Sindbad that they leave him on a mountain top and return to their city. Alone on the mountain, Sindbad meets two messengers of God who are shining like moons and they give Sindbad a thing of red gold. Suddenly, Sindbad sees a snake approaching beneath the mountain. It is swallowing a man almost up to his navel. Sindbad saves the man by striking the snake with the golden staff. Later, Sindbad is carried back to the island by one of the birds. Sindbad then knows from his wife that the townsmen who could transform themselves into birds are actually brothers of devil. They do not actually know how to glorify God. Sindbad then decides to sell all the properties of his father-in-law. He leaves with his wife to Baghdad, City of Peace. It is known that it takes Sindbad twenty-seven years to come back from his seventh and last voyage. After the seventh

voyage, Sindbad promises to God that he will not make any further voyage in the sea and lives happily with his family in Baghdad.

“The Sinbad cycle, which is a fictional reworking of mariners’ yarns about the wonders to be found in the Indian and China seas (among them the wak-wak tree with its human-headed fruit, the Old Man of the Sea and the fish as large as an island), is the most obvious example of this process” (Irwin 131). “Readers and writers in medieval Christendom also had a taste for marvels and loved to read of monsters, of strange cities and of supernatural events” (Irwin 131). “The rukh in Arab folklore was a bird of vast dimensions, very similar to the equally vast and mythical Persian simurgh. It was capable of carrying men and even elephants in its claws. Stories about this bird played on the wonder of scale” (Irwin 147).

Chapter IV

Alibaba and the Forty Thieves

Alibaba and the Forty Thieves is one of the most popular stories in *The Thousand and One Nights* also known as *Arabian Nights*. The protagonist of the story is Alibaba who by profession is a poor woodcutter. He is married to a poor woman and his only means of survival is by selling the woods he cuts in the forest. He has an elder brother named Qasim, who is very selfish and has become rich by marrying a rich widow. The realm of fantasy begins as Alibaba accidentally discovers a secret cave. One day as Alibaba is cutting wood in the forest, he discovers a gang of forty men accumulating in front of a big mountain. Alibaba hides himself on top of a tree close to the mountain, so that he can clearly observe what is happening. Alibaba hears one out of forty, approaching near the mountain and coming close to a door. He says “Open Sesame” and the door of the cave magically opens. All of the men go inside and after a certain period of time comes out by pronouncing the words “Shut Sesame”. Alibaba is greatly astonished and waits for some time until he feels safe to come down from the tree. Alibaba goes in front of the door of the cave and utters the same magical words, “Open Sesame”. As soon as he says the words the door of the cave opens. As he goes inside, he sees the entire cave consisting of chambers instead of being dark and gloomy. There is light as sun rays pour in through some holes in the rock. Alibaba is surprised to see enormous quantities of food stuffs and merchandise. There are “silks and brocades, priceless carpets, and, above all, gold and coins in heaps or heaped up in sacks or in large leather bags that were piled one on top of the other” (Lyons 1560). To Alibaba it seems that the treasure house has been stocked by generations of thieves. Without any delay, Alibaba takes as many gold coins as possible that can be carried by three donkeys. Alibaba on returning home shows it to his wife: “He then emptied the sacks,

making a great heap of gold which quite dazzled his wife” (Lyons 1561). Alibaba buries all gold coins under the ground and warns his wife to keep it a secret. However, the secret is disclosed when Alibaba’s wife goes to borrow a scale from Qasim’s wife in order to weigh the gold. Qasim’s wife, being a cunning lady put some grease below the scale so that she might know what they would be weighing. Qasim, being informed by his wife about Alibaba’s riches, goes to his brother to know the secret. Alibaba, being a soft hearted, good man gives the details about the thieves’ den. Very early the next morning, Qasim goes in front of the cave with his ten mules. Qasim, as instructed by Alibaba says “Open Sesame” and the door opens. He goes inside the cave and “he was amazed at the sight of riches far greater than Alibaba’s account had led him to expect” (Lyons 1565). “The more closely he examined everything, the more his astonishment increased” (Lyons 1565). He removes as many gold coins as he can but in the meantime forgets the magical word to open the cave. He tries to remember but the more he tries the more confused he becomes. In the meantime, he hears thieves approaching the cave. Qasim is so indecisive that as soon as the door opens, he hurries outside to escape and is killed. The thieves chop his body into four pieces and put each pair in front of the door hanging. By hanging the body in the entrance, they want to warn anyone who dares to invade their treasure like Qasim. As Qasim did not go home till midnight, his wife becomes worried and informs Alibaba about it. Without any delay, Alibaba goes to the cave and finds his brother’s corpse. Alibaba makes two bundles of the corpse and put it in the sack of one of the donkeys. He arranges some wood on top to avoid people’s curiosity and to keep it a secret. The remaining two donkeys are filled with sacks of gold. Upon reaching Qasim’s house, he informs his sister-in-law about her husband’s death and asks her to keep it a secret. Qasim has a female slave who is very clever named Marjana. Alibaba entrusts her with the responsibility to make Qasim’s death appear to

be normal in the neighborhood and also to keep it a secret. Marjana at first goes to an apothecary's shop and takes medicine for Qasim due to his serious illness. The next morning, she again goes to the same medicine shop and this time brings an essence that one usually takes when a person is about to die. This is done so that in the neighborhood people believes that Qasim is extremely sick. The next step taken by Marjana is extremely daring and courageous. The following day, very early in the morning she goes to Baba Mustafa who is a cobbler. She blindfolds him and takes him to Qasim's house. She unfolds him so that he sews the dead body parts of Qasim together. When Baba Mustafa is done in stitching the body parts together, she takes him again blindfolded so that he is unable to trace Qasim's house. On the same day, Alibaba and his wife pays visit to Qasim's house and by evening everyone know that Qasim is dead. Thus, "Qasim's grisly death was carefully concealed and covered up by Alibaba" (Lyons 1574).

The thieves are at great rage on knowing that Qasim's body is missing. They want to know who is courageous enough to enter their cave and steal his body. They are also worried to know that someone else has also known about their treasure house. They devised a plan to reveal the secret. Two thieves are consequently sent on a mission in the city. Both of them fails and is killed by the captain. All thanks go to Marjana who cleverly marks the other houses exactly the same way as the thieves have marked Alibaba's house. She is suspicious to see the marks on their door and thinks it wise to mark the other doors in the same way. After losing two of his brave soldiers, the captain decides to carry out the operation on his own. He meets Baba Mustafa who shows him the house by walking blindfolded. The captain notices every precise detail of the house and the next day goes to Alibaba's house in the disguise of an oil merchant. He carries thirty-eight leather jars on nineteen mules and requests Ali Baba to allow him to stay for the

night. The thirty-seven jars are actually filled with thirty- seven thieves and only one jar contains oil. He plans to come out at midnight and attack Alibaba and kill him. However, the plan fails as Marjana is clever enough to discover that the jars contain thieves instead of oil. Without losing any time, Marjana takes out a large cooking pot and boils oil. “She went and poured enough boiling oil into each jar, from the first to the last, to smother and kill the thieves- and kill them she did” (Lyons 1588). Ali Baba, “seeing a man in the jar, he drew back in fright, uttering a loud cry” (Lyons 1590). The thirty-seven thieves are secretly buried in a long and wide trench that is dug under Ali Baba’s garden. However, the captain escapes and again conducts a plan to kill Ali Baba. This time he disguises himself as Khawaja Husain and befriends with Ali Baba’s son. He is looking for an opportunity to kill Ali Baba when Marjana recognizes him. She kills him with her dagger.

Finally, all the forty- thieves are dead and the treasure in the cave which is known only to Ali Baba remains a secret forever. Ali Baba later informs his son about the treasure and all the treasure in the cave is now at the disposal of Ali Baba’s descendants.

Conclusion

The Arabian Nights is a very rich and diverse book which contains stories of many different kinds. It is also a children's classic which allures children with the fantastical and magical elements present in it. However, if we study the tales critically, we will understand that they contain much more than what we understand on the surface level. They have many serious implications. This is what I have experienced, while studying the three story cycles such as "Aladdin", "Sindbad" and "Alibaba". For instance, from the story, Alibaba and the Forty Thieves we learn that greed may lead to downfall and in the worst cases may lead to death. Too much greed has resulted in Qasim's death. The application of many modern theories such as the structural approach, morphological approach and psychoanalytic approach enabled me to understand the deeper significance that underlines them. Many other theories can also be applied such as feminist theory, since we see a lot of subjugation of women and depiction of women characters in a degrading way. However, Marjana plays the role of a heroic lady. She uses her intelligence, keen sense of judgement and becomes successful in saving Alibaba and his family from the robbers. By reading the stories of Sindbad, we get a glimpse of the human unconscious which is always craving to explore the fantastical world. We understand the human passion which leads to hard work in order to gain riches. The journey which I undertook to complete my thesis sharpened and widened my knowledge and enabled me to understand how a story can be deciphered from a variety of angles. Since I have a fascination with fantasy, I enjoyed reading the stories though sometimes it became strenuous as it led me to read a lot of books in order to see the texts through a critical lens. Last but not least, it aroused my curiosity to read and explore some more tales from The Arabian Nights.

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