Moral Values in the Book One Thousand and One Nights

القيم الأخلاقية في كتاب "ألف ليلة وليلة"

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Abstract:

The theme of ethics is among the intellectual and literary issues that have been associated with humanity since ancient times. It has been addressed by thinkers and critics from diverse perspectives. This study examines the presence of ethical themes and their dimensions in literary texts, specifically in the enduring work *One Thousand and One Nights*, which is distinguished by a diverse intellectual structure in its social and human themes, and by an engaging narrative style that contributed to its global dissemination.

Keywords: Moral Values; Ethics; One Thousand and One Nights; Arab Society; Justice; Loyalty; Courage; Generosity.

ملخص:

يعد موضوع الأخلاق من الموضوعات الفكرية والأدبية المرتبطة بالإنسان منذ القديم، وقد تناوله المفكرون والنقاد من وجهات نظر مختلفة، ونبحث في دراستنا عن حضور موضوع الأخلاق وأبعاده في النصوص الأدبية وبالتحديد في النص الخالد "ألف ليلى وليلى" الذي يتميز ببناء فكري متنوع في موضوعاته الاجتماعية والإنسانية، وبأسلوب قصصي تعبيري ممتع ساهم في انتشاره عالميا.

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كلمات مفتاحية: القيم الأخلاقية، الأخلاق، ألف ليلة وليلة، المجتمع العربي، العدل، الوفاء، الشجاعة، الكرم.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Concern with the issue of moral values among the Arab individual is as old as his very existence and is not the product of any particular historical period. It has remained a subject of debate among critics and researchers, which has endowed it with a quality of continuity. These values are considered valid for all times and places, unchanging, while people and their circumstances vary. The individual merely applies these values within society.

Literature is distinguished by aesthetic artistic values, and its content also carries moral values that the writer promotes in texts and creative works, whether in poetry or prose. The texts of *One Thousand and One Nights*, or what some prefer to call "the Nights," constitute a work rich in expressive, stylistic, and rhetorical features, open to multiple meanings. This has made it a formal and semantic structure distinct from other conventional prose texts of the time, especially since it consists of stories generated from a frame narrative and intertwined with one another to include various tales that touch on different aspects of life, such as stories of good and evil, justice and injustice, love and hatred, loyalty and betrayal, customs and traditions, as well as tales of jinn, giants, and magic. This multiplicity raises for readers many questions related to its moral values, symbols, various structures,

and its relations with other interacting peoples, and the deep and diverse meanings produced by these interactions. Thus, have moral values in Arab society remained the same or have they changed?

Critical and social studies commonly assert that Islamic civilization reached its peak during the Abbasid era as a result of its openness to various peoples and nations and its intellectual and cultural interaction with them in several fields, foremost among them literature and prose. This openness created a fertile environment for the emergence of new phenomena such as a life of indulgence and luxury that became clearly visible, leading individuals to distance themselves from praiseworthy moral values. Islam, however, urged adherence to noble ethics, and the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, served as an exemplary model to emulate in his virtuous character. Islam also encouraged the elimination of various negative practices prevalent at that time that contradicted Islamic teachings and Muslim ethics, such as the burial of infant girls, the purchase of slaves and concubines, houses of entertainment, nightlife, and indulgence, in addition to the emergence of class disparity. This has led us to attempt to uncover certain moral aspects of the Abbasid era as depicted in the Book of the Nights, without neglecting the significant role played by non-Arab nations, whose effective contributions helped generate new images previously unknown to the Arab individual. The Book of the Nights abounds in numerous moral values.

2. The Concept of Moral Values

The observer of the term moral values finds that it is a compound expression comprising the notion of values on the one hand and that of ethics on the other. Values is the plural of value,

and in its simplest meaning it refers to "collective standards imbued with a strong emotional character, connected to the moral levels presented by the group, which the individual absorbs within his external social environment. Through them he establishes scales by which he evaluates his actions and adopts them as a guide and a compass. They thus constitute a regulated normative psychosocial framework (Bahi, 1958, p. 294)." Accordingly, values may be described as laws and conventional measures related to various aspects of life, particularly the moral dimension. They are created by the group in order to regulate individual actions, behaviors, and reactions, thereby achieving social integration and organizing individuals and societies. This is clearly reflected in the statement of Jamil Saliba, who considers them to be "a quality that the mind confers upon statements, actions, and things according to circumstances and conditions. It is a means to achieve an end (Saliba, 1982, pp. 213–214)." Values thus represent a behavioral pattern that regulates people's conduct and actions, as they arise from mental conceptions striving to achieve goals and objectives.

Ethics, on the other hand, is the plural of khuluq and denotes "a state of the soul from which a person’s actions proceed without deliberation or choice (Arabi, 1990, p. 12)." This prompts the question that if actions are performed without reflection or planning, then both good and bad, praiseworthy and blameworthy actions may emerge from the individual. This is what Andre Lalande recognized when he stated: "The term ethics may be applied to all actions issuing from the soul, whether praiseworthy or blameworthy. Thus, one may say that a person possesses noble ethics or bad ethics (Lalande, 2001, p. 539)." Each of the terms values and ethics therefore carries its own distinct meaning. The

expression moral values results from the combination of the two concepts and may be defined as a social practice that directs human behavior and fosters psychological reform, thereby creating a form of balance and harmony in relationships, both in the individual's relation with himself and with others.

3. The Story of the Book *One Thousand and One Nights*

3.1 Origin and Title

The book achieved wide circulation, which qualified it to be classified as a work of global stature. It became known to both Arabs and Western audiences, each approaching it from a particular perspective. Some read it for pleasure, entertainment, and relaxation, while others approached it out of curiosity and a desire to explore the worlds of the East and their enchantment, entering its wondrous realms filled with strangeness and mystery. Others read it in pursuit of knowledge and the expansion of learning. As a result of the journey undertaken by the book and its widespread dissemination among diverse peoples, languages, and dialects, questions arise regarding its origin, its true author, especially given that it belongs to popular heritage transmitted orally from one generation to another, the reason for its specific title rather than others, and the identity of the person who compiled it into a written volume.

The book has not been attributed to a specific author. Scholars have differed in determining the nationality of its originator and whether it was produced by a single author or by multiple contributors. Al-Shirwani was among those who raised this question and concluded that the book was composed by a Syrian writer who employed a simple language with the aim of

facilitating the learning of Arabic, which contributed to its fame. In contrast, Desaky maintained that transmitters added to the original Syrian corpus some of their own tales and narratives across different places and times (Farhani). The additions incorporated into the original text may be explained by its nature as popular heritage transmitted orally through collective memory, which rendered it subject to both expansion and reduction. Each transmitter might emphasize one aspect at the expense of another or recall certain details while omitting others. One scholar remarks regarding the origin of the Nights: "For a long period before being committed to writing, it was transmitted from one generation to another through oral narration, and this is the fate of all tales narrated in global folk literatures (Sherifi, 2000, p. 172)." The work is known only through its narrator Shahrazad, the daughter of the vizier of King Shahryar, who constituted the principal reason for the proliferation of the book's stories.

Studies concerning the origin of the book have multiplied and diverged. Some scholars consider it Persian, others Indian, still others Arabic, while some view it as a synthesis of all these cultures combined. Both Ibn al-Nadim in his book *al-Fihrist* and al-Masudi in *Muruj al-Dhahab* regard it as a translation of Persian stories known as "Hazar Afsana." The latter states: "Many people knowledgeable about their accounts have mentioned that these are fabricated stories composed of invented fables, and that their nature resembles that of books transmitted to us and translated from Persian, Indian, and Greek. Their composition follows what we have mentioned, such as the book 'Hazar Afsana,' which in Persian means 'One Thousand Tales.' The word 'khurafa' in Persian is called 'afsana,' and people call this book One Thousand and One Nights (Masudi, 1989, p. 192)."

Credit for introducing the book and drawing attention to it is attributed to Antoine Galland through his translation of stories from the work in 1704. He was thus the first to open a long series of translations and diverse narratives that revolved around the book, affirming that its tales were Arabic. He obtained manuscripts from some of his acquaintances in Syria containing the voyages of Sinbad the Sailor, and these stories encouraged him to translate them (Battouti, 2005, pp. 64–65). Accordingly, it can be said that Europeans and Arabs alike are indebted to Galland's efforts in acquainting them with this civilizational popular heritage, as he was the first to enter the vast worlds of the Nights and draw attention to them. His translation therefore constituted a foundational building block for the translations and scholarly interests that followed.

Opinions have diverged regarding the origin of the book and its primary source. Most likely, it represents a mixture of different cultures that interacted across ages and periods. This is perhaps what Nabia attempted to demonstrate in his study published in the Near East Journal in 1949, where he discussed the possibility of identifying the principal stages that contributed to the formation of the book until it reached us in its present form. These stages are as follows:

- A translation of the book *Hazar Afsana*, undertaken in the eighth century CE. This translation may have been complete and accurate, and it may have borne at that time the title *One Thousand Fables*.
- An Arabization and Islamic adaptation, either wholly or partially, of *Hazar Afsana*, also in the eighth century.

- The book *One Thousand Evenings*, written by Ibn Abdus al Jahshiyari in the tenth century, who may have added material from his own era to the earlier Nights.
- Another collection of stories composed in the twelfth century, containing local Egyptian tales and Asian narratives. It is possible that the title *One Thousand and One Nights* emerged during this stage, since until that time the title had been only *One Thousand Nights* or *One Thousand Fables*.
- The final stage, during which some stories related to the Crusades or the Mongol invasions in the thirteenth century were added, along with references to the entry of the Turks into Syria and Egypt in the sixteenth century (Darwish, 2002, p. 187).

It may be concluded that the book passed through several stages before reaching its present form. It was composed in a narrative style in which stories generate other stories from the frame tale. It is filled with accounts of kings, brave knights, tales of lovers, their suffering from the anguish of separation, and moments of reunion and embrace. All these situations were formulated in poetry adhering to the meters of al Khalil, making them more eloquent in description and more melodious in recitation. This confirms the assertion that the book is a mixture of civilizations, Arabic in origin, bearing the features of the enchanting knowledge of the East, such as matters related to the Islamic caliphate, stories of slave girls and servants, including the tale of Tawaddud the slave girl in the assembly of the Commander of the Faithful and her debates with them, the tale of Dalila the Trickster and Ahmad al Danf, the tale of Harun al Rashid, the slave

girl, and Abu Nuwas, and many other remarkable narratives. Most of these events take place in palaces and in the streets, alleys, quarters, and gardens of Baghdad and Egypt. Evidence supporting this includes the notes, translations, and explanations added by Galland in the footnotes to clarify Eastern customs and traditions and everything that might be obscure to the reader regarding the atmosphere and meanings of the Nights (Sherifi, 1997, p. 117). The book also mentions Arab clothing such as the keffiyeh, turban, and vest, as well as Arab foods, which affirms the Arab identity of the work. This led Abd al Malik Murtad to question whether, if the book were truly of Persian, Indian, or Greek origin, those cultures would have remained silent before such a great heritage, leaving the Arabs alone to weave its tales and narrate its events. He argues that it is difficult to believe that this text is a human product in which numerous peoples of different origins, orientations, and beliefs participated. In his view, the book is a fruit of Arab Islamic civilizations and a product of their cultural output (Mortad, 1993, pp. 3-6).

3.2 The Tale of the Book

The frame narrative recounts the story of the origin of *One Thousand and One Nights*, recalling the primary reason that generated the tales narrated by Scheherazade, the daughter of King Shahryar's vizier. She was a woman who, by virtue of her beauty, self-confidence, and her solitary confrontation of Shahryar, whom all men had failed to stop, employed both femininity and knowledge (Darwish, 2002, pp. 184–185) as her means to achieve her aim and to save herself and the women of her kind from the king's tyranny.

The introduction to *One Thousand and One Nights* mentions the story of two brothers who shared the rule of the lands of Persia. The first was named Shahryar, and he had a brother called Shahzaman. They ruled justly for a long period. Shahryar longed for his brother and sent for him to visit, and his wish was fulfilled. However, when Shahzaman set out to visit his brother, he remembered something he had forgotten, so he returned to his palace and was shocked to find his wife in the arms of a black slave. He killed them both and departed to his brother in a state of anger and grief, remaining in that condition. This prompted Shahryar to resolve that they should go hunting together for amusement and relief. Yet Shahzaman did not accompany him on the journey and remained in his brother's palace, where he witnessed the betrayal of his brother's wife with a black slave. This betrayal, however, took another turn, as she was accompanied by twenty maidservants, each of whom was likewise with a black slave. All this occurred in broad daylight and in an open place in the middle of the palace garden. This made him feel somewhat better, for whoever witnesses another's affliction finds his own affliction easier to bear.

Upon his return from the hunting trip, the brother was astonished by the sudden change in his sibling's condition and insisted on knowing the reason. After persistent urging and repeated insistence, he obtained what he sought, as the other found no way to conceal the truth. He asked his brother Shahryar to pretend to go out hunting and then return to witness the matter with his own eyes. Shahryar did so, and upon seeing what occurred, he lost his composure, was seized with rage, and ordered her beheaded. He concluded that every woman is unfaithful and resolved to take revenge upon his wife and his brother's wife

through women of their kind. Thereafter, he began marrying a virgin each night and killing her the same night, commanding his servant Masrur the executioner to cut off her neck so that she would not commit treachery as his former wives had done.

He remained in this state for three years, until people fled with their daughters, and no girl of marriageable age remained in the city except Shahrazad and her sister Dunyazad. Shahrazad then appeared before her father, the vizier who was responsible for securing wives for King Shahryar, and requested that he marry her to the king in order to achieve her purpose, saying, "Either I shall live, or I shall be a ransom for the daughters of the Muslims and a cause for their deliverance from his hands." Despite her father's attempts to dissuade her from risking herself, her resolve did not waver. She asked him to prepare her and instructed her younger sister, "If I send for you while I am with the king, and you come and see that he has fulfilled his desire with me, then say, 'O my sister, tell us a strange and wondrous tale to pass the night.' I shall then relate a story in which, God willing, there will be deliverance."

Her sister did as she requested, and Shahrazad achieved what she intended. Over the course of one thousand and one nights, she narrated numerous tales rich in purposeful meaning and genuine moral significance. She would continue her storytelling and pause at a suspenseful point, prompting the king to spare her so that she might complete the tale. This continued until she bore him three sons. Ultimately, King Shahryar inclined toward her, spared her life, repented of his former practice of killing, and lived with her and their children in happiness, tranquility, and contentment. Shahrazad resorted to this stratagem

to save herself, and her skill in storytelling was the true reason for her preservation. She thus fulfilled the role of a savior for herself and for women of her kind, transforming her husband Shahryar's thinking and temperament. Since the tales she narrated possessed purposeful content, the attentive reader finds them rich in lessons, wisdom, and moral values, which prompts the question of how these values are manifested.

4. Manifestations of Moral Values in the Book *One Thousand and One Nights*

Moral values constitute the foundation of all things, as they encompass the ethics of human interaction. This has led creative texts to emerge as attempts to consolidate moral values and uphold them within society. The pre-Islamic individual found himself besieged by existential conflicts and was compelled to confront these struggles and fears with all available strength in order to preserve his existence and dispel the specter of fear and terror that threatened his being. Consequently, he privileged certain values over others within his society. Like other societies, this or that community was governed by morals, customs, and traditions that corresponded to its needs and its particular configuration (Boubaia, 2001, pp. 27–29). These conflicts prompted the creation of laws and systems designed to protect humanity. Since every society possesses its own regulations and laws, and literature serves as a mirror reflecting its creator's environment, literary texts emerged as conveyors of what existed within that milieu and as instruments for consolidating the laws established by society.

The book *One Thousand and One Nights*, with its diverse tales, likewise fulfilled this function. It has attracted considerable attention due to the vivid depiction within its pages of life in its

most precise details and its moral values, thereby serving as a historical document of the community. It may thus be regarded as one of the greatest texts preserved by popular memory, transmitted across generations, and circulated throughout the world with its captivating charm. Its narrator Shahrazad begins her stories, marked by a wondrous character, with the assistance of her sister, captivating King Shahryar through the enchantment of storytelling and interrupting the narrative at suspenseful moments. This strategy led him to postpone her execution in order to enjoy hearing the continuation of the extraordinary stories she narrated, carefully filled with elements of suspense and anticipation. The narrator deliberately ended each night at an exciting and stimulating moment, compelling the king to delay her death until he could hear the remainder of the tale (Battouti, 2005, p. 153).

The principal reason behind the emergence of *One Thousand and One Nights* is widely recognized. Through her narration, Shahrazad sought to demonstrate that despite what is often said about women, and the claim that betrayal is an exclusively feminine trait, this characterization is neither fixed nor permanent. Betrayal is a human attribute shared by men as well as women. Moreover, beauty is not the only weapon available to women, despite inherited perceptions in human mentality. Intelligence constitutes another formidable instrument. This is underscored by the critic Amal May, who states: "A woman's weapon is the mind, even if betrayal is attributed to her; her weapon is intelligence, even if the man is captivated by her feminine beauty (Amal, 2013, p. 111)." In this manner, Shahrazad tamed Shahryar and prompted him to reconsider his views. Her narrative thus became concerned with moral values. Arabs were

renowned for their noble ethics, which the narrator strove to embed in collective memory and to guide the man represented by Shahryar, liberating him from deviation in his thoughts and behavior and from the illusion that possessed him. This invites an examination of some of her tales in order to reveal these values and to identify their most significant manifestations as presented therein, thereby acquainting us with new aspects that emerged during the Abbasid era.

4.1 Loyalty, Trustworthiness, and Allegiance

Betrayal is considered one of the reprehensible moral traits. It constituted a decisive turning point that altered the course of King Shahryar's life, distorted his thinking, and troubled his existence. Scheherazade, the narrator of the Nights, frequently spoke of this blameworthy characteristic, perhaps reflecting a personal motive, as the saying goes. Since things are distinguished by their opposites, she perceptively used this as an entry point to discuss an important virtuous moral value that had prevailed among the Arabs since ancient times and that individuals, whether men or women, should embody. This value is loyalty and trustworthiness. This is clearly manifested in her narratives.

For example, in the story of Aziz and his beloved Dalila the Trickster, and the suffering and hardships he endured in order to unite with her, his cousin advises him to recite a particular phrase to his beloved if reunion occurs and the time of departure arrives. The phrase is: "Loyalty is fair, and betrayal is vile (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 49)." Through this counsel, Aziza, the cousin of Aziz, urges the beloved to remain loyal and not betray her lover. The beloved complied with the request, remained

faithful to Aziz, and granted him safety, although she had originally intended treachery and even murder.

Additional instances of loyalty appear abundantly throughout the texts of the Nights, such as the loyalty of lovers to one another in the story of Ni‘ma and Nu‘m and the trials they endured, the story of the old woman who served Abd al Malik ibn Marwan, and the story of Qamar al Zaman and Budur and the hardships of love they experienced, demonstrating their unwavering devotion. The letter he sent to her states: “He whom estrangement afflicts, his remedy is loyalty. He who betrays among you or among us shall not attain what he desires, and nothing is more graceful than the loyal lover to the aloof beloved (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 269).” This letter was the primary reason for the improvement of Queen Budur’s condition, her recovery from illness and weakness, and her return to health.

Another example is the story of the brothers Amjad and As‘ad, who remained loyal to one another and to their father Qamar al Zaman. They neither betrayed him in his rule nor compromised his honor. Likewise, there are stories of servants who remain loyal to their masters and kings, as well as the story of Sinbad the Sailor with the owner of the ship who entrusted him with his wealth and merchandise. When an incident occurred, Sinbad was shipwrecked and took refuge on an island. The ship’s owner eventually departed after waiting for him. During the journey, they saw a man atop a tree on one of the islands signaling to them. They approached him, gave him water, and took him aboard. After he recounted what had happened, the ship’s owner felt compassion for him and said that he wished to assist him so

that he might return to his homeland. He explained that they had lost a traveling companion and did not know whether he was alive or dead, and that he intended to give Sinbad that man's cargo to sell on the island and safeguard, granting him a share for his labor, while the remainder would be taken back to Baghdad to be delivered to the absent man's family along with the proceeds (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 3, p. 49). Despite the absence of the cargo's owner and the lack of information about him or his relatives, the ship's owner remained committed to safeguarding the goods and benefiting their rightful owner, hoping to return to his homeland and deliver the entrusted property to his family.

Many other narratives similarly address the important ethical value of trustworthiness and loyalty that fills the book. Through them, the narrator sought to demonstrate that just as betrayal exists in society, so too does trustworthiness. If one encounters one or two instances of betrayal and generalizes them to all, such judgments stem from the individual rather than from society itself.

4.2 Justice

The Arab individual has long been known for justice, equality, aiding the oppressed, and giving each person his due. The images and narratives preserved in ancient Arab heritage serve as strong evidence of this, among them the Pact of al Fudul, in which the tribes of Quraysh pledged to support and assist the oppressed, whether they were native inhabitants of Mecca or newcomers. With the advent of Islam, this moral value was further reinforced because of its important role in building nations and societies. Justice was regarded as the foundation of rule and as governing social relations between a husband and his wives if they were

more than one, between a father and his children, and between the ruler and his subjects. The epithet of the just thus became a quality attributed to kings and princes, and it was often applied to them. Describing someone as just indicates conformity with truth, and the just person judges himself as he judges others, rendering his judgment free from emotion and devoid of bias, arbitrariness, and selfishness (Saliba, 1982, p. 43). Most of the tales in the book point to this moral value and insist upon it, as it appears as a fundamental pillar within them. For example, in the tale of Taj al Muluk, he promises one of the members of the trading caravan to remove his injustice and to rule for him with fairness, as stated in the narrator's words: It has reached me, O happy king, that Taj al Muluk glanced toward the caravan and saw a handsome young man whose features had changed and whose face had grown pale. When he saw him in this condition, he was perplexed and approached him, saying that he must inform him of his situation, for he saw tears in his eyes. If he had been wronged, he would remove his injustice, and if he were in debt, he would settle his debt (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2). Many stories of justice and kings appear in the book. The story of Qamar al Zaman illustrates his fairness in rule and in kingship, as well as in his treatment of his two wives, Budur and Hayat al Nufus. He treated them with great kindness, was just in his dealings with them, and placed them on equal footing in rank and affection, living with them in a manner pleasing to God. He was also just in his love for his two sons, al Amjad and al Asad, whom he had from his two wives. The narrative states that when they reached manhood and attained perfection, their father, whenever he traveled, seated them alternately in the council of judgment, each of them ruling for two

days among the people, in accordance with decreed destiny and determined fate (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 27).

4.3 Courage

If justice is a moral value and a quality attributed to kings and those in positions of authority, then courage is a moral value associated with heroic knights. This is clearly manifested in the letter written by Dhat al-Dawahi and sent to King Afridun, in which she states: "Sharkan is the knight of the brave and the bravest of horsemen," warning Afridun against him (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 297). The Arab individual has been known since ancient times for courage, boldness, and the ability to confront hardships and terrors. This moral value has long been entrenched in the popular imagination. According to Ibn Khaldun in his Muqaddimah, hardship in the difficult life of the Arabs became a disposition, and courage an ingrained trait and inherent characteristic to which they resort whenever called upon or when someone seeks their assistance, whether oppressed or oppressor (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 07).

Among the passages that illustrate Arab zeal and their support for those who seek their help is the following: "The people of the city began shouting, crying out, and seeking aid. The chamberlain entered the king and informed him that a king had encamped with his army outside the city, their weapons drawn, and that they did not know his intent. Al-Amjad said, 'I will go out to him and discover his purpose.' Al-Amjad went outside the city and found the king with his army (Khaldun, p. 106)." Although Al-Amjad was fully aware that the king and his forces were stationed outside the city, and that it was both erroneous and dangerous to go out to them alone and unarmed, he nevertheless

went to determine the reason for their arrival with such equipment and armament, unafraid and undeterred.

We also encounter the courage of the son of one of the kings in combat and his ability to fight an entire army alone. He said to the king: "Go out to your army, your soldiers, and your attendants, and inform me of their number." The king replied that they numbered forty thousand horsemen besides the servants. He then said: "Bring them out to me and tell them that this man seeks your daughter's hand on the condition that he will fight all of you, claiming that he will defeat and overpower you, and that you cannot overcome him." The king ordered the army, and the youth said: "O king, I shall mount my horse and charge your army, scattering them to the right and left and striking terror into their hearts (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 349)."

In another passage, one of them exhorts and encourages resolve, urging courage and boldness and the good that lies therein. The narrator describes him as saying: "The chamberlain grew angry and called out, 'O army of the Muslims and defenders of the true religion, if you flee you will perish, and if you endure you will be victorious. Know that courage is patience for an hour, and no hardship becomes constrained except that God grants it relief. May God bless you and look upon you with mercy (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 04).'" He achieved what he intended, and the Muslim army stood firm in battle and triumphed over the enemies of the faith.

In addition, numerous passages address individual courage as well as collective courage, confronting hardships and adversities, and fighting for a purpose. Among these is the story of the horse thief who stole horses by night and day, named

Ghassan, the scourge of every mare and stallion. He heard of the horse Fanun, nicknamed the Madman, and traveled for it to Constantinople, watching it until the opportune moment to seize it. Unexpectedly, however, another knight named Kahardash, accompanied by his followers, preceded him, a warrior who in battle was like a lion, rendering heroes like moths. Nevertheless, the thief did not surrender and continued to await his chance, which he eventually obtained. Yet his act was noticed, and they pursued him, surrounding him on all sides and striking him with arrows and spears, while he remained steadfast upon the Madman until he emerged from among them like a piercing star and a shooting arrow (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, p. 04). Courage, therefore, is a moral value possessed by individuals and groups alike, each according to circumstance, whether on the battlefield, in the depths of forests among wild beasts, or amid the surging waves of the sea.

4.4 Generosity

Miserliness and stinginess are among the most reprehensible and despicable moral traits. This led the Arab individual to reject them and instead embrace the praiseworthy moral quality of generosity, which became closely associated with him and by which he came to be known. Over time, this trait became deeply rooted and further entrenched in various aspects of daily interaction, whether with strangers or with relatives, thus becoming an important moral value. Abu Ali al-Qali states that generosity was among the qualities that distinguished the Arab individual (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 2, pp. 111-110). Generosity, for him, is an authentic and ancient trait, as old as the social situations that sought to honor the human element.

Arabs became renowned for their abundant liberality, generosity, and munificence, and proverbs were coined about them in this regard. Hatim al-Ta'i stands as one of the most prominent exemplars, as the expression "more generous than Hatim" became proverbial. Generosity is a moral value that the pre-Islamic Arab glorified to the point of exaggeration, and tribes, through the voices of their poets, boasted of it and competed in displaying it as a deeply rooted characteristic (Qali, p. 117).

The book *One Thousand and One Nights* abounds with such images, including the story of Hatim al-Ta'i with Dhi al-Kara, the prince of Himyar. The latter mocked him after his death and sought to test what he had heard of his generosity and liberality. When he spent the night in the valley at the summit of which lay Hatim's grave, he said, "O Hatim, tonight we are your guests, and we are hungry." Hatim appeared to him in a dream carrying a sword and said that they had come when nothing was available, then slaughtered the camel of Dhi al-Kara. When the latter awoke terrified and called for help, his camel was found struggling, and his companions slaughtered and roasted it. In the morning, they resumed their journey, and while traveling they encountered a man riding a mount and leading another. When asked who he was, he replied that he was Adi ibn Hatim al-Ta'i. He gave the camel to Dhi al-Kara and said that it was compensation for the camel slaughtered the previous day. He explained that his father had appeared to him in a dream and asked him to provide a camel for the king of Himyar, who had hosted him and whose camel had been slaughtered. Dhi al-Kara accepted it, astonished by Hatim al-Ta'i's generosity both in life and after death (Boubaia, 2001, p. 29). Thus, the fame of Hatim al-Ta'i's generosity spread widely,

and he remained committed to it in both life and death, qualifying him to become a symbol of generosity and liberality. Whenever generosity is mentioned, Hatim is mentioned alongside it, to the extent that they are regarded as inseparable.

Other stories may also be cited, including what is narrated about Ma'n ibn Za'ida. One day, while hunting, he became thirsty and found no water with his servants. Some maidservants approached him carrying three water skins. He asked them for water, and they gave him to drink. He sought money from his servants to reward them but found none, so he gave each of them ten arrows from his quiver whose heads were made of gold. One of them then said to her companions that such qualities could belong only to Ma'n ibn Za'ida (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 3, pp. 13-14). Because generosity was frequently associated with princes and kings, it became closely linked to them. Whoever approached them was honored with gifts and rewards. Shahrazad recounts this in describing one of the rulers, stating that in ancient times there was a city beyond the mountains of Isfahan called the Green City, ruled by King Salman, who was known for generosity, benevolence, justice, security, excellence, and favor. Travelers came to him from every place, and his fame spread throughout regions and lands (One Thousand and One Nights Volume 3, p. 14).

Although the book is replete with stories of the generosity of kings, wealthy individuals, and people of influence, generosity was not confined to them. It also appears among the poor and the needy, who likewise offer their most precious possessions, even if others consider them insignificant. The generosity of this group possesses a distinctive value that may reach the level of altruism,

preferring others over themselves despite hardship and limited means. This is evident in the story of Ma'n ibn Za'ida and the maidservants he encountered. Water, though simple, was scarce in the desolate place, yet they did not withhold it. Just as they were generous, he responded with generosity and magnanimity, acknowledging their kindness. His abundant gift encouraged them further, and they later composed poetry in appreciation of his generosity. Such manifestations illustrate this moral value, which often stems from the desire to assist others and to display liberality and giving. In Arab popular heritage, generosity is an honor and a value that elevates social status, making the individual a focus of attention and earning respect and esteem, thereby distinguishing his reputation from that of his peers and contemporaries.

5. CONCLUSION

One Thousand and One Nights, with its diverse stories and remarkable narratives and their various characters, has for many centuries attracted the attention of readers, critics, and researchers alike. This is due to its purposeful and substantial content. The work portrays the morals of nations and their highest ideals and is rich in representations of ethical values that undertake the task of reforming societies and nations and shaping their relations with other communities on sound and precise foundations. It also constitutes a rich record of moral values that represent a natural law which must be observed, respected, and revered. These ethical values appear in multiple forms throughout the book, with the aim of disseminating them within society in particular. The widespread circulation of the work across different regions of the world and its readership among people of various backgrounds further confirms the validity of the assertion that literature is one

of the means that contribute to establishing moral values, reinforcing their forms, and demonstrating that they govern and regulate the nature of human relationships. These values are acquired through customs and consolidated through daily practices across times and ages.

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