

# The thousand and one nights

Literature



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THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS In the Thousand and One Nights, there is a certain relationship between the prologue and the ending in which the king spares Scheherazade and they stay married and the story of the "Tale of the Ox and the Donkey". This relation shapes the story a complete circle and makes the conclusion more meaningful. However, to understand the basic interpretation of the approach a little background research is needed.

The story of Thousand and One Nights is actually the compilation of stories by a queen Scheherazade to the king Shahryar in order to trick the king to keep her alive. The prologue indicates that once the king was betrayed by his queen and was executed for her misdeed. The king decided that all women are culpable and he started his marriage campaigns where he married a virgin each night and executed her in the morning.

When Scheherazade was selected for this marriage she planned her way out telling a story to the king each night without the end. The conclusion of the story was prolonged for the next night and the king kept her alive to fulfill his inquisitiveness about the story. A new night saw the completion of the story only to start with another one. This format carried on for 1000 nights and when Scheherazade delivered children the king found himself to become fond of her and pardoned the women race as a result. This compilation by Scheherazade is the basic framework of the story. This is a story that has several stories interwoven into it and the fulcrum of these stories or nights certainly relies on the narration pattern of Scheherazade. (Reynolds, 27)

Scheherazade starts her chain of stories with the Tale of the Ox and the Donkey. This story is actually a metaphor of the entire situation that Scheherazade was going through. This is the story of the ox who managed to trick his master with the help of the donkey who actually provided the plan

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but suffered on behalf of the ox. It needed a double trick from the part of the donkey to settle matters. (Dawood, 20-22) Thus, in a way, it can be stated that the basic principal of the ox represents Scheherazade as the ox needed to work on a daily basis to stay alive or there was every chance that the ox would be sent to the slaughter house, much like Scheherazade, who without an interesting tale to tell the king, would certainly be executed. On the other hand the double tick by the donkey represents the intellect of Scheherazade and her well formulated plan to stay alive.

Thus it is certain that Tale of the OX and the Donkey is a fundamental compilation of the basic tension and complexities of the entire Thousand and One Nights. This appears to us as a struggle for existence where tricks are to be executed perfectly in order to stay alive. This is juxtaposed by the context of buying time to play a diversion to buy time. As a result the stories told by Scheherazade convey a double result. One is short termed, to stay alive for a night, and the other long termed to stay alive a lifetime. Here the element that is yet to be explored is the position of the Master in the Tale of the OX and the Donkey.

This Master is the Supreme Being who controls every variables of life and is ever present and knows every element. The master is wise and understands the language of animals and acts according the universal wisdom that yields proper result to every act taken. Similarly, in the entire Thousand and One Nights the existence of this Supreme Being, be it Allah or God, appears time and again and in the context of the prologue and conclusion of this series of stories the blissful nature of this Supreme Being appears as the queen is pardoned at the end thus suggesting a happy ending that is so needed for a good soul like Scheherazade.

In conclusion it should be stated that fundamentals of epic or evergreen stories include elements that indicates the probable end of the story in its initial parts. As in Iliad or the Mahabharata, or for that matter Gilgamesh or Beowulf, there is always that indication or hints that prepare the listeners or reader about the ultimate conclusion like the victory of the Greeks, or Nirvana of Yudisthir, or even the gallant death of Beowulf or Gilgamesh. Like all these time tested narrations the Thousand and One Nights too indicates the basic flow of the stories and here the vibe of the prologue and conclusion is revealed in the very first story of the series of stories.

#### Works Cited:

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