

# The Analysis of Quranic Collocations in the Orchard “Boostan of Sa’di”

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## Abstract

Collocations are linguistic phenomenon, which are notably proliferative in all languages. The definitions of collocations provided by linguists are numerous and varied. While some emphasize the multi-element structure of a collocation, other scholars admit only those composed pairs of words. Since one of the most significant features of great poets' works is using Quranic collocations, the present study addresses the distinct features of these collocations in Orchard (Boostan of Sa'di as one of the greatest poet of 12-13 AD). In order to estimate the historical and semantic origin of lexical collocation, some translations of Orchard couplets embodying Quranic collocations were chosen both semantically and historically were evaluated.

**Keywords:** Quranic collocation, Lexical collocation, Linguistic phenomenon, Semantic feature, Historical origin.

## **1. Introduction**

There is a relationship between different concrete objects in the world. Since words are the reflection of these concepts, their semantic connection is obvious. A collocation which is based on semantic relations of words can be considered as one of the important issues of linguistics. Many researchers have been recently attracted to this topic; however, few works have been done on collocations according to their semantic origin and historical views.

Moreover, what and how words collocate is an essential part of one's lexical knowledge which enables him/her to distinguish the various senses of a word within a context, in addition to identifying an appropriate lexical item that fits in the context under discussion. Thus, this kind of linguistic knowledge has been largely utilized in a variety of natural language processing systems such as word sense disambiguation.

Many researches in this area have been considered with the definitions of the notions of collocation, its properties, independent relation of grammar, or how it differs from other language forms like idioms, and metaphors in terms of the transparency of its adjacent constituents in contributing meaning, in addition to its accommodation in linguistic theory. Yet, there is a little consensus as to their conventional use and the fixed patterns in which they recur and sometimes the historical origins of collocations are ignored (Al-Quran 2010:48).

Since the apparent motivation of lexical collocations cannot be achieved with the general rules, literal corpus can be valuable for assessing their origin. So one of the chief features of a poem is how the poet employs lexical collocations. They make allusions to the Quranic stories. By using one Quranic word they refer to the whole Quranic story. This is one of the best ways of making Quranic collocations. Through this approach, however, collocations of the words are not based on their adjacency order but refer to the stories behind them in Quran that makes Quranic collocation.

The present study lends itself to some Quranic distinct collocations which are used in Orchard of Sa'di as one of the greatest works of Iranian nation. Investigating the literary history of Iran in 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries (12-13 AD), Sa'di is one of the most distinguished poets whose Golestan (The Garden) and Boostan (The Orchard) have been wholly or partly translated in various periods and centuries.

With regard to his Boostan, it is said that it took thirty years to be completed. It is comprised of 4133 couplets (each couplet consisting of two-half lines) in the form of 203 anecdotes with ethical or philosophical conclusions, or in the case of the first two chapters, pieces of advice addressing his patron Abu-Bakr Sa'd.

## **2. Literature Review**

The question of collocation has been studied for at least five decades. The word collocation was first used as a technical term by Firth (1957). According to Firth (1968:181), collocations of a given word are statements of the habitual or customary places of that word. Firth's notion of collocation is essentially quantitative (Krishnamurthy 2000, 32). The statistical

approach to collocation is accepted by many corpus linguistics including, for example, Halliday (1966: 159), Greenbaum (1974: 82), Sinclair (1991), Hoey (1991), Stubbs (1995), Partington (1998), McEnery and Wilson (2001), and Hunston (2002). All of these linguists following Firth in that collocation refer to the characteristics co-occurrence of word patterns. One assumes that Greenbaum's (1974:6-7) definition of collocation "a frequent co-occurrence of two lexical items in the language" only refers to a statistically significant collocation.

In the case of cohesive word combination in content, Halliday and Hassan (1976) treat collocation as words used in lexical cohesion of text and contain "a cohesive force". In terms of the degree of lexical combination's cohesiveness, Benson et al (1986) state collocations are "fixed phrases" stored in the mind.

One of the pioneering linguists discussing collocation is Sinclair (1991) who views a collocational structure as co-occurrence of two or more words but within a short space of each other in a piece of discourse. Moreover, in computational linguistic literature, the notion of collocation is similarly referred to as a sequence of two or more consecutive words with a particular behavior in that it has the characteristics of a syntactic or semantic unit, and whose obvious meaning or suggested idea cannot be extracted directly from the meaning or connotation of its components.

Shifting from form to meaning, Stubbs (2005: 225) suggests that "there are always semantic relations between node and collocates, and among the collocations themselves". The collocational meaning arising from the interaction between a given node and its typical collocates might be referred to as semantic prosody, a term for meaning which is established through the proximity of consistent series of collocates (Louw 2000: 57).

Hoey (1991:6-7) uses the term collocation only if a lexical item appears with other items with greater than random probability in its context. It seems that this definition of collation is accepted among the most linguists and especially among the Iranians ones. They consider two words as a collocation set according to their high probability in context. But frequency criterion is not enough and more specific criteria are required to determine a collocation more accurately.

### **3. Method of Study**

Because of Sa'di's apparently considerable familiarity with Quran, he distinguished a different emphasis laid on Quranic collocation in his works. So we selected Orchard as a literal corpus to analyze the frequency of collocation in his work. From 4133 couplets of Orchard, 31 couplets significantly were related to Quran which were historically, syntactically, and semantically described in this study, and 148 couplets collocated according to semantic relations like synonymy, antonymy, or the same associational semantic field. For each Quranic collocations translation of couplet was given. Finally the historical information behind the collocations which made them to be considered as collocations is also presented. The historical information of each collocation and its semantic analysis are the major points of the present study.

#### 4. Some Semantic Features of Quranic Collocations in Orchard

##### 4.1 Ibrahim and Fire

گلستان کند آتشی بر خلیل      گروهی بر آتش برد ز آب نی

**CT**<sup>1</sup>: He turns the fire into a garden for Khalil and he takes another group to the fire by the waters of Nile.

**HI**<sup>2</sup>: Khalil is a title of honor for the Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham in Bible) who safely emerged from a fire into which he was thrown by the order of that time king “Nimrud”. He decided to burn Prophet Ibrahim alive to please his idols. When Prophet Ibrahim landed in the fire, he prayed to Allah to protect him. By Allah’s command, the fire became cool and harmless (Quran 21: 68-69).

**FD**<sup>3</sup>: Syntactically, according to constituent analysis, a common noun “fire” is combined with a proper noun “Ibrahim” and forms a compound noun.

**SD**<sup>4</sup>: Semantically, since fire has the semantic feature of burning inherently, and in the Quranic story, it became metaphysically cool with the command of God, the combination of this word and Ibrahim has the semantic relation of antonymy.

##### 4.2 Musa and Nile

نگه دارد از تاب آتش خلیل      چو تابوت موسی ز غرقاب

**CT**: He safeguards Khalil against the heat of the fire as He did the chest containing Musa from drowning in the Nile.

**HI**: Musa (Moses in Bible) was at the time of King Fir’aun (pharaoh). He ordered that all male children born in the families of Israelites should be put to death. When Prophet Musa grew a few months older, his mother made a very tight box and put his son in it. Then she pushed the box into the water of Nile River. The people took the box to Pharaoh and his family. The wife of Pharaoh took pity on the baby and she decided to care of him as her own child. (Quran 28:13)

**FD**: The proper noun “Musa” is combined with another proper noun “Nile” and forms a compound noun.

**SD**: Semantically, the Nile has the semantic features of life for Prophet Musa since Allah gave him another chance for life, once He rescued Musa’s chest from drowning in Nile. Another semantic feature related to the Nile refers to the time when it was split in two and Prophet Musa and thousands of his followers were rescued and pharaoh and his huge army drowned. So, collocation of these two proper nouns beside each other can be considered as one of the God’s greatest miracle in Quran.

<sup>1</sup>Couplet Translation.

<sup>2</sup> Historical Information

<sup>3</sup> Formal Definition

<sup>4</sup> Semantic Definition

### 4.3 Musa's Staff

عصای کلیم اند بسیار خوار      به ظاهر چنین زرد روی و نزار

**CT:** One grain may word off a great calamity, as a staff, as you know, has killed a giant of people.

جوی باز دارد بلایی درشت      عصایی شنیدی که موجی بکشت

**CT:** Like Kalim's staff they swallow profusely though in appearance they are so pale and lean.

**HI:** In Qur'an, Kalim is the title of honor for Prophet Musa. God commanded Prophet Musa to throw the stick in his hand on the ground. He threw the stick in compliance with the orders. To his surprise he saw the stick moving like a long wiggling snake and it greatly warmed him. He used the same stick in competing with magicians and it devoured every moving stick that the magician had thrown. (Quran 7:124)

**FD:** The proper noun "Musa" is combined with the common noun staff and makes a compound noun

**SD:** Inherently, staff is the symbol of resistance and success in Musa's life. God demonstrated to him the miraculous potential in that seemingly insignificant staff. With that rod Musa defeated the magicians of Egypt, stripped Pharaoh of his power, humiliated Egypt's gods and liberated Israel from slavery leading them to freedom on the edge of the Promised Land. This staff symbolizes the power of God too. Something which is just an instrument, changes to extraordinary one and this collocation has a sense of personification.

### 4.4 Musa's Hand

به موسی کهن عمر کوتاه امید      سرش کرد چون دست موسی سپید

**CT:** With a razor the old man, having no hope of living turned the boy's head white like Musa's hand.

**HI:** God ordered Musa to thrust his hand into his armpit. He did so. When he took out his hand, it was shining white when he put his hand back into his armpit and pulled it out, it came back into its normal position. God made the Prophet Musa to perform those miracles so that he would be sure of the existence of Allah and confident of His power.

**FD:** The proper noun "Musa" and a common noun "hand" form a compound noun.

**SD:** In this couplet, the poet uses the adjective "white" instead of the adjective "shiny" and it has the metonymy. The collocation of Musa together white hand reminds us about one of the greatest miracles of God and since an ordinary hand lacks whitening as a feature, it is considered a kind of personification for Musa's hand.

#### 4.5 Yusuf and Zulaikha/ Yusuf and Ya'qub/ Yusuf and his brothers

زلیخا چو گشت از می عشق مست      به دامان یوسف در آویخت دست

**CT:** As Zulaikha became intoxicated with the wine of love, she caught hold of Yusuf's garment.

جو یعقوبم ار دیده گردد سپید      نبرم ز دیدار یوسف امید

**CT:** Even if I, like Ya'qub go wholly blind I shall not lose hope of seeing my Yusuf again.

جو گر به نوازی کیوتر برد      چو فربه کنی گرگ یوسف درد

**CT:** When you care a cat, it will steal a pigeon, and when you fatten a wolf, it tears up Yusuf.

جو یوسف کسی در صلاح و تمیز      بسی سال باید که گردد عزیز

**CT:** If one is like Yusuf in virtue and discernment, many years must pass before he attains a high position like his many long days should pass.

نه یوسف که چندان بلا دید و بند؟      چه حکمش روان گشته قدرش بلند

گنه عفو کرد آل یعقوب را      که معنی بود صورت خوب را

**CT:** Did Yusuf not suffer such calamities and prison? And when his command was obeyed and his worth exalted, he forgave all members of Ya'qub's family.

**HI:** The narratives of Yusuf (Joseph in Bible) been told in Qur'an 12.4-102. Yusuf was one of the God's Prophets and lived all his life confronting conspiracies developed by the closest people to him. His brothers plotted to kill him, but they amended it to exiling him. Then they killed a sheep and splashed Yusuf's shirt with its blood and told their father, Ya'qub (Jacob in Bible), that Yusuf had been eaten by a wolf. This happened to him while he was a boy. He was sold to the slave market in Egypt, where he was sold at a low price. Then he fell victim to Zulaikha's seducing attempts (wife of chief minister of Egypt, Al-aziz (Potifar in Bible), when her plot was foiled, was sent to prison in order to save the royal family's respect. In spite of all these disasters, he at length approached close to the Egyptian throne and became the king's chief minister. (Quran: 12).

**FD:** In all of these collocations, two proper nouns are combined with each other and form compound nouns which are phrasal noun.

**SD:** Yusuf was one of the greatest Prophets whose supernatural beauty is described as being the special gift of God. Yusuf was considered the emblem of divine perfection and Zulaikha's love was the symbol of love of the creature toward the Creator. Some believe Zulaikha has stood out as a despicable symbol of lust, hedonism, and feminine evil, but she simply represented someone purely and madly in love. There are the ideas on temptation of Zulaikha's side and resistance on Yusuf's side, so these collocations show the antonymy.

Yusuf's brothers, because of Ya'qub's abundant love dedicated to Yusuf which makes him a special tunic, generally hated him. So the name of Yusuf's brothers besides his name shows the contradiction of love and hate and includes another antonymy.

#### 4.6 Yunus and Whale

قصا نقش یوسف جمالی نکرد      که ماهی گورش چو یونس نخورد

**CT:** Destiny has not yet designed a beauty like Joseph without telling the whale of the tomb to swallow it like Yunus.

**HI:** Prophet Yunus (Jonah in Bible) was one of the greatest prophets of Allah. His story is mentioned in 21 and 10 chapters of Quran. Yunus boarded a small ship in the company of other passengers. The ship sailed all day in calm sea with gentle winds blowing at the sails. When night came, the sea suddenly changed. A horrible storm blew as if it were going to split the ship into pieces. Behind the ship, a large whale was splitting the water, waiting for his prey with his mouth open. A command had been issued from Almighty Allah to one of the greatest whales of the sea to surface. The whale found Yunus floating on the waves and swallowed him into its furious stomach. Yunus continued praying to Allah, repenting this invocation. Allah Almighty saw the sincere repentance of him and commanded the whale to surface and ejects Yunus onto an island. Allah told Yunus that if it had not been for his praying to Him, he would have stayed in the whale's stomach till the Day of Judgment.

**FD:** The proper noun "Yunus" is combined with a common noun "fish" and makes a compound noun.

**SD:** For Yunus, the belly of a whale wasn't a pleasant place to live, but it was a good place to learn hard way of God's salvation. In the depth of the sea he was not only stripped of his tan but also his pride. Collocation of these nouns mentions the second chance of living for Yunus. We can conclude that Yunus underwent a symbolic death and a symbolic resurrection which is a symbol for Day of Resurrection in Quran.

#### 4.7 Qarun's Treasure

در آن ملک قارون برفتی دلیر      که شه دادگر بود و درویش سیر

**CT:** In that land even Qarun could roam about without fear, for the king was just, and the poor stated.

اگر گنج قارون به چنگ آوری      نماند مگر آنچه بخشی بری

**CT:** Even if you manage to get the treasure of Qarun, nothing remains but what you reap by generosity.

کسی ره سوی گنج قارون نبرد      و گر برد ره باز بیرون نبرد

**CT:** No one discovered the way to Qarun's treasure and if he did, he could not find his way out.

ندانست قارون دنیا پرست      که گنج سلامت به کنج اندر است

**CT:** The worthy Qarun did not know that the treasure of safety is in a cozy

**HI:** The story of the destruction of Qarun (Korah in Bible) appeared in Al-Qasas 76-82. Qarun was an Israelite living during the time of Musa. Because of his wickedness, God put



him to death by commanding the ground to swallow him and his home (Al-Qasas 28.81). In the Qur'an, Qarun is simply a rich man who is too arrogant.

**FD:** The proper noun “Qarun” and a common noun “treasure” form a compound noun.

**SD:** Literary, treasure refers to something which is valuable and antiquated. In this collocation, it refers the richness and Qarun’s wealth so it is metonymy. According to Quran, Qarun wealth not only did not help him to survive but also led him to destruction. Therefore these two words, Qarun and treasure, demonstrate a contradiction.

#### 4.8 Blast of the Trumpet

حریفان خلوت سرای آلتست      به یک جرعه تا نفخه صور مست

**CT:** The fellow-men of the private house of the Covenant Day are intoxicated with one draught till the blast of the trumpet.

**HI:** The blowing of the trumpet in this couplet signifies summoning everything in the heavens and on the earth to a reckoning. It signifies a transformation of all existence as described in Surah 69:13-17. When the Prophet Mohammad was asked about this trumpet he said, “It is a horn of light upon which Israfil blows”.

**FD:** Two common nouns form a compound noun

**SD:** A trumpet is traditionally an instrument of announcement- it is used to announce an event, or the announcement of something important to all the people. It refers to the day when God made His Covenant with man and the Day of Resurrection.

#### 4.9 Iblis’s Prostrate

ز ابلیس هرگز نیاید سجود      نه از بد گهر نیکی اندر وجود

**CT:** Iblis can never be made to prostrate himself nor will an ill-natured man have goodness in his constitution.

**HI:** The Holy Quran has talked about Iblis (Satan in Bible) as a physical being made of fire. He is portrayed as a rebellious creature, basking in glory of the matter he was made of and showing arrogance to man, who was made of clay. The cause of his rebellion against God was the high regard in which God had held Adam when He created him and for his forthcoming role on earth, especially when God ordered the angels to prostrate themselves to Adam.

**FD:** The proper noun “Iblis” is combined with a common noun “prostrate” and forms a compound noun.

**SD:** The name of Iblis is derived from Greek and also called Shaitan in Quran. As the Quran implies, Satan was part of the angelic group. He was jealous of the first man, and his evil thoughts finally led to his fall. The semantic feature of prostrating is humility and refusal of Iblis shows the paradox between these two words. And since all angels prostrated to Adam except Iblis, this collocation contains antonymy.



#### 4.10 Qadr Night

تو را قدر اگر کس نداند چه غم      شب قدر را می ندانند هم

**CT:** If no one appreciates you, why worry. Neither do they know the worth of the Qadr night.

قضا روزگاری ز من در ربود      که هر روزش از پی شب قدر بود

**CT:** Destiny took a way such days from me, every night of which was a precious (Qadr) Night

**HI:** The Qadr Night (Lailat ul Qadr) is a special night that occurs every year in Ramadan and represents a golden opportunity for Muslims to gain blessings and forgiveness from Allah. The word Qadr can be best translated as: value, and worth. However, from the same root of this word, another word Qadar which means destiny or pre-destination is derived. It is mentioned in Quran 97:1-5.

**FD:** A Common noun “night” is combined with adjective “Qadr” and forms a compound noun

**SD:** In Quran, the Qadr night refers to the night of destiny. On this night God’s decree for one year is sent down. It is obvious that some features of this night like the descending of the angels on God’s apostles only happens on the night of destiny. Since this holy night happens every year just once, it is called Qadr that means understand the value of this holy night. Because it is said its value is more than one thousand months of worshipping.

#### 4.11 Ya’juj and Ma’juj

تو را سد یاجوج و ماجوج کفر از زر است      نه روبین چو دیوار اسکندر است

**CT:** The barrier to the Ya’juj and Ma’juj of paganism is of gold and not of brass like Alexander’s wall.

سکندر به دیوار روبین و سنگ      بکرد از جهان راه یاجوج تنگ

**CT:** Alexander by means of a wall of brass and stone narrowed the road of Ya’juj from the world

به ذوالنون خبر برد از ایشان کسی      که بر خلق رنج است و سختی بسی

**CT:** Someone reported the matter to Dhan-Nun, saying the people are suffering much pain and hardship.

In Arabic, Ya’juj (Gog) and Ma’juj (Magog) are derived from “ajj” or “ajij” in the forms of yaful and maful and ajij means the flaming of fire. But “ajja” also means “asra’ a” or “he walked fast”. They have been compared to the flaming fire and surging water because of their intense onslaught. Gog and Magog are mentioned twice in the Quran.

**FD:** Two proper nouns form a compound noun.

**SD:** Ya’juj and Ma’juj are closely related to anarchy. Anarchy which is a word derived from Greek, means the absence of the state and government, the people unconfined, the weakness

of the rule of the state and law and the social chaos caused by them. Alexander made a separating wall between them and people. So collocation of these words is a symbol of destruction in Quran.

#### 4.12 Water of Life

که ممکن بود کاب حیوان در اوست

ز ظلمت مترس ای پسندیده دوست

**CT:** Do not dread darkness, my admired friend, for the water of life may be there.

**HI:** This verse refers to the Prophet Elias (Khezh in Farsi) who is said to have discovered and drunk the water of life in some dark region, and thus became immortal. Alexander the Great and many others are said to have searched for this water, but in vain.

**FD:** Two common nouns are combined and form a compound noun

**SD:** Water of life is used in the context of living water. Water is the basic component of life and it is mentioned in Quran that life originated from water. (Quran 11:7). Moreover Adam was made of clay and water. In this collocation water refers to eternal life. Water of life has the symbolic meaning of eternity and man's affairs to have eternal life. Combination of water and life shows the synonymy of these two words as water itself means life.

### 5. Conclusion

One of the most notably striking linguistic deviants is that of number based relations between text constituents. The current and frequent use and adaptation of some co-occurring lexical items, have given them an arbitrary and fixed relation. Linguistics and semantic dimensions of collocation play considerable role in collecting words.

Collocation is one of the most effective and persuasive means of expression which has been issued in the Quran and contributes to its splendor. It helps Muslims to memorize the Quranic verses – a requirement in Islam. Furthermore, the secret behind the excessive collocation of the Quranic expression is the great persuasive and informative influence of this device. It has an emphatic function in exhorting people especially Muslims to obey God.

The present study addressed the semantic and formal features of Quranic collocations in Orchard (Boostan of Sa'di) to assess the historical and semantic origin of lexical collocations. Although collocations in Persian poetry, like any other language, reflect conventional uses and fixed patterns, the Quranic collocations display distinct usages which considerably differ from those found in other collocation types.

One of the most significant features of great poets' works is using Quranic collocations. Sa'di is one of the most distinguished poets in Iran. Because of his familiarity with Quran, among 4133 couplets of Orchard, 31 Quranic collocations were based on the Quranic stories prophets' miracles. What has made these Quranic collocations distinctive is their historical background and semantic features. So the analysis of these Quranic collocations is of great importance and necessity.

Considering the data analysis, the cited collocations were formed through the semantic relations and historical information existing behind them in Quran. Due to this connection

between the different parts of collocations, the hypothetical reader should be familiar with the background knowledge of the stories. In other words, the origin and the way these linguistic items are combined together should be mentioned for a foreigner to make Quranic collocations understandable for him or her.

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