



## ḤĀTEM-NĀMA

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**ḤĀTEM-NĀMA**, a popular prose romance by an unknown author, consisting of the imaginary adventures of Ḥātem (coll. Ḥātām) Ṭā'i, the pre-Islamic Arab noble, renowned for his boundless generosity and graceful hospitality. Being very popular during the 17th and 18th centuries in the Indian subcontinent, numerous manuscripts of this narration have remained to the present time, of which the oldest one, named *Haft sayr-e ḥātemi*, dating back to the 16th century, is kept at the Karachi National Museum Library.

A lithographed edition of *Qeṣṣa-ye Ḥātem Ṭā'i* was first published in Calcutta in 1818 under the supervision of James A. Atkinson and republished later several times in India. The latest edition of *Ḥātem-nāma* in Iran, edited by Ḥosayn Esmā'ili, was published in 2008 in two versions: *Haft sayr* (Seven journeys) and *Haft enṣāf* (Seven judgements). In *Haft sayr*, Ḥātem, prince of Yemen, meets Monir, prince of Šām, who has fallen in love with a merchant's daughter called Ḥosn Bānu, known for her beauty and intelligence. In order to examine her suitors, Ḥosn Bānu asks them to solve seven mysteries. Ḥātem accepts to travel in Monir's place to help him discover the secrets. Eventually, he succeeds in his adventures and convinces Ḥosn Bānu to marry Prince Monir. Ḥātem himself rejoins his own beloved, princess Zarrinpuš, the daughter of Šām Aḥmar Jādu. In *Haft enṣāf*, a sequel to the seven journeys, Ḥātem's wife dies. The nobles at his court encourage him to remarry Māria Dāhia, a smart, sage lady with her own specific seven mysteries as well as seven judgements for the suitors. Ḥātem sets out on a long series of adventures, this time to reach his own beloved. Semnāna, a talented monkey, accompanies him in his



journeys. He succeeds eventually against all difficulties and marries Māria.

The story is also entitled *Siāḥat-nāma*, *Mohemmāt-e Ḥātem Ṭā'i*, *Sayr-e Ḥātem*, *Ḥātem wa Ḥosn Bānu*, *Ḥosn Bānu wa Monir Šāmi*. Oral versions are called *Qeṣṣa-ye Ḥātem Ṭā'i* (*Qeṣṣahā-ye Mašadi Galin Kānom*, p. 119), *Ḥātem berāh* (Raḥmāniān, ed., pp. 21-27), *Ḥātem wa Ṭā'i* (Kandān and Darvišiān, IV, p. 17), *Ṭayy-e Lab-ṭelā* (ibid., pp. 29-40). Oral versions vary partially from the written. For instance, in *Ḥātem wa Ṭā'i* and *Ṭayy-e Lab-ṭelā*, Ḥātem's beloved, for whom he ventures around the world, is called Ṭā'i or Ṭayy.

*Ḥātem-nāma* has been translated into Urdu, Turkish, Tatar, Puthi (Bangla), Qazaq, Russian, and English. Duncan Forbes, the translator of the text into English in 1830, recommended it for teaching Persian.

The dominating atmosphere in *Ḥātem-nāma* marked by respect towards nature, pacific tendencies, and Indian customs, as well as the narrative's linguistic characteristics and prose style point to its formation in India. It demonstrates a variety of structural forms borrowed from the Indian storytelling tradition, where a series of tales are narrated within the framework of a principal story. The influence of other fictions, religious sources, and hagiographies is ostensible in *Ḥātem-nāma*, while the story itself has probably affected other narratives such as *Amir Arslān* (q.v.) and *Čahār Darviš*.

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