

**CHESHM ‘EYE’ EXPRESSIONS IN PERSIAN:  
A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**

**Muhammad Salehi**

[sevdali1985@yahoo.com](mailto:sevdali1985@yahoo.com)

Islamic Azad University of Tehran, Iran

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**Article History:**

Received: 12 January 2022

Accepted: 16 June 2022

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**Keywords:**

Body part; eye;  
conceptualization; persian  
expressions; metaphor

This study seeks to explore the conceptualization of the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ which constructs a vast part of spoken discourse in Persian expressions. Taking a close look at a number of modern Persian expressions in Iranian culture, containing the body-part term *Cheshm*, one can easily become aware of lack of a definite pattern in those expressions. Given that this shortage makes a lot of misunderstandings among non-native speakers, the present exploration is done as a kind of a qualitative research which is based on a library-oriented study as well as general and theoretical scholarship that aims to bridge the gap by categorizing the conceptualization of the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ under the classification of desire and ambition, vice versus virtue, hope and expectation, affection versus aversion as well as vision and outlook. After the introduction of Persian expressions and the context in which they are used, the assumed cultural factors which are thought to have motivated such conceptualizations are discussed. It is hoped that the study at hand aids anyone learning Persian as a second/foreign language in order to better understand the expressions and also shed enough light on some of the major aspects of conceptualization of the body-part term *Cheshm* ‘eye’ in Persian language.

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## INTRODUCTION

Language plays a great part in human life. Distinguishing man from animal absolutely can be seen from language (Bloomfield, 1933, p. 3). The aim of language is to communicate which depends on what one tries to convey. Language is studied through linguistics. In fact, Linguistics is the scientific study of language that is how it is put together and how it functions. According to Abrams (1999), linguistics is defined as “the systematic study of the elements of language and the principles governing their combination and organization” (p. 140). These elements and principles are also studied through different branches. Semantics as one of the branches is the study of sentence meaning. Sentence meaning varies depending on the context which refers to the branch of pragmatics as the study of sentence meaning in the context.

Every language is adorned with a myriad of metaphoric phrases and idiomatic expressions having the advantage of enabling the speakers of a language to overcome the problem of communication in specific circumstances. The body-part terms such as eye, heart, hand, etc. are so-called inseparable components of so many expressions in almost any language; however, due to cultural variations and other factors that are influential in bringing about such expressions; non-native speakers may find them perplexing and thoroughly incomprehensible when they are used differently in various contexts. The specific body-part term that one language contains for the expression of emotion, anger, etc. may be analogous with the one used in another language. This superficial pattern of similarity among the expressions of different languages enclosed by the same body-part (for example using the eye for the expression of one’s outlook) does not necessarily imply that the underlying concept of that specific body-part term (e.g. eye) is identical in those languages. Indeed, there are similarities as well as variations in different languages and cultures in terms of conceptualizations of body-part terms.

Questions about the root of these expressions and the way they came and penetrated into a language have ever been the focus of numerous researches and studies, though many have still remained unanswered. Besides, it happens to be a challenging issue for non-native speakers who found themselves besieged by a pile of expressions that seem to have no definite pattern or structure. As a solution, the present study seeks to remove these misunderstandings by categorizing some Persian expressions under the following sample of classification:

1. Desire and ambition
2. Vice versus virtue
3. Hope and expectation
4. Affection versus aversion
5. Vision and outlook

The expressions belonging to each category are flourished through irony, metonymy, metaphor and simile, etc; These figures of speech which all have the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ as one of their major components might have some stories behind. In this regard, Lakoff and Johnson (1999) refer to the role of culture in relation to primary and complex metaphors. They maintain that “complex, everyday metaphors are built out of primary metaphors plus forms of commonplace knowledge: cultural models, folk theories, or simply knowledge or beliefs that are widely accepted in a culture” (p. 60). Cultural model is defined by D’Andrade (1987, p. 373-375) as “a cognitive schema that is intersubjectively shared by a social group”. For Lakoff and Kövecses (1987), the relation between metaphor and cultural model is such that “metaphors largely constitute the culture models or the native understanding of non-physical-social, legal or emotional concepts.” Quinn (1987, p. 176) and Quinn and Holland (1987, p. 24), however, think that metaphors rather reflect cultural models.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 1999), as the conceptual metaphor the mind is the body may illustrate, the more abstract conceptualizations such as human mind are illustrated through the bodily-based conceptual tools of metaphor and metonymy. However, these metaphors and metonymies are not purely imaginative leaps for the purpose of mere aesthetic sense-creation; they are rather more fundamentally rooted in and motivated by the bodily experiences of humans.

According to Sharifian, Dirven, Yu, and Niemeier (2008), the significance of the body-part terms in human conceptualization is partly physiologically motivated, for example the physiological effect of an emotional experience on a body organ or body part may lead to conceptualizing the affected organ as the seat of that emotion. In this sense, the conceptualizations may be viewed as a metonymically-based metaphor. But it should be stressed that physiological motivation does not seem to play a major role in conceptualization of body parts, otherwise there would be many more similarities across different languages and cultures.

Needless to say, to date there are these similarities and differences which have inspired researchers to study the history of language and origins of the words and expressions. One of the aims of this article is to contribute to the knowledge of cultural conceptualizations of the word *Cheshm* 'eye' in Persian folklore and illustrate how feeling, thinking and willing are related to the body-part term *Cheshm* in Iranian culture. Moreover, it is hoped that this paper sheds light on the intricate relationship between language, body, conceptualization and culture.

### **Literal and Figurative language / meaning**

According to Nordquist (2020), “literal meaning is the most obvious or non-figurative sense of a word or words.” or “Language that is not perceived as metaphorical, ironic, hyperbolic, or sarcastic.” On the contrary, figurative language based on what Abrams (1999) puts, is defined as “a conspicuous departure from what users of a language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or the standard order of words, in order to achieve some especial meaning

or effect” (p. 96). Figurative meaning is obtained through the use of various figures of speech in the context. As what Crystal (1999) puts, “Figure of Speech is an expressive use of language where words are used in a non-literal way to suggest illuminating comparisons and resemblances” (p.116). Needless to say, metaphor as an example is one of the most common figures of speech which is used in a language to produce especial kinds of meanings. In fact, “the essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 5).

While literal language means exactly what it says, figurative language changes the literal meaning to capture a physical or sensory effect, or to extend meaning. Figures are sometimes described as primarily poetic, but they are integral to the functioning of language and indispensable to all modes of discourse (Abrams, 1999).

To furnish new effects or fresh insights into an idea or a subject, Persian native speakers, without even being aware, take advantage of a countless number of metaphoric expressions in their day-to-day talks. The manipulation of these expressions is so widespread and routine that they are taken for granted; not only are not the speakers aware of the story behind these expressions, but also they do not have any idea of their origins.

Since the ancient times, people used to take advantage of their body parts to express their thoughts and ideas more tangibly. Eye, as the most precious part of the body is the cornerstone of many Persian expressions. These innumerable metaphors, ironies, metonymies and similes which contain the body-part term *Cheshm* ‘eye’ reflect particular image-schemas underlying the conceptualizations of *Cheshm* ‘eye’ in Persian language. These conceptualizations appear to provide a basis for the expression of a plethora of meanings. For instance, one can easily find the correct rendering of the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ by referring to a Persian-English dictionary; Eye is either of the two organs on the face one can see with (Arianpoor and Arianpoor, 2000), which is what in Persian also referred to as “*Cheshm-e-sar*” (eye-of-head); on the other hand, “*Cheshm-e-del*” (eye-of-heart)

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is used to mean wisdom, which is what sometimes referred to as “*Cheshm-e-badan*” (eye-of-inward); If one has “*Cheshm-e-del*”, it means that he can go beyond the surface meaning and see the depth of things.

Hatef Isfahani (2015), the outstanding Iranian poet of the twentieth century says:

- *‘Chashm-e del’ baz kon ke jan bini*

Eye of heart open do to soul see

See with your mind's eye to reach the truth

- *Anche nadidanist an bini*

What not to see is that see you

To see the unseen (p. 50)

“*Chashme del*” here has been used as a metaphor to conceptualize wisdom in this context meaning that one has to expand his/her horizon to be able to see what is beyond the surface which is the depth of things, for the unseen is not what to be seen with the body-part *Cheshm* ‘eye’.

## FINDINGS

### Desire and ambition

*Cheshm* ‘eye’ is used in expressions that are associated with the concept of desire and ambition; for instance, a person whose vision is infinite - one whose wants are beyond his/her need-is described as not having a full eye and heart:

1) *Cheshm-o del-esh sir nist*

Eye-and heart-his satisfied is not

He has insatiable desire for everything.

“*Cheshm-tang*” (eye-tight) is also used metaphorically to refer to someone who is miserable or greedy. A person who cannot stand other peoples’ success and happiness seems to have a “tight eye”. For better clarification consider the following poem by Sa’adi (2013):

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2) *Goft Cheshm-e tang-e donya dar ra*

Said Eye-of tight-of world-lover

The desires of a greedy person can be satisfied.

*Ya ghenaat por konad ya khak-e gur*

Either contentment fill-do or dust-of grave

Either by contentment or by death (p. 117)

It seems that if a person has an eye of covetousness to something, he/she has views upon it in a sense that he/she longs for it. For better understanding, let's have an example:

A person who is looking forward to his father's death in order to gain his property can be described as:

3) *Cheshm-e tamaa be mal-e baba-sh doukht-e*

Eye-of covetousness wealth-of father-his has fixed

He wants to take his father's property (if he dies).

One more closely related expression referring to the same concept above is used in the context of proposing to a girl for her father's property. For example a guy whose marriage is just for the girl's wealth is described as the following:

4) *Cheshm-esh donbal-e mal-e dokhtar ast*

Eye-his after wealth-of girl is

He wants to marry the girl just because she is rich.

On the other hand, a person who is not greedy and is rather satisfied with what he/she has is labeled as:

5) *Cheshm-por*

Eye-full

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A person who shows that he/she is satiated with everything.

Another concept in relation to the notion of desire and ambition is depicted in the schema of jealousy. The act of being jealous and trying to keep up with the Joneses is described in Persian as:

6) *Cheshm-o ham-cheshmi kardan*

Eye-and the same-eye to-do

To keep up with the Joneses.

Not standing what one has/does is referred to as “not having eye to see something” which is expressed as:

7) *Cheshm nadare bebine man ghabul shodam*

Eye not-have to see I accepted have been

He is too jealous to be happy with my success.

The reason that Persian speakers express their desires and ambitions through EYE expressions is the fact that human beings see via EYE but desire with the heart. Indeed EYE is the window of the heart. In the above expressions, EYE is taken as the window of the heart; if the window of the heart, i.e. the EYE is closed, the entry to the heart is blocked. If the entrance is open, one’s longing for mundane matters is not astonishing. The portrait of desire of the heart, through the EYE, is best shown in the following rhymes of an outstanding poem by Baba Taher (2002):

- *Ze dast-e dide o del har do faryad*

From eye and heart both crying

Complain of eye and heart both.

- *Haranche dide binad del konad yad*

Everything eye see heart do want

Whatever the eye sees, heart longs for.

- *Besazam khanjary nish-ash ze foulad*

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Make a spear it's blade from iron

I shall make a spear from iron.

- *Zanam bar dide ta del gardad azad*

Shoot at eye till heart gets free

Shoot it at the eye so that the heart gets free (p. 38)

It should be stated that in the above lines, the word “*dide*” which is mostly a literary term has been used as a synonym for *Cheshm* ‘eye’.

### **Vice versus virtue**

Look or glance is believed to pave the way for a variety of sins; to many people such sins only begin to happen with a glance. Indeed, the number of narratives about the subject of eye and glance can demonstrate its significance in Iranians' religion and accordingly in their culture. Some of these narratives are pointed out here which underscore the importance of religion in the Iranian culture and language:

- The act of ogling is an arrow from Satan that aims at one's faith, If quitted for the sake of God, he/she will be bestowed a faith that will feel it's sweetness in his/her heart. (Reyshahry, 1989, p. 78)
- The EYES are the pioneers of the hearts. (Reyshahry, 1989, p. 70)
- Taking care of the EYES will inhibit lust and corruption. (Reyshahry, 1989, p. 72)
- EYE is the ambush/stalk of Satan. (Reyshahry, 1989, p. 70)

In order not to be in conflict with their soul, human beings are advised to take care of their eyes, since what is sensed through the EYE influences human attitudes and behavior. Among the physical senses of man, the sense of sight is the most efficient one in perception. When one views a sin, he/she will seldom forget that picture and this is due to the strong power of sense of sight which has an everlasting effect on one's mind. In fact, EYE is the mirror of moral character; the wickedness of the EYE means inappropriate moral behavior. For example

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“*Cheshm-pak*” (eye-pure) is attributed to a chaste person who is innocent and honest. On the contrary, a person who has a vulgar eye and ogles women is described as “*Cheshm-cheran*” (eye-grazing); besides, one may talk of a shameless and impudent person as someone whose eye is torn:

8) *In dokhtar kheyli cheshm-darideh ast*

This girl very eye-torn is

She is very cheeky.

“*Cheshm-sefid*” (eye-white) is also another expression which is used to refer to someone who is impudent and mulish as in the context below:

9) *Che dokhtar-e cheshm-sefidi hasti*

What girl-of eye-white are you

You are such a mulish girl.

If someone is “*Bi Cheshmo ru*” or in literal meaning (without eye and face), it means that he/she is ungrateful in a sense that he/she doesn’t feel ashamed to behave in a repulsive way:

10) *Kheili bi Cheshm-o ru hasti*

Very without eye and face you are

You are such a shameless person.

Another conception of EYE is associated with the degree of one’s awareness of different matters such as sexuality which is also one of the most used contexts in Iranian culture. The following two expressions illustrate the two opposite extremes of this awareness:

11) *Cheshm-o gush baste*

Eye and ear closed is

He/she is so inexperienced and innocent.

“*Cheshmo gush baste*” (eye and ear closed) refers to a person who is inexperienced and unaware (Anvari, 2011); on the contrary, a person whose eye and ear is open is attributed to someone who has a good knowledge of that specific matter which is talked about:

12) *Cheshm-o gush-esh baze*

Eye and ear-his open is

He/she knows well enough about that matter.

**Hope and expectation**

With the advent of technology the way people expect someone to come or something to happen, has changed to a great extent; neither stand people on the way to expect someone to come from far away, nor are they left without any news from a beloved; nevertheless, the Persian expressions conveying expectation are abound with *Cheshm* ‘eye’. People still say “*Az sobh ta hala cheshm entezaretam*” i.e. (I am waiting for you from morning till now). In the expressions of this category, the body-part term *Cheshm* ‘eye’ is used to visualize the concept of hope and expectation. For example, the expression below is used to refer to the concept of when one hopes something to happen or someone to come and is waiting for that to come about soon:

13) *Cheshm entezar*

Eye waiting

A person who is waiting.

When someone is expecting a person who has been very late, his/her act of expectation is described as one’s eye to the door:

14) *Cheshm-esh be dar-e ta beyad*

Eye-his to door-is till he/she come

He/she is waiting for someone to come.

If “*someone’s eye is to (the) way*”, it means that one expects something joyful to happen either some good news or some happening:

15) *Cheshm be rah-e farda-ye behtar*

Eye to way-of the future better

Looking forward to seeing better days to come.

To have “*eye of hope to someone/something*” means to be optimistic about someone’s success or something that is going to happen (you expect that success to enjoy it):

16) *Cheshm-e omid be kasi (ya chizi) dashtan*

Eye-of hope to someone (or something) to-have

To be hopeful about someone or something.

On the contrary, the following expression is used when there is a lack of hope and faith in something or whenever things are quite unlikely or one thinks they are almost impossible to happen, he/she can say:

17) *Cheshm-am ab nemikhore*

Eye-my water not-drink

I doubt it very much (I have no hope or faith in that or not believing in something to happen.)

One likely explication of these expressions is associated with the way people expected something to happen in the past. These expressions had been devised in the time of yore, the time when there was no cell phone; no email and no internet to make people aware of one’s arrival, hence leaving the EYE to be remained as the sole victim of expectation is not unfounded.

Another more probable justification is the worldwide role of eye which is crucial in making images among people. No one visualizes something to happen or someone to come with his/her ears. Indeed, the first and the outmost signals of any happenings are witnessed by the eyes.

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### **Affection vs. aversion**

Eye as one of the most precious blessings that God has bestowed upon us is paralleled to what we most love and appreciate. That is why in Persian language one can find many expressions which are flourished with the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ conveying the concept of affection versus aversion. To this end, Iranians express their love to their beloveds by admitting them to their realm of eyes. In fact, one that has the permission of entrance into one’s heart has also the position on his/her eyes. It means that he/she is so dear that his/her place is upon one’s eyes. For instance, Persian speakers’ welcoming a dear guest is stated as the following:

18) *Befarmaeed ghadam-etun ru cheshm*

Have your foot upon the eye

You are very welcomed.

Considering the expression above, one can easily understand the paradox between the two body-part words ‘foot’ and ‘eye’. The host’s respect to the guest is exaggerated by stating the word ‘foot’ upon one’s ‘eye’. ‘Foot’ which is considered to have the least value is placed on the most valuable part, i.e. the ‘eye’ to highlight the degree of respect to one’s beloved.

Along with similar lines, the following expression can be used to respect someone to whom you care and are very fond of:

19) *Ruy-e cheshm-e ma ja dary*

On the eye of us place you have

You are very favored.

In fact, in Iranian culture *Cheshm* ‘eye’ is so sacred that just those who are loved are allowed for the admission; if admired, their place is on one’s eye, if hated, they fall from it; therefore, ceasing to love someone is attributed to “*falling from one’s eye*”:

20) *Digar az cheshm-am oftadi*

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Any more from eye-my you fall

I do not love you anymore, I no longer love you.

The image of falling from the ‘eye’ demonstrates the fact that when you love someone, you have a high opinion of him/her; therefore, he/she has an elevated position in your view. When you stop loving him/her, he/she will descend from that high stance. As far as the word “dide” has the same meaning as *Cheshm* ‘eye’, the concept above has also been expressed long ago by Dekhoda (2012) in the following verse:

*Az del beravad har anke az dide beraft* (p. 129)

From heart go everyone from eye go

Out of sight out of mind.

Along with similar lines, when you hate somebody, you do not have ‘eye’ to see him/her. As in the following example, he/she is so despised that one cannot endure seeing him/her:

21) *Cheshm-e didan-ash ra nadar-am*

Eye-of seeing him don't have I

I can't stand the sight of him/her.

There are also some other examples validating Iranians' expression of emotional attachment with reference to their eyes as the following:

22) *Mesl-e Cheshm-am dust-et daram*

Like eyes-of-my love you have I

I like you as much as I love my eyes.

A mother may speak of her child as her “*Noore Cheshm*” which means (the apple of one's eye) to put stress upon the fact that how much she loves him/her:

23) *Ali, aziz-am, noor-e cheshm-am*

Ali dear-my light-of eye-my

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Ali is my dear.

A person of whom everybody is proud or he/she is considered as an important person in every sense of the word can be literally described as “*eye and light of home*” which is expressed as:

24) *Cheshm-o cheragh-e khune*

Eye and light-of home

Of whom everybody is proud at home.

At this point, the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ is indeed the light, as the means for illuminating the heart is the eye; the means for illuminating the home is the light too. The word *Cheshm* ‘eye’ is used in collocation with the word light to intensify the image of illumination.

The last but not least is the prevalent word “*Chashm*”, meaning all right, Ok, of course, agreed, yes. It is used to show one’s agreement for doing something. If someone asks somebody to do him/her a favor, the interlocutor replies with the word “*Chashm*” showing his/her respect for the speaker. This kind of agreement is more elucidated in the following situation:

A: May I ask you to lend me your car for a few hours?

25) B: *Ruy-e chashm-am*

On my eyes

All right, Of course.

The word *chashm* ‘all right’ is taken from *Cheshm* ‘eye’ which is another form of its pronunciation. It means that the one who asks for the favor is so dear that, his/her request is laid on one’s eye. For the ease of speaking, in the majority of conversations, the expression “*Ruye chashmam*” or (on my eye) is reduced to “*chashm*”.

### **Vision and outlook**

Many Persian expressions containing the body-part term *Cheshm* ‘eye’ convey a sense of viewpoint and outlook. One prime example used both in Persian and English is the expression “*Be cheshme man*” with the exact English equivalence of “*to my eye*” meaning in my opinion.

This sense of standpoint is expressed using the word *Cheshm* ‘eye’; for many things that we believe in, is through our sense of sight. The use of *Cheshm* ‘eye’ in this situation which clearly depicts one’s outlook highlights the fact that people believe in things that their eyes have witnessed. Even the English expression “*seeing is believing*” illustrates this metonymical relation. On the surface, *Cheshm* ‘eye’ is conceptualized as a part of the physical body, yet in depth it illustrates a person’s mind, his/her way of thinking and feeling. If one feels suspicious, his/her eye is actually suspecting.

The following examples reflect the pervasiveness of the belief in Persian speakers that the ‘eye’ plus its physiological role defines human thoughts, attitudes and their social status as well:

26) *Be cheshm-e man to hanuz yek bacheh-ee*

To eye my, you still a child-are

I think (in my opinion) you have not yet grown up.

Everyone perceives the world through his/her own frame of eyes i.e. every person’s way of considering people and happenings is different. There are as many viewpoints as the number of each single personality. Indeed, it is the eye that sees and the mind that thinks.

The following lines of a poem by Sohrab Sepehri (2001) can clarify the issue better:

27) *Cheshm-ha ra bayad shost*

Eyes should be washed

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Change your way of thinking

*Joore digar bayad did*

Kind different shall see

To see the world otherwise. (p.291)

In these lines, Sepehri uses a brilliant metonymy for the word ‘eye’; on the surface, he says that Eyes should be washed. Washing the eyes is metonymically used here to refer to what he means as changing one’s outlook; it is the ‘mind’ which needs washing and cleansing though.

In the Iranian culture, the way a male looks at his sister, mother or his aunt is completely different from the way he considers other females. Because of the religious constraints, males are not allowed to have the same freedom in considering or looking at other females as their sisters, or those who are called “*Maharem*” (According to Quran, those relatives one is not allowed to marry). If someone looks at a “*Na-mahram*” girl or woman (the ones who are not Maharem), the same as the way he looks at his sister, he is committing a besetting sin, because this kind of look or behavior is considered as a satanic one in Islam. That’s why in ironic words, males’ looking at females with chastity and dignity is stated as “*Be cheshme khahari negah kardan*”. Looking without any sexual desire or pleasure is the way one behaves with his/her “*Maharem*”. The situation is used to refer to both sexes toward each other. The expression above is used in situations where the intimacy and emotional tendency between the two sexes is anything save for sexual matters; Therefore, to consider a person as one’s sister or brother is attributed to “looking at someone with the eye of sisterhood / brotherhood”:

28) *Be cheshm-e khahari / baradari negah kardan*

With eye-of sisterhood/ brotherhood look to-do

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To consider a girl or a boy as one's sister or brother. (Looking at him/her with no sexual pleasure)

In accordance with the situation that was described above, "*Cheshm-et ra darvish kon*" which means (Evert your eyes) is used imperatively to say to someone to be careful about his/her look in order not to commit a sin:

29) *Cheshm ra darvish kardan*

Eye to-evert

Evert your eyes.

To treat everybody equally can be conceptualized in Persian as:

30) *Hame ra be yek cheshm didan.*

All with one eye to-see

To be fair in treating people.

The above expression is usually used when one wants to express his/her fairness in treating others. A mother's saying "*Hameye bachehamo be yek cheshm mibinam*" (All my children are equal to me) means to show the mother's impartiality toward her children.

### **Further expressions**

So far, many Persian expressions have been stated and explained in details, yet there are also many other expressions used repeatedly whether formally or informally in everyday conversations in the Iranian culture that may or may not fall into the five above-mentioned categories some of which are as the following:

Seeing or hearing something strange and shocking follows with a sudden change in one's eyes so, they get wide open. In this case, the expression below is used to conceptualize one's surprise:

31) *Cheshm-ash chahar ta shod*

Eyes-his/her four became

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He/she's got surprised.

It is believed that there exists the power to harm people by looking or staring at them. People with this kind of power are called to have the evil eye or in Persian “*Cheshmash shoore*”:

32) *Cheshm-ash shoore*

Eyes-his/her salty-are

He/she's got evil eyes.

Regarding the above expression with its explanation, the expression “*Cheshme nazar*” is said in the same context that best describes the situation. “*Cheshm zadan*” or (cast an evil eye on someone) refers to what the doer of the action does in return to “*Cheshm khordan*” which refers to what that happens to someone. In order to avoid “*Cheshme nazar*”, people usually say:

33) *Cheshm-e bad dur*

Eye-of bad away

Evil eyes should be away.

Sometimes, things are actually so justifiable or logical at the surface that nobody can find fault with them. In other words, one is really sure about the result of something, because of some internal feeling or a clear background about that thing, thus has no fear to admit it and doesn't need to open his/her eyes to check it. In this regard, the below expression is used about the ones who accept whatever something is in advance without pre-thinking:

34) *Cheshm baste paziroftan/ ghabul kardan*

Eye close to-admit

To admit something with no thought.

Contrary to the previous expression, one being stuck in a dilemma needs to weigh things up and think carefully to make the right decision. As a result, he/she needs to open their eyes to see what that thing is. In this case, they say:

35) *Ba cheshm-e baz kari kardan*

With eye open something to-do

To way things up.

People either see each other repeatedly or meet for the first time mostly in a way that their eyes are the first organ to get involved in this process. A sudden look at someone in the eyes especially unexpectedly reminds us of the expression below:

36) *Cheshm tu cheshm shodan*

Eye in eye to-become

To face someone.

In Persian, being able to see things very well or having the ability to notice things physically accords with the English equivalent of having eagles' keen eyes which enables them to see things particularly from above and far distance. The following simile likens the eyes of human beings to eagles to best describe the point:

37) *Cheshm-ash mesle oghab tize*

Eyes-his/her like eagle keen-is.

He/she's got keen eyes.

Losing trust in someone or something for whatever the reason is, leads to being more cautious and careful to make the other decisions ahead. To conceptualize the situation one may exaggerate not even believing in his/her own eyes anymore:

38) *Be cheshm-am ham etemad nadaram*

In eyes-my too believe not-have

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I don't even believe in my eyes.

To make somebody angry or to upset someone hard is described in Persian as literally being burr in one's eye which is stated as:

39) *Khar-e cheshm-e kasi shodan*

Burr eye-of someone to-become

To make someone angry or upset.

Sometimes, it is almost hard to keep one's eyes open or they won't work properly, because of lack of enough sleep or energy. To express boredom or tiredness informally, one can say:

40) *Cheshm-am ghili vili mire*

Eyes-my glaze go

My eyes are glazing over.

Some expressions can be equivocal, i.e. with a minor change to the person they are referred, they can be used in different contexts with different meanings. The expression below can be used in two various situations with different conceptualizations in Persian. "*Cheshmam roshan*" has a negative connotation which is said to someone in response to something unexpected or far from one's expectations; on the contrary, "*Cheshmetun roshan*" has a positive one that is used to express congratulations to someone:

41) *Cheshm-am/-etun roshan*

Eye-my/your bright

Well, well, well / congratulations.

Looking at something or someone in order to be careful or to have a good control on them, because there's something wrong or suspicious with them, especially in a way not to make anyone notice can be referred to as:

42) *Zir cheshm-i negah kardan*

Under eye to-look at

See something or someone with half an eye.

Here is another expression somehow with the same meaning as the above but different in a way that is used to express the state of being careful not to lose or miss something. It can be equal to the English expression of (*keeping an eye on something*):

43) *Chahar cheshm-i negah kardan*

Four eye to-look at

To be all eyes.

In accord with the above expression, “*Cheshm az kasi ya chizi bar nadashtan*” is also used interchangeably with the same meaning. This expression too has the same meaning as (*to keep an eye on someone or something*) in English.

Not considering one’s fault or forgiving and forgetting what someone has done wrong refers to covering the eyes in order to give them another chance in the Iranian culture which is best expressed in the following expression:

44) *Cheshm pushi kardan*

Eye cover to-do

To overlook.

Sometimes, a person doesn’t want to face the problems or doesn’t want to accept the truth. In this case, he/she closes his/her eyes to reality to ignore them which is expressed in Persian as:

45) *Cheshm ruye haghayegh bastan*

Eye on facts to-close

To ignore the truth.

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Trying to blame someone right after something bad or unexpected happens can be described as:

46) *Az cheshm-e kasi danestan/didan*

From eye-of someone to-know/ to-see

To blame someone.

There is a similar expression as the above one but somehow different in way that when a person does something wrong, he/she has to take the responsibility that is, to accept the result which is said as:

47) *Harchi didi az cheshm-e khod-et didi*

Whatever you see from eye-of yourself you see

You will face the music.

A formal or literary way of declaring one's birth is literally described as someone's opening his/her eyes to the world in the Persian culture which is conceptualized as:

48) *Cheshm be jahan goshudan*

Eye to world to-open

To be born.

The opposite equivalent of the above expression which means one's closing his/her eyes to the world as they die is expressed as:

49) *Cheshm az jahan foru bastan*

Eye from world to-close

To die.

Expecting things to happen quickly or one's doing something very fast refers to (*a blink of an eye*) that is the action of quickly shutting and opening one's eyes. In this situation a person can say:

50) *Dar yek cheshm be ham zadan*

In one eye to each other hit

In a flash/ in a jiffy/ at a click/ in the blink of an eye (very quickly).

The way people look at each other is bound to various interpretations. Looks can be recognized through the eyes with various criteria such as the size, colour, manner, etc. Some people have such striking eyes that attract anyone's attention looking at them. An individual with this kind of magnetic looking is literally referred to as the one whose eyes have dog in them or in Persian as:

51) *Cheshm-ash sag dare*

Eyes-his/her dog have

He/she's got attracting eyes.

Sometimes, what one can see is different from what it exactly is or one cannot see things properly as a result of lack of concentration, weakness of the eyesight, confusion, etc. In this case, the expression below is used to describe the situation:

52) *Cheshm-ash albalu gilās michine*

Eyes-his/her berries picks

He/she cannot see things properly.

In the Iranian culture, it is said that some people believe things as they are seen or heard not considering what they really are; in other words, there is a straight simple connection between one's mind and eyes or ears that is believing what is seen or heard at the surface. A person with this characteristic which shows his/her being naïve, gullible or credulous is defined as:



53) *Aghl-esh be cheshm-esh-e*

Mind-his/her in eye-his/her is

Believing whatever one sees.

Describing a person's getting great satisfaction from something or the one who gets really happy right after seeing or hearing good news is expressed in Persian as:

54) *Cheshm-ash bargh mizane*

Eyes-his/her sparkle is-hitting

His/her eyes sparkle/shine

When a person spends a lot of time and effort to buy a good product but finally, it is not as good or valuable as what others expected it to be, they react as:

55) *Cheshm-e bazaar ra dar avardan*

Eye-of bazaar to-dig out

You've bought a pig in a poke.

Doing something in the absence of someone or without that particular person knowing about it, especially when it is considered wrong or not accepted is stated in Persian as:

56) *Cheshm-e kasi ra dur didan*

Eye-of someone far to-see

Doing something unbeknown to someone.

Doing magic or conjuring tricks in order to deceive people is stated in Persian as "*Cheshm bandi kardan*" which literally means to cover one's eyes so that they cannot see or understand what one is doing:

57) *Cheshm bandi kardan*

Eye cover to-do

To hoodwink.

When a person does something wrong, he/she has to pay for it; no matter if they regret doing so, they should accept the result, because they are known to be responsible. In this case, the below expression is said to them directly:

58) *Cheshm-et kur*

Eye-your blind

May your eye go blind (you have to pay for it).

In order to get rid of someone because of not standing what they are saying or doing, or because they are thought to be annoying, the below expression is used to tell them in an impolite way to go away from one's eyes:

59) *Az jeloje cheshm-am dur sho*

From in front of eye-my far become

Get out of my face/Get out of my sight.

The expression "*Cheshmato dar miyaram*" which literally means (I will gouge out your eyes) is said to someone directly as a kind of deterrence to stop them from doing something wrong:

60) *Cheshm-ato dar miyaram*

Eyes-your I-gouge out

I will punish you if you do something wrong.

## CONCLUSION

Many languages around the world seem to have a tendency to employ the body-parts or even the domain of internal body organs as a source of conceptualizations for the expression of thought, emotion, personality traits, etc. This is not astonishing, in view of the fact that all people independent of their cultural backgrounds and the culture-specific conceptualization of the body itself, do have bodies that are basically similar all over the world, leading them share bodily experiences. Such bodily experiences are immediately noticeable and

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whenever we find that something is happening in or with our bodies, we try to look for explanations, be they lay views or expert ones; therefore, explaining the body is arguably a general human need. Indeed, our experiences, our thoughts and emotions are sometimes too abstract and still too little understood, that is why we tend to metonymize and metaphorize such experiences by using body-related terms (Sharifian et al, 2008). However, the literal and figurative words which are used in every language are different from the others in terms of both background and the story behind each.

Language variation can be discussed in terms of cultural differences that give rise to it. This view has been affirmed by linguists who tend to treat language as “socially acquired” (to quote Yule, 1947). In other words, as languages are acquired within the process of cultural transmission, language variation is considered to be tied to the very existence of different cultures.

To put the world's culture under the investigation, one cannot deny the fact that different groups of people have particular way of thinking which has reflected into the very minute facets of their lives and this seems to explain the reality of having different languages among different nations. Culture is too broad to be defined; it can rather be discussed by referring to the factors, which has been originated from.

For instance, one can trace cultural conceptualization of *Cheshm* ‘eye’ in Persian back to some factors such as Indo-European philosophy and religion. Persian is an Indo-European language that has tendency towards “speculative” or philosophical worldview. Indo-European sought “insight” at the heart of the history of the world. One can find a specific term for “insight” or “knowledge” in Indo-European culture. In Sanskrit it is referred to as “*vidya*” that is closed to the Greek word “*idea*” that is a key term in Plato's philosophy. In Latin it is called “*video*” that for Romans implies “seeing”. “I see” is also used to mean “I understand”; however, it is mostly used to refer to the act of watching. On the whole, it can be concluded that “vision” has been the most important sense out of the six senses for Indo-Europeans. That is why Indian, Greek, Iranian and German

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literature have ever been brimming with vision and great visualization of the universe.

Another consideration which is of outmost significance in bringing about such conceptualizations in the Iranian culture is the supreme role of religion. Religion has penetrated into every facet of Iranians' lives and in this case, the language can't be an exception. That's why in a lot of Persian expressions, the body-part term *Cheshm* 'eye' is conceptualized in association with the issue of vice versus virtue. Cultural factors as well as religion are explained to be as two of the most salient rationale behind these expressions. To underscore the importance of culture in conceptualization, a reference is made to Palmer (1996), who considers cultural linguistics as "primarily concerned not with how people talk about some objective reality, but with how they talk about the world that they themselves imagine." (p. 36)

This article was a partial attempt to demonstrate how the body-part term *Cheshm* 'eye' has been reflected in a number of Persian expressions as implying the concepts of desire and ambition, vice versus virtue, hope and expectation, affection versus aversion and vision and outlook. Although many common Persian expressions having the word *Cheshm* 'eye' were covered in this article, many other expressions related to the topic are left that can be found to be explained. Some of the expressions which were explained in the study at hand are replete with a variety of words from various domains such as animals, fruits, colors, etc. to describe different ideas and concepts and this point proves the fact that human beings take advantage of whatever they can imagine, but not able to express in the realm of literal language, to express their thoughts. These concepts also were classified by examples that seem to be the most frequently used expressions applied in the spoken discourse of Persian language. Some of the examples are metaphorically structured to transform a semantic shift from the abstract domain of the body to the more concrete realm of it. Some of the expressions also contain the other body-parts such as *Gush* 'ear' which was not under the scope of this study. Yet, it is a recommendation for anyone who is

interested in studying the related area to cover the other body parts existing in the Persian expressions. It is hoped that this paper help non-native speakers to remove their misunderstandings. Furthermore, it is considered to be an aid to anyone teaching Persian as a second or foreign language or those explaining the culture of a nation through their own language.

### **List of expressions**

- 1) *Cheshm-o del-esh sir nist*
- 2) *Goft Cheshm-e tang-e donya dar ra  
Ya ghenaat por konad ya khak-e gur*
- 3) *Cheshm-e tamaa be mal-e baba-sh doukht-e*
- 4) *Cheshm-esh donbal-e mal-e dokhtar ast*
- 5) *Cheshm-por*
- 6) *Cheshm-o ham-cheshmi kardan*
- 7) *Cheshm nadare bebine man ghabul shodam*
- 8) *In dokhtar kheyli cheshm-darideh ast*
- 9) *Che dokhtar-e cheshm-sefidi hasti*
- 10) *Kheili bi Cheshm-o ru hasti*
- 11) *Cheshm-o gush baste*
- 12) *Cheshm-o gush-esh baze*
- 13) *Cheshm entezar*
- 14) *Cheshm-esh be dare ta beyad*
- 15) *Cheshm be rah-e farda-ye behtar*
- 16) *Cheshm-e omid be kasi (ya chizi) dashtan*
- 17) *Cheshmam ab nemikhore*
- 18) *Befarmaeed ghadametun ru cheshm*
- 19) *Ruy-e cheshm-e ma ja dary*
- 20) *Digar az Cheshm-am oftadi*
- 21) *Cheshm-e didan-ash ra nadar-am*
- 22) *Mesl-e Cheshm-am dust-et daram*
- 23) *Ali, aziz-am, noor-e cheshm-am*

- 24) *Cheshm-o cheragh-e khune*
- 25) *Ruy-e chashm-am*
- 26) *Be cheshm-e man to hanuz yek bacheh-ee*
- 27) *Cheshm-ha ra bayad shost*
- 28) *Be cheshm-e khahari/baradari negah kardan*
- 29) *Cheshm ra darvish kardan*
- 30) *Hame ra be yek cheshm didan*
- 31) *Cheshm-ash chahar ta shod*
- 32) *Cheshm-ash shoore*
- 33) *Cheshm-e bad dur*
- 34) *Cheshm baste paziroftan/ ghabul kardan*
- 35) *Ba cheshm-e baz kari kardan*
- 36) *Cheshm tu cheshm shodan*
- 37) *Cheshm-ash mesle oghab tize*
- 38) *Be cheshm-am ham etemad nadaram*
- 39) *Khar-e cheshm-e kasi shodan*
- 40) *Cheshm-am ghili vili mire*
- 41) *Cheshm-am/-etun roshan*
- 42) *Zir cheshm-i negah kardan*
- 43) *Chahar cheshm-i negah kardan*
- 44) *Cheshm pushi kardan*
- 45) *Cheshm ruye haghayegh bastan*
- 46) *Az cheshm-e kasi danestan/didan*
- 47) *Harchi didi az cheshm-e khod-et didi*
- 48) *Cheshm be jahan goshudan*

- 49) *Cheshm az jahan foru bastan*
- 50) *Dar yek cheshm be ham zadan*
- 51) *Cheshm-ash sag dare*
- 52) *Cheshm-ash albalu gilās michine*
- 53) *Aghl-esh be cheshm-esh-e*
- 54) *Cheshm-ash bargh mizane*
- 55) *Cheshm-e bazaar ra dar avardan*
- 56) *Cheshm-e kasi ra dur didan*
- 57) *Cheshm bandi kardan*
- 58) *Cheshm-et kur*
- 59) *Az jeloye cheshm-am dur sho*
- 60) *Cheshm-ato dar miyaram*

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