

The Revolution in the Poetry of Dabiran

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ABSTRACT

The poetry of the era of the Islamic Revolution developed alongside the Islamic movement of Iran in the closing years of the previous regime, and soon indicated its future direction. Many poets were inspired by the demonstrations and protests of the days of the Revolution to write about achievements of the movement and reflect the new values of the popular movement in their poetry, with their mainly epic, mystic and religious aspects. After the Revolution, these works grew in quantity and reflected the bravery and self-sacrifice of the generation of the Revolution. The traditional and religious emotions of the people opened up a new horizon for Persian poetry and literature and paved the way for the introduction of new subjects, theme and even vocabulary into the language and literature of Iran. The poetry of Gholamreza Dabiran is a characteristic example of the poetry of the Revolution, in which all literary features and rhetorical figures are reflected.

Keywords: poetry; the Revolution; Iran; Dabiran

1. INTRODUCTION

Gholamreza Dabiran was born in Tehran in 1917. His father Shafi' Dabiran, known as *Dabir-e Afkham*, was a man of arts and letters; he was a master of *nasta'liq* calligraphy and has written The Qur'an and Divan Hafez in *nasta'liq*. His father has also created some unique pieces of *moraqa'* [the art of patchwork] (Dabiran, 1379: 6).

Gholamreza Dabiran received his early education from his father, grandfather and uncle, and went to high school in Tehran. Then he studied Persian language and literature at University of Tehran, where he was taught by great masters of Persian literature, such as Badi'ozaman Forouzanfar and Malakosho'ara Bahar (Dabiran: 1376).

Some of the valuable works and writings of Dabiran are as follows:

- A. Artistic works: fifteen sections (juz') of the Qur'an in *naskh* script and Divan Hafiz in *nasta'liq* script
- B. Research works: The History of the Qur'an
- C. Collection of poems: in poetic forms such as *qasida*, *ghazal*, *masnawi*, *rubaae* (some poetic forms of Persian poetry)

The late Dabiran assisted people in all the stages of the Revolution and was in favor of the Islamic Revolution and Imam Khomeini. In the thick of the Revolution, just a few days before the Revolution succeeded, he wrote a poem praising and eulogizing the personality of

Imam Khomeini; the present article aims to analyze and explain this 57-couplet *qasida* (a form of Persian poem which is usually long).

1. 1. Literature review

No article, book or piece of writing has been written on this poem so far.

2. DISCUSSION

This beautiful poem by Gholamreza Dabiran is among the greatest literary works of the era of the Revolution, in which he has utilized the rhetorical figures, figures of speech and figures of thought effectively.

This poem is about Imam Khomeini; however, because of its style of writing we cannot grasp its true concept on first reading. In other words, the poet has expressed his idea in a way that the poem encourages thinking in the readers. Figures of thought, such as ambiguity, allusion and proverb, are quite well-known in the poetry of Dabiran. In the fifth couplet, after a subtle allusion to the story of Jesus Christ and Moses, the word *ruhollah* (the spirit of God) appears which, as an ambiguity, makes the reader wonder whether it is a reference to Imam Khomeini (Ruhollah Khomeini) or it is the epithet of Christ; as its main message, the poet expresses the courage and the heroic struggle with the oppression of the time in this couplet:

He must be Christ, for all call him the spirit of God
Or must be Moses, for he is so courageous against Pharaoh

In this poem, the poet has used beautiful allusions in fifteen couplets. He is inspired by the Qur'an and alludes to the story of some tribes in the Qur'an (the Israelites), some classical Iranian poets (Ferdowsi and Sanaee), some prophets (Moses, Christ, Noah, Mohammad), Imam Ali and even the prime minister of the time Bakhatiar.

He is a ray of hope to the Iranian nation
As all are recommended never to give up

This is an allusion to verse 87 of *surah Yousof* of the Qur'an (never give up hope of Allah's mercy).

All will be perished, if they do not take refuge in his ship
Whether they are thunderbirds, or waves of the storm

Two allusions are made here. One is an allusion to the words of Prophet Mohammad: "truly Hussein is light of guidance and the ship of deliverance". And the other one is an allusion to the last prime minister of Pahlavi regime, Bakhtiar, who called himself "thunderbird" (*morghe toofan*).

They believed the cow to be their god
Ignoring the spirit of God passing all judgments

This couplet makes an allusion to the Israelites who worshiped cows as their gods; some other subtle allusions are made in others couplets.

Dabiran employs other figures of thought and figures of speech in this poem beautifully; the poet uses his creativity and poetic imagination to provide the reader with an opportunity to enjoy the poem. An example of a beautiful ambiguity can be found in the following couplet:

He is the spirit of God, by myriads of people
Is worshiped because of his celestial breath

There is an ambiguity in “the spirit of God”, since it is both the first name of Imam Khomeini and the epithet of Jesus Christ.

In this poem, the poet employs antithesis creatively and effectively. There is an antithesis between the words ‘wax’ and ‘stone’ in the beautiful couplet below; the poet describes Imam Khomeini as a person who can turn people with hearts hardened as stone into soft-hearted people. In another couplet, he refers to people who cannot distinguish between the right and the wrong or follow England, the US or Russia obediently. In another couplet, he draws a contrast between the earth and the sky.

With his eloquent speech so warm, makes
Hearts of hard stone, as soft as wax
Miserable are those who can’t tell the right from the wrong
Or meekly follow England, the US or Russia
Neither on the earth nor in the sky, like him
One can be found, both the phoenix and the sun

In some couplets of this poem, impressive examples of the same lexical field (*mora’ate nazir*) can be found. In one couplet, the poet describes Imam Khomeini beyond any desire for kingship, wealth and power, and in another couplet there is an example of words from the same lexical field (*mora’ate nazir*); the poet states that disobedience to God is regarded as blasphemy, polytheism and a grave sin.

Ruhollah (Spirit of God) fancies no wealth and power
His abode is above, high in heavens
The faith so easy to break, yet should be expiated
And disobedience to God is sinful and blasphemous

In fifteen couplets of this poem Dabiran alludes to verses from the Qur’an and *hadith*, and in one couplet he borrows a hemistich from Ferdowsi, which as an important figure adds to the beauty and value of this poem.

According to the poet, Imam Khomeini is similar to Noah in that he leads the ship of the Revolution and the country to where God wishes, and people board the ship in the name of God and the ship stops in the name God.

Like Noah he takes the ship where God wishes
Guided and enlightened by the name of God

The poet points out that whoever puts up an opposition to Imam Khomeini will perish because he is a descendant of Imam Ali and is superior and select; it is implied that the descendants of Imam Ali are never defeated and this is an allusion to the Persian proverb “he will be vanquished who struggles with Ali”.

Synesthesia is the mixing of sensations in speech to produce more effects and enhance the appeal of the poem:

With his eloquent speech so warm, makes
Hearts of hard stone, as soft as wax

In this poem, all the characteristics of a great man are described; and as a unique man, Imam Khomeini possessed all the characteristics the poet attributed to him:

What a great man must Khomeini be, who has allured
Not just us, but whoever knows him wherever he is

Dabiran prays to God for the success and prosperity of the Iranian nation. The poet has used his pen name in the last couplet, and ends the poem beautifully with an invocation.

Dabiran implores God with all his heart
To help Iran stay secure and prosperous

In most couplets, figures of speech efficiently add to the beauty of the poem. Different kinds of alliteration have been used successfully in this poem, along with repetition and consonance. The words “*lo’lo*” (pearl) and “*lala*” (sleep) create a consonance. The sound “s” is repeated in the couplet which is another example of consonance. In the 10th couplet, the word “*hich*” (nothing) is repeated; also the words “*rasti*” and “*kasti*” rhyme with each other, and the words “*rasti*” (indeed) and “*rasti*” (truth) are homonyms (Shamisa, 1381: 3).

He with a kind heart, as fathomless as sea
In which he treasures a precious pearl
Endowed with everything, and in him lies no weakness
Indeed God adorned him with such truthfulness

Figures of speech are ample in these two couplets. In couplet 27, the words “*dast*” (hand, control) and “*yazdan*” (God) are repeated and the repetition of the word “*dast*” in its different meanings forms a homonym; the sound “s” creates a consonance in the same couplet. In couplet 34, the word “*qafas*” (both cage and prison) is repeated creating a homonym (Sadeqiyani, 1379: 12).

He is the hand of God, the spirit of God
He is commanded by God, and is beyond us
He has broken the cage and move above
While some are still deceived by such a cage

2. 1. Outstanding Characteristics

The beauty of this poem reveals the natural gift, creativity and the depth of the poet’s thought.

He demonstrates his skill in using simile, metaphor, metonymy and other rhetorical figures; such a skill can be identified in most of his poems.

2. 2. Simile

He possesses the pearl of freedom, and
The star of dignity is reflected on his forehead

The common point in this simile is “preciousness” and words of comparison such as “like” and “as” are omitted. In the second couplet, dignity is likened to “star”; however, the words of comparison are not utilized (Hadi, 1374: 34).

Like a bride, the ship sails through the waves
Adorned in a perfect way, like the eye of a rooster

The ship is likened to bride and the eye of a rooster.

2. 3. Metaphor

Praised be God that black crows left the meadow
And the garden is filled with the songs of nightingales

Crown is a metaphor for the oppressors, black is a metaphor for the wicked people, meadow is a metaphor for the homeland, nightingale is a metaphor for honest people and song is a metaphor for speech.

2. 4. The Intellectual and Thematic Characteristics of the Poem

Poetic language is used to express valuable ideas and concepts in a more effective way. Dabiran, as a creative and tender-hearted poet, expressed bright ideas in this *qasida* in a beautiful way. This poem expresses the belief of the Iranian people in the Islamic Revolution, long before it toppled the previous regime; Dabiran was one of these people.

He is the spirit of God, by myriads of people
He is worshiped, because of his celestial breath

Dabiran believes that the spirit of God is blown into the body of Iran, and the spirit blown into the body of a human being is now praised both by people and angels.

In the same poem he likens the Islamic Revolution to early days of Islam and states that “whoever is not in the ship of Islam will perish”:

In the sea, he has made seventy ships
All the ships had their sails raised to save people

3. CONCLUSION

Dabiran was an ingenious poet, a committed researcher and a learned translator. Dabiran’s poetry is inspired by the Qur’an, and reveals great insight; his poems are among the most precious poems of the Revolution. The poem discussed above is one of his most beautiful poems, which describes the charismatic personality of Imam Khomeini; it was written just two days before the Revolution succeeded. In this poem, Dabiran mentions the name of Imam Khomeini along with his unique characteristics using beautiful rhetorical figures.

This poem includes important moral issues and a short history of the Revolution; the rhetorical figures used in it are in their most beautiful form. Dabiran, inspired by Islamic culture, found a new way in the literature of the Revolution through novel symbols and analyses.

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