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POETRY AND ITS PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS

poetry, we mean Persian poetry, consists of three elements :

External Form. Poetical Form, Context or subject matter .

External form establishes its outward constitution. It comprises four constituents; the rhythm, rhyme, word and pattern. Rhythm is one of the important elements of the poetry. Some have considered it as the innate characteristics of the poetry. Some have taken it as an acquired one. Khajeh Nassir-i-Toussi says: 'Rhythm, not only stimulates imagination, but simplifies the understanding of it and gives it an especial artistic order and harmony.'

However, some critics believe that existence of rhythm in poetry impedes the flowing current of the imagination. Eventually obstruct the climax of poetical imagination and therefore it is rejected. Yet there is no doubt that rhythm is an element which harmonizes the dispersed fragments of the words and exposes them as a homogenized whole. The mind adapts it, appreciates it, stimulates the reader and penetrates into his inner soul.

Persian poetry has three types of rhythm, one is (quantitative) Prosodic. It is often based on the equality of the padas. Persian poetry has been based on this pattern in the course of time. The other type is 'Nimāic Rhythm' in

which the equality of the padas is not considered, but the feeling and the nature of the poetry and the meaning of the words determines the length of the padas.

Therefore the poem goes on regardless of the meter from which it has been chosen.

This particular rhythm is called Nimāic, because Nimā introduced it first. He believed that external form of a poem is supposed to create mental form. That is to say, that poet's feelings should manifest itself in its natural rhythm, without being affected by the monotonous prosodic rhythms. In other words emotional faculties of a poet evokes rhythm in various forms, and not the other way round. According to Nima, any subjective image has its own characteristic and natural rhythm. In other words, the nature and particularities of a poem, determines the length of the padas. He believed that neither a single verse nor a single pada can produce a desired natural rhythm. It would be through the amalgamation of padas and verses that the desired rhythm is felt.

It should be noted that even Nimā himself could not adhere to this desired rhythm in all of his poems. His most successful successor who used this especial artistic rhythm in its real application and accomplished it was Mehdi Akhavan Sāles. He says : 'Rhythm terminates at a point of time when words at the very same time end up naturally . . ' This rhythm has the complete form of its peculiar unity. It has not jumped from a branch to the other and has not mixed various subjects, Therefore a single effect is expected from it . . '

Contemporary Persian poetry has another rhythm which

is called 'Free Rhythem'. This rhythem, not only overlooks the equation of the padas, but even neglects all the prosodic conventions to which, Nimā and Akhavan had given credence. The poems composed in this manner have a sort of untraditional and unconventional rhythem which somehow, is felt. There is also an especial melody which goes on. It is felt even in the combination of words which makes it easily distinct from a non rhythical composition. Amongst the contemporary poems, some of the poems of Shāmloo, as well as that of F. Farrowkhzād are composed in this rhythem. As mentioned before, some contemporary poets do not believe in any rhythical necessity in poetry. In fact they consider it abstractive and corruptive. They have presented a rhythemless poetry which they call it 'The white Poetry¹'. It is very similar to prose, lacking poetic atmosphere.

Rhyme, in traditional poetry, always accompanies rhythem. In fact it puts emphasis on the melody and rhythem. Even very often rhyme outshines rhythem, especially in traditional poetry. People sometimes do not recognize rhythem, whereas rhyme attracts the eyes, while its harmonious sound, especially in the form of Gassideh and Ghazal fascinates the reader. That is why sometimes a poet is called a composer of rhyme. Rhyme always had been a prerequisite in classical poetry and very often context and subject matter came next. Rhymes, usually used to serve as a device for the association of the words and context. Nevertheless, in traditional poetry, especially in terms of external form, rhyme has always served as a means of connection between verses and has always exposed the harmony and the unity of a

poem. Very often it might cause changes in a poet's course of thoughts. So, rhyme has been considered a necessity. rhyme prejudice may cause catastrophies for the poets of a burning productive mind.

However, there are two types of rhyme. one is the traditional or the conventional, which comes necessarily at the end of each verse. otherwise the meaning is not complete. No doubt, this type of rhyme, though worthwhile from an artistic and poetic view point, often confines the poem within a limited scope. or might even bring changes through the course of a poem in many different aspects. The other type is the free or natural rhyme which is found in Nimā's poetry. This type of rhyme is composed in accordance with the meaning and the nature of a poem, not because of the prerequisite of a poetical composition. This type of rhyme usually helps the transmission of the meaning. According to Nimā it is a sort of a bell, by which the attention of the reader is immediately turned towards a particular word which has been in the mind of a poet. That is why, even in Modern poetry, rhyme is of important status. But it is not considered as an undeniable necessity. Perhaps this is the reason that in modern poetry one does not find it in every verse, unless it is required. The eminent poets of the modern poetry, such as Nimā, Akhavan, Forough and Shāmlou have used it. But after Nimā, most poets have neglected it and its place is kept devoid. Undoubtedly rhyme is not needed if a poem possesses a saturated poetic atmosphere. Under such circumstances, rhyme can be replaced by rhythmical or repetitional words.

Word is another element which is of great importance regarding the external form of a poem. Word is not only

important because of its especial musical and melodious nature, but because of the manner by which the poet treats it. In poetry, a word does not signify its conventional meaning. In fact it implies a sort of rejection for conventional meanings and an attraction towards new significances. For example when Hafiz says:

While¹ the violets were coiling their twisted hair, the morning breeze broadcasted the story of your hair, none of the words are used in their proper sense, Neither the violet is the same violet that a gardener cultivates in the soil, nor the morning breeze (Saba) is the same breeze that carries everything, even twigs and dead leaves, regardless of their worths.

Also in Nimā's poem which goes as the following:

'My² dwelling is a cloud.

There is a cloud all over the earth, with which from the peaks of a smashed, ruined, drunk hill, the wind whirls, by which the whole world is totally ruined. and my senses.

Oh, you musical reed player who are carried away by its sounds, where are you? For 'Away from the road'.

Here every word is used in a sense other than its conventional usage. Therefore, from a poet's view point, every word is a world of its own. The poet delves in the world of words, associates with them and establishes especial mental connection. That is why J. P. Sartre's saying is acceptable, when he says, 'In poetry, word transforms into feelings, emotions, thoughts and consequently carries a par-

۱- بنفشه طره مفتول خود گره می کرد صبا حکایت زلف تو در میان انداخت

۲- خانه ام ابری است ... الی آخر

ticular emotional, cultural and social load.' Because of this, to be able to find out the real meaning of a poetical word, one can hardly consult a dictionary belonging to a culture not depending on poetical significances.

To poet's mind, a word is not an ordinary means of communications. It is a marvelous world in which exist emotions, feelings, and music, as well as cultural, social and artistic significances. Coleridge, the English poet, in respect of the poetical treatment of the word says: 'Note, that in poetry, when it is the questions of the meaning, I do not pay attention only to what it signifies but contemplate on all other possibilities that the same word might associates'.

Therefore each word in poetry has a multi-dimensional nature: making it unusual and giving it the possibilities of images.

On the other hand this compactness of the meaning brings about a quality of conciseness. These two characteristics (i.e. images and conciseness) are original sources of a real poetry.

In classical poetry, word has a sort of poetical authenticity. That is, a poet is not allowed to use any word which suits him best. A word can not enter into the realm of poetical grounds unless it is appropriately tested and labeled. This very fact confines and bounds it within the four walled boundry of specific words, carrying specific cultural loads. Thus words become imprisoned within their own limits, deprived from evolution and movement.

Consequently the poet becomes detached from his principal mission. i. e. the construction of the language.

In contemporary poetry this bondage has become obliterated and conventional poetic words replaced by poeticized and coined words. This is considered a great success in poetry, because it entails its accomplishment.

Pattern is also important. In Persian poetry the leading patterns are Gasideh, Masnavi, Ghazal and Robaiy. Certain contexts and certain significances have their especial pattern, such as Tarji - band, Tarkib-band, Mosa mmat, Gheteh and Mostzād. There is also a connected four padas one. Each of these forms represents a particular context. For example Gasideh is often either eulogies or elegies, and sometimes it is of gnostic Wisdom or moral substance. Masnavi is usually analogies, stories and epics, Ghazal is, in general, the expression of personal or spritual feelings. Robaiy comprises philosophical thoughts. A new pattern is introduced by Nimā which might be called 'The Free Pattern'. The context introduced by this pattern is mostly humane, and social feelings as well as emotional receptions are conveyed. The authentic poets of the present day are true adherents of this pattern. In the past, the poets presented themselves in a particular pattern, whereas no especial pattern is followed. Freedom of pattern is highly appreciated by free thinking poets.

Needless to remark that pattern serves only as an instrument and has no especial originality in the field of poetry. The poet is free to choose and compose in any meter he wants to. Although nowadays pattern does not exist as it used to, but still a unity as well as an entity exist all through in every poem either in terms of context or in terms of other poetical devices, and can be considered a

pattern by itself. In modern poetry, this poetical composition has replaced the conventional patterns.

Therefore every poem has a particular composition which is continued all through and leads towards a unity and harmony.

The second constituent of poetry which is also one of the principal elements of it is the poetical form of it. Poetical image or imaginative creation is that particular imaginative atmosphere which makes the poetry to be distinct from the usual conventional prose wordings, eventually stimulating the feelings and the emotions. In fact, poetical image is the real faculty and true atmosphere of a poem. It is considered as its main principle so much so, that if it is taken, there remains nothing and the poem would become a simple prose. For example when Ferdowsi says:

When¹ night was all prepared to depart.

Day-break exposed his brilliant bow.

If we take out that imaginative motive and say 'Night ended up and day appeared, we are not dealing with poetry any more.

Representation of an image in a poetry is by itself a sort of artistic production. At this junction, the poet gives an especial touch of life to words and things, and charges them with emotional loads. Quite often a poet reconstructs a subjective world out of objective facts.

A world which is not credible to a non-poet. The poet creates a new world through his presentations of poetic images. A world which before that very moment did not exist and if it had existed it had not been observed by anyone

چو بر کشت شب گرد کرده عنان سپیده بر آورد رخشان سنان - ۱

else other than the poet. It is not in vain that it is believed that a poet's mission is to establish relations between man and nature. It is at this point where the poet gets engulfed in the world of words and things. It is here that he gets his exclusive poetic familiarization with his world. Out of every lifeless, motionless particle of the nature, he recreates a lively dynamic, exciting image. That is why a poet lives in a world which is entirely different from that of a non-poet.

A world of artistic dynamism, a world which is created out of imagination, He is associated with whatever passes around him. By composition and amalgamation of those very things he presents images that no painter would have even dreamed of it. Creation of poetical images helps the visualization of the context and eases the conveyance of the meaning.

It stretches the possibilities of the expressions of the poetical thoughts. Moreover it carries the words out of their conventional limits and creates real poetical environment.

Nevertheless poetic image would only have great effect, if it is supported by humane contemplations, feelings, findings and creations. Otherwise it would be something colourful and beautiful, but ineffective and void.

Poetical image would be of no value if it is not motivated in accordance with the needs and requirements of a particular poetic ground. An image is not presented only for the sake of the presentation of that image.

Most poets think that while composing a poem, if they change the words into images they will succeed in creating a poem. Whereas presentation of a poetic image, regardless of its necessity, would be worthless and can not be consi-

dered a poem. Poetic images are the fruits of experience. Experience implies the total sum of subjective and objective experiments of a poet within his life time. There is no doubt that the more these experiments are objective the more they are authentic. The course of poetry is from objectivity towards subjectivity. Therefore the principal substance of a poets work is his objective world. In other words it is the absolute nature and the society with which a poet is directly confronted. If a poet is not associated with objective experience he is not associated with authenticity. And because of this deprivation which is the lack of understanding and lack of perception of his society. his poems would only represent repeated images of his predecessors.

This poetic objective experience is very similar to that which was called 'Local¹ Color' in classical poetry.

It exposes to a great extent. that authenticity of a poem.

Persian poetry catered for this authenticity but gradually all these experimental forms had given way to repetitive and modeled forms and very often, instead of deriving an objective form out of nature or environment, the poet refers to his own mind and represents his mental visions without being objectively experienced. Consequently the poem, instead of its normal course which is from objectivity towards subjectivity, will remain static in that very subjectivity.

The question of poetical authenticity, from objective view point, has gone through different phases within the

course of time. For example, during the period of 'The Literary Return', or what ever that period is called, modeled forms have been used more than any other time.

That period, totally lacks any artistic originality, or also has continued to our era and most of our contemporary traditional poets appreciate it. One of the contemporary poets, who for the first time used his objective experience for his poetic creation was Nimā. He usually converted into poetry his objective experiences.

When he speaks of the sea or shore or talks about the seashore butterflies, or of the time when he was taking a walk or of a boat which has anchored, or describes a Kakki's wailing in a quiet rice bed or čokeh čok of a bewildered in a dark night or of a Darvag or an old Turtule who wanders along the banks of the river.... it is has factual objective experiences prevailing everywhere. In fact he represents the combination of nature and of men.

Nimā in his poetry dose not describe the nature but tries to picture a combination of the real nature and man.

Nimā's poetry, contrary to that of Manoochehry's or that of Ghaani's is not a colourful picture. it is an artistic picture composed of substantial particles of the nature, amalgamated with man and society.

In Nimā's poetry nature and man is combined together. Through this combination, the poet represents a symbolic significance¹

Of Nimā's successors, those who have really understood his poetry, have similar conception and very often from their view points, nature manifest itself in itn symbolic

-۱ rop مرغ آمین (morgh-1-Amin)

manifestations It should be pointed out that imagery in contemporary poetry is not only confined in the manifestations of the nature, Urban and social life and even lots of mythical narrations reconstruct the nature through a symbolic manifestation. In contemporary poetry this mythical imagery, which enjoys modern conceptions exists and is of course quite different from what is used to be in the course of time.

It is not possible to designate any specific context to poetry. But, since poetry is the conception of life, it must have a humane and social hearing. To create a poem, the poet must have real understanding of his time.

In other words he should live in a time, which is exclusively his own, otherwise it would be impossible for him to have proper conception of life. Undoubtedly, conception of life is entirely a subjective fact and is not conventional. In the meantime, life is not a pre-recognized fact. It is always subject to movements, evolutions and changes.

It is this changeability that within different periods of time gives all sorts of variations to the context of the poetry. Therefore, it is the particularities of a time that produces the context of a poem. If the context is not based on this faculty it would lack the quality of the conception of life and eventually would not last.

Persian poetry had always been able to conceive life along with its historical peculiarities. It has always gone through various changes within different phases of time.

A superficial glance through original Persian poetry would prove this claim. Persian poetry in terms of context and subject matter is a dynamic poetry. Various changes of social life have always affected it, has changed it and has renovated it. The context of Persian poetry has had its own peculiarities within each period of time, and has been affected by it.

Apart from eulogies which are an especial formal type of Persian poetry, mostly composed on orders and consequently lacking any special message, Persian has always had a characteristic impulse of its time. In other words, it is the product of its social necessities. These necessities have inspired certain messages in the poetry, of any certain period. For example, by the same token that certain social and political requirements caused the composition of epic poetry and that of Shah - Nameh, religious and philosophical motives in another period caused creation of Khayyam's and Nasser Khosrow's poems and in that very certain era, when the zenith of gnostic and Sufi contemplations had engulfed social life, Masnavi of Molavi, in its unique gnosticism was born, likewise was born Hafiz, poetry which carries an especial philosophical and social message.

Since social and mental movements had always had direct effects on the contexts and subject matters of Persian poetry, at a time when these movements were repressed in Persia naturally Persian poetry of that period and not represented any lively or dynamic context, and rather had been doomed to corruption and decline. A true example is post Mongol period, especially that of Safavids, or similar to Qajar period when they only imitated their predecessors. Therefore, blossoming period of any poetry corresponds with

the dynamism of social thoughts.

The advent of Persian Constitution and familiarization with Western culture and civilization, caused certain social evolution in Persian society, eventually introducing new thoughts and conceptions, thus the contexts of Persian poetry was brought to life and new forms and new messages were presented. this new way of transmission of thoughts started with Bahar and Adib-ol-Mamalek and was accomplished by Nimā. Even today, this especial message which is based on social contexts, produced through the necessities of time, is carried on in contemporary Persian poetry, until a time when through the genius of a great poet it reaches its zenith and becomes eternal.

In my case, the real context of a poem is :

"The Man of The Century", or he who lives in the time of the poet. whom the poet knows well and understands deeply. This understanding which is in fact a combination of thoughts and experience does convert to poetical feeling and the poet represent it in the form of a poetry.

Therefore the context of a poem caters for these three elements; the experience, the feeling and the contemplation. With out these three, no original poem could be composed

There is no doubt that any turn of mind is impressed by social environment. Naturally any poet presents the thoughts and philosophies of a period. Even sometimes presents thoughts that are sublime for the certain period of time. Since this special poetic turn of mind is the product of the society and of the environment in which the poet lives. it is also a representation of the thoughts and of the mental attachments of the time of that poet. That is why it is manifested in Ferdwsi in some way and in Nassar

Khosrow in another way. Khayyam's turn of mind differs from that of Molawi's. However, the essence of thinking is presented in all of them. Deep contemplation is a virtue by which the poets are differentiated. By contemplation, it is not meant that a poet should express the philosophy of his own time, or presents parts of it in his poetry. A poet is not a teacher of philosophy, but must understand that particular philosophy of his own time and somehow convey it through his poetry, otherwise his poetry becomes meaningless and superficial.

The contemporary poetry is always in search of sublime humane contexts, originated from contemplation. Some of our poets like Nimā, Akhavan, Forough, Shāmlōo and Sohrāb Sepehri have somehow attained it.

