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## THE CULTURAL CRITERIA OF EULOGIES

Our subject is a discussion of the poetic eulogy, a form which developed and flourished in the territory of the Persian speaking peoples, becoming an essential pillar of Persian culture in its time.

Poetic eulogies must be recognized as one of the most genuine and richest elements of Persian literature and national culture, although, unfortunately, they have been accused of containing too much servile flattery, and, as a consequence, have met with indifference and even rejection on the part of some readers. Some of our modern young writers and poets, or their followers, claim that the true poet is one who cares for and senses the pains of society; who does not deviate from his true human mission; and who formulates his poems in the dialect of the people for the people. These modern writers say that as the eulogists were unrestrained and undisciplined, their poems cannot meet the criteria of good poetry, and cannot constitute a permanent monument in our cultural history. Even the students of this classic form of poetry, in their teaching and lecturing, emphasize the introductory and descriptive sections of the eulogies, ignoring the panegyric parts which they hesitate to recite.

Thus, in order to appraise the values and merits of the eulogies, a short introduction is needed in which we may

evaluate their criteria, hopefully clarifying the issues. In studying the eulogies, we should keep in mind the following points:

1. the authors satisfied their poetic needs by writing of nature or lyric feelings in their introductions. First the poets tried to satisfy their hungry souls with descriptive poetry about such subjects as nature, as for instance, animals, the seasons, and the land, or the characteristics and attributes of the beloved. From this beginning, in order to fulfill their official obligations, they would proceed to eulogize the minister, amir or commander who was their subject, at the same time encouraging them to be just and fair.

Abolfazi-e Baihaqui, describing the times, said "On Monday, two days before Ramazon, the month of fasting, he sat (on the throne)... the poets gathered and recited their poems and the singers and dancers began their singing and dancing".<sup>1</sup> Thus we can see that the poets were obliged, for the sake of the remuneration they received, to eulogize the heads of state or their ministers at the festivals and to condole with them on the mourning days.

Still, when we search through the eulogies, we can see that they are rich with descriptions of nature and its beauties. For example, as we read through the eulogies of Manouchehri, we can see that, in several sections, the descriptions of nature are longer than the panegyrics. In the first multiple eulogy of his complete works, thirty-five stanzas long, twenty-one stanzas describe autumn and grapes and fourteen stanzas praise King Masood-e Qaznavi. This section begins.

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1. Phayyaz, ed., **Tarikh-e Baihaqui**, pp. 273-4

خیزید و خز آرید که هنگام خزان است

باد خنک از جانب خوارزم وزان است<sup>1</sup>

In the second multiple eulogy he describes grapes and wine in twenty three stanzas and eulogizes his subject in five stanzas, beginning,

آب انگور بیارید که آبان ماه است      کار یک رویه به کام دل شاهنشاه است<sup>2</sup>

The third multiple eulogy, in which thirteen stanzas are descriptive and ten praise King Masood, begins,

باز دگر باره مهرماه در آمد      جشن فریدون آتین به در آمد<sup>3</sup>

Finally, in eulogy fifty-seven, thirty lines are on wine, after which fifteen lines eulogize Boosahl-e Zoozani.

2. In their eulogies the ingenious poets skillfully encouraged their self-willed and despotic subjects to the fostering of justice and equity, generosity and benevolence, doing this so deftly that the recipient of the eulogy would see only the praise, and the poet would receive a generous payment. Examples of such eulogies are,

سلطان معظم ملک عادل مسعود      کمتر ادبش حلم و فروتر هنرش جود  
از گوهر محمود و به از گوهر محمود      چونانکه به از عود بود نایزه عود<sup>4</sup>

We know that King Masood-e Qaznavi was not so generous as to deserve this praise. Abolfazi-e Baihaqui reveals his

1. Syaqui, **Divan-e Manoucheri**, p. 147
2. Syaqui, **Divan-e Farrokhi** p. 159
3. Syaqui, **Divan-e Farrokhi** p. 164
4. Syaqui, **Divan-e Farrokhi** p.152

true nature very distinctly in his history in which he shows how the king lost Khorasan, then in his kingdom, as a result of his greed. "It is said that there are thousands and thousands of men in Amol. If you obtain a gold coin from each man, you will have thousands and thousands of gold coins, and you will collect them all in three or four months".<sup>1</sup>

In the following eulogy by Onsory, King Mahmood is praised for characteristics not compatible with his known behavior and temperament, and he is wisely encouraged to be patient, forbearing, generous and civil.

آب گردد آذر از برحلم او یابد گذر	باز آب از بگذرد برخشم او آذر شود
خلق او بردیو بندی، دیو را مردم کند	اسم او بر خارداری، خار نیلوفر شود
عفوش آن کس بیشتر یابد که جرمش بیشتر	حلمش آنکه چهره تر باشد که او غضبان بود
جود او را بر نپاید گر همه دریا بود	زخم او را بر نپاید گر همه سندان بود
به شاه رو که ده انگشت شاه و هردو کفش	کلید روزی خلق است و چشمه حیوان <sup>2</sup>

Many such examples occur in the eulogies, each of them worthy of study and investigation.

3. Not all eulogies were meant only to praise their subject. Some were in the nature of official correspondence and were meant for administrative and governmental purposes, such as asking forgiveness for a misunderstanding; stopping payment of a salary; getting released from prison; demanding justice for innocent persons; and asking for freedom from oppressors or outlaws.

1. Phyyaz, ed., **Tarikh-e Bayhaqui**, pp. 446, 444.

2. Quarib, ed., **Divan-e Onsory**, pp. 47, 49, 161

As an example, once the enemies of the poet Onsory told Amir Yousuf Saboktakin that an eulogy dedicated to him had originally been written for someone else. The amir was annoyed and stopped the payment of the poet's salary. Onsory then wrote another eulogy in which he referred to the backbites of the envious, beginning:

چگونه برخوردارم از وصل آن بت دلبر  
که سوخت آتش هجرش دل مرا دربر<sup>1</sup>

Then he said:

به من چنان بود اندر نهفت صورت حال  
که میر سیر شد از بنده سخن گستر  
گرانی آمدش از من به دل مگر که چنین  
بکاست رسم من و سوی من نکرد نظر  
دبیر میرا بوسه ل گفته بود مرا  
برو که شاه سوی بلخ شد همی به سفر  
که چون نگویی دیگر مدیح میر همی  
به جشن ها و نیائی به وقت خویش به در  
ز درد پاسخ دادم که میر خدمت من  
همی نخواهد تو نیز از این سخن بگذر  
اگر بخواستی او رسم من نکردی کم  
مرا بگفت غلط کرده ای بدین اندر  
که میر بسیار آزار دارد از تو به دل  
که تو نکردی از کار ناپسند حذر

In another example, Anwary wrote to Khaquan-e Samarqand on behalf of the people of Khorassan, complaining about the invasion of Ghozis;

به سمرقند اگر بگذری ای بساد سحر  
نامه ای مطلع آن رنج تن و آفت جان  
نامه اهل خراسان به بر خاقان بر  
نامه ای مقطع آن درد دل و سوز جگر<sup>2</sup>

The poet implores Khaquan to come to their aid:

عمر که پائی و خری داشت به حیلت افکند  
رحم کن رحم بر آن قوم که نبود شب و روز  
چه کند آن که نه پای است، مرا و را و نه خیر  
در مصیبت شان جز نوحه گری کار دگر

1. Quarib, ed., *Divan-e Onsory*, pp.81, 25, 27

2. RazaVi, Modarres ed., *Divan-e Anvari*, V.I, p. 201

## The Importance of the Fulogies

Thousands of references and allusions in these ancient Persian poems refer to genuine historic and geographic facts, providing such information as the names of places, castles, armor and other implements of warfare, and customs of war and of festivity. Scholars who wish to study the history, religion and social life of ancient times consult these poems which are living documents for the preservation of contemporary culture. An instance can be seen in a eulogy of Onsiy, whose opening verse is:

آیا شنیده هنرهای خسروان به خبر      بیا ز خسرو مشرق عیان بین تو هنر<sup>1</sup>

Included here is much useful information such as the names of the persons against whom King Mahmood fought and the castles and fortresses he conquered.

Farrokhi in an eulogy of 175 couplets describes the attack on Soomanat and its conquest, the breaking of the Manat idol, and his return home.

فسانه گشت و کهن شد حدیث اسکندر      سخن نو آر که نورا حلاوتی است دگر<sup>2</sup>

There are many such eulogies which contain living and valuable references and thus serve to guard our ethnic heritage.

Also contained in the ancient poetry are thousands of words and words combinations representing ancient dialects

1. Quarib, ed., Divan-e Onsiy, p.107
2. Abdorrasoli, ed., Divan-e Farrokhi, p.303



and revealing the transformation of our language through the centuries; Through them we may be guided to the meaning of words which are now unknown or of doubtful origin. Thus, a study of the language of literature is of great importance in understanding the meaning and origin of the words in our lexicon.

## CONCLUSION

Although we believe that Iran is alive and ever lasting, we cannot explain why this is so. It would seem that this eternal life of Iran depends upon its past. It is the powerful culture of the Iranian people, their knowledge and experience, which have given them such extraordinary strength to resist the many invasions of foreigners. At dangerous and critical periods, with the weapon of knowledge and culture, with the deep roots of science, the Iranian nation has softened its enemies, subduing their brutal nature and ultimately bringing them into harmony with the Iranian nature and habits. As we have seen, in time after time of invasion and destruction, Iran has risen again from the ruins. Its glow and the radiation of its life have never disappeared.

This national independence, resistance and solidarity have a direct connection with our ancient culture of which these works are part. These poetic offerings are as important to us as the ancient remains buried underground, or the old ruins of castles and fortresses, where archaeologists may dig for years to recover a broken vase, an old coin or object from which we may learn about the achievements of past generations. Just as that broken several thousand year old

object, made out of the soil and water of that ancient time which is now dried up, is still a fresh and new representative of those days. so poetry remains alive and vital. After all art, whether it is an intangible product of poetic talent, or a visible object created by painters and artists, is eternal, a guide to posterity.



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