

Abo-Al Ghasem Lahouti, the Poet of Censure

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ABSTRACT

Doubtless the most well-known and stunning Persian poems have been in form of sonnet. The sociopolitical poems of constitutional era bear no exception as well. One of salient characteristics of the Constitutional era poems is "theme-orientation" which mingle with novel words is specific to the modernity and evolution period. The sonnet in constitutional era reminiscents great and efficacious poetic figures such as Abo-al Ghasem Lahouti. He is known a famous poet from two aspects: worker poems and literal breaking. Though, most of Lahouti's fame belongs to his ability in worker poetry. He, indeed, for the first time introduced a libertarian, political activist and rebellion figure of workers. After leaving Iran, Lahouti dwelled in Tajikistan and Soviet Union for a long time and was being always respected by people and the states. He was not only a political activist but also regarded as a powerful and popular poet.

KEY WORDS: constitutional era, political, social, worker, liberty, patriotism, sonnet, activism, Lahouti, poem, theme, Tajik, Soviet Union.

INTRODUCTION

History of constitutional era talks about those men and women who were active in fight between evil and goodness, did wrong and being oppressed and finally left signs of victories and deafest behind. The constitutional era describes oppressed farmers, workers and scholars who shouted tyranny. It is about assiduous poets, writers and researchers who in an endless attempt tried to record this oppression and fight for justice. The constitution era narrates great scholars like Farokhi Yazdi and Mirzadeh Eshghi who in spite of being anonymous, their attempts and devotions to the revolution could not be ignored. Although the revolution failed to succeed in his predicted aspirations, it became a powerful guide to the freedom and justice in Iranian community.

Certainly with time passage these heroes will find their real stand in Iranian history. This paper is dedicated to the memory of these great men.

Sonnet of Constitutional era:

Reviewing Iranian literature we will find out that Iranian poem in its most stunning and glorious moments has been manifested in Persian sonnet. The biggest literary greats of Persian literatures composed their poems in this form. Saadi, Molavi and Hafez are considered as three salient poets in the world were all sonneteers. Poem is the most important and principal element of Iranian culture.

The sonnet is the identity of Persian literature and Persian verse has been most of the time recognized through its pretty sonnets. The sonnet form is a kind of lyrical literature conceptually. This area concentrates on the "self" and the sonnet is the best to narrate (Zolfaghari, 2002).

The Persian sonnet was founded in mid 3rd century (Hejrah) and beard different developments until late 5th century. It reached its excellence in 7th and 8th century (Sabour, 1991).

The development of sonnet continued its path to 13th century (1281 Hijri Sahmsi)/20th century A.D hand in hand with its natural path in interpretation of past concepts. It was at this time that a new form of sonnet was born which served the society and politics simultaneously. Although this patriotic effect soon left the Persian sonnet, its impact was long lasting. In fact, the patriotic sonnet welcomed some special terms were uncommon for lyricism. Terms such as name of foreign countries, war equipments, national political terms, the applications Commission, Baharestan, secret society, religion, reactionaries, etc. consequently, the sonnet language lost the glory it deserved to. Other types of love sonnets also could not experience the renewed glory of sonneteers of 13th century, those like Neshat Isfahani, Froughi Bastami and many others (Motamen, 1973).

The socio-political sonnets of the Constitutional era extensively have influenced by concepts inspiring love of Iran, coping with tyranny, opposing hijab, fighting against foreign interference and domination, liberty, invite to uprising and sometimes republicanism. At the same time a common belief was shared with Constitutional's poets that they prioritized death for national honor and defending the homeland and mobilized people for creating a national epic and human perfection. They stimulated national passions and thoughts in direction to

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defend the Homeland and fight for and defend national rights. It was the Constitutional's movement indeed that from among sonneteers and panegyrics bred national social poets (Zaker Hussein, 1998).

In spite of its precision of speech about social problems, formal, mental and linguistic decline and banality were resulted while had no trace of deep poetic understanding indirectly caused social awareness of poets in next decades. This trend continued in a direction that descendant poets not only avoided any decline and banality but also got more engaged in composing social verses (Rouzbeh, 2000).

In Constitutional's poem the theme possesses a special originality and all of poetic elements served up the theme consequently. Thematic and subjective development of Enlightenment poem finally led to development in form and language. Formal and linguistic maturity as well as spirituality emerged in Enlightenment period verses owed the great revolution and movement had widely affected social and political systems of the time.

Since the political debates and activities were still running a number of composers felt a necessity in finding creative and pure changes. However, nobody was courage enough to break the laws and go farther. The well-known poets like Adib Neishabouri and Shourideh Shirazi were two who seemed are strange with what is happening around. They still insisted on composing love and spiritual sonnets. Some others who were a little more modern only replaced concepts of homeland and liberty in ballades with the praised and in sonnets with the beloved. Sometimes, they borrowed strange words and terms either directly from Turkish literature or from foreign languages and inappropriately used them thinking they found the literal modernity eventually (Arian Pour, 1993).

Lahouti the poet of censure sonnet:

When in a community literature as an influential factor deviates from in progress social situations and contradicts with benefits of certain individuals and social classes, then, it will be detested and criticized. In this condition, concerning the maturity and development of both community and literature and their mutual effect basically cause no separation of literary activities from social dynamism

(Zarrin Koub, 2004).

Telling and testifying about tyranny is a duty of witnesses, narrators and lecturers though composing their poetic equivalent using any speech leads to intuitive and ultimate structure of the verse will be a task of poets. The former is a base for mental, holistic and missionary realization which eventually stimulates intrinsic feeling, motivation and action and the latter necessitates a spiritual, detailed and conceptual perception that is able to provide individuals awareness and historical significance (Nikbakht, 1995).

Reviewing Lahouti's verse shows evident instances of concepts like patriotism, liberty, philanthropy, peace, opposing tyranny and advocacy of the labor and poor social classes. The last concept however was under the influence of living in former Soviet Union and his

The language of Lahouti's speech is clear and gentle and sometimes is mingle with foreign words and sociopolitical terms far away from lexical and spiritual complexity. His immigration poets were to some extent under the influence of his stay in Soviet Union and contact with Tajiki Persian language (Sabour, 1999).

His childhood spent in Feudal period which was filled with extensive tyranny and violence. young Lahouti could witness the oppressed farmers. This disastrous behavior was powerful enough to makes him believe that sorrow and threat sound trivial. He found out that the ruling party enjoys oppression and do his best to put endless pressure on the public (Bayat, 2009).

After leaving Iran, Lahouti continued most portions of his sociopolitical activities in Tajikistan. He called Tajikistan his second home because of all effects the new community had had on him. In last days of his life that was hospitalized in Moscow tasted to burn his body and if no proletarian revolution occurred within next 15-20 years in Iran burry him in Tajikistan.

In spite of different difficulties in life, Lahouti emotionally possessed characteristics of a rebellion, and adventurer. For this reason, at the beginning of great revolution he distributed political scripts and as the revolution continued its way ahead he joined to *Fadaeian Enghelab* in 1287 Shamsi/1908 A.D. He shoulder to shoulder of other rebellions fight against autocracy and received honor of *Satar khan* (Sabour, 1957).

The majority of Lahouti's life passed in exile, some years in Istanbul and some in the Soviet Union. The first sonnet composed by Lahouti was full of passion, and wish for liberty. It was published in *Habl-al-Matin* newspaper in Kolkata that finally brought him reputation. During the revolution he was a member of *Fadaian Azadi*, though a bit later entered the gendarmerie administered by the Swedish. He was the head of the gendarmerie of Qom that because of a misunderstanding lost his relationship with them and was sentenced to death. But he escaped to the Ottoman and spent a while in misery and difficulty (Bayat, 1988).

In this stage of his life, Lahouti inspired by Ali Akbar Taherzadeh known as Saber applied the satirical poetry as a means for preceding the social struggles. Finally, after 3 years living in Istanbul he backed Kermanshah and in the first two years of World War I founded the *Bistoun* newspaper. But when the central

Europe forces lose he for the second time went to Turkey. In early 1340 Hejira since the superordinate of Tabriz, Mokhber –al Saltaneh pleaded him, he could back Iran and soon after employed by gendarmerie of Azirbajjan keeping his previous position there. In this new condition he had the opportunity to be gallant enough and assisted revolutionaries to seize Tabriz. However, their operation was unsuccessful and he forced to leave Iran to destination of the Soviet Union and until the end of his life stayed in Tajikistan. Here he held positions as a school teacher, membership of communist party, head of Academy of Sciences and ministry of education (Мирзозода, 1974). The very first appearance of Lahouti's poems was in famous newspaper *Habl-al-Matin* and *Iran –e- No*. But poems of his last years were printed in newspaper *Avaz-e Tajik* (Sabour, 1991).

The poetry of Lahouti consists of various poems from sonnet and piece to song and ballad composed in a fluent and simple language. His social poems unlike his other poems are heroic and lack any poetic imagery (Турсунзода, 1974). Considering his manner, Lahouti is dominantly a materialistic and Marxist poet who knows poem a tool for attaining the goals of labor class. In spite of these characteristics, the poems of Lahouti possess some innovations in its structure and form that as an example, his "Bloody Trench" which is a translation of Victor Hugo's poem was composed in 1302 Hejira Sahmasi in a non-prosodic format in Moscow (Lahouti, 1957).

The warriors of the bloody trench were captured
Along with a brave child
Twelve years old
-were you there, too?
Yes
With these warriors
-so we will also trigger your body with shot
Wait until your turn will come

As a matter of fact, Lahouti should be named as the first poet who before Nima composed non-prosodic poems (Arien pour, 1993). Even though, poem and being a poet wasn't his first priority in life and never considered them artistically since he spent most of his life in political and martial affaires, he left a deep and positive trace on Tajiki culture and thought. This effect is so important that even after several decades the name and memory of Lahouti is still alive in that country together as a literary and a revolutionary figure. In Iran and Persian language also the significance of Lahouti is due to his violation from literary traditions and certain innovations in his poetry which appeared before or at time of Nima Youshij (Arien pour, 1993). An example of his poem is as follows (Lahouti, 1957):

It dies
My fervor kills me that a butterfly such dies
It burns and forsooth how courageous it dies
How good that honest lover who in the ring of love
Drowned in blood and on the lap of beloved dies
Doorway of friend is the house of freedom and hope
He is alive whoever, while serving this house, dies
If fall invades, I'm the servant of that drunken nightingale
That does not abandon the flower and in the nest it dies

One of the most beautiful and famous political sonnets of Lahouti named as "Or Both" has attracted attention of many Iranian, Tajiki and Russian scholars. The Russian orientalist Z. Varajay Kina in the introduction of Lahouti's book of poems was printed in 1981 writes about the famous sonnet " Or Both" as :

"This poem was printed in several publications. Through publishing this work, the poet could gain high reputation and popularity among Iranian culture and at the same time promotes the wrath of leaders against him that got him imprisoned. However, very soon he was released and was wanted for a long time.

The home is ruined by friend, or alien, or both?
Tragedy is made by Muslim, pagan, or both?
All shout patriotism yet I know not
Patriotism is realized by speech, or deed, or both?
Is the home protected against danger through lieutenant thoughts,
Or bayonet of a mass troops, or both?
Slavery lasso around the neck of the miserable people
Was firmly tied through rosary string, or Zunnar thread, or both?
For murder and plunder and exploitation of the farmer
Was the principal just Mosque, or court, or both?
Injustice and tyranny of the subversive hangers-on

Is made through hammer or sharp sickle, or both?
 Do lawyers deliberately neglect serving the nation,
 Or are ministers averse to the country, or both?
 Parliament is accused of treason against Iran
 I don't know to confess or deny, or both?
 Lawyers and ministers are traitor, I disclose
 If under the knife, or on the gallows, or both
 Once you will be killed, Lahuti! For
 Truly speaking or fiery temper or both

In fact, Lahuti used the sonnet as a form to serve the revolution, and socialist ideas. He of course did much effort to make some changes in poetic form like making hemistiches long or short before appearance of Nima. He indeed takes his reputation as the first who created the Iranian modern literature and other Persian speakers all around the world. His poets are full of pure images. The technique of paradox is outstanding which have been mingled with sociopolitical ideas of the poet himself. This really triggers emotions of a reader or listener (Талбакова, 1981).

The writer believes that in spite of some Iranian critics Lahuti didn't prefer the land offered him peace, and reputation to Iran. His praise of Tajikistan people or the people of the Soviet Union was only for the reason they had sheltered him after he escaped from Iran and directed him as much as they could. In a meeting Lahuti says about his true feeling:

" I came to the land of soviets as a refugee who had lost his weapon though my ever weapon, words, in the Soviet Union became more powerful and made me more proficient in using it (Осимі, 1974).

The most mordant and tragic poems of Lahuti especially his homegrown lyrics named as "Istanbul sonnets" were composed when he moved Turkey for the second time. Each line of these verses are filled with sorrow and mourning being away from the motherland.

Whoever that made me homeless from my nest
 I hope that he will get homeless from his hearth
 My heart broke from aliens' word
 I go to rub on the eyes my threshold soil
 I'm that strong dove that in patriotism
 Do not accept the heaven instead of my nest (Barzabadi Farahani, 2001)

In 1945 in the poem "My homeland" was dedicated to his beloveds, with an endless honor and glory he talks about his homeland and says:

(Юсуф, 1987)
 I'm from that proud country
 My mother born me in that epoch
 I'm one of the sons of that great community
 Is there any happiness more? (Юсуф, 1987)

Lahuti might be the first who reflected miseries and failures of workers in his poems. Since before him no other poet has dealt with workers and poor people and if there was any concern was in form of a slight warning to the lords take more care of their workers' life conditions and through which maintain their power as well as enjoying the other- world benefits. In worker verses Lahuti present a revolutionary image of workers who do not tolerate any suppliance at all.

The life will finally end, slavery doesn't exist
 If slavery exists, the life doesn't exist
 If the enemy pressure squeezes you, don't get poor
 Be courage, O broken-hearted, shame doesn't exist
 Does the rain of pearls with scorn fall on your head
 Tell the sky, go! The rain doesn't exist
 If you attain the world with dependence
 Dispose it that such an ownership doesn't exist
 If the head remains on your body only with servitude
 Die and reject it that humiliation doesn't exist
 The life is human freedom and his independence
 Struggle for liberty, servitude doesn't exist (Lahuti, 1987)

In his poems Lahuti via benefiting the new literary speech illustrates the historical status and significance of hardworking man, revolutionary role of farmers and workers and their strong power in creation and development that have been ignored until that time. He assumes that when the fresh air of freedom breezes it is

farmers and workers who play the major role since they are who provide humans only. If someday they quit their works nobody will survive. Great Lahouti in 1917 composed the following verses: (Юсуф, 1987)

O worker! You are the Lord, the Lord

The cure of any pain is you

Nobles and the wealthy are the human foe

You give the people provisions, you

For Lahouti the reason of violation of workers' rights as well as leaders' dominance was in part due to their submission and in other part believing in fallacy. Even though the feudal ownership has been a result of the people's affliction, workers themselves gave feudal lords the right to dominate and did nothing without their permission or satisfaction (Мирзозода, 1974).

A son of a farmer wanted to eat a fruit of the vine

Farmer grabbed it and made him glum

He said if we eat it sooner than the lord

I'm afraid that it enrages God, the Divine

A farmer that ate the water of Iran

Once, I saw that sworn an oath by the Quran

That if he would eat a bread from his planted wheat

The lord beat him hundreds of lash for one bit

Conclusion

Finally, the significance of Lahouti has to do with 1) the worker poetry who is one of the salient representatives in Constitutional era and 2) for breaking a number of literary traditions. Lahouti was a highly respected and popular among the Tajikis and Russian people. The cause is for not only his lyrical and revolutionary poetics but also his intimate interactions with them. Meanwhile companionship with Stalin intensifies this sociopolitical status. The leader of communist party called Lahouti a noble warrior and paid special attention to him. He even appointed him as the agent of Soviet Socialist Republic campaign in Tajikistan. For this high position in communist party he was buried near the communist leaders in Moscow.

The Tajiki scholar "Qaharaf in one of his articles states that at time of his presence in Tajikistan, Lahouti was among the firsts who wrote for the central newspaper, of the first editorials of the nascent publications in Tajikistan as well as holding the committee chair of authors in Tajikistan (Қаъноров, 1974).

Over the time after the new friends discovered his talent and abilities assisted him to achieve higher positions since he was either a valiant revolutionist or a talented poet. Professor Torsen zadeh says about the Lahouti and Russian people back up that:

The Kermanshahi poet spent more than 30 years in the Soviet Union and provoked by socialism activities. His poems also sounded noble. If Iranian government had forbidden his poems in the Soviet Union he was free to track a national motif either technically, artistic or thematic view point. He governed on many hearts. Furthermore, he could develop a revolutionary order in classical poem and renews the poetic language that was very successful (Турсунзода, 1974)

It is quite common then the prestigious position of Lahouti in the Soviet Union makes the king (Shah of Iran) angry. As Qani Abdollah, the very well-known playwright of Tajikistan says, in spring 1933, Reza Shah (King Reza) warns Lahouti if he doesn't back Iran immediately, he will be identified as a traitor and award is given to his arrest

Great Lahouti called for his Iranian companions in Moscow then loudly dictated this poem. Very soon the hemistich "I'm not black soldier" became notorious.

In honor of Lahouti, the committee of Samarqand-Tajiki teachers invited him from Moscow to Samarqand. Lahouti also welcomed it warmly and addressed audiences by this speech:

"my dear companions! The Shah of Iran brags lot, threats much and lays reward, though he won't be lucky enough I surrender him. But you see, your very first call provoked me to come to you instantly" (Асозода, 1974)

The famous scholar, Parviz Natel Kanleri, in commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Lahouti reminisces him as one of Iranian glories. In a meeting with Tajiki and Russian scholars and authors he says:

"it is a great honor for we Iranians that one of us could in a foreign country achieve such a noticeable status has been respected and praised by our neighbor nations. In my eye, Lahouti is a herald sent from Persian literature and poem to the republics of Soviet especially Tajikistan. By this, he left durable effects on Persian poetry and Persian poetry relations abroad (Хонлари, 1974)

Today's the Lahouti's collection of poems have been translated into several foreign languages including:

Russian, Uzbek, Azeri, Georgian, Armenian, Turcoman, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, Ukrainian and many more and has been recognized an integral part of national literature of these countries. In Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan as

well as other eastern states Lahouti possesses an absolute reputation. Furthermore, his works have been published 32 times in Tajiki script with grandiose circulation so far (Осимӣ, 1974).

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