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Political and Social Issues Impacting on the Theme of Contemporary Poetry

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Abstract

Islamic Revolution has been a significant cultural event in Iran and world. This cultural-social phenomenon has considerably affected all political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of society. The question is that how is this effect on literature and contemporary poetry and has it had effect or not? This study elaborates that entrance of new religious contents, impressionability of ritual poetry, new thinking with religious-social approach in contemporary poetry as well as a new attitude toward death in frame of martyr and martyrdom, and etc. are achievements of revolution in scope of literature. Also, Islamic Revolution could change poetic forms so that modern poetry (free verse) and white poetry (blank verse) can be seen in poems of poets at early years of revolution. This paper argues that Islamic Revolution made the poetry completely social by removing personal aspects and bringing it to community.

Keywords: Persian poetry, Contemporary poetry, Islamic revolution, Ritual poetry.

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Introduction

Islamic Revolution is a prominent cultural, social, and political event in the world that has drawn attention of all people around the world. This event with such level and greatness is not a one-dimensional phenomenon in life and community. This Revolution has affected all cultural, art, social, economic, and political fields. Of that, poetry and literature have been also affected by this phenomenon. Revolution would change taste and viewpoint of people toward the world and community and this transformation effect on language and literature of community so that it can be changed to a poem in language of poetry. Revolution led to deep transformations in community structure and cultural relationships of people and created an innovation establishing Islamic Republic System; however, all matters and fields should be studied separately to indicate the effect of revolution innovation. The effect of revolution on contemporary poetry might seem premature, but now three decades after Islamic Revolution, it is the right time to examine effect of revolution on contemporary literature, in particular, poetry.

After more than 37 years of Islamic Revolution, relatively a long time, the present time is different with the situation of 1978 and exciting days of revolution. However, revolution has experienced various crises that can affect literary field too. For instance, Iran-Iraq war, death of Imam Khomeini, elections, revolutionary governments and some crises such as election of 2009 etc. have had effect on revolutionary literature; hence, each of the mentioned phenomena should be examined properly. However, some works of poets during three decades after revolution are reviewed herein although time sections at each era of revolution can be seen in poetry of poets obviously. Revolution has had a considerable deep effect on poetry and literature of Iran; on the other hand, literature is also considered as a tool to progress Islamic Revolution achievements. Islamic Revolution created a spiritual dynamic aspect to poetry. Undoubtedly, stable and beautiful literature leads to durability of thoughts and expansion of poems and literature has been significantly effective in this field. Poets of Revolution applied poetic forms, in particular traditional forms, as a location to record exciting revolutionary scenes, many of contemporary poets emerged in the field provided by Islamic Revolution, and they could introduce ideals of Imam and revolution to the community properly and spread it all around the world using modern poetic forms. Any idea expandable among people of a community should be expressed in poetic language and literature in order to be accepted by community simply.

In this research, some existing questions are responded after studying on works of some contemporary poets and writers. Now, the question is that whether the Islamic Revolution with such popular uprising could affect contemporary poetry and contents of them. Could popular revolution of Iran change poetic forms? What was the effect of this revolution on moral of secluded poets

living at tyranny era of Pahlavi? Could this revolution make such poets back to the poetic scene with favorable contents? What is the position of modern poet (free verse) after Islamic revolution? Were modern poets and contents welcomed at that era considering ancient and traditional mood of poets? Were poetic forms such as sonnet, ode, blank verse and modern poetry used in revolutionary poets or not?

Islamic Revolution and Ritual Poetry

Persian ritual poetry faced a new flow after conquest of Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1978. The most important effect of revolution on poetry, which was raised from deep religious thoughts of poets, was related to changes in the content of poetry. Heretofore, ritual poetry was composed by poets just for eulogize without any strong intellectual aspect and this specification can be seen in mystical poetry. Although the mystical and wisely poetry of Iran was emerged after Islam, it could not cover all precious aspects of this school and consisted of advice and piety compared with social, political, and religious aspects. Some specific and new horizons were created in ritual poetry during and after Islamic revolution. The former poets either were separated from the regime or were close to it in the hope of gaining financial benefits and it can be stated that this relationship was not based on sincerity and conviction except for Naser Khosro and some other poets in Savafid era who believed in the government. Propensity of poets toward ruling government was as a belief in Islamic revolution since financial gains were less involved in this relationship. Poets were admiring values not specific individuals and even those poets composed for Imam Khomeini were related to his spiritual values not influencing power of Imam. The great events occurred at that time was a kind of epic literature that was new style of Persian poetry and could create a link between poets in terms of composing poetry with epical and religious contexts. War and its relevant events was another context considered by poets at this period and such interest considerable influenced in poetries. War poetries have a specific priority over poetries compose at early years of Revolution for its conquest both in content and form and the major reason for this is development of poets' thoughts during this time interval. The third shocking incident was piteous death of Imam Khomeini in May 1989, and numerous elegies of poets in his grief (Sabzevari, 2008: 133-134).

Other concerns of poets at that times consist of martyrdom concept, fight against oppression, encountering with political and intellectual enemies of revolution, sympathy with the poor in the world, and some other similar context with religious aspect. There were ritual composers before revolution, but most of them were indifferent or in conflict with innovative transformations of

Persian poet and only few numbers of them such as Tahereh Safarzadeh and Ali Moosavi Garmaroodi could compose modern poet with religious content before revolution.

Islamic Revolution and its effect on poetic forms

The poetry of revolution era benefited from apparent specifications in addition to all of spiritual innovations. The most important privilege of this poetry is propensity toward ancient forms. This propensity has numerous factors including wide scope of audiences who were people interested in ancient popular forms, in particular sonnet. On the other hand, we know that content background of free verse in Iran has not been accepted by religious class. Naturally, some of revolutionary poets found concomitance between new forms and religious-unreligious concepts and avoided these forms to make the poetry religious, but some poets who had not been interested in experiencing modern poetry (Nimae and Sepid) did not forget modernity and content transformation in ancient forms. The modern sonnet of revolution is different with sonnet composed by Shahryar and Emad Khorasani and sometimes it can be treated as modern poetry in sonnet form. In revolutionary poetry and besides sonnet, two other forms (Masnavi and Rubai) were revived and each of them had its own application. Masnavi, which consisted of fiction or anecdotes and long poems, was applied as short poems with modern language and thought. Masnavi of Ali Damghani is a sample of this category. Some of poets composed high-weight Masnavi that was not a common style in poetry of former time. Rubai form, which was allocated to philosophical, mystic and ethical thoughts and points, entered into religious poetry with a new face and became a form for epical and revolutionary contents. Some forms such as refrain and ode were not used in poetry except by some former pioneers. However, the relative orientation toward ancient frames was not a reason to forget modern poetry. Majority of revolution young poets experienced modern poetry forms and some of them composed their best poems in this form; one of these poets is Salman Harati:

“Salman Harati addresses the home country in a white poem with an epical and morning field, in which make a connection between religion and fatherland remembering it with beautiful and exquisite expressions including the strongest innocent, iconic and big-heart sun, powerful humble, magnificent patient, archipelago of flowers and goddesses, injured oppressed, the raging ocean of affection and violence, clear prospect of God, humble invulnerable” (Sangari, 2007: 70-72).

Revolution, the factor of modern thought in literature and contemporary poetry

The effect of revolution on contemporary poetry is a cultural approach in society led to a new literary attitude and thinking. “The purpose of literary thinking is the worldview and attitude of a person who is aware of literature” (Hakimi, 2010: 8).

Accordingly, it can be stated that attitude and worldview of revolutionary poets was formed in effect of spiritual and popular space. Revolution affected the attitude and worldview of people so it is clear that poets and literati show this change and attitude more and soon.

Poets do not consider Islamic Revolution just for freedom of people but also they reflect demands of all captured oppressed. The result of this conformity with oppressed people is the righteous message of Islamic Revolution, sympathy for the poor and rejection of any kind of hegemony.

This is the freedom voice raised from the East

This is the outcry of people from their bottom heart

This is the scream of storms coming from anywhere

This is the anger of oppressed nations

This the wish of people

(Feyz, The situation of oppressed people, 2008: 175)

Also, Sabzevari reflects the freedom voice of oppressed and Muslim people of Lebanon and freedom wish of Palestine in long masnavi called “Hampay Jelodar” (Sabzevari, 2008: 219-226).

Effect of Islamic Revolution on revival of Islamic values in contemporary poetry

Islamic Revolution led to revival of human and Islamic values. This transformation made precious human values indicate themselves in an artistic form in framework of prose and other forms creating prominent popular committed literature. For instance, the imposed war and eight years holy defense was one of the greatest social-political events during revolution so that it could affect intellectual and moral environment as well as community behaviors. Committed and popular poets indicated the moral of sacrifice, martyrdom, defense, anti-oppression, spirituality and these poets have been one of factors affecting acceptance the circumstance of that era.

In general, revolutionary poetry is roaring, fighting, aggressive and stimulating in terms of appearance and is calming, refreshing, and stabilizer of spiritual beliefs and thoughts. “After invasion of Iraq, national values and national symbols showed them along with religious values and

symbols in poetry. The epical field of poetries made religious and national values interconnected so that there was a close correlation between these two elements as if they are as a connected soul and body” (Sangari, 2007: 69).

It is war, we should fight against enemy

The enemy of the fatherland of ours

We should be brave as Imam Ali

In legend of devil castle

Our way is the way of Imam Hussein

We should conquer over the enemy

No other thinking in such circumstance

We believe in overcoming over the enemy

We could kill the devil with our belief

Devil cannot deceive us

We are allied to defeat devil

We fight against the enemy

Frightening all oppressors

We think of the morning of victory

We can end the frightening night

Although everywhere is silence

We can break this silence forever

(Mardani, Mast Bar Khastegan, 2008: 205-206).

Some words such as “fatherland”, “Imam Ali”, “way of Imam Hussein”, “devil and blood” that are specially applied in religious culture along with other words such as country, belief, and defeat indicate a clear view of correlation between religious and national beliefs.

There is a consensus between religion and fatherland in depth of poetry that creates such interconnections. The poet creates a link between national symbols, epical elements, ancient beliefs, background of the poetry, and religious beliefs and thoughts using this interconnection to deepen the poetic power of the poetry (Sangari, 2007: 70).

Sepideh Kashani could illustrate patience and resistance against the enemy through a poetic language and revolutionary poetry:

Oh, enemy if you make my land bloody

We are together to fight against you

If you burn my body, if you shot me

If you hang me

You cannot remove my love to my country

I am Iranian and believed in martyrdom

If I die but I am still alive

(Mohadesi, *Ritual Poetry...*, 2009: 146).

Butterfly woman (Sepideh Kashani) composed some revolutionary poetry besides other fighters in field of poetry and literature to describe the uprising and revolution and these poetries were heard on the radio making the popular uprising more exciting, and warm (Ghafarri, 2005: 77).

Islamic Revolution and socialization of contemporary poetry

One of advantages of Islamic Revolution was socialization of poetry and poets composed poems for other people and community instead of composing poems for themselves in order to express the pain of oppressed people and purpose of tyranny people mentioning conquest of oppressed and the poor. This event is such important that isolated poets of pre-revolution sometimes are interested in such poetries. Post-revolutionary poet is popular and away from financial desires.

The new approach toward life is an effect of revolution on Persian poetry. Islamic Revolution affected different aspects of people life. The approach type toward life and death is one of cultural transformations. Some effects of revolution on contents of Persian contemporary poetry consist of avoiding luxury life, helping people, sympathy for the poor, charity and benefaction, Jihad and defense.

Martyrdom seeking instead of fear of death in contemporary poetry

The purpose of life is believe in God and serving the God's servants and death is the end of the life in this world going to eternal world and start of a new life, but martyrdom and self-sacrifice made the death invaluable so that martyrdom seeking and death welcoming became the ideals of poets

instead of fearing of death. The mentioned contents influenced in contemporary poetry and death changed to a pride and life wetness in view of people. At that time, people were competing with each other for reaching martyrdom, because it was originated from the endless life after death.

“Death in revolution literature is nor individual emancipation neither sacrificing, but is just for social awareness and emancipation. A combination of love, awareness, self-emancipation, socialization, and task would lead to martyrdom so that the community will be empty and life leads to death without the martyr. One of the secrets of immortality of martyr and their revival, from the Quran perspective, is that martyr is reproduced after martyrdom and the life of martyr is embodied in life of reality and realists” (Sangari, 2007: 102).

Salman Harati, the poet of revolution and front, states:

It was essay time

And teacher said to student:

Listen, I think martyrs are like the sun

Morteza Said: Martyr is as a red copes

A student said: martyr is as a light burning in our house

Another student said: martyr is as a tree growing in garden

The other said: martyr is a story full of beauty and events

Mostafa said: martyr is an excellent score

Remains in heart book of us

(Harati, Water in Old Samovar, 2008: 246).

In a general view, death and indeed martyr is mentioned in revolution poetry combining several elements including love (mysticism), epic, mobility, prosperity, and a mirror in which, the poet interprets his/her humility and such view has not been existing in background of Iran’s literature. If we read successful poetries in this field, we will be in a purgatory of passion and grief so that we feel sadness in our mind and a passion in our heart. Hence, the deepest approach toward death can be found just in literature of revolution era (Sangari, 2007: 112).

Hope, an achievement of Islamic Revolution in contemporary poetry

Jasmine and isolation phenomena are social harms that change to hope and dream among community people, in particular among writers and poets with advent of Islamic Revolution.

Repressive atmosphere before revolution made the people and artists isolated and disappointed. Poets used to reflect social issues in their poems considering their safety. This jasmine was indicated as poetry in different forms by poets. For instance, poems composed by Mahdi Akhavan Sales, with pseudonym of Omid (hope), can be mentioned so that he considered oppression and tyranny desperately hopeless (Akhavan Sales, 1975: 9-10).

There are abundant samples of poetries in early years of revolution right after collapse of Pahlavi regime so that some expression including “the tyranny night passed” and “light of freedom and hope” are reflected in these samples. Hooshang Ibtihaj (H. A. Sayeh) promises in a sonnet:

Gardener, I hear the tidings of flower
Where is a messenger sending my hello to you?
It is the time to go to fatherland at the morning
Hopelessness is enough!
Oh, bud! Come out
Oh, hope garden grow up
There is good news everywhere
Grief is enough and it is the time for happiness
There is tidings of freedom
All people are together to defeat enemy
The enemy was not successful
The tyranny enemy
Hear! It is the voice of flowers and spring
It is time to enjoy happiness
(Ibtihaj, 1999: 136-137).

Salman Harati, the young poet of revolution, states in a sonnet:

Oh! Friend yesterday destroyed
Today is full of the spring flower
There, in sold limbo, in grief alleys
Night is in our eyes

Yesterday in roving garden, I was and a hot gross

Today, the sun in plain is our mirror

We are sad for roving let go under the rain

There are hundred rivers waiting for us

This season is ours, our prosperity season

Come to sing with flowers in spring

Come to be with morning

Our memory remains in garden!

I am hopeful as a river restless

I go to the sea, the shelter of us”

(Harati, Water in Old Samovar, 2008: 35).

Conclusion

According to the collected references and documents in this research, it was concluded that Islamic Revolution has had an unexpected effect on contemporary poetry so that it could change contemporary poetic forms and employ all poetic capacities such as ode, sonnet, masnavi (lone poem), etc. Islamic Revolution was an event led to change in poetic contents changing some horrifying words to beautiful and sweet expressions so that many of people, affected by revolution, dreamt of realization of these words in real world. For instance, the word “death” changed to martyrdom.

Revolution could make isolated poets, who used disappointing words in their poetries and were isolated due to oppression and tyranny atmosphere ruling the society, back to the community making them use public words instead of individual expressions. In this regard, revolution benefited from these poets as Islamic advertiser using their poetic instruments as propaganda fields. This political-social event was sun effective in contemporary poetry in terms of poetic content that the poetry became a field for its influencing power in community with highest effect on people and revolutionary society.

The revolution could make contemporary poetry socialized using new content derived from enthusiasm sense of revolution, it taught socialized life to people of that era so that people could benefit from these poetic contents.

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