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مربوط به مقاله

«در حاشیهٔ سبک صائب»

The Style of Sa'ib's Poetry

In this essay I will attempt to explain some salient features of Sa'ib which set a pattern for the ode (ghazal) for about two hundred years in Iran, Turkey and India.

I- We cannot neglect Sa'ib, his high merits and his influence on Persian literature. He was one of those famous and outstanding poets whose Divan was sent as a gift to the Ottoman court. He gained immortality as he combined in his odes (ghazals) the traditional style with eloquence of diction.

Sa'ib is the greatest exponent of the Indian (Isphahani) style' in which no one has ever surpassed him. The group of poets who followed this style chose the ghazal as a vehicle for their thoughts. They endeavored to find new conceits as much as possible. With Sa'ib this epoch in Persian poetry reached the pinnacle of its glory.

II- Sa'ib was a great admirer of Mowlana jalaloddin Mohammad, Sadi and Hafiz. In some ways he followed them, but he had a style and originality of his own, even on

previously trodden ground. Thus he always had new ideas and new themes, even when he composed ghazals after a pattern set by Hafiz.

For instance, Hafiz says in one of his famous ghazals.

The waves run high, night is
clouded with fears,

And eddying whirlpools clash and
roar;

How shall my drowning voice strike
their ears

Whose light-freighted vessels have
reached the shores?(1)

Now compare this with the following verses of Sa'ib:
If I am lightly burdened in life it does not mean I am
neglectful of my friends(2).

It is evident, indeed, that the perfect man whom Hafiz strove to find was found by Sa'ib as is reflected in the above verse.

III- At the hands of Sa'ib the Persian ghazals, composed after the style of Hafiz, which carried many symbolic words such as magus, the son of magus, sheikh, rosary.... etc., were given up and new themes developed. With Sa'ib the ghazal was a vehicle for expressing various topics and for the interpretation of human sentiments.

IV- Sa'ib was devoted to nature and the environment. Everything in nature spoke to him a thorn on the wall, a whirlpool, a shell on the beach and so on.

Also his vast knowledge of natural things and traditions in the life of the people gave variety to his conceits.

V- With Sa'ib the ghazal is not only an expression of

1- Gertrude Bell, Poems for the Divan of Hafiz, London 1928. Page 85-86

۲- کی سبکباری زهمراهان کند غافل مرا بارهر کس بر زمین ماند بود هر دل مرا

personal feelings and sentiments, but it is something universal. It is for this reason that one finds contradiction in his verses.

VI- Another feature of Sa'ib's poetry is that he minutely analyses human psychology- or it could be said that he is a psychoanalyst (to use a modern term) of his time.

It is for this characteristic of Sa'ib that his poetry has found favour among the orientalist (1), because his way of expressing human sentiments in verses is so much like the way they write a short story or even a novel in the Western countries.

VII- According to some critics(2), some of Sa'ib's verses speak of pessimism and despair. But, as I see it they are mistaken, because Sa'ib brings out the reality of life in his verses. He is afraid of putting his friends(3) to the test, because he is sure that, in doing so he would lose all of them, and thus remain alone in life. As a matter of fact, it is his realism that is the mainspring of his despondency.

VIII- A large number of Sa'ib's verses deal with the philosophy of life and its transient nature. This is an idea which is common between Khayyam and Hafiz (something which is in the very nature of people). But the difference between Hafiz and Khayyam on the one hand and Sa'ib on the other is this: while they preach wine drinking to escape the pains and sorrows which the earthly life brings with it, Sa'ib exhorts people to take a lesson from the transient nature

1- Amiri Firooskouhi, Moghaddameye Sa'ib, page. 89.

2- Zarrinkub "Ba Carevanehclleh", page. 37

3- صائب که زودای کس و بی یار می شوی- تجربه دوستان مباش بر در مقام

of this life and prepare themselves for the life hereafter(1). This philosophy of life- these words of exhortation-are in fact addressed to himself, because Sa'ib loves life and is afraid of death, and thus in a way these words are a sort of admonition to himself.

IX- The gnosticism of Sa'ib is pure and simple, unembellished by symbols and terminology as we find in Nizami and Sadi. Everybody can understand and appreciate it.

X- Another eminent feature of Sa'ib's poetry is that he illustrates his verses with allegories. Here he resembles Mowlana in Mathnavi with the difference that his allegories are simple and concise, complete in one hemistich.

The following verses illustrate this point:

"The roots of the aged palm-
tree exceed those of the young
one:

The old have the greater at-
tachment to the world(2)

..Flowers and fruit are never com-
bined in one place;

it is impossible that teeth
and delicacies shall exist simul-
taneously"(3)

XI- Like Hafiz, his predecessor, the number of meters employed by Sa'ib in composing his ghazals is limited.

1- زخاک تیره کمر بسته چون قلم بر خیز -

غنچه در پوست مگر برگ سفر ساز کند

درین جهان نبود فرصت کمر بستن

فرصت عمر کم و وقت بهاران تنک است

2- Browne, A Literary History of Persia, Vol. IV Page
280

3- Ibid.

XII- Sa'ib's poetry is so much steeped in the reality of life and portrays so many common incidents in day to day life that many of his verses have become proverbs among the people. This is mainly due to the fact that he is a master in the art of proverbial quotation.

XIII- Another characteristic of Sa'ib, which has been the subject of much adverse criticism in the days of "Baz-gasht" (return to old style) and even in our own time, is that the diction and usages employed by him are taken from the language of the common man.

But it would be unfair to level such a criticism indiscriminately. Not all the phrases and idioms he makes use of are from the language of the people. He uses such language when he has to illustrate some characteristic from the common man's life.

In the end I may observe that the secret of Sa'ib's greatness is the very fact that he is an interpreter of man's life, and this is not surprising. A great poet symbolizes his own age and therefore this interpretation of life has to be within the spirit of Persian poetry: it is like a stream which must flow into the heaving ocean of Persian verse. If it does not, it will be like a rivulet which flows into a sandy space and is lost forever.