

Influence of Sufism on Persian Literature

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INTRODUCTION:

As an atmosphere of unrest, acts of terrors, arson, violence and cruelty developed in the whole world today which is a matter of being upset to every inhabitant of it. The murmuring of insurgency, terrorism, oppression, injustice and hatred among the people are prevailing in every corner of the world, facing the present world scenario. In this crucial situation, the exercise of the term 'Sufism' is more relevant because Sufism bestows mental peace to human being and social harmony and brotherhood to the society.

The Sufi poetry in Persian literature has been an interest to all Persian scholars and historians. Sufism is a special School of thought which was formally introduced from the second century AD. The first thing that was important among them was the denial of the world and then, love for God was the ultimate goal of their deeds. Therefore, their teachings are divided into two categories: **educational literature and romantic literature**. Subsequently, the great heritage left behind which was nourished from this School of thought. Therefore, in this essay, culture, the influence of Sufism on Persian literature and Persian Sufi poetry will be investigated, without paying attention to the romantic poems written by non-mystical poets who mean human love for mankind, which have been whispered by the mystics in a certain way. Meanwhile, the attempt will be made to mention the masters of Persian Sufi poetry.

Keynote –Culture, Sufism, Persian literature, Persian poet and poetry

Culture:

Culture is a blessing aspiration for human society which specially depends upon language and literature. Language is a medium of communication, through Language one can understand the feeling of another and one is associated with trade and business. A country can introduce its culture and deeds to the whole world through a Language. Thus languages play a leading role as vehicle of thought and interaction between two groups of people. Additionally language can enrich literature and Language produces poetry and prose. Prose and poetry created history among the people through ages. A great number of people love to recite poetry while a large number of mankind is impressed by the influential of prose writings. 1

In the world there are so many languages which had great value and importance in their culture and literature. However Persian is the main language of Iran, which is one the oldest language in the world. Persian language belongs to the Indo- Iranian branch of Indo – European language family and it has root in the history of human being and came back to Aryan group were an old group arrived to Persian from Western Asia. Sufism is a system of Islamic practice where human being finds a state of his mental peace and happiness from Almighty Allah. It also conceives the whole creation as a reflection from the light of Allah. As holy Quran says, 'Allah is the light of the universe'.

Sufism:

Sufism is the glorious achievements of Islam to the world civilization. All human beings are equal to the eyes of Islamic mysticism. Influence of Sufism is found in every aspect of human life especially on culture, language and civilization. Sufism is universally defined as a way of character building to the internal as well as external behaviour of a person in order to attain the divine approval.

Sufi, an Arabic term derived from 'Soof' means 'wool' has more than one connotation. It means either to purify one's inner organ or self with the light of spiritual knowledge through exercise of certain principles having full faith in oneness of Allah, or it means to adopt such simple life having extreme poverty as of those who lead their life remaining in the mosque of the Prophet at Medina called 'Ashab-e- suffa' or it means to wear coarse clothes made out of 'wool' in order to aloof from the luxurious life or it means those people of the first line who are pioneer in leading a life having complete purity in all aspect. 2

Hence 'Sufism' is defined as an Islamic science normally associated with that discipline of knowledge which highlights the principles guiding purification of soul through a process of character building by regulating both internal as well as external behavior of person. It is the name of spiritual quest for hidden truth or wisdom which represents the inward and esoteric side of Islam.

The Sufi poetry in Persian is undoubtedly one of the most important events in the history of this language, unfortunately; no one has addressed it separately; an incident that turned people's language into the deep one. The introduction of the mystical poems to Persian has begun from the beginning of the fifth century; it has inspired a new spirit in the body of Persian poetry, and thanks to that, the domain of meaning in this language has gradually expanded to the extent that the Persian language carries profound mystical and metaphysical meanings thus became a sacred and deep language.3

The mystical literature or Sufi literature is part of the literary heritage that the mystic poets have been influenced by Sufism and includes a huge part of the Persian literature. In order to understand this kind of literature, it must inevitably recognize the creators of it, namely, the Sufis and the mystics. So it is better to understand what Sufism is and who is a Sufi?

Sufism is nothing other than Islamic mysticism, which means that it is the central and most powerful current of that tidal wave which constitutes the Revelation of Islam; and it will be clear from what has just been said that to affirm this is in no sense a depreciation, as some appear to think. It is on the contrary an affirmation that Sufism is both authentic and effectual.

It is to be noted that the origin of Sufism based on four famous theories in the world namely: 4

- (1) Indian or Vedantic or Budhistic Theory
- (2) Christian or Neo-Platonic Theory
- (3) Persian Theory
- (4) The Quranic Theory

The influence of Sufism on Persian literature:

Persian Theory of Sufism had tremendous influence on Persian Literature particularly on Persian poetry since beginning.

The standardization and ascertain of mystical language and increasingly evident use of allegory became a distinctive feature, for the development of Persian mystical poetry in particular during the 14th century. Sufism played a key part in the islamization of Persian world. The literary appearance of its principle matched its didactic attitude which involved introducing and guiding its addresses on the mystical path of Allah. The term Sufism is always reluctant in finding excellence, perfection, purification and satisfaction of soul, which promoted the path of love moving austerity to asceticism. Sufism could also lead to a form of elated spirituality.

Literary works followed to guide explorer along the path. One must recall here that two schools of Greek philosophy namely: (i) Stoicism and (ii) Neo-Platonism had a tremendous impact on the development of three monotheistic traditions. 5

It is to be mentioned here that Stoicism is an ancient Greek school of Philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium. This school taught that virtue, the highest God, is based on knowledge. Stoicism can be epitomized by three essential beliefs: 6

- (i) That Virtue is sufficient for happiness
- (ii) That so called good, should be regarded with indifference
- (iii) That the world is providentially ordered by God

Neo-Platonism is a thought form rooted in the philosophy of Plato but extending beyond or transforming it in many respects. Neo-Platonism sought to overcome the platonic Cleavage between thought and reality, or ideal and form.

Neo-Platonism believed human perfection and happiness were attainable in this world, without awaiting an afterlife. Perfection and happiness could be achieved through philosophical contemplation. All people return to the One from which they emanated. The Malamati movement significantly swayed Sufism and its literary activities.

The poetry of Hafiz Shirazi can be interpreted from this view point. Many modern critics remarked that Hafiz Shirazi was not a Sufi but a follower of Sufi order. There after his accounts of wine, sin and music as well as references to desire, even mystical. Allusion to sin and erotic pleasure in his work are thus seen to be part of a sumptuous code of symbols. In this view, the character of Hafiz as a rind (an inspired libertine) and his revolt against religion authorities, including Sufis are regarded as symbol of Malati trends in Sufism. 7

The Kirrami movement encountered resistance and was eventually defeated because of its political inferences. In this early period, the spread of Sufism appeared a great and lonely though often-visited, master, Bayazid Bustami. He left behind a legacy of adages in Persian that continue to resonate.

At the beginning of the following century a remarkable figure Mansur Hallaj (d. 922) was a Persian Mystic, poet and a teacher of Sufism. He is best known for his saying 'Ana'l Haq' i.e. "I am the truth" which many saw as a claim to divinity, while others interpreted it as an instance of annihilation of the ego, allowing God to speak through him. Mansur Hallaj gained a wide following as preacher before he became implicated in power struggles of the Abbasid court and was executed after a long period of confinement on religious and political charges. But most of the Sufi contemporaries disapproved his actions. Later on Hallaj became a major figure in Sufi tradition. 8

Mystical love, the source of all literary manifestation in Persian Sufism, rightly declared itself with Hallaj. A third significant stage in the History of Persian Sufism arose with the colossal work in Arabic of Ibn al Arabi, who was born in Murcia, travelled much and finally settled in Anatolia. He died and finally in Anatolia. He died in 630/1240, at the time when Jalal Uddin Rumi was born in Konya. His disciple and interpreter, Sadr al Din Qunyavi spread his master's teachings all over the Iranian cultural world. For instance, the literary production of Moulana Abdur Rahman Jami was completed during 15th century under the inspiration of the Andalusian master and set the prime direction of Sufi beliefs in Sunnism even to this day.

AS Sufism matured it became entrenched in orders. This was accomplished not by Jalal Uddin Rumi by his son and successor, Sultan Walad. Sultan Walad is the true founder of the Mawlawiya order. The Sufi poetry of Persian literature has been regarded as the important

vehicle to develop the Persian literature. Sufism is a special school of thought, which was formally introduced from the second century AD.

Jala Uddin Rumi, and Shaikh Sa'adi lived in the same century. Rumi introduced mysticism in the Persian literature from Khurasan. Sa'adi lived in Fars, a province under the government of the Salghurid that had not witnessed the cultural separation and social chaos suffered by other provinces during the Mongol destruction. Sa'adi's work is regarded as a high point in the historical growth of Persian literature. The 13th century also witnessed the beginning of Persian literature in India. It was a splendid century of Persian prose widely used by historians in the court of Mongols.⁹

Persian Sufi Poet and Poetry:

The Sufi poetry in Persian literature has been an interest to all Persian scholars and historians. Sufism is a special School of thought which was formally introduced from the second century AD. The first thing that was important among them was the denial of the world and then, love for God was the ultimate goal of their deeds. Therefore, their teachings are divided into two categories: **educational literature and romantic literature**. Subsequently, the great heritage left behind which was nourished from this School of thought. Therefore, in this essay, the manifestation of the Sufi poetry in Persian literature will be investigated, without paying attention to the romantic poems written by non-mystical poets who mean human love for mankind, which have been whispered by the mystics in a certain way. Meanwhile, the attempt will be made to mention the masters of Persian Sufi poetry.

Persian Sufi Poetry:

To find the date of the first mystical poems, we have to obtain the correct definition of mystical poetry. The mystical poem is a poem written in the formulation of the spiritual principles and truth. So the mystical poem is the one written with a mystical intention, not a love poem (man to man) which is interpreted mystically.

Sufism which originates from the inspiration has the same affinity with poetry that comes from the same inspiration, nevertheless, the Sufis, who at first was ascetic, at the beginning of the same period, did not show much interest in poetry. Many believe that the history of this incident is not clear. Some consider Baba Tahir as the first mystical poet; some people say that the beginning of the mystical poetry coincides with the beginning of Sama; another theory that has many supporters considers Sanai as the founder of the mystical poems. Here we are referring to the Sufi poems of Persia. 10

Baba Tahir:

Although the history of the life and death of Baba Tahir is not known, surely he has preceded the others. "The first Sufi who can be identified individually as a poet would have been Baba Tahir, nicknamed 'Uryan ('the Naked')'. Because Ru'ba'i is considered the first genre of poetry which was used by mystics to express their thoughts and experiences, Baba Tahir as one of the most celebrated Iranian poets of Rubai was the forerunner of this style of mystical poetry. Because the poetry of Baba Tahir is not reliable, he cannot be the originator of the mystical poem. In one of his poems, he appears as a dervish who is searching his mystical ideas: 11

While I wander through the desert, night and day,
Tears are streaming from my eyes, night and day.
No fever do I feel, nor pain in any place;
I only know that I am crying, night and day.

Abu-Saiid Abul-Khayr:

Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khair is one of the great wise mystics of the fifth century, whose word "Sama" is the companion of his name. Undoubtedly, the Sema ceremony, which was held in the presence of Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khair has no meaning without poetry; the mystical poetry was one of the essential items of the Sufi ceremony. Two arguments are here: First, the ceremony of Sama needed poetry and forced Abu Sa'id to compose a mystical poem. Second, there is a collection of Rubaiat showing that Abu Sa'id is the first mystical poet. But it's easy to reject these two arguments. Although in sema ceremony, mystical poems have been read, these poems may have been written by poets who mean human love, in sema ceremony, mystic had another meaning from the same poem. There is no doubt that Sufism used poetry as a great tool in the sema ceremony to influence the audience's morality; Abu Sa'id expressed many teachings by poetry for the mystic audience. However, the point is whether there was at that time a Persian mystical poem which could easily express concepts like Arabic Ghazal.

Secondly, the poems which attribute to Abu Sa'id are not significant. If the assignment of these poems to Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khair was not a problem, we could have cited him as one of the serious options for the creation of mystical poetry. The following poem is an example of his poetry:¹²

I have my eyes filled by the vision of the Beloved.
My eyes rejoice when the Beloved is there.
Between eye and Beloved one cannot distinguish:
He is in the eye, or the eye is nothing else but He.
My body became all tears and my eyes wept.
Loving you, one should live without a body.
No trace remained of me; why is there Love?
Now I became the Beloved entirely, where is the Lover?
When I shall be dead for twenty years or more,

Sanai:

The first great writer of Ghazal in Sufism is Sanai. He is the first poet who used Ghazal to express mystical thoughts. Sanai's services are enormous for the development of Sufi poetry. We need to know him as the leading of this kind of poetry. The first person to introduce the

interpretation of the true and virtual love into the language of the Persian Sufi love poetry was Sanai. Sanai is one of the earlier Sufi poets. "The whole of Sanai's poetical works amount to more than thirty thousand distiches, of which the most important is the " Hadiqa," or Garden, a mystical work on the unity of God, self-mortification, and the attainment of the knowledge of spiritual truth".¹³

Sanai's works are of particular importance to historians of poetry and mysticism. Sanai's Hadiqa is the beginning of the new style of poetry, and his qasidas are also the beginning of another style; his ghazals have the unique style in comparison to his previous ghazals. A poet can rarely be found like Sanai, who is the beginner of the new style of poetry. With Sanai, the path of the Persian poetry changes, the first time poetry enters the field of mysticism; he is the "founder of mystical poetry."

Attar:

After Abu Saeed, the Sanai in the sixth century, by introducing the mystical concepts into the solid structure of qasida opened a new window to mystical literature. In addition to his sonnets, full of zeal, Sanai introduced the theme of mysticism in the structure of the Qasida, after him, Attar Nishapuri in the form of Ghazal and Masnavi introduced the great mystical concepts. "Attar is regarded as the famous Persian mystic poet standing between Sanai and Jalal-uddin Rumi".¹⁴

It is worth mentioning, however, mystical literature is divided into two types of literary education and romance. Sufi poets generally write secrets and excitement in the form of sonnets, preaching and asceticism in the form of Masnavi; accordingly, Sanai and Attar, as well as other mystic poets have both Ghazal full of passion and educational Masnavi such as Sanai's Hadiqa and Attar's Mantiq al-Tayur. Attar dedicated much of his literary output "to honoring the Sufis and glorifying their doctrines".

Jalal al-Din Mohammad Rumi:

The great mystic poet is Maulana Jalaluddin Mohammed Rumi, not only in the field of mystical romance but also in the field of mystical teaching. Rumi's Masnavi is the most important work which is considered to be the richest heritage of Sufism.¹⁵

"He seems to have been influenced by the religious and mystical ideas of al-Ghazali, by the famous Sufi poet Sana'I and by 'Attar". Rumi has underlined the importance of both. "Attar appears to Rumi as the (asheq) 'lover'; Sanai as the 'king and superior' (faeq), whereas he himself is 'neither this nor that' but has lost himself completely". In general, after Rumi, mystical literature didn't have special flourishing; the works which were later created were based on the imitation of Rumi, Attar, and Sanai. In general, Sufis have had a very important influence on the formation and transformation of Persian literature. They have led the Qasida from the flattery to the peak of preaching and research; they have given the Ghazals from the erotic love to the spiritual affection; Masnavi has been a means of education, mysticism, and morality; Rubai has become the expressive form of the transient and temporal suffering; the prose is made in depth and simplicity; they made stories in the form of meanings and judgments.¹⁶

Conclusion:

The main reason for the emergence and prevalence of Sufism in Iran is that the Iranians have made the highest progress and reached the highest levels as a result of centuries of living in the material and spiritual civilization. Sufism was the best way to reach this freedom of thought; that's why from the beginning, music and dance, which the Iranians were accustomed to them, not only perceived as legitimate but also in some of the branches of Sufism were considered as the form of worship, a means of approaching the source, refining the soul, and purifying the inner being.

One of the earliest means by which Sufis took over the concern of Iranians was by means of poetry, which is the subject of discussion in one of the chapters of the history of the intellectual movements of Iranians. The first person from the Sufi leaders of Persia, who accepted Persian poetry for his education, was Abu Sa'id Abu al-Khair. With the advent of Hakim Sanai Ghaznavi, the path of Persian Poetry changed. He was the first poet to find that there is a close connection between Islamic poetry and mysticism. At the time of Sanai's death, Attar was born and continued his journey. For Sanai and Attar, poetry is a platform for the presentation of ideas that ultimately leads to human salvation. After Attar, Rumi, who had great dedication to Attar and Sanai, continued the way. This dedication is apparent in the Divan Shams and the Masnavi Manavi.

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