

Poetry of Bushehr, Pioneer in the Poetry of the South of Iran

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Abstract

Bushehr in southern Iran is the vanguard of contemporary literature in Iran. Bushehr's poetry is nature-oriented, the poetry of a human being who lives in the south of Iran. This is the art of Bushehr's poetry which using rural natural beauty creates urban and national poetry and is Post Modern; it recreates the symbols and from them creates wonderful and beautiful images. Bushehr's poetry is not supposed to be native-world but it is believed to make Post Modernism world-native, since the future of the world is nothing but the symbol of a small village; and it speaks out that the neighbors must have mutual understanding of themselves and their identities in order to help each other attain salvation from different perspectives. Manouchehr Atashi and Ali Babachahi are the fore-runners of the symbols of contemporary poetry of Bushehr. In this article, we will study these two poets' poetry.

Keywords: Post-Modern Poetry, Bushehr, South of Iran, symbols of contemporary poetry

1. Manouchehr Atashi's Poetry



Manouchehr Atashi (1931-2005)

Courtesy: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manouchehr_Atashi

Manouchehr Atashi (1310-1384) was born in Bushehr. With his book of poems *Āhang-e digar* (Another melody) he introduced himself to Iranian literature in 1339. Many critics believe that this book was more powerful and more beautiful than the first book of poems of many of the poets of his generation. It was such that Forough Farrokhzad had an envious look on it and looked at it with respect.

Atashi's other books of poems include *Āvāz-e kāk* (The Song of Earth) (1347), *Didār dar falaq* (Meeting at Dawn) (1348), *Vasf-e gol-e suri* (In praise of the Red Rose) (1367), *Gandom o gilās* (The wheat and the cherry) (1368), *Zibā tar az šekl-e qadim-e jahān* (More beautiful than the old shape of the world) (1376), *Če talk ast in sib* (How Bitter Is This Apple) (1378), *Hādetā dar bāmdād* (The Event at Dawn) (1380), *Ettefāq-e ākar* (The Last Event) (1380) and *Bar entehā-ye aḡāz* (At the End of the Beginning) and some translated books.

Atashi and His Collection of Poems

The growth and literary advancement of Atashi began with the publication of the collections *Āhang-e digar* (Another melody) and *Āvāz-e kāk* (The Song of Earth) in Bushehr and with *Vasf-e gol-e suri* (In praise of the Red Rose) crossed its path and finished it with *Zibā tar az*

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šekl-e qadim-e jahān (More beautiful than the old shape of the world) and *Če talk ast in sib* (How Bitter Is This Apple). All of these books of poems were composed in Bushehr.

Atashi appeared so impressive and splendid in the forties, but in the fifties we see no books from him. In this decade we see not just Atashi's decline, but a decline of poetry in Iran that has its own analysis; yet in comparison with the poets of his generation he appeared to be what was not expected of him, even though we see his activity beside the poets of the scope of Masjed Soleiman and the movement of "pure poetry".

Nature of Atashi's Poems and His Career as a Poet

After the fifties Atashi proved that he is a poet in his essence and his poetic individuality continuously tempts him to write and unlike many of his contemporaries who were in a process full of ups and downs, he would proceed slowly but constantly and would do his own job. He was one of the most balanced of the contemporary Iranian poets. Even in the forties when well-known poets like Shamloo overshadowed Iran's poetry and Sepehri, Forough and Akhavan had a prominent presence, Atashi was not captivated by them although he was influenced by them, he had his own poetry and language and would step in with his own style and trend. Atashi was a poet of climate and nature; a man who lived in the south of creation. It was his art that along with his rural born essence he would compose urban and national poems; he would recreate symbols and from them would create beautiful and wonderful images. The prophetic mission moments of his poetry were nothing but his rural and gypsy-like soul. Whenever this should arouse a chaos, excitement would pour out of him in the form of poetry; the wild white horse would be born. Abdo Jet would be born, Mir Mohanna would pass through Persian Gulf water. This very honesty, simplicity and his rough and tough soul were kindly to mingle rebellion, violence and love in a blessed or unblessed union with the life of the audience.

Wild and Restless Soul

Atashi had a wild and restless soul; his poetry was his life and it was his very life. Perhaps his life was nothing but "the wild horse"; his gypsy-like essence was surprising. He would constantly carry his native hearth words from here to there in his swag of poems and from trivial

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“these” would create wondrous and beautiful “those”. The suffering of his poems’ sobs were his people’s pains.

He himself would confess of his gypsy-like style:

I am a gypsy left alone from the tribe
Left alone from the caravan
Alone in the desert, alone in the mountains
I hammer my tent’s black nail every night
And take away the smuts of old pots of loneliness
With song’s polish
And I rub the black bowl of night
With sands of cry
I am a gypsy
With my black tent on shoulder
Am in an eternal departure... (Atashi 35)

Less Native Symbols in Later Poems

However after the sixties he had less native symbols in his poetry and his poems had found a global tone, but he never departed from his climate-words. This was both good and bad; good since he was himself in these words of his poems and would bestow honesty and credit to his work that made him prominent and more artistic in poetry and bad, because when repeated too much it would make poetry devoid of sense and softness. A poem cannot be made native-global when only native words are considered in it.

The Conscious and the Unconscious

Applying these words must be done with precision and in due time, but since Atashi was not strict in composing his poems, he would pour his poem on the paper quite simply at the time of inspiration. According to Babachahi, he would respect the reader’s understanding highly; he would write in a way as not to eventually let the reader leave confused and bewildered. Some critics believe that if at the moment of composing poems the unconscious soul of the poet

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overwhelms the conscious soul, then the poem is a high-grade art, but this unconscious soul as it was mentioned before can lead poetry to the valley of abstraction and delusion. Atashi's poetry is in a point between the conscious and the unconscious. Babachahi considered two general classifications for poetry: the poem of "thought" and the poem of "expression". Atashi in his poetry makes us of southern mythology. This myth does not mean a return to the past and fossilizing in it, but as a bridge to connect the past to the present and the future, since the poet's poem gains national and infra-national recognition and credit when it carries a particular culture with itself. This is the very thing that made Boges, Borges; in his works he would make use of myths and indigenous subjects in order to globalize his voice and this established him in world literature. Since the culture of any nation needs to be washed and refreshed, for as the time passes the dust of time also makes the culture old and dejected, but composing, recreating and renewing myths in poetry makes the culture and civilization of a nation become dynamic. It helps culture to constantly have new words for new people (Babachahi 71).

Poetry and Its Structure and Boundless Freedom

Atashi believed that poetry must be structured and that boundless freedom would cut the poet from artistic discipline and would lead to distraction, delusion and wandering. This structured space does not mean that the poet must first determine a framework and move in its direction. This being structured in internal and intuitive factors that need teaching and training and cannot be achieved except by reading and experiencing. He calls the poet at the moment of composing poetry "discoverer of the word's beauties". Both restriction and having no boundary are unbecoming of the poet, since ascension of the poetry is nothing but moments of freedom in the mind of the poet, but this freedom must have direction, otherwise, when there is nothing there no freedom would be involved. (Mohammadi 4)

Defamiliarization

Another distinct aspect of Atashi's poetry is its defamiliarization. He would beautifully take away the normal daily words away from the scope of the audience's understanding and experience and would lead them to recreation and taking a new meaning such as:

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“...I - a nymph-stricken lunatic
Am going to sell reason to Aristotle” (Atashi 138)

Poetry of Rebellion and Protest

Atashi's poetry was the poetry of rebellion and protest. He wanted to take the Southern man to well-being, no matter he was successful or not. If he was not successful he had at least said the words. In his poetry, he splendidly established the Southern man in Persian poetry as the one who had something to say.

Some critics have introduced him as not being that active and believe that climate and native word at times appear where they ought not to and due to this some kind of excess can be seen in his work. Just like other Southern poets he is often a fatalist. This fatalism wavers between the terrestrial and the cosmic aspects. He never slides thoroughly into any of these to be accused of humanism and mysticism. He brings the feeling that he has paused at the moment of composing poetry and transferring it to paper. If routines have crushed him and bread's concern has withered him, fatalism takes the upper hand to itself. If in the imagination and the mind he is weary and forlorn and reaches a supernatural sense, this fatalism becomes cosmic. But in general, he is not a philosophical or an ideological poet. If some philosophical formula is seen in his poems, it is more due to his “neuroticism”. Babachahi believes that Atashi cannot be considered as a modern poet, he is highly region-oriented and since his poetry has a realm of feelings within the experienced climactic elements, his poems own a familiar look and an effective tone. Atashi prefers being a reeve in his province to wandering in unknown lands”. (Babachahi 292-3)

Manouchehr Atashi had a rebellious and stubborn soul and in old age his poetry was also irritable and a stubborn horse could not be made quiet by any spur. He was the sound of broken pride, but not out of shame and embarrassment. He would admire the glorious defeat of his myths and lead them to another destiny. His was the simple form of his poetry, the rough and tough nature of south was his poetry's honor. By recreating and transforming native symbols he could create inter-continental and worldly images.

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It is worth mentioning that his poem “If I were Jesus” from the book *Meeting at Twilight*, was translated to German most beautifully by the well-known German orientalist Annemarie Schimmel in her book **Jesus and Mary in Islamic Mysticism**.

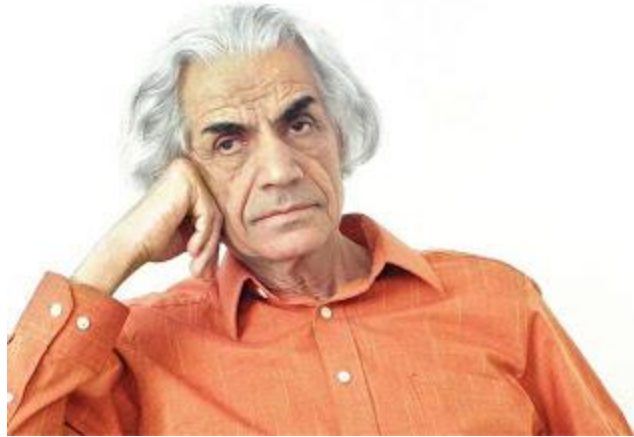
If I Were Jesus

My pain is heavier than Christ's
My burden
Is heavier than Christ's
He with his wooden cross only once
-with his iron nails in hand-
Took his body to the heights of defamation
He with wooden cross and enemies' curse
Was grappling with the mountain of fate and I
I am my own cross...
He was the son of a holy soul and I
The son of a strange
-From the thirsty deserts of Dashtestan
He
Only
Died once, meaning that
Flew and I
Die a thousand times
My pain is heavier than Christ's (Atashi 35)

Certainly, Atashi is one of the greatest cotemporary poets of Iran and contemporary poetry is indebted to him.

Ali Babachahi's Poetry

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Ali Babachahi

Courtesy: http://sabido4.rssing.com/chan-7896477/all_p52.html

Another poet from Bushehr who has gained transcontinental and national fame and has established his name strongly in Iran's contemporary literature is Ali Babachahi. He was born in Bushehr in 1942 and introduced himself to Iran's literature with his book "Suspended Without Support" in 1968. His other works of poetry include: "The World and the Woeful Lights" (1970), From the Sun's Generation (1974), The Sound of Sand (1977), The Lays of Seamen (1989), The Sun Rises from Our Grave (1989), Untraceable Destinations of the Sea (1995), I Am A Drop of Rain (1996), My Wisdom Tortures Me (2000), My Appearance is Very Suspicious(2002), Picasso in Persian Gulf (2009) and... .

In the realm of literary criticism and analysis he has a lively presence in literary circles and creditable journals; he has published dozens of other works in Children's Literature and Iran's other contemporary literary issues.

Like other Southern poets he began his work gradually and modestly. He is one of the few contemporary Iranian poets who has a comprehensive mastery over Iran's ancient literature and has associated his poetry over time with a type of poetic intuition.

The Suns and Thorns

Perhaps in the opinion of some critics **Ali Babachahi's** first book that was sent to Iran's literature did not have a good perspective, but it was one of those poems that promised a bright

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future for him from the beginning. During those years, “The Suns and Thorns” and “What must Be Said” became idioms in the literary Circles. The poem “The Suns and Thorns” was accompanied by a social protest approach:

I come from the watering place of the cocophonous frogs
And with me is the talk of home-burdened hens
That see their mate in bottles of water
I feel sorry my friend
That girls in love don't pick flowers...
Hail to waken till dawn bars!
I come from the watering place of the cacophonous frogs
I come from the private place of filled-with deception crows
My night, is a bitter tale
Whose each chapter would be the beginning of a doomed book.
My sorrow, is the wind and the rain
That can go through the depths of the world
...
Step more lively!
For our thorn bush would not flower with tear
...
The world is beneath our feet, but bushes of thorn
Will get into the world of you and me (Babachahi 33)

Concept Oriented Poems

This poem was the beginning of Ali Babachahi's endlessness in poetry; his poetry was more concept-oriented until the sixties and would not withhold meaning from the audience. But from the sixties on with poetic maturity and more study in the world's poetic themes and theories, Babachahi all of a sudden acts effusively, surprising Persian literature and this climax can be seen in “I Am A Drop of Rain”.

In recent decades Babachahi is known to be one of the most unexpected literary figures of Iran. His every moment in poetry is surprising and astonishing. Apart from any criticism whether there is good or bad in his poetry, his most important work is the movement he made in the literature of Iran. He is one of the most mainstream contemporary literary figures whose presence has given freshness and novelty to today's literature. He with a special and fatherly look at the youths' works has not led them away from development and this has let us see some kind of enthusiasm and fervor in the realm of nation literature.

“Poetry in Another Situation”: Sublimity and Change

Ali Babachahi's poems are called **“poetry in another situation”** and its difference with “another poem” according to Babachahi is that the latter case has “individuality” approach while in the former it is the pulpit of “plurality”.

The most important sense which Babachahi has dedicated to Persian Literature is the need for sublimity and change. It is obvious that any change for better or worse, knowingly or unknowingly is associated with resistance, but Babachahi has got a strong taste and perception and with a support that is rich and full of ancient Persian Literature he could bring change to the arena of contemporary literature of Iran. The need for change is in fact a form of protest; a protest to what should be and what is not and what should not be, and is. He is not seeking to annihilate the "entities" that have withdrawn our literature from the components of World Poetry.

Inventor of Postmodernism

Babachahi accepts risks and is not afraid of stigma and it is not an easy task for a great poet as him. He is the inventor of Postmodernism in Iran and his very work was done, accomplished overnight. In response to those who accuse him of sophistry in poetry it should be said that he started postmodern discourse in Iran when he has more than thirty years of experience and poetic knowledge. Babachahi's poetry is not poetry with a certain message or mission. In his poetry words have their own personality and at a specific moment in poetry can be sent on a mission, so his poetry is a kind of poetry with several messengers who are sent on mission at the same time or at no specific time and share the moments of ascension with the

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audience. If the audience accept the participation then they will understand the poetry and if not they will not tolerate it. In this way, Babachahi's poetry is not against the audience, instead it has got a complex geometry and each twist can bring a different discovery for each individual.

Image Interpretation

Meaning and image interpretation, word games and their fusion is a queer deviation on the one hand and on the other hand, it has brought about paying attention to the dark realm of language. For him, nothing is worthless and even "nothing" is also valuable and can attain meaning and value when it is together with that of which we do not think. His poetry is the poetry of suspended rings. The audience can go up on these rings and sit down to contemplate in a philosophical meditation or hang themselves or become pendant in the opposite direction and see existence upside down or between the earth and the sky in an explosive moment to be thrown to an unknown place.

Magical Look Upon Words

Babachahi takes a magical look upon words and is like a magician who constantly creates wondrous and marvelous realities upon the basis of simple and trivial ones. This is the very prophet-like attribute that he considered for his poetry. Most importantly, he is the poet who is highly influenced by himself and it is quite very surprising that those who criticize him compose their poem under his influence.

When you have black skin and bright eyes

Partridges appear whiter (Babachahi 72)

A Poet of "Search"

Babachahi is the poet of "search"; he constantly keeps struggling with a word to reveal his inner capacity. He is the poet of building capability for words; the words that do not seem to have any place in art, find artistic degree and dignity in his poetry. Accordingly, his poetry is the poetry of the "unmarked" and the "asymptomatic". He all the time leaves some part of his poem incomplete, for his poem becomes complete with the audience. If the audience is skilled then the

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poem is complete; otherwise, it would be left incomplete for good. This is both a weakness and strength; it is both good and bad:

The sea does not know that it is the sea
It didn't know until yesterday...
...
OK! Hope you haven't made yourself tired you curly hair black boy!
Even if the sea notices that it is the sea, one of the drowning
What is that to you?
...
Great people are probably multi-digit
Or drowning and unaware of everything
Or small and tiny
And curly hair! (25)

Babachahi's poetry is simultaneously immersed in different times or at times the poem is composed in a vacuum, where time and space are disabled and one should only reach for the scene of no time and no place from the origin of the inside of the unseen. In this way at times the poem appears inexpressive and obscure and the reader faces delusion-like reading. His poetry is against habit and the audience that is incurred with routine and habit has lots of problems with it.

“Fear of Not Reaching”

Babachahi as he himself states, constantly has the “fear of not reaching” and his haste in poetry is not an “immature haste”; it is there to compensate for all those moments during the period of transition of poetry in Iran when postmodernism has been lost. Someone in Iran's poetry must compensate for the lost moments and this has fallen upon Babachahi. “Reaching” is his stopping point, he draws his poetry to “standing” and in the middle of the struggle, stops. That is why his poetry is all the time unfinished at the point of “not reaching”, to make the audience finish it. In fact, he seeks the “entirety” of poetry in unfinished-ness.

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Babachahi all the time sees the end as something uncertain and infinite and this means that one should hurry up. His poetic abodes are with no sign and no symptom; for these signs and symptoms should be associated with the audience. He in his poetry produces some narrow path that anyone with the sign and symptom that he/she has with himself/herself can lead their taste through these private places to the desired path and anyone who has got no sign with themselves is certainly lost in his poem. He remains confused with no sign and this is the point where some critics consider his poem as against the audience, delusive and agitated.

Words Are Also Slippery and Slithery

In his poetry beside the fluidity of time and place words are also slippery and slithery. If you are not careful then the words would get out of your hand and the mind would constantly get involved with the game of meanings and images. The words being slippery, produces a sense of mischief and playfulness which is enjoyable.

Babachahi is not supposed to be native-world in his poetry, instead, he believes that he has to make postmodernism native-world, for the future of the world is nothing but the symbol of a small village in which all the neighbors should have a mutual understanding of each other and their identities in order to help each other to attain salvation from different perspectives.

Conclusion

The province of Bushehr in the south of Iran is pioneer in Iran's contemporary literature. Honesty, simplicity, love and rebellion in a fortunate and unfortunate connection get incorporated in the audience. At times the poem is composed in a vacuum where time and space are disabled and one should only reach for the scene of no time and no place from the origin of the inside of the unseen. In this way at times the poem appears inexpressive and obscure and the reader sometimes faces delusion-like reading.

There are times when poetry with a simple and intimate presence blends with the audience and the reading is easy and comfortable.

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