

Akhavan-Sales's Reformist Approach in The Eighth Labor

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Abstract: Akhavan-Sales's poetry is believed to seek racial, ethnic, religious and other sorts of discrimination. He portrays human as a free integrate agent who attempts to gain victory over the power of destiny. He attempts to revive the traditions of ancient Persia to achieve this purpose. He highlights attributes of justice and honesty while degrading cowardice and unfairly behavior and portrays the eternity of liberty. In order to avoid misunderstanding the concept of 'nothingness', he borrows terms from nihilistic view which is a form of absurd and he juxtaposes this interpretation of life with words that signify life in Zoroastrian philosophy to show that the lives of chivalrous people and heroes are inexhaustible; in contrast to nihilistic view, man is not abandoned but included under God's plenty favor. In The Eight Labor, the end of Rostam's life is not in accordance with nihilistic nothingness rather, it is a perspective in which life turns into non-life which according to Zoroastrian philosophy is a form of being.

Key words: The Eighth Labor, social reformist, chivalry, liberty, being, nihilism, non-life

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary poetry, "the main poetical movement, despite the challenges and paradoxes has always been focused on the Iranian human being, its past, present, future, function, ideals and fate while tending toward the human's fate in the universe and this movement has also shown that investigating the human nature is the intrinsic characteristic of modern art and literature." Hence, such movement has regarded its task to depict the hidden realities in the society. Therefore, poetry and art in every era is a mirror of the real human life in that era; thus, discovering the modern human is not only related to human, social, philosophical and functional theories of that era. Rather, poetry and art can effectively have a share in the recognition of the modern human and sometimes, the identification of the modern human, happens in poetry and art earlier than the other sciences.

Poetry and art, besides showing these aspects of human life, reflect the present and past social values and the more they demonstrate the past values and the more the mental images are similar to the past, the novelty of the artwork or the poem is reduced and its ideal and futuristic lifetime declines. On the other hand, if these images are not driven from our perception of the present situation and the past experiences, they are certainly empty, artificial and shallow. However, if they are just a mirror of past characteristics, features and values, they are nothing but pure reactionary attempts. And they may

seem novel or ideal to those who are accustomed to the past and dependent upon the tradition". Hence, reflecting the present and past time in poetry puts the poet and the reader in a situation where they have to touch a culture which is alive in the present time while its bases are built on a civilization's past. This issue creates a paradox for the poet; a paradox that will do away with the artist, if one of these times (past and present) overcomes the other. Nevertheless, finding such paradoxes in the poems is a difficult task and one can find the most important instance of such paradoxes in theological ideas of every artist, more than any other fields. This kind of paradox can be seen in the works of great Iranian poets such as Hafiz, Rumi, Saadi and some other mystics, a figure which has made the meaning of their poems ambiguous, giving the readers a freedom to choose their understanding of the poems, each with his/her taste. Also, the source of such paradox is the very "will to freedom" which is embedded in the human nature. Artistic creativity is nothing but the occasional emergence of such paradox. The cause of such existential paradox in the artists can be an individual or personal matter, demonstrated in the historical, social and national issues and it can even be shown beyond the historical, social and national issues, in the field of theology.

Subject:

Akhavan's paradoxes: In Akhavan's poems, there are several instances of paradox in case of the present and

the past of ancient Iran which is far from being experienced by him and this causes him to describe a mixture of love and hate in his poem. This paradox of theological type is shown in his poem, in the most beautiful way. In the unique poem called "Namaaz", he says: "Drunk I am and I know that I am/Oh, from ye all beings are, are you too?" In which he denies and proves one thing. Even if we consider the "Mazdosht" story deeply, we would realize that Mazdosht is the very formation of such paradox. This means that in order to get rid of such paradox, Akhavan reconciles Mazdak with Zoroaster in his own way and depicts a strange image of a paradoxical society". Also, when he reflects the social and ethical values, speaks about the paradoxes among the present and past values, displaying the revolution or destruction of the values in his time. Hence, he pictures the ancient Iran before the reader's eyes and reminds him/her of the genuineness of the past. For instance, the frequent use of Zoroastrian and Mazdaki religious terms is aimed to remind us of the fallen and destroyed social values of those eras:

"By heart, I abhor this despicable mind, Oh Insanity, bloom. That I have the dream and love for other chains. Of no value are such rebukes or praise for me. As with the credit of Mazdosht, I have another price". Hypocrisy and bribe cannot deceive my Ahura, Yes. I have another kind of astute reckless God. Love is the best religious; consent is the key to union. I have such contract from another old devotee. The best redeemer, Mazdosht, the fruit of Mazdak and Zardosht. That I can redeem the world with his message"

Akhavan cannot bear the Islamic society and the injustice he sees in Iran and therefore, he looks back upon the Iranian history which creates a paradox for him. Thus, he mixes all these images and eras so that he can solve the irresolvable dilemma of his beliefs.

Furthermore, he also complains about the people around him; those that can see the far and unreachable ideas in their poetical imagination but are blind to the truths before their eyes and he says:

Good and empty poems/I would write right,
right/Today one should ask/the newly
converted and the rich/And they do not see
besides their muzzle but/the stink of the
deafening and blinding fumes by which/mole
marks such as hot moles, they pound on the
wrinkled forehead of the man/and it is today or
tomorrow/that it swallows down the humanity
and washes it away the world's pockmarked face

Akhavan in "The Eighth Khaan" by using terms such as "dark, bright, fire, Tousi Narrator (Raavi-e-Tousi),

accompanying the words with proofs, Measure of Love, Hate, Coward, Nothing, not being excellent, compacting with Mehr, thinking, etc. "wants to restore the Zoroastrian and Mazdaki religions and each of such religions advocate the social reforms in their times, causing revolts and uprisings which were hardly suppressed by the governments then, leaving undeniable effect on the societies as now we can say that one of the reasons why Sassanid dynasty fell was the suppression of Mazdaki followers of that time.

Mazdaki followers, sought for justice and believed that the source of any injustice is the human himself and they insist on the resolution of segregation among the human beings, considering the fact that such injustice and wrongdoings were caused by social indiscriminate. Also, they emphasized the equality of the people and eradicating the classifications.

Akhavan thought that Zoroaster's religion is also an effective and transformational school, as "Zoroastrianism created an intellectual, social and material revolution in Iran, after which the people put away the imaginary gods and left the nomadic lifestyle, going for the urbanization, construction, work and cooperation" (Mehr, 2005). And freedom which is one of the symbols of civilization and modernity has been highly insisted in Zoroastrianism. However, free will in choosing one's religion did not exist in Akhavan's era; the thing that was already there in Zoroaster's religion and everyone could choose his religion with freedom and will and he/she must be committed to doing the rites of his/her religion. Having been born as a Zoroastrian was not enough rather, everyone had to choose their parents' religion based on his/her knowledge and will, after reaching the puberty age and he/she had to plan his life by practicing his/her religious commitment, far from any hypocrisy.

Sassanid dynasty conspired to create some divisions among the Mazdaki, Zoroastrian and other ancient religions, as that they destroyed Mazdak's writings or mixed them with naive Zurvanite (Zurvanism is a now-extinct branch of Zoroastrianism in which the divinity Zurvan is a First Principle (primordial creator deity) who engendered equal-but-opposite twins, Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu) doctrines in which time had lost its original place and "they poured the mud of ignorance and prejudice into the clear and ever-flowing fountain of one of the greatest philosophical thoughts in the world, in such a way that, one cannot easily get access to Mazdak's real philosophical ideas". After Mazdaki followers, it was Zoroastrians' turn to be the victim of Sassanid's conspiracy, as they divided the people into four classes of clergies, warriors, farmers and workers, so that no one was allowed to get promotion

from one class to the other hence, the people's fate was determined by the government and the Zoroastrian clergies were forced to broadcast such belief among the people which was against the Zoroastrian beliefs, as this religion regards human as the one who has the free will to choose. Thus, these deviations from the conventional Zoroastrian and Mazdaki doctrine, paved the way for their decline and destruction.

Akhavan in the introduction of "Three Books" series writes: "These some words and secrets are what I want to tell you, the people, to myself and to our time". Then, he notes that "I speak about my past experiences, I talk about my ideas, meditations, perceptions and beliefs". He is happy that he does not think like the others:

"In this city full of tumult and commotion, Happy I am that with my many sorrows, I have another kind of solitude. I like Morgh-e-Hagh but with my type of saying Hagh and retreat. In my solitude, I have another tone and treasure. Now in this "fall in jail" to the memory of the gardens. I have another song, poem and lyrics".

In order to understand the ideology of a literary text or poem, regardless of the literal aesthetics principles, one should focus on the recognition of the text. It is now for many years since Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics has been highly noted in the literature. Based on this approach, understanding of a text escapes from the methods and theories and "we are encouraged to the openness of the texts. In Gadamer's opinion, the only way that the understanding happens as an event is by remaining open to the text (Gadamer, 2014) and the way to reach the truth is to get rid of aesthetical conditions and theories. Thus, in order to get familiar with the poet's thought, knowing what the poem means and recognizing its rhetorical devices are not enough. Rather, we must be familiar with his thinking style and his biography, since one's biography and history of life has many stages and the forms of life in all of these stages are not the same. These different life forms and lifestyles depend on the certain ideas and behaviors that one does in a certain stage. Hence, one's life history is his/her thought history, that is the description of his spiritual life evolution and such spiritual life is the one which can emerge as mysticism, philosophy, religion, politics, etc." (Hooman, 1969). Therefore, knowing the openness of the text and the history of poet's and thinker's life, are the background of understanding every text.

PHILOSOPHY IN AKHAVAN'S POETRY

Simply, in case of philosophy we can say that "we have estimative (assumption) cognition of the whole.

Everyone is a philosopher in some way, in the sense that everyone has a comprehensive knowledge of the world but this knowledge is mostly based on assumption and imagination. The task of philosophy is to replace this assumption with the knowledge of the whole world". In this regard, poetry links one's understanding, assumption, feelings of the life.

Some researchers believe that the philosophers have used the poetical forms in order to present their theories better among the people so that the people could understand their thoughts more and easier. Some others like Professor Robin think that "around the middle of the fifth century B.C. the philosophical thought was the one that could tell what under the layer of "reality" is and what the real being and the visible being are. Meditating upon the human behavior was left to the poets and legislators and philosophy did not bother to deal with such ideas" (Babae, 2007). This means that the task of poetry is to investigate the human behavior and the task of philosophy was determined as getting the general truth while today one cannot distinguish human behavior and philosophy.

The mythical literature of every nation is based on the original thoughts of true existence of things. In this regard, Dumézil, the famous French scholar, in case of the Indo-European mythical and religious-philosophical thought structure showed that "Indians and Europeans had organized societies in the ancient times and also his studies showed that the later developments of Indo-European myths were influenced by the developed Mediterranean and Western Asian civilizations" (Bahar, 2005).

Dumézil tried to restore this myths and legends as he thought those figures reveal the cultural, social, political, economic and mythical experiences of ancient Indo-Europeans. Indian, Iranian and Greek mythologies are the subsets of such classification and Dumézil concluded his study with these remarks: The original Indian society and primitive European communities, before getting split and spreading in different lands, had a three-part ideological structure. that primitive communities brought some elements of this ideology into the lands that later became the Indo-European communities habitats. One can see these elements in the vast area of ancient and mythical literature in India and Europe, from the ancient Indian Vedas to the pre-Christian Irish Tochmarc Etaine (Bahar, 2005).

Then he remarks that the common Indo-European mythology grounds are "the existence of patriarchy; the masculinity of the gods which is originated from the pastoral economy and the cow raising culture; the existence of father in Indo-European mythology such as

Dyaus-Father in India, Zeus-Father in Greece, Ahura Mazda in Iran” Also, some other common features of these mythologies are the immaterial being of the gods and the existence of religious terms in them. The poem “The Eighth Khaan”, reminds us of the Shahnameh’s legendary parts and when in the poem, Akhavan talks about the mythical legends and the ancient religions and myths, we can see the mixture of Shahnameh’s legendary parts with the aforementioned mythologies.

In “The Eighth Khaan”, the epic ancient Iran is described. The horizon of the images is open and is not confined to a certain field; therefore, thought can maneuver and get into the text:

Now I remember although, outside was dark and cold, like fear/coffeehouse was warm and bright, like shame

The use of words such as “Dark” and “Bright” in this poem is a conscious act; as the Mazdakis believed that “the light accompanies knowledge and perception and the acts caused by brightness are done due to the will. Darkness is ignorance and blindness and the acts done upon which are random and purposeless. The encounter of these principles is arbitrary and as Shahrestani thinks, their division is also arbitrary. Out of the coincidence and encounter of these principles, Good-Schemer and Evil-Schemer are created” (Bahar, 2005).

According to the writer of Bundahishn “Ohrmazd was the best in case of goodness and knowledge living in the infinite time, in the light which was his realm. Some call his realm as the infinite “Light”. Ohrmazd’s unchanging features are omniscience and absolute good-ness and some regard these two as his religion” (Mehr, 2005). In other words, “Hormazd eternally lives with his unlimited knowledge and goodness, timelessly in the light which is Hormazd’s position in the top-most while Ahriman with his destructive features and ignorance, timelessly lives in the darkness which is his place at the lowermost.

So, we can say that Akhavan’s going from darkness toward the coffeehouse light is to do a conscious act, based on thought and the narrator of the seventh khan is the narrator of ancient myths. In this regard, he is familiar with the ancient philosophy and religions. Also, in the other Zoroastrian narrations and texts, Ahriman appears in the darkness while Ahura Mazda is in the light and now Akhavan speaks about the essentials of brightness that is the light, fire and heat:

Because of the samovar, of the light, of the fire coffeehouse was warm and bright, the narrator was giving fiery message Yes, That was a warm gathering” (Abedi *et al.*, 2011, 2012)

Fire is of great importance in Zoroastrianism and also in Indo-European mythologies. “The existence of Agni in Vedas, Azar in Iran, Hestia in Greece, Vesta in ancient Rome, Ugnis Szventa in Lithuania is the natural sequence of praying and worshipping the sacred fire which existed in the grimes of primitive Indo-European people which was regarded as the existential and integrating symbol of these nations” (Bahar, 2005). Now Akhavan, after this reminiscence, presents a proof for his words:

Seven khaans narrated that Marvi man/that good and pure religious Herati man/the Eighth khan/I narrate from now on/.../ I always tell the proofs besides my words/so that the slightest doubt does not remain in the hearts/.../This is the story, the story, yes, the story of pain/this is not poetry/this the measure of Mehr (Love) and Hate of man and cowards”

The content of the proof that Akhavan wants to present is latent in the clarification of the word “Mehr” and by making it clear, there would not remain any doubts. The frequency of the use of this word in Akhavan’s poems is a lot. For instance, in the poem “The End of Shahnameh”, he describes the court of Mehr as follows:

This lawless broken harp tamed to the hands of a pale old man. sometimes it seems that it dreams itself in the Mehr’s full of light court the wonderful and joyful landscape of Zoroaster

In the same poem, he describes Mithra as without beginning and end and also he regards its meaning equal to Zurvan and says:

The big clock Ding-dong strikes aloud its arms long as the ancient Mithra’s arms/ancient and far-reaching to the lowest lowered to the highest reached

Also, in the epilogue to the “From this Avesta”, Akhavan writes: “And hails to the herald and ruler of the four great gods and angels of Ahura Mazda, the heavenly creature, Mehr who is the guardian of the convention, treaty and light and the guard of Ahura force, his long arms reaching near and far, defeating the Ahriman forces hails to the herald and ruler of these four gods, the pious man from Neishabur, the wise leader of just men and judges, the head of the kind and chivalrous men, Mazdak, the son of Bamdad, the noble redeeming, the just, fifties, hundreds, hundred hundreds, fifties thousands, hundred thousands, tens thousands hails from the all noble women and men that Ahura Mazda has created, to these two heavenly leaders and masters”.

“Mehr” was of great importance in the ancient Iran, especially in Mithraism, Zoroastrianism and Mazdak’s doctrine. In Sassanid era, Zoroastrianism was the official courtly religion and other religions could be freely propagated as the unofficial religions having their own followers. In Zurvanite religion, “Mehr” exists as the Ohrmazd’s battle instrument with Ahriman and in Zoroastrianism it is the god of bondage and oath and in ancient Greek philosophy it is regarded as the organizing element of the world.

The mithraeums of the Mithraists were built toward the east, in which three ports were embedded, among which the middle port was the biggest. In front of each side doors there were two Mehrbaans (Guardian of Mehr), one at the east with a torch holding upward and the other was on the western side, holding a torch downward. The person who was the symbol of “Mehr” would sit in the middle port and would refine the souls of the followers with the help of seven “Mehryaar” (Mehr aids). In order to reach the ports, the Saalek (disciple) had to go up “seven steps” through the mithraeums. “Seven” steps was to the memory of seven khaans and the “Fall of Adam” from the seven skies. In any case, the Saalek must ascend the seven steps or khaans to get back to the place he had fallen from and to unite with Mehr in such a way that “no one can go without any leader and the fathers had chosen among the Mehr followers, some who had the capacity and merit to ascend those seven steps” (Parto, 2009).

Each of the Mithraic khaans was considered as a stage of inner self-refinement for the Saalek and by passing each stage, he would be nearer to the stage of dividing the body and soul, continuing up to that stage that from which the soul had descended. These seven stages were mostly named after some birds so the Saalek could easily understand the message. These steps in brief are: Crow Stage in which the Saalek gets familiar with the gluttony of this bird and tries to avoid such evil demeanor. Vulture Stage where the Saalek learns about the necrophagy and scavenging feature of such bird and he is taught to repudiate such attribute and seek for introspection. Army or Soldier Stage which is also called (Nokaar) Disciple Stage and maybe the word “Nokar” (lit. Servant) is driven from the same term, in which the Saalek would wear Zunnar (Zoroastrian belt) by the order of Mehr. Lion Stage and the stage of getting familiar with this animal’s avoidance of eating dead corpse, in which the Saalek learns to ignore the worldly pelf; in this stage, the disciple is also called “Peivastaar”. Parsi or Parsaa (lit. Devotee) Stage. Mehrpouya (lit. The one who seeks for Mehr) Stage in which the disciple reach the “Mehryaar” stage and his soul was redeemed of the Ahrimani shadows. Paternal Stage in which the disciple and the

Saalek was ready to get united with the Mehr and ascend to the position, from which he had descended (Parto, 2009).” In fact the seventh khaan and stage is the stage where the soul is freed from the body and the Saalek gets spiritualized, as in Ferdowsi’s *Shahnaameh*, we see the same seventh khaan as the redemption and maturity stage in which the hero reaches the predetermined purpose (Ferdowsi, 2007).

NEGATING NIHILISM IN AKHAVAN’S POETRY

Some of the vague ideas that the contemporary literature and philosophy nowadays deal with are the terms “nothing” and “being” or “existence” which have been hot topics in the philosophical circles and human mind is unable to solve this dilemma as the mind itself is a subordinate of such problem and based on the principle “creation out of nothing” which involves the mind as well it has been incapable of giving a rational and convincing answer. In order to clarify this issue, we will discuss it from the Zoroastrian philosophical viewpoints and some of the Western philosophical ideas.

In the Zoroastrianism, the relationship between being and Ahura Mazda is defined so close that it seems “Ahura Mazda is being and being is Ahura Mazda. As such, being is not created out of nothing and all over the Gathas we do not find anything called “nothingness”; rather, we have “non-life” which is against the life, created in the human ideas and not out of void. What exists in the world is not apart from Ahura Mazda (Parto, 2009).

In mystical literature, being is based on the Wahy (lit. revelation), hadith and the sayings of Imams which is governed by God and people are prohibited to question such issue. However, in Zoroastrianism, being is perceived by the human mind and enlightenment and “on this physical part, human can go beyond perception, reaching consciousness up to the level of judgment”.

The ancient materialistic Greek philosophy regards the basis of being of four elements of water, wind, earth and fire and the Greek philosophers thought that these classical elements form the basis of being and if they are mixed with one another, they take a form of being and if they are divided, they disappear. Anything that exists does not vanish and that which does not exist cannot be created, the idea which is reflected in Persian literature.

Also, it was first Parmenides who stated such philosophical view as he “regarded ‘being’ or in his terms ‘existence’ as the essence and compared it with ‘becoming’, that is producing, changing and destruction and he called the study on ‘being’ as the true path and

speaking of 'becoming' and "nothingness" as the thought pass and he encouraged human to study on the 'existent' with a poetical, symbolic and soft language. This is why some call Parmenides as one of the first 'ontologists' (Hooman, 1969)

The relationships between the Iranians and the Greek philosophers in ancient times, caused that the Zoroastrian philosophy be fused with the Greek ideas, as many Zoroastrian doctrines has been affected by Western philosophy. Some linguists also think that Heraclitus was familiar with Zoroaster's philosophy and Iranian doctrines. Among these linguists, Lawrence Heyworth Mills in the book titled "Zoroaster and Iranians" writes: "we must confess that Heraclitus knew about the Mazda doctrine because when Heraclitus became well known, the Iranian forces had reached the Ephesus gates." Although, such reason is not enough, we can say that expanding concepts such as war, interplay of opposites, eternal fire, etc. have been the result of Heraclitus's familiarity with Iranian ideas" (Hooman, 1969).

However, there seems to be a difference between the ancient Greek and Western philosophy with the Zoroastrian doctrine which is "originally and since the time of naturalist metaphysics introduction, the essence of Western thought was basically profane and worldly, according to personal whimsical utilitarianism which is essentially contrary to the concept of virtue in religious ideology which based on the idea of redemption, believing in the other world and sacrifice" (Zarshenas, 2007). Such idea is more conspicuous in the modern nihilist approach and it is "based on four foundations of humanism, subjectivism, worldly speculative utilitarianism and instrumental temporal reason and it has also demonstrated some relativist and totalitarian sensual absolutism as it has developed" (Zarshenas, 2007).

Heidegger, the secular existentialist philosopher, has another definition of being which is "if 'being' is not a concept such as 'existence' or the highest case of creatures or a creature such as will, life, soul, matter, becoming, imagination, essence, subject, energy, eternal recurrence, etc. which are regarded as the original and primary existent, so what is it? And his answer to such question in brief is that 'being' is the same is 'non-being' and we must immediately add not the absolute non-being" (Heidegger, 2014). In such views, being is equal to non-being. Now, Akhavan in the "Eighth Khaan", besides noting the ethical message of reproofing cowardice, goes on to negate the "nihilist" approach and disagrees with the Western existentialism, subjectivism and "Dasein" which is the result of Western existentialism and nihilism, since in these philosophical doctrines, the

human is regarded as a cast-away and self-sufficient creature and each of these terms is related to the nihilism and existentialism and we can say that Akhavan rejects such philosophical schools and says his poetry:

Is not an empty and absolute artless poem.
Nothing- like void is not the best

Simply, we can define nihilism as "oblivion of truth and being engaged with amnesia and illusion. Nihilism is to forget about the truth, denying its existence and negating the meaning and transcendental aspect and end of life and to get far from the 'real self' and 'one's spiritual essence" (Zarshenas, 2007). In other words, "nihilism is regarded as the worldly resistance towards meaning and sometimes, this nihilistic idea is overcome by aesthetics and in this regard, some "emphasize the creativity and the wonderful solution that the artwork possess and also the "miraculous expression" which impresses the readers and philosophers" (Deranty, 2014).

In short, the existentialist features and the nihilist basics are: the precedence of existence over essence anxiety, or the "Angst" due to the absurd existence of human being vanity and purposelessness of life void and nothingness void in existentialist terms means death, void as death which is the eventual nothingness of human alienation (Babae, 2007). So, when Akhavan says "nothing like void is not the best", he is negating the protagonist's death and somehow disagrees with the nihilistic idea of death as the basis of life.

Here, we must clarify all these. Firstly, we should consider Rostam's and Shaghad's birth; where, we see an idea quite contrary to the existentialists and nihilists that think human is cast-away and his life is void of meaning and believe that one should make his/her own destiny. In that story, as Rostam and Shaghad are born, their destiny and fate are clear, the matter which is against the existentialists' idea. As Rostam is born, Simorgh tells his future life story to Zaal which means that his destiny is clear from the outset.

Roodabeh is upset at the time of giving birth. Zaal, lights Simorgh's feather he has and Simorgh appears and this is how Simorgh tells about Rostam's life and death:

"Simorgh told Zaal why are you so upset, Why so much grieve and tears, That from this tall, beautiful woman. A lion cub will be born, a well-known one, That his footstep will kiss the lions. No cloud would dare to pass over him. From his yell, the panther's skin. Will be torn away and it will panic. Any champion if sees his mace. Or his broad breast, arms and neck. With his yell will be done away. The warrior's heart it will sway".

As Rostam wants to Esfandiar, Simorgh appears again and tells Rostam about his fate after killing Esfandiar:

The one who Esfandiar's blood. Sheds, would be hunted by the fate, And will be in pain till the death, Neither can escape, nor would gain"

And when Simorgh tells Rostam about the consequence of killing Esfandiar, Rostam accepts such fate and kills Esfandiar. Also, when Shaghad is born, the fortunetellers predict his fate and tell his relatives his future destiny. This means that in contrast with the existentialist and nihilist ideas, the protagonist's life is purposeful.

"Searched and explored the secrets of the skies. There is no child like him in the world. As this beautiful child grows up. To the age he will be a champion. He will destroy Saam, Neiram's seed. A defeat in the power he would do indeed".

The birth story of these two heroes, negates the existential priority that the existentialists seek for, since they "emphasize the precedence of existence over the essence which means that they think human is not predetermined and pre-made; rather, he would make his own destiny. No fate is determined in advance. This amounts to the precedence of the existence of cogito as a conscious subject who regardless of what essence is left to it and apart from any predefinitions by science, philosophy, religion or politics (Babae, 2007).

Now, after Rostam and Shaghad's death, we need to have a righteous judgment which is "formulated by the human mind and intellect and we can see such thing with the other physical and psychological capabilities. In other words, on this physical part, human can go beyond perception, reaching consciousness up to the level of judgment" (Parto, 2009):

And he thought that he should not say nothing and he thought again that unmanly dirty treachery again that old illusion closed-up pit, Hum! How despicable! Battle this means battle with an old champion and he thought that he should not think"

Now, we come to this question that why should not him think? Maybe because the oath-breaking of Shaghad and his accomplices is so disgraceful that language cannot bear to express it or it contradicts the common sense? In philosophical point of view, human can reach the truth by thinking; in Western philosophy, thought is the only instrument to reach the truth; while in Zoroastrian philosophy, how one thinks is more important.

In Zoroastrianism, "how to think is taught with two terms, "Good Thought" and "Pure Thought". Good

Thought is like proper thinking and human can gain the prime secret only by means of proper thinking (Yasna 48) A proper thinking that as it is mentioned in Yasna 30 is clear and deep thinking; clear thinking is to think about an issue in a way that we can clearly perceive or see it; as in the darkness, in which nothing can be observed, thought is unable to "know" and is engaged with wrong judgments" (Parto, 2009).

Also in the Zoroastrian philosophy, anyone who has learned the proper way of thinking, would reach the pure reason and with that, he can help Ahura Mazda in ordering the world. In this doctrine, justice is based on three main principles: "Humata or Good Thoughts, Hukhta or Good Words, Huvarshta or Good Deeds and the two later tenets are created after the first one as "human cannot say good words and is not inclined toward goodness, unless he thinks good". A kind of good thought that would bring about perfection and a stable life. Hence, we see that the epistemological approaches and ways of reaching the truth are basically different in Zoroastrianism and Western existentialist philosophy, in which the basis of life is regarded to be void and in vain. Now, the protagonist of Akhavan's poem, Rostam in such situation that he may not think right, denies any kind of thought and eventually he becomes the victim of his fate. Thus, he should not have any kind of thought. As in Zoroastrian philosophy, when one thinks well, "he will become aware of his incompetence against the perfect being and he would decide to reach that perfection, so that he would be eternal and united with Ahura Mazda. Such "eternal life" is not escaping from "death", as the death is a part of such being doctrine. This eternal life is preparing the soul for the union with "Faravahar ". The award he gets is eternal life and getting back to Faravahar in the joy house and this is the very future being with all the heavenly aspirations" (Parto, 2009). Here, such eternal life in Zoroastrian doctrine is against the nihilist ideas who think that in "the other world, no one will welcome our human wants with meaning and order" (Deranty, 2014):

And for a while, no longer did he think he tells a story this was terribly easy and facile for him he could if he wanted to open his curved lasso and throw it up onto a tree, a clamp or a stone and climb he could if he wanted but

The reason why Rostam does not climb out of the pit and welcomes the death is that he has accepted his destiny as it was clear from the outset. Also, another important note here is that the poem "The Eighth Khaan"

ends openly and unfinished to make room for more thought which indicates that “every unfinished work points to a thing more than itself, the thing which is still lost and hidden, the thing which only can give the full meaning of the work” (Gadamer, 2014) and this unfinished work of Akhavan, needs more thought to be through.

CONCLUSION

Love, freedom and liberty, reform, eliminating ethnic discriminations and classicism are the most common poetic motifs in Akhavan-Sales’s works. These motifs are foregrounded resorting to Zoroastrian philosophy of life; thus, concepts used in Akhavan-Sales’s poems are more plausible and require knowledge of their history for proper understanding, in particular, The Eighth Labor which is a poem reminiscent of ancient Persia. In this poem, Akhavan attempts to portray the immortality of the hero, Rostam and condemn the cowardice of Shaghaad; to do so, he integrates vocabularies which have symbolic significance and ancient history in Zoroastrian philosophy. He wants to emphasize that the death of Rostam by Shaghaad is not an end to his life; rather, from the perspective of Zoroastrian philosophy, he finds an immortal life which, given the symbolic lexicon is juxtaposed against nihilistic philosophical view according to which the death of man is his destruction.

In The Eighth Labor, although Rostam disappears with Shaghaad’s last arrow, his memory remains immortal and eternal on earth. He shows that fraud and deceit which will be cursed to the end of time, are mortal.

Akhavan discusses life and non-life according to Zoroastrian philosophy and religion; Zoroastrian non-life is thoroughly different from nihilist’s nothingness and, in turn, immortality of the hero is noted. As a social reformist with an ideologically classical history, he fights inequality and the unjust so that he can breathe a new spirit into life and revive the forgotten ancient ritual again. According to Akhavan, The Eighth Labor is a poem of life and immortality strengthened with ancient and religious history; thus, such poems are open to several intellectual perspectives, such as Zoroastrianism and Mazdak religion in Akhavan-Sales’s poetry. So, readers and researchers must recognize and identify such intellectual foundations and try to understand them properly to build support for current ideas.

It is suggested for scholars and researchers who intend to explicate thoughts and attitudes of poet in relation to a specific subject to review the poet’s thought progress from beginning to end so that he can identify certain intellectual viewpoints within a delimited time of the life of the poet and judge his ideas depending on that particular context to avoid issuing general and reckless interpretations. Akhavan researchers must comply with the same rules and explore different sections of his life and, the, judge that certain period and avoid overall judgments.

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