

Ethics And Moral Values As Reflected In Arabic Poetry

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Abstract

Poetry that is the earliest form of Arabic literature is well reflection of the entire Arab society. All reputed characteristics that prevailed among the Arabs are described in Arabic poetry of all the stages. Words praising the own tribe criticizing other tribes unfairly have been observed in most of the forms of Arabic poetry. Above this, ethics and moral values that govern a person or groups behavior made an impact on the early Arabic poetry and poetry in the further stages. In the early Islamic period several poets were influenced by the ethics and moral values of Islam i.e. Quran and Hadith and composed verses that contain the moral principles which make motivated one's behavior and the quality of peaceful social adjustment. This paper is an attempt to picturize the presence of the thought of ethics and moral values in both of the categories of Arabic poetry --- Classical Arabic Poetry and Modern Arabic Poetry. It will present and discuss the noble spirit of the Arab poets as manifested through their poetical works.

Keywords: *Arabic Literature, Ethics, Moral values, Classical Arabic Poetry, Modern Arabic Poetry.*

Introduction: Arabs encountered an unexampled state of chaos restlessness and violence, because of their thoughts and therefore, they adopted moral values in literary section which made effect on their cultural and intellectual status. The concept of ethics and moral values is surrounded around some excellent characteristics of human life like righteousness, good character, kindness, charity, forgiveness, love, justice, honesty, tolerance, fulfillment of promise, modesty, humility, decent speech, trustworthiness, patience, truthfulness, anger management, sincerity, generosity, respecting elders etc. It is all about the moral qualities and virtue's that should be practiced in the best possible way by every sensible person of a society. One can study ethics through understanding the moral rules and the rational foundation of moral perspectives. Here is an attempt to link moral Philosophy of Arab with its poetry. It will shed light on moral values and ethics adopted by the Arabs of all ages.

Pre-Islamic poetry and ethics: Ethic and moral value was one of the significant themes of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. Though, pre-Islamic period was at the height of barbarism and ignorance and the Arab people were divided into various tribes, there some young and educated persons existed with their noble thinking. Most of them were the poets who were regarded as historian, soothsayer, propagandist and leader of the tribes and they were outstanding figure in such an age. Amongst them Juhayr bin abi Sulma (d.607 AD), well known as the wise poet of pre-Islamic period, had composed many verses that reflected the noble thought like morality and wisdom. In his famous mua'allaha poetry there is a clear picture of generosity, gratefulness, wisdom, truthfulness, politeness, and peace before the advent of Islam. Again, the thought of God fearing and faith upon the day of resurgence and the Supreme power of the Universe is visible through his verses as he tells:

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“Don’t conceal anything from Allah whatever in your mind, even if it may be hidden and whenever you will conceal anything from Allah, He knows it well.”

Juhayr bin Abi-Sulma hated war and called the combatant people for peace through his poetry and expressed his vast gratitude upon the peacemaker and mediators like Harim bin Sinan and Harith bin Aouf.

Another one poet is Hatim al-Tai, who is very popular for his extreme generosity in the History of Arabic literature and often regarded as an example of morality. His name is famous for virtue to the eternity. He composed his verses with a great and nice purpose and in most of his poems he expressed the distinguished qualities of human being like nobleness, charity, love, philanthropy, guest compliments, courage etc.

Some other poets like Al-Nabigha (d.604 AD), Antarah bin Shaddad (d.624 AD), Samauwal bin Adia, Umaiya bin abi-Salt (d.624 AD) etc. also are there who mentioned morality and ethics in their poetical compositions. Thus, because of the noble endeavor that made by these poets, poetry of the pre-Islamic era has become able to reveal that Arabs were at times flexible and tolerant and filled with other virtues that are most necessary for well adjustment in the human society.

Early Islamic poetry and ethical verses: In the early Islamic period, Arabic poetry was influenced to the immense by the noble principle and fundamental purpose of Islamic morality and ethics. Teachings on morality and moral values constitute a major part of the Islamic literature and the Holy Quran and the Hadith which two are the central religious texts of Islam, serves as the primary source for these teachings. Both the Quran and the Hadith instruct its followers to adopt a character that is upright from the side of morality and ethics. The messages of holy Quran played a vital role to the development of Arabic poetry. Several poets of this time composed verses which contain moral values and ethics and the revelation of Islam added the divine dimension to these values. Mukhdareem poets like Hassan bin Thabit, Al- Khansa were one step ahead in this side. They expressed through their poetical work the thought of religious value and mentioned Loyalty, God fearing, Honor, Sacrifice, Devotion etc. Above them the four rightly guided Caliphs also contributed a lot to the development of moral values in the common living system. Through different way they tried to establish morality, spirituality, and other virtues among the people. Hazrat Ali, who was a very skillful writer and composer often, uttered his poetical sayings that filled with moral sense.

Again, Al-Farazdaq, one of the outstanding poets of The Umayyad period, reminded the value of ethics to the Caliph Hisham bin Abd al-Malik when he was found to misbehave with Imam Jaynul Abedin. Al-Farazdaq told:

“It is he, who is the son of the best among all the men of God
 And it is he, who is the most pious and devout,
 The purest and most unstained,
 The chastest and most righteous
 A symbol of Islam!”

Abbasid poetry and the existence of ethics and moral values: It is revealed from study that Arabic poetry has largely been flourished in the Abbasid period with moral values and ethics. In the poetical works of Mutanabbi, Abul Atahiya, Ibn Rumi, Abu Nuwas, Abul Ala Al- Ma’arri and many others it is easily noticeable. Many of their verses bear human spirits to the greater society covering the very common issues and ideas of moral values. Again, Diwan al-Hamasah of Abu Tamam, which is considered as a treasury of classical Arabic poetry, includes in its third chapter entitled as Baab al-Adab, nearly about 55 pieces of specific poems that are related to ethics and morality.

Concept of Morality in Modern Arabic Poetry: Modern Arabic poetry which is the most advanced form of Arabic literature is well reflection of the social system that prevails in the current time. Till date there are so many poetries available that carries the concept of ethics and moral values. If we look through the eminent poets of Modern Arabic literature like Ahmad Shawqi Bek, Hafiz Ibrahim, Khalil Mutran, Mikhail Nuwayma and Iliya Abu Madi, then it can be observed that their poems contain morality along with another issue. Ahmad Shawqi, one of the greatest poets of the Modern era, used poetry as a vehicle for contemporary social commentary. He composed various poems reminding responsibilities and duties of the people of Egyptian society. Through his verses, Shawqi tried to inculcate knowledge as well as moral values in the new, young generation. As for example, in his poem entitled 'Qum lil-Mua'allim' he compared ignorance to death and considered proper education which includes moral integrity in it, as the one and only antidote of death that happens for ignorance. Again, he has pointed out the important role of parents and teachers in their children's moral development.

The poem 'Al-Ummu Madrassa', composed by Hafiz Ibrahim is a nice example of ethics and morality. Here the poet Hafiz has talked about the virtues of women that are often unnoticed and disregarded by most of the people of society. Also, he expressed about modesty and how it makes a woman fully beautiful. The plead for women empowerment through education, well upbringing of girl child, stopping female infanticide, equality between male and female, love for native land etc. are another noble thought reflected in his poetry.

Mahjar poetries also contain the thought of ethics and morality in large extent, as it is seen in the composition of famous Mahjar poet Iliya Abu Madi, Mikhail Nuwaima and others. One of the most significant features of Mahjar literature is inclination towards humanity. To them value of humanity was a matter of great importance. The sympathized and affectionate address like "Ya Akhi, Ya Rafiqi" figured in Mahjar literature, touched the core of heart, and thereby took birth affection and love therein. Again, Patriotism is another aspect observed in Mahjar poetry that is emerged from value system. The thought of spiritual value also there that distinguishes good and evil existed in human body and soul. Above these, some Mahjar poets talked about the virtues of women that disregarded and often neglected by the society. Thus, modern Arabic poetry is enriched with the concept of ethics and moral values.

Conclusion: Poetry held an important position in the history of Arabic literature. Poetry and its poet played vital role in the Arab society. Common people followed the poets and their noble utterances. If anyone feels the need of knowing about the Arab people and their society then he or she should go for the poetry section of Arabic literature as it reflects the authentic and genuine picture of the Arab people and society of different ages, for which Arabic poetry is well known as the register of the Arabs. Arabic poetry has been glittering like stars in the sky of Arabic literature for ages and still in the eyes of various critics and poets as a perfect illustration in the composition of Arabic odes and availability of their lyrical elements. An attempt has been made through this short paper to depict briefly about the existence of ethics and moral values in Arabic poetry as a whole. With the help of analytical method, here are drawn the endeavor that Arab poets made for the establishment of the concept of moral values and ethics in the human society through their poetries.

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