

## SHAKESPEARE : THE CHARIOTEER OF UNBRIDLED PERSIAN “ISHQ”

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Some of the concepts, which are linked with human intellect or emotions, never change, with the passage of time and certainly they beat the temporal and geographical boundaries. The intensity, the treatment and the way to express may differ from place to place and time to time, but the essence remains the same. “Love”, is one of those themes or concepts, which is so much embedded in the persona of an individual that it has presented a kaleidoscopic view of itself in different times and at different geographical locations.

This research paper is an endeavor to compare the thoughts and feelings about and of love at different locations of the world and of course at different time fragments. The time fragments chosen are 13th century of Persian poets, in Persia and 16th century of Elizabethan poets in England, with a focus on Shakespeare and his sonnets. In this research Shakespearean sonnets, rich in fervor and full of intense love are compared with the epoch making Sufi poets of Persia of 13th century and the purpose is to show that how beautifully the poets derive from the Nature for their poetry and the social conditions change the way which in turn affects the intensity and magnitude but essence remains same, everywhere and everytime.

“Love” has always remained a celebrated theme with the poets all over the world and it has affected the minds and hearts of the readers beyond temporal and geographical boundaries. Poets who decorated the pages of history with the Persian words as the advocates of indomitable “Love” are a bit extravagant in their thoughts and expressions and their explanations about feelings of a lover and a beloved always oscillate between the extremes of heavenly bliss and unbearable pain.

On close examination it becomes crystal clear that in the form of Shakespeare, the West had found an echo of 13th century Persian poets but in an acceptable and practical form which was felt and appreciated by each and every class of the society and not only by the nobles and lords. Love between Romeo and Juliet, Ferdinand and Miranda etc. are the repetitions of the Persian love stories like Khosrow-o-Sheerin and Leyli-o-Majnoon.

Shakespeare’s conception of “Love” can be traced in his sonnets where the lover and beloved are indulged sometimes in their spiritual elevation and entangled sometimes in their carnal desires.

Persian poets never allowed the mingling of two different types of “Love” i.e. spiritual and physical, which they call as “Ishq-e- Haqiqi” and “Ishq-e-Mazazi” respectively. But in this mundane life, it is not possible to maintain such distinctions in a relationship and here arise almost all the reasons to celebrate Shakespeare who plays with the malleability and tenacity of the emotions and makes this realization of Love, a blissful experience for everyone.

Persian poetry talks about the love of a king or a saint(sufi). The poems of Rumi and Ameer Khusroo celebrate love remaining outside the prescribed boundaries and they become unstoppable even by the Religion e.g.

“Ba zere- kungurae-kibrayash mardanand  
Farishta saaid o payambar shikaro yazda geer”

which means that in the shade of the Love (form of Brahmaa), there are standing such warriors who can hunt down angels, priests and even God.

In the poetry of Sauda, one of the greatest poets of Persian language, we can find the softness of a human being and his celebration of the Universal love. In one of his poems, Sauda says:

“ Maykhush-o-mushaf bisoz-o-aatish andar kaaba zan  
Saakine butkhaana baash-o-mardumaazaari makum”

which means one can drink wine, one can set the holy Quraan on fire, one is allowed to sit before an idol but one must not hurt anyone because this is the greatest sin.

Shakespeare also celebrates “Love” in a comprehensible manner but the intensity and zeal or to be more precise, the fearlessness in Persian poets is not that much evident in him. Shakespeare, the bard and the dramatist as well, never challenges the things and agencies which are beyond the human capacity. He respects Time and Death. But the Persian poets are not ready to accept Death as the end. The exact treatment of Time and Death in the poems of Shakespeare and that of the Persian poets can be seen easily with the example which follows:

In his Sonnet no.73, Shakespeare expresses his feelings in the lines written below:

“As after sunset fadeth in the West,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death’s second self that seals up all in the rest.”

In the above lines Shakespeare very humbly accepts the power of death which engulfs everything that is born and marks an end. But on the other hand fuelled by the conception of Ishq-e- Haqiqi , Omar Khayyam portrays Death as follows:

“ Maa zaat-e-nihaada dar sifaatem hama  
Ain-e-khirad-o-survrae-e-zaatem hama  
Taa dar siftem dar mamaatem hama  
Chu raft sifat, ain-e-hayatem hama”

The poet in the above line says “I am that person without attributes who is surrounded by attributes. I am complete but since I am covered with attributes, I look like a fool. I am with Death because of these attributes. The day all these attributes will be destroyed, I will emerge as a complete life.”

Without any doubt the above lines by Omar Khayyam seem emphatic and majestic but Shakespeare feels more practical about Death and that is clearly evident in the above lines.

Shakespeare loves but he accepts human limitations and with these also he continues to love. The English bard is not ready to stop himself from loving because of his limitations and that is very much evident in his Sonnet no.51 “ Thus can My Love Excuse The Slow Offence”. In this sonnet , the poet wants to reach his friend as soon as possible and he feels his horse is a bit slow , so, he gets down from it and starts running towards the city. The Persian poets and Shakespeare also share the undeniable optimism as one of the common traits, again varying in magnitude. Shakespeare prays to make his Love immortal when he says:

“His beauty shall in these black line be seen,  
And they shall live, and he in them still green.”

Sonnet 63

On the other hand Hafiz Sheerazi confirms his liberation because of Love in the following lines:

“ Baaz mee goyamo az guftaye-khud dilshaadam  
Banda e ishq-o-az har do jahaan aazadam”

In these lines the poet says “ I am repeating this fact again and I am also feeling happy to say that I am slave of Love and I am free from the fetters of both the worlds.”

Shakespeare in his sonnets has shown his cravings for his friend and his beloved and for his expression he needs their existence and their attributes, moulding the same of the poet. On the contrary “Ishq” of the Persian poets is self motivated and without taste, ambition and destination. Shakespeare wants to acquire the love of his friend or beloved and poets of Persia want to possess “Love” itself. Shakespeare wants his feelings to define “Love” and the poets of Persian language try to acquire the never ending bliss with their feelings.

These feelings of the Persian poets is beautifully depicted in the lines by Jaami:

“ Banda-e-ishq shudi tark-e-nasab kun ‘Jaami’  
Ki darin raah fulaan-ibn-e-fulaan cheezein neest.”

which means that “O! Jaami, once you have accepted the slavery of Ishq (Love), then rest of the acquaintances and identities are of no use.”

Love fuelled both Shakespeare and the Persian poets ,though in different parts of the globe and in different fragment of Time. On comparison , it can be traced out easily that both the conceptions of love by Shakespeare and the Persian poets respectively , were true to their respective times and this fact grants them the confidence to emphasize their potential. Shakespeare says as follows:

“And yet to times in hope, my verse shall stand  
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.”

\_ Sonnet No.60

Persian poets also emphasize their capability in the words of Rumi;

“ Na shabam na shab parastam ki hadeese khwaab goyam  
Chu ghulam-e-aaftabam, hama aaftab goyam.”

which means that “ Neither I am night nor the lover of night, who will say good things for good dreams. I am slave of sun and every word said by me is as bright as sun itself.”

Love , in the whole world is a feeling to celebrate and everyone has celebrated it in his/her times but this comparison really establishes a relation between 13th century Persian poetry and Shakespearean poetry which celebrates love and shows that how with the passage of time the unbridled Persian “Ishq” was tamed with the prudence of Shakespeare and the ideas of his 16th century.

Hence , it can be concluded that whether it be pederasty or the unstoppable love, the poets of the different hemispheres differed only in magnitude and of course the bard from Stratford-on-Avon bridles the unconquerable and intense Love of the Persian poetry and without diminishing its beauty makes it more palatable for the masses.

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