

CURRENTOLOGY OF SONG AND SONG WRITING AFTER THE VICTORY OF ISLAMIC REPUBLIC¹

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Abstract. Song is a general term in Persian literature that refers to various types of poetic forms which are associated with music particularly Fahlaviat, two-couplet, quatrain and stanzas. "Fahlaviat, Gusan, Khosrawani, Gulbang, Tasnif and so on and so forth, were other names that had been used for referring to this poetic form in the course of history" (Bahar, 1965: 60). Moreover, some have understood *Taraneh* (Persian terms for song) (Taranak, Tarangeh, Tarang, Rang) as a derivative of *Tar* in the sense of fresh, young and well driven from an Avestaeian root, i.e. *Turuneh* (Dad, 1996: 68). This term today is generally used by literary experts to refer to two-couplets (do-beyti) and in music it is usually tantamount to musical composition, song, rhyme, and melody as well as melodic poem. Music and first written document of song, according to Kadkani, "dates back to a song by Barbod the poet and musician of the court of Sassanid Khosrow Parvis" (Kadkani, 1989: 102). Song after undergoing through historical changes of Islamic eras, wars and peace, and movements came to Islamic Revolution of Iran and evolved to what we are witness to now. The language of song today has become more intimate and easier to understand and this has its origin in the social and cultural changes of Islamic community. The current essay is an effort to investigate the changes of song writing based on a study of the song currents. Of course, for the sake of a better understanding a short history of song writing as well as a discussion of the definitions of the key terms of this melodic literary branch has also been provided.

Key words: Song, Song Writer, Melodic Composition, Music.

Introduction. Poetry has had an inseparable relationship with the concept of music in the course of history. "As if a special and mythical cause has combined these two together. They are the children of the same mother and also the splitters of the hidden mysteries of human primordial nature" (Purnamdarian, 2006" 15). The goal of the present study is discovering these relations and their introduction. This is exactly what causes a melodic stanza despite its poor literary expression and technique to turn to an eternal ballad in the minds of several generations due to its association with music.

"The song writer resorts to music for making his poetry popular and lasting. On the other hand, the artistic character and behavioral structure as well as the internal and external prestige of the composer and singer of the song take form based on the ideas imbedded in the song insofar as these two groups ignorantly insist on these concepts" (Binesh, 2001: 30). In the present essay we have discussed the history of the formation and growth of this poetic form in the past half century based on currentological methods. The methodology of this research in analytical classification of the historical currents is based on precision on a special event which has had an impact on the course of the history of song like Iran/Iraq war (Sacred Defense). Sometimes the history of social, political and cultural transformations of Iran has been associated with this context (like revolutionary songs) while some other time the songs had the least relevance to their historical context like child songs which are not limited to a special period of time and is the case with all eras. In analytical perspective of the current study it has been attempted by bringing examples and evidences the concepts become more documented and provable.

Song on the Threshold of Islamic Revolution. Before the 1960s and 1970s Persian song was dominated by traditional literature of Iran and sonnets writing a la Ali Akbar Khan Sheyda had established its roots in the domain of song writing with minor modifications and thus there was almost no room for any change. Furthermore, the ever-increasing growth of shallow nightclub style songs which were then known as Laleh Zar style songs had contaminated the ears of Iranian audience and the need for a deep transformation in the field of song writing was felt. On the other hand, modern Persian poetry had become then popular among the literature fans thanks to the efforts of Nima and his followers and the expectations from song had were higher. Amid these efforts it seems that Shahyar Qanbari in collaboration with Babak Afshar, Varoujan and Faeqeh Atashin struggled to modernize Iranian music. It was the winter of 1970 that they introduced the song of *Story of Two Fish* to Persian song and music. This revolutionary movement first faced tough reactions on the behalf of the disc production companies as well as the experts of music and song writers. It was estimated that this movement will fail but the latter estimation did not become true and the audience received this movement warmly and many started to support this new style by writing similar songs. This type of song writing gradually turned to a wave that later came to be known as "modern song" (Barkashly, 2004: 115).

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Ardalan Sarafraz, Iraj Janati Ataei, Zoya Zakarian, Mansur Tehrani and many others joined this movement and the music of Varoujan, Babak Bayat, Babak Afsahr, Esfanyar Munfaridzadeh, Turaj Shabankhani, Farid Roland, Hassan Shamaeizadeh and others started to support these song writers insofar as this newly emerged style turned to the major song writing current in the shortest time.

The song writers of this era despite the common goal that they were pursuing differed in method and vision to a considerable extent. Shahyar Qanbari had an urban, complicated and majorly imaginative vision as compared to other song writers and Iraj Janati Ataei used a language based on the compound phrases and concentration on the revival of forgotten words. Ardalan Sarafraz wrote simple and popular songs that could be repeated fluently by the general public. The other writers were a combination of these three perspectives. Of course, besides these song writers the previous generation continued to write new songs and sometimes it antagonized this group. The poets made certain experiences in this field including Shamlu, Hossein Monzavi, Nozar Parang, Muhammad Ali Bahmani and others. Bahmani and Monzavi were among the active song writers and poets after the victory of revolution that we will discuss in detailed fashion below. One can also refer to the names of other song writers of this era like Mohammad Salih Ala, Leila Kasra, Akbar Azad, Mohammad Ali Shirazi, Homa Mir Afshar, Masud Hushmand, Farhang Qasemi, Farhad Sheybani, Shermin Shajareh, Saeed Dabiri, Farshad Eshqi, Bizhan Samandar, Masud Amini and others.

Song after Islamic Revolution. After the Islamic Revolution of Iran an atmosphere full of hope and enthusiasm emerged among Iranian youth and society. The gates of freedom, independence, republicanism, development and democracy were opened from all directions and an unprecedented struggle and activity was seen in artists' community. These actions and reactions and the existing revolutionary spirit among the song writers paved the ground for the creation of works which were in line with the worldview and ideals of the society (Musavi, 2011: 86).

Sheyda and Aref groups came together and released an album named *Chavush 2* in early days of the victory of revolution and this followed immediately by the emergence of *Chavush 3* in music market. Both albums contained revolutionary songs that reflected all social tensions resulted from revolution and political spirit of Iranian people.

The song *Baharan Khujasteh Bad* (Merry Spring) was written amid the revolution by Daneshyan. Esfandiyar Munfaridzadeh wrote the notes and played all instruments and recorded it with the assistance of a number of unprofessional singers. This song was built in commemoration of the anniversary of the execution of Khosrow Golestorkhi but after its extensive popularity it became a national song and few people know the true impetus behind the creation of this song:

Weather turned friendly and the flower came out of soil/ Swallow sang the hopeful song of return/ Blood started to boil in the veins of the plant/ Good fortune spring is staggering on the road;

The other song that was a product of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the time is the song of "Unity" written by

Siavash Kasraei and composed by Esfandiari Monfaridzadeh. Farhad Mahrhad was the singer of this song and it could be considered an expression of the Islamist interests of intellectuals in the course of Islamic Revolution" (Purjavadi, 2006: 26).

Song in Sacred Defense Period. If the researchers of contemporary history of Iran identify 1970s with the concept of Islamic Revolution certainly they do know 1980s the decade of war. "Epic music among various ethnic groups of Iran was particularly of a significant role in the warfare of Iranian warriors and gradually this type of music found its place in the religious theatres, condolence theaters, and even ancient sport in the form of playing drums and bell in Power Houses (Zur Khaneh)" (Hasuri, 1999: 203).

The prevailing music and content in the songs of the 8 years of Sacred Defense were more influenced by the elegiac poems written in commemoration of the Prophet's Household instead of western style music. The poems and songs struggled to reconstruct the events of Ashura. This major tendency could be seen in the names of military operations, codes and symbols of the headquarters, and the names of squads. All these were inspired by the elegiac poems of Imam Hossein and his household and this culture was the leitmotif of the songs of 8 years of imposed war. Besides religious elegies and mourning for Prophetic Household, Iranian National Orchestra as well as the traditional music groups played effective roles via composing music and writing songs of war. Of course, the lack of popular music known as Pop was felt in this era and if a single singer like Husam al-Din Siraj released music in this field it would be warmly welcomed by youth and the soldiers in the battle ground. "However, the need and taste of part of the society was neglected. On the other hand, the villagers and religiously minded people and those who were less exposed to modern music provided their spiritual needs by religious elegies" (Ruh al-Amin, 2001: 258).

Such singers as Ahangaran and Kuvaytipur introduced the melodies and local religious music into the culture of war song and music. Ahangaran used the melodies of Shushtari, Bakhtiari and Dezfuli in his songs and Kuvaytipur from Bushehri melodies. Among musicians one can refer to the names of Mohammad Reza Lotfi, Shahram Nazeri, Majid Entezami, Mohammad Golriz, Javad Alizadeh, Javad Alizadeh and Shajaryan who were pioneers of this current and produced numerous works. A number of the song writers of imposed war are as follows: Soheil Mahmoudi, Saed Baqeri, Seyed Hassan Hosseini, Ahmad Azizi, Abd al-Jabbar Kakaie, Parviz Beigi Habibabadi, Nasrullah Mardani, Iraj Qanbari, Mohammad Reza Abdulmalekian, Salman Harati, Moshfeq Kashani, Hamid Sabzewari, Fatemeh Rakei, Alireza Qazveh.

Systematic Songs. Since 10 years before Islamic Revolution the Center for Preservation and Promotion of Iranian Music and the Department of Music of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Tehran University started a movement towards returning to tradition which particularly after the Revolution came to fruition following the elimination of popular music from the

official scene of music of the country. The trained students of these two institutes resisted first the media music and struggled to revive the traditional values of Iranian music. In the domain of melodic songs this movement intended to purify the systematic (Dastgah based) music that had been westernized before the Revolution. The first steps were taken via performance of old melodies without resorting to western instruments and techniques. Following this the musicians started to compose new melodies and for distinguishing themselves from the early song writers they revived the term *Tasnif* (meolody).

Young musicians decided to choose the texts of their melodies from the classic books of poetry and thus eliminated the song writer from the process of composing the *Tasnif* in order to turn their back wholly to the modern song and song writing and revive the art of *Tasnif* and in this way they acted in an untraditional fashion. Moreover, they preferred to use the minimum extra words and phrases and instead let the music and melody to take the lead. However, the application of the solution proposed by Amir Jahid for preservation of the dynamicity of music (based on the use of stanza with unequal meters) was indeed impossible where the texts of ballads were chosen from the classic works of poetry. Of course, some innovations in the field of rhythm (using 7 beats and 5 beats meters) could cover the lack of freshness in music expression to some extent. It is also noteworthy that in this era there was no longer a place for a professional ballad writer. Among those who were involved in the creation of this type of music one can refer to great masters of Iranian music like Mohammad Reza Lotfi, Hossein Alizadeh, Parviz Meshkati and Mohammad Reza Shajarian.

Song in Our Time. Song and song writing reached a more peaceful and intelligible bed after passing through continuous vicissitudes. After experiences and events like prestigious and classic melodies, description of nature, a language of bigotry and pessimism and revolutionary state and war gorillas and early days of Revolution the music approached a most logical and original path. Regardless of some exceptions, contemporary songs have become simpler and communicable. They might be similar to the course of modern poetry in our time that experiences simple style and distance from complication. Contemporary poetry after passing through language and formic games as well as continuous deconstructions seeks to experience a path that would be a requirement of the audience and the governing atmosphere of the Persian speaking society. Song has always moved in line with the events around poetry. In an era when Shamlu and the key poets after Nima were involved in creation of new themes and unprecedented compound phrases, Janati Ataei and Shahyar Qanbari started to create works influenced by the prevailing atmosphere of Iran.

Contemporary song has decided to be inspired of a fragile spirit and fantasy. Of course not that type of fantasies one expects from poetry of Indian style rather simpler and more audience friendly:

*You turned grey with me, I am dying with this ache
Here are the house and match you can take vengeance but return*

This folly and a type of sacred insanity in the song of Ruzbeh Bemani could prepare the ground for critical assessment of the contemporary song. The way that Bemani treats with the words can be seen also in the works of several other song writers and this vision is not specifically limited to this poet.

Bemani and Afshin Yadollahi have played a key and effective role in strengthening and popularity of contemporary song. Yadollahi is among the poets who managed to promote the course of evolution of language and emotional and psychological states of Iranian people as well as Pop song writing. In doing so he has made considerable contributions to song writing and revolutionized in one sense this poetic branch.

In the second half of 1990s Yadollahi experienced a mystic and romantic language influenced by Indian style and in this period many of his songs were closer to written language. Successful TV songs were composed based on the songs of this poet in 2000s including *Zero Degree Latitude* and *Tenth Day* which were performed by Alireza Qurbani, *Forbidden Fruit*, *Dirty Money*, and *For the Last Time* which were performed by Ehsan Khajeh Amiri and also *Hangout* comedy series which performed by him.

Abd al-Jabbar Kakaie is very similar to Afshin Yadollahi in being successful in accommodating his own songs with linguistic changes and managed to leave the difficult period of 2000s behind with lasting works. The early works of Kakaie were theme-centered and this caused in some cases the place to be limited for artistic and linguistic influence and the effort for meaning and content overshadowed the form either.

Eliot believes that good poets are two groups: "first those who build a good poetry with minimum poetic emotions; second the poets who can write brilliant poems with the minimum content" (Shamisa, 1984: 90).

This commitment in the later poems of this poet changed to personal and original vision that moves in line with the society and linguistic and historical actions and reactions of the Iranian audience.

Among the other ode-song writers who are both professional in song and ode writing one can refer to the name of Mohammad Ali Bahmani. His odes along with the poems of Simin Behbahani and Hossein Monzavi have had an undeniable impact on contemporary ode. Of course, we cannot describe Bahmani as a post-revolutionary poet as a major part of his poetic evolution has taken place before the victory of Islamic Revolution and in those times he was accepted by the musicians as a classic song writer. Bahmani's song leaves ode behind and has a spirit full of emotion and imagination. Soheil Mahmoudi has written numerous songs in these decades and he can also be considered as one of the key poets who have resorted to the ancient treasure of classic poetry in his songs. He has cooperated with Esfahani, Eftekhari, Hami, Nasir Abdollahi and others in the field of song and for a long time he was active as the presenter of various TV programs.

He was one of the rare song writers who have created a personal style and has made a considerable contribution to the presentation of Iranian contemporary songs to the outsiders.

The songs of Afshin Moqadam are different from the point of view of words structure, tone, and theme and so on and so forth. Generally speaking, there are classic academic songs and also ordinary folk songs and popular songs loved by the youth within his repertoire of songs:

I love only this that when I am mad at everyone

To sit in a corner and weave your hairs

Female Song Writers

We have always thought of song and song writing as an emotional and romantic affair. Needless to say, song is essentially emotional and intimate. On the other hand, the language of women requires intimacy and peace. The songs written by women are the result of these two emotional realities; first, the intimate nature of the song and second, peaceful spirit of women. This is why emotion appears to be colorful, extreme and romantic in the songs written by women.

Nevertheless, only those song writers will be successful who seek to organize these worlds in line with the song spirit based on the required knowledge of their own psychological modes. This vision can be relatively found in the songs of Mokarram. For example, in the song of "My Sun Rise" the audience finds himself sympathetic with an emotional and intimate word:

I do not want to be confused/I do not want to be a hidden wish

Do not allow my word remain untold at the end of the story

Among the female song writers one can refer to Maryam Asadi. Before song writing Asadi was involved in novel writing but she was not successful. However, in song writing she surpassed the other song writers with her popular folk songs. Among her renowned songs one can name "Everything is Peaceful" performed by Hamid Talibzadeh, "Maryam" performed by Artin, "I Am Coming to You" performed by Ehsan Khajeh Amiri. The serious criticism that is leveled against the songs of Asadi is the monotonous concepts and themes as well as production of mediocre works in collaboration with all types of vocalists and composers.

Mona Borzuei is the other professional song writer of our time. In the songs of this poet the beloved is treated in a womanish way. There is no rational argument for proving the love a la men. All weaknesses and strengths of an Iranian woman can be identified in her works and for finding a special expression of the experiences and life one can resort to her works. Like Zoya Zakarian she has not found her style based on a combination of the styles of Qanbari, Janati Ataei and Sarafraz. This is why the "self" of the author can be identified by the audience in all corners of the works and the linguistic authenticity of them has added to their beautiful aspects:

Get back to me, like a bird that finds its tree

Get back to me, like someone who loves the sea at night

Along with Borzuei, Maryam Delshad, Narges Jafari, Sepideh Amini, Zahra Ameli and others have made contributions to the strengthening of the contemporary current of female songs.

Conclusion. Song and song writing have passed through various stages after the victory of Islamic revolution. The major difference of it as compared to the song before Revolution lies in the strengthening of spiritual and metaphysical themes, distance from conceptual and structural vulgarity and leaving symbolism in favor of complication and traditionalism. Contemporary song is more intimate and communicable in its relation with the audience. Song has been influential on the growth of music and the latter has provided some direction for the development of song. Song is the only branch of poetry that has permeated into all behavioral-functional fields of Iranian man. Song had been associated with the formation of special spirits in the society and moved in line with the cultural, social and political changes of Iran. Then one can say that the history of song writing share the form and direction of the contemporary history of Iran. The past experiences of Persian song shows that in future Persian song will take benefit from poetic themes. More literary and poetic figures will be used in the songs.

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