Exploring the History of Development of the Concept of Home (Nation) in Persian Poetry

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to provide an answer to the fundamental issues related to the concepts of home, freedom, law, and justice in the collected poems of past and contemporary poets. Investigating all of the poems and studying the concept of home and its pertaining issues in order to know the Iranian culture is what this research does and hopes others do as well. As far as the researcher knows, there has not yet been a single work devoted to the concept of home. Thus it appeared necessary to conduct a thorough research in spite of having no predecessor in the back. This work helps reader to have a clearer understanding of home in their minds.

Keywords: Home, Persian Poetry.
Introduction

Home and its freedom, justice expansion and its retention emerge as a must to poets’ eyes. In studying and reviewing the works of past and contemporary poets, we observe that all of them inquire the honor and independence of their ancient land in all of its aspects. But when these ambitions are interrupted by national elements or foreign countries, one must oppose, in any possible way, these forces.

Poets, in this regard, had always engaged with the interruptive issues menacing the Iranian national identity and inspiring the people and the young to defend their home, and thus protect the old fame of their land.

From this perspective, home and national land had been a vital and valuable element for the inhabitants.

The researcher tries to explore those issues directly related to the concept of home and the history of its development.

Statement of the Problem:

As noted above, there have been studies on investigating the concept of home in Persian poetry, and it has not evaded the attention of famous contemporary scholars of literature. But no work has been yet devoted to an exploration of the aforementioned concept in a single volume, and the discussions of this issue are more or less dropped amongst other discussions.

Thus, the expanse and quality of research in this work, focusing on various aspects, can be stated as a new research problematic.

Indeed, each individual, and accordingly each poet has a world of his own, a specific worldview, and a particular way for expressing his/her mind. Discovering this feature of a poet’s mind and his/her capabilities seems a difficult task. May the research domain expand and exceed one poet, our approach in turn changes into a more superficial or focusing on a single quality of the mind, and we have indeed facilitated our way. Home and its related issues can be one mere instance in this world whose examples are wide among the collected poems of past and contemporary poets.

Research Methodology:

The research method was library-based. Though working in the literary laboratory (library) is not always easy (due to lack of important resources, lack of facilities in small towns and even large, scarcity of some literary sources and etc.) but nonetheless it appeared as the easiest.

We have conducted a research on the poems of the past and contemporary poets as possible as we could.
The History of Development of the Concept of Home

Professor Mohammad Jafar Yahaqi says of the “home” in “Chon Sabuye Teshne” (Like a Thirsty Jug):

“Traditionally, the concept of home was used to designate the indigenous land in which a person was born and brought up, and in the vaster context of Islam, it included the Muslim world. Politically speaking, the slogan for Islamic unity was first articulated by Seyed Jamal-o-din Asad Abadi and later Eqbal Lahuri, the Persian poet of the Indian subcontinent asserted such claims:

We who our homes throw far are like two eyes of a single body

From Hijaz, China and Iran the dew of a smiling sunrise we are”

From Dr Shafiee Kadkani’s perspective: “home is a prominent feature in this period, in no way similar to our understanding of the term after the French Revolution, and in his view, Eqbal Lahuri’s poems are the best representative of internationalism and Islamic world.

From Iraq, Rome, and Iran the dew of a smiling sunrise we are

As indicated above, home in the poems of the past, especially in epic poetry (except mysticism) meant the site, location and the geographical limits of one’s birthplace, which the renowned Persian poet Ferdowsi had best said in this regard. Since Ferdowsi’s infatuation with Iran or his ancestor’s home is categorized under “Love of Home”, one of the basic emotional principles of this sage man from Tous, oftentimes appearing in his Shah Nameh. He presents nationalism and respects his compatriots in his poems, referring to them as freemen and writing:

Naught be my existence if Iran disappear without it no one should live near

Alas if it gets stricken down turn to a den for lions and tiger

For our home and our children our wives, babies and our dear

We’re all ready to die in advance rather to the enemy’s surrender

The love of this grave poet from Tous for his home is so much that he considers everyone who gets killed in defending the land as a martyr whose place in the afterlife will certainly be paradise. Ferdowsi refers to this crucial point from Kaikhusrau’s side addressed to the Iranian commanders before his war with Afrasyab:

If anyone gets killed from this army indeed will reside in the high paradise

He has describes some natural landscapes from Mazandaran and Alborz-Kuh beautifully, again an attest to his love of home:

In the way to the Alborz-Kuh One hits some exquisite view
All trees and fluid water the sitting-place for the young dew

Another indicative of Ferdowsi’s love of home is the fact that he refers to Iran in his poems as: “Free Land” “Land of Freemen” and calling the inhabitants free men.

He reached the thralldom of Afareydon Shah From afar he saw the great Iran

On the entrance were sat the exquisites in the inside, the home of free men

“With hindsight, Hakim Abolghasem Ferdowsi while praising his home and calling them full-blooded Iranians, there is no trace of chauvinism or condescension of other homes; since he is a theist and demands equity and places human beings in the highest positions. His particular love of home has won him a special place in people’s views, and since then no one has been successful in creating such a great picture, and probably won’t there be any. No poet has been able to incorporate Iranian’s thousand-year wishes into his works. It is about a thousand year that Ferdowsi guides Iranian spirit and governs people’s hearts and their affections.”

According to Bertels, the Russian orientalist, “The moment in the world the word of Iranian appears, the name of its honorable great poet who devoted all of his love to his home, will hover eternally.”

Indeed, this fiery love of Iran and Iranian drove him to devote 35 years of his fertile life to write such a serious thorough work.

Ferdowsi, by writing Shahnameh, has revived the glorious history and chivalries of Iran, and in fact protected the Iranian historical myths from a die out. “This freestanding and patriot poet aspired the greatness of Iranian governance and wished for: a full-blooded Iranian leader from Ancient Persia’s Armani would rule over the country. So, patriotism inspired him to revitalize the forgotten name of Iran and also to resurface the free-spirited independence-seeking nature of Iranians, so marginalized by the tyranny of the enemy.

Among the contemporary poets, Aref’s most valuable contribution was to teach the meaning of home to the people; Up to that time, there has not been any example of this important practice, except Ferdowsi. All of Aref’s songs and ballads are descriptions of Iran.

In this regard, Aref says: “not only will I forget, but also all my contemporaries will remember the time when I wrote those national ballads and songs. People thought that ballads were only to be written for the court or for the “Tiggy Tiger” of the king, or recounted from one sinner to another. When I wrote national ballads, one out of thousand knew not the meaning of home indeed. The thought that home is merely the birthplace of a person. After the Constitutional Revolution, the meaning of home was understood, thanks to God. Now that the understanding is clear, I can firmly hold that:

In home, the only homeless is me the one coming to naught is like me
In sepulcher I tear the shroud for not seeing the home as I wished
The zealot and ambitious man who grieved over the home is me

**Home as city and local region**

Though under the term “home” we find: “one’s settlement place, birthplace, local region, homeland, the place where one is born and brought up”, many think of home as the geographical limit of a group of people sharing language, race, religion and history, and regarding the land as their second mother. As they put it “Home is the second mother” and on the other hand some argue that there is no such truth for home at all. Since the land is owned by God and we are all his creations, all these lines we have drawn on the earth designating them as borders and groupings have no sense at all.”

Our home is our mother we are the nationalists

Thanks God since childhood we learn the love of home

Love of home, like loving one’s mother, come at the birth and vanishes by death. It is because of this fact that wherever man goes to settle there with all the welfare provided, still finds his love caught by his own home, in Mowlavy’s words:

If you see me going to a journey know that the love of home never vanishes

The word home in past literature has been used to designate the settlement place, home, dwelling in a place, birthplace or the country or the local in which a person is born and brought up. There are many examples in the poems attest to this claim, using the word home in the senses that were given above:

I’m far from home, no hope for returning to Khorasan they draw me from going to that particular place

You put me afar from my home; help me look how impatient I am for its love

Yay, your memory never vanishes indeed the stranger craves for his home

O Saadi, though love of home is true I cannot even die anywhere except there

This home is the home of the beloved the realm of lovers and their beloveds

But the concept of home finds a new meaning in the contemporary period, especially in the Constitutional period. After the Constitutional Revolution, the term was adapted in its political sense; the following poems are an example of this practice:

Since I want home and its freedom I expect help from the God of emperors

From the love of home all intoxicated as drinks from the purple container

Of the freedom of your home, O patriots Think hard, if not you’re useless as me
Home is our blood, home is our soul, home is our secret treasure, is our accompany

The Mystical Home:

Since in mysticism, especially mystic poems, word have deeper meanings beyond their literal ones, thus home is no exception. The concept of “home” and “love of home”, to the mystics’ and ascetics’ eyes—giving proof on the famous Hadis of the Prophet: “love of home is part of faith”—meaning “affection and sometimes prejudice for the geographical limit of the earth under the classification of country with some names as Iran, Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia and etc.is something wrong. The meaning of home for the mystics is rather the eternal place of man in world of the spirits. In Mowlavi’s words, the descendants of Adam are like some canes taken out from canebrake for a time and inevitably return there at last.”

Whoever fell far from its origin again seeks its reunification sure

It is in association with this concept that we see the poet advises us crucial points from a mystical perspective.

Evade love of home since the real home is elsewhere dear

If you want home cross the river don’t ever misjudge this truth ever

Love of home is also true pick the real home you wise

The Sufis, who are heavily influenced by Islam, do not accept home in its ethnic sense, and interpret the famous phrase “love of home is part of faith” in a way that remains excellent in their tradition. “They believe human beings are thrown from another world into this material cage, they have to break the cage of their body and ascend to the celestial. Therefore, they try to interpret the famous Hadis as the eagerness for returning to the world of the spirits, and in this context, what beautiful mottoes one can observe in their texts. As Mowlana puts it:

The cry of love is out in everywhere we ascend to the celestial, who’s better?

We’ve been up a companion to angels we’ll return there, our original home

Better than the world, higher than the angel why not pass them, destination’s not here

All the creatures descend from God stays it not here, one who belongs there

This notion is a core to Mowlana’s thought and other great men of mysticism. Before Mowlavi, the interpretation of the love of home by Shahab-o-din Sohrevardi put it in this way: beware you metaphysical brothers, your God emphasizes on the monotheism, and the purpose of this material is to return to its celestial place. When the Great Prophet said that: love of home is part of faith, he meant it in this way, and also the meaning of Qurans: O the comfortable man! Return to your providence happily, is also the same.
Because “returning” only makes sense when one has left somewhere in the first place. Therefore, one cannot say “return to Egypt” to someone who has not seen Egypt yet. And beware that home, be it Damascus, Baqdad are all part of this world.”

Also, Hafiz has used the term “home” in his poetry, meaning both local region and celestial ascendance.

Hafiz’s fear of journey and being far from home is a notion commonly referred to in his poems.

The world does not worth a moment of grief, and says:

How easy-going it appeared the world    I was wrong, doesn’t worth a pile of diamonds

As noted earlier, Hafiz meant celestial ascendance by journey; he prefers this kind of journey to the one taking place in material world:

Good fortune be your buddy    the wind from Shiraz your messenger

Never leave the home of beloved    the celestial journey is the best

**Conclusion:**

Throughout history, the will and belief of all the free and good-natured men have been the honor and glory of their nation in all times and in all aspects. Thus the poets fighting for freedom are in the vanguard of this movement and always defended their nation and its visionaries, whether politically or otherwise. They have tried their best in this way, and praised not only all the rulers protecting the nation, but all those men who have fought for its independence against the foreign forces. This vein of patriotism and nationalism is a common thread running through the poems of all the past and contemporary poets, and also in the struggles of those fighters in the hope of protecting the nation. They have tried to eliminate the mercenaries and treacheries out of the way and accordingly protect the nation against the intervention of foreigners, fight against the despots and dictatorship, and finally to dignify the nation.
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