Nature in the Poetry of Saib Tabrizi

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Abstract

Saib Tabrizi is one of the best and most prolific poets of the Safavid period and is a moderate representative of the Indian style. He is a thinker and an orator who is enamored of words and has devoted his life to words, for he says:

You placed your head like the pen in this melancholic ardor
As like you Saib too is a devotee of words

And he claims that with his wise words he will intoxicate the world with his words.

A world is dead drunk thinking of Saib
Passion of Master of Words is not less than that of Sahba

It is with this belief and view that he writes his bulky Divan of poetry and his poetry, along with the extensive volume of his poetry, is full of diverse themes and vivid poetic imagery and by means of his penetrating look, innovative mind and careful and dominant thought, his vocabulary and rich themes have been shaped.

In many cases, he has drawn on nature for expression of his poetic themes, in such a way that he expresses his observations, the way he has perceived and nourished them in his mind, using words and he shares his feelings and influences of nature with his readers. He turns the reflection of objective and external beauties of nature into poetic imagination. The search for natural elements in Saib’s poetry shows that his approach is also a considerably natural approach and his attention to nature is particularly distinct and significant not only in the mere description of nature but also in all other areas, in such a way that in all areas, from spiritual poetic areas to poetic imagery, nature plays a substantial role.

In this paper, after a short introduction on the reflection of nature in art, Saib’s approach to nature and the use of natural elements in his poetry have been explored.

Keywords: Saib, nature, poetry.
Introduction:
Nature has always been one of the sources and fountainheads of art and the purest artistic creations have sprung from it. For instance, in the art of painting, from Japanese and Chinese miniatures to the western paintings, traces of influence of nature can be seen. Also, in music there are abundant inspirations from nature. In other arts, such as sculpture and cinema, traces of nature can also be seen. Accordingly, influence of nature on verbal art, the evident example of which is poetry, has a great width and breadth. And poets, either directly or indirectly, have created their works by inspirations from nature. Although it seems that the natural world and its various manifestations, such as the beginning and ending of nights and days and seasons, etc., are always constant and repetitive, humans’ relationship with nature is not a constant and stable relationship and can be considered and reflected depending on every poet’s special approach. Without a shadow of a doubt, in most literary works in the world nature has special effects and is even sometimes considered as one of the literary honors of various nations; namely, in Indian or Arabian literature and in western literature in the works of poets and writers such as Lamartine, Hugo, Musset, etc., nature plays a unique role, to such an extent that even a style called “naturalism” is integrated with nature and this integration of literature with nature leads to the creation of powerful and effective works.
This influence has a special position also in Persian poetry, which nevertheless appears differently in different periods. Also, natural themes in the poetry of poets are developed depending on the type of their relationship with nature and their approach and philosophy and views of life.
Sometimes the poet or the author describes nature and realistically describes the natural phenomena without involving their feelings or intervention, which is in fact a kind of painting with poetry. Although intervention of the viewpoint of the poet’s feeling and taste in the choice of time and place and description of phenomena never completely disappears in any works of art, in this kind of description this becomes the least.
In fact, these kinds of descriptions of nature are shaped by the poet’s direct experience and are rarely tied to his/her imagination and the imagery are not very stunning in it. However, this kind of naturalism is very rare in the poetic expression and may be more frequently seen in realistic novels and stories; but traces of such natural descriptions can be seen in the poetry of some contemporary poets, as what has been described in Fereydoon Moshiri’s poem “Lucky the Half-open Buds”:

\[
\text{Scent of rain, scent of grass, scent of soil} \\
\text{Wigs washed by rain so clean} \\
\text{Blue sky, white cloud} \\
\text{Green leaves of willow} \\
\text{Fragrance of daffodil, dance of wind} \\
\text{Happy swallows singing . . .}
\]

Moshiri, Fereydoon, 2002: Vol. 1, P. 307

Another kind of expression of natural themes is the description of natural phenomena along with poetic imagination and associations. The poet, with the help of metaphors and comparisons he/she creates with his/her own imagination, expresses the descriptions with greater hyperbole or
exaggeration, as we see in the poetry of poets of the Khorasani style such as Manuchehri and Farrukhi.

According to Dr. Shafiei Kadkani, such descriptions that have been common until the fifth century are external and extrovert poetry and the poet again observes the surface of things and does not seek an emotional and spiritual dimension beyond the scene of nature and physical elements. He attributes this to the style of court poetry and the eulogy common in this period, in which the poetic “I” is rarely manifested in poetry and in which description is done for the sake of description (Shafiei Kadkani, M., 1991: P. 317).

So, the centrality of this kind of poetry is not the poet’s mind and world. It is rather the objectivity and external view that moves on the surface of nature.

**Reflection of Nature in the Poetry of Saib**

Saib sometimes also in a ghazal in the style of Khorasani poets describes nature and in most of his couplets one ghazal is the external description of the theme of nature. Yet even in this mere description of nature, he also catches a glimpse of his inner self and also portrays his subjective theme, as in:

\[
\text{The air is the essence of light in the moonlight night} \\
\text{The star is the smile of the nymph in the moonlight night} \\
\text{The sky is the crystal cup brimming with bright wine} \\
\text{The earth is the territory of light in the moonlight night}
\]

Sometimes nature acts as a symbol for expression of the meanings and concepts intended by the poet. Since time immemorial, in the literature of different nations also many of the natural phenomena were symbolically described in the poetry of poets and in fact instead of describing what he/she observed, the poet would consider its symbolic dimension. Now, these symbols were either contractual or known symbols, or were made and created by the poet himself/herself. Also in the poetry of Saib, in proportion to the complexity of his thoughts and feelings, sometimes every external natural phenomenon is representative of a meaning and substitute for a sign and this is perfectly evident in his different poems. For instance, the range of meanings of the word “bubble”, as a natural element, is very broad and extensive in his view and it has been reflected from different perspectives in his various poems and is manifested in the form of various symbols, a number of which will be mentioned. He considers “bubble” as the symbol of absurdity and absurd words, being full of pride and arrogance, losing control, having temptations of the heart, being empty of values, being a wanderer and homeless, etc.

**Symbol of Absurdity and Absurd Words**

\[
\text{The brainless ascetic knows nothing of the heart, o’ Saib} \\
\text{Do not ask the empty bubble of the state of the rolling gem}
\]

Vol. 5/ P. 2336/ Gh. 4840

\[
\text{O’ Saib, the bubble fades into the air due to its absurd words} \\
\text{If it closes its mouth, the bud’s mouth will fill with the gold}
\]
Symbol of Arrogance

*If you are full of airs out of pride
Prepare to break up like the bubble*

Vol. 3/ P. 1319/ Gh. 2699

Symbol of Having Temptations

*If in the mind-air like the bubble they did not hold you
The sea would not take you to it anymore*

Vol. 2/ P. 1031/ Gh. 2103

Symbol of Being Empty of Inner Values

*It would ask the bubble for the kingly gem
Whoever seeks the Truth beyond the possible world*

Vol. 4/ P. 1763/ Gh. 3658

Symbol of Being a Wanderer

*I am one of the wanderers of the world like the bubble
What can I do with this precious and fearful flood?*

Vol. 5/ P. 2739/ Gh. 5674

Symbol of Needlessness in Poverty

*In poverty blessed with needlessness like the bubble
Empty of the sea bring out your cup*

Vol. 1/ P. 43/ Gh. 84

Symbol of Light Sleep

*We are not seashells to be drunk with a heavy sleep
We are the bubble of erythrean love, our sleep is deep*

Vol. 2/ P. 836/ Gh. 1698

Symbol of Gaiety

*The bubble became the sea’s gem crown for its gaiety
Do not fear for Gihon once you become empty of your identity*

Vol. 6/ P. 2955/ Gh. 6108

Symbol of Innocence

*In this storm that the wave fears to move late
The innocent bubble builds a house on the sea wave*

Vol. 3/ P. 1467/ Gh. 2699

Symbol of False Reliance and Futility

*Every moment I cry and keen for the pleasure of death*
Another kind of attention to natural themes is in fact description of nature in the color of the poet’s inner feelings, and expression of natural themes shows his concerns and beliefs. In fact, such an approach to nature and its manifestations of truth in the poetry of the poets of the Indian style, specifically Saib, is perfectly evident. In nature, the poet sees exactly what he/she is and penetrates into the inherent meanings of nature only when he/she is able to permeate his/her innermost depths (Nasr, H., 2004:126). Saib has this characteristic as well. With his special feelings, he considers a natural phenomenon and in fact expresses his own feeling and sees his observations with his special approach.

Regarding poets’ different approaches to nature, Coleridge maintains that nature never changes. It is rather the poets’ reflections on nature that is transformed and it is a result of their feelings and temperaments (Shafiei Kadkani, M., 1991:317).

Therefore, in such natural themes, the subjectivity and inner self of Saib or his feelings and thoughts overcome the outer space and more than trying to describe outside, Saib intends to express his inside. That is to say, in the mirror of nature he sees something else which has overshadowed his mind and feelings, and it is in fact his mind which is the center of poetry and the natural phenomena are a reflection of his thoughts and feelings. He is not the painter of nature and the natural phenomena that happen in the external world are not much important to him. Rather, what matter are the states and thoughts that these external phenomena create in his mind. Therefore, Saib’s attitude towards nature is similar to what European symbolists say. They believe that our views about nature refer to our own internal and spiritual life. It is we who feel and it is the role of our spirit and soul that is reflected in objects (Shamisa, S., 1999: P.?).

So, by looking at natural themes he intends to retell his subjective thoughts and beliefs. He sees humans and nature so close to each other that he thinks it possible to look for one within the other, and considers the language of one as the language of the other (Mokhtari, M., 1992:196). As if nature has all of his sorrows, feelings and beliefs within itself and he thus tries to express them with the language of nature. For instance, he says:

From the cold breath of autumn when on the soil a leaf falls
Leaving the world without leaves comes to mind

He does not want to portray the coldness and falling of leaves in winter. Rather, he wants to point out to the reality of death and leaving the world without leaves using this theme. According to mysticism, sometimes by expressing natural themes Saib intends to describe mystical themes. With his mystical approach, he considers nature as the symbol of God’s beauty and the mirror of His attributes and believes that there is no existence other than God and all that exists is His manifestation. In such description and look at the theme of nature, he acts as the narrator and he himself has no role other than witnessing and perceiving this beauty. Natural phenomena are either symbols of that beauty or are somehow immersed in and enamored of that. Thus, his description of the natural theme as well as the mystical theme is perfectly well evident. Examples:

In the clenched cloud the face of the sun is manifest
For your beauty can’t be found at the bottom of the tent  
Vol. 2/ P. 1074/ Gh. 2198

The thorn and the rose are sincere in the world of unity  
The thorn and the rose are both one in the flow of the Saba wind  
Vol. 2/ P. 776/ Gh. 1569

If like the rosy dew you do not leave the fragrance  
Inside the sun’s gaze you shall not find a place  
Vol. 4/ P. 1824/ Gh. 3789

He sometimes imitates the beloved and sometimes himselfs by expressing the theme of nature. Nevertheless, it can be certainly said that in Saib’s Divan of poetry there is no ghazal which is devoid of descriptions of natural manifestations, but the overall trend of its expression, based on the law of evolution of art, is from simplicity to complexity; that is, from the external nature towards the experimental and inner world. That is to say, instead of being in nature and describing it, in fact the natural manifestations influence his soul and mind and his poetry is the expression of these effects. Thus, it can be said that Saib, as an artistic poet, is not in nature. Rather, it is nature that is in him and what matter to him are not the natural imagery that are located in the external world, but the moods and states that these natural manifestations create in his mind and soul. Therefore, description of nature is always seen as a theme along with his other poetic themes.

He sometimes chooses manifestations and effects of nature, such as spring, autumn, highland, bubble, stone, sea, etc. as the “Radif” (the repeating of common words) in his poems and by means of them portrays his inner states and beliefs and views in the form of diverse imagery.

Conclusion
In this paper, after a study of Saib’s poetry, some conclusions are made from his general approach to nature and its various manifestations, which are briefly mentioned as follows:

- In his poetry, the realistic expression of nature without involvement of inner feelings, like what is seen in many realistic novels and stories, is not very evident.

- He sometimes describes nature with greater hyperbole or exaggeration with the help of his imagination and poetic associations through comparisons and metaphors in the style of Khorasani style poets, in such a way that the centrality of such description of nature is not his mind and inner world. It is rather his objectivity and external view that moves on the surface of nature, even though this approach to nature is fading and in this merely external description he also slightly portrays his mental theme by a glimpse of his inner world.

- Another expression of nature in his poetry is in such a way that he sees nature in the color of his inner feeling and expresses his feelings by describing nature, and more than trying to portray and describe the external manifestations, he tries to express his inner side and natural phenomena are in fact a reflection of his own thoughts and feelings. This approach to creation is the major part of use of nature in his poetry. Thus, this is how natural manifestations appear in the form of his intellectual and religious concerns, faiths and views and he considers the manifestations of creation and nature as an excuse in
order to reflect what he has in mind about the human community, nation, religion, beliefs and ideas by means of the mirror of nature.

In this regard, by expressing natural themes he intends to describe mystical themes, and by his mystical approach to the another style of the mystics he regards nature as the symbol of God’s beauty and the mirror of His attributes. It is due to this approach that he considers description of nature as description of himself and expresses his own description in the words of nature. Sometimes he imitates himself and sometimes the beloved with the help of nature. In fact, this is why natural elements are the mental reflection and the mirror of his inner world.

- He sometimes considers natural manifestations as the symbol or sign of another concept, since according to Saib an insightful viewer is a person who passes beyond the manifestations of nature and finds his way into its inherent and symbolic concept and in many cases due to the expansion and complexity of his thoughts he considers many natural phenomena as representative of a meaning and substitute for a sign.

Generally speaking, it can be said that although in Saib’s poetry we are not directly faced with mere nature, that is to say the mere description of nature in the style of Khorasani style poets can’t be seen in his poetry, it can be certainly said that he is so closely integrated with nature that in his poetry various natural imagery act as the expression of his thoughts, and nature is always placed on the margins of his poetry and is in fact overshadowed by his distant thoughts and imaginations, in such a way that this approach to nature reminds us of European symbolists who believe that poetry is not painting and is rather a manifestation of inner and spiritual moods and that one should try to reach from objective reality to subjective reality as much as possible. The symbolists say that one’s views about nature refers to one’s spiritual life. It is we who feel and it is the role of our own spirit and soul that is reflected in the objects, and this is exactly what we see in Saib’s poetry with regard to the function of nature.
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