Hopelessness, a Review of Rhetoric of Mehdi Akhavan Sales' Poetry

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Abstract

In this study, the rhetorical aspects of Akhavan Sales' poetry are discussed. He applied rhetorical devices such as symbol, simile, irony, poetic adjectives, word and appropriate combinations. Akhavan conveyed his thoughts excellently through rhetorical devices. He is called 'Poet of Defeat'. Akhavan was the representative of intellectuals in the forties who lost their hope to obtain a free society and looked at it pessimistically. Akhavan's poetry is filled with his pessimism. For instance he used similes with pessimistic simile reasons and he frequently criticized tenors. Akhavan applied narration in his poetry. The more narration enhances sincerity, the more it lessens the imagination. But he applied it in a way which reminds the form of 'Ease and Abstention'. Akhavan entered his pessimism also in metaphors and allegories and it worked well in conveying his thoughts. The words and adjectives he employed are also pessimistic and they expressed his concerns. Somewhat his poems are in heroic tone which enhances his rigidity.

Keywords: Akhavan Sales, Rhetoric, Expression, Simile, Metaphor, Irony.
Introduction:

Mehdi Akhavan Sales was a chivalrous man who appeared in the thirties and produced magnificent poems in the forties. His appearance resulted in Nima Youshij's failure. As we know, Akhavan accepted Youshij's new concepts after their acquaintance, and imitated him in his few works. Akhavan's first collection was "Zemestan (winter)". He gained new experiences in poetry and reached full maturity in "Az in Avesta".

It was thought that due to lack of knowledge of poetry and rhyme, Akhavan chose this new style. He paved the way for Nima's own literary style. Being under the influence of Khorasani school and using Iraj Mirza's language and also employing his own style, Akhavan made a conjugation of classic and modern literature which freed Nima and his adherents from people like Malek Alshoara Bahar. According to Shafiee Kadkani in Nimaie literary style no one could be better than Akhavan. No poet produced half or even a quarter of Akhavan's poetry (Shafiee Kadkani 62:1391).

Akhavan's reputation and prosperity met disastrous political events in the thirties in which the fall of Doctor Mossadegh was the bitterest one. Akhavan committed himself to social-political issues and he accepted the risks. Akhavan claimed to be the representative of intellectuals through Zemestan series which he wrote after the fall of national government. Writing political poetry combined with hopelessness drew poets' attention dramatically. Hopelessness in this period has a social-political concept rather than a philosophical one. This hopelessness was the consequence of the fall of national movement of Iran, because it failed while reaching its top.

Hopelessness dominated his works although his pseudonym was "Omid (hope). He wrote: "People say that however my name is hope, I am a disappointed person. They have no idea that I am the poet of my dead country".

Shafiee Kadkani wrote about Akhavan's hopelessness as: "In the dark gloomy winter in which people escape from each other, he also escapes from their coldness and it represents his honesty. Offering hope is meaningless here"(Shafiee Kadkani, 1391:19, 20).

Akhavan lost his heroic conceit for the government turmoil although he had grown up in the place of epic, Khorasan. This divergence affected his works dramatically. Zarghani wrote as:"Akhavan's emotional identity is nothing but a contradictory confliction; on one side he has a heroic spirit which affects his poems and on another one he is the poet of defeat"(Zarghani, 1384, 433).

Literature Review

The entrance of social-political issues in poetry follows certain doctrines and techniques. Language and literary-rhetorical devices show necessary inflections for being in harmony with the content of poetry. Accordingly considering new linguistic and anthropological concepts is indispensible for understanding fiction.

Perhaps Akhavan's most distinguished privilege is achieving a particular poetic language. Shafiee Kadkani, according to Akhavan's own utterance, wrote: "his language is the result of Khorasan language and its combination with Nima's language of Mazandaran and even above him".
Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub accounts Akhavan's language as "including rigidity and gentility" (Zarrinkoub, Abdolhossein, 1370:97). Pournamdarian, P.H.D ascribes that Akhavan's language is "earnest and emotional and filled with rhetorical values" (Pournamdarian, 1379:202).

Innovation in language from the most explicit linguistic behaviors to the most complicated literary devices is practiced in different manners such as: new word creation, archaic words application, colloquial words application, syntactic structure infractions and etc (Hasan Lee, 1386, 112 & 142).

Akhavan employed these rhetorical devices which are totally created by him. They are not "stereotype" (Fouladvand, 1379:324):

- Allegory, symbol, "narrative"- this construction is mentioned by Kadkani (Kdkani, 1370:312), rhythm, description, simile, metaphor, allusion, lexis and selected constructions, explicitly, irony, appropriate adjectives and heroic characters.

- One of the features of Akhavan's poems is long narration. He was "influenced by narration" (Baraheni, 1379:132) although "narrative poems are more cohesive than non-narrative poems (Hasan lee, 1386:212), but it was considered as a great fault in poetry. However this matter in Akhavan's works is developing the narration into poetry, not devaluing poetry as narration.

On the contrary, few people consider Akhavan's narrative poems as "a cause of his eminence" (Shafiee Kadkani, 1391:178) which is an acceptable comment. This narrative aspect enhanced the serenity, familiarity with the reader and brought verbosity. According to Doctor Pournamdarian "Verbosity is a distinguished feature of Akhavan's poetry" (Pournamdarian, 1379:189). In my opinion, Akhavan's this method, as the method of Farokhi Sistani, Sadi and Iraj Mirza, is "Ease and Abstention". His narrations, in fact, are a detailed report of an important subject that displayed in a narrative form. Therefore, his narrations should be taken as his chief rhetorical devices.

For few contemporary critics, Akhavan's poetry is void of any symbol and allegory and they offer the word 'Allusion', instead of allegory (Dastgheib, 1373:44). On the contrary, some critics emphasized that symbol is one of Akhavan's rhetorical methods. Houshang Golshiri thought of Akhavan's symbol as "something influenced by mystical symbols in a social-political manner" (Golshiri, 1370:182).

Akhavan employed various types of symbols but "his fairest symbols are those which created by him" (Hasan Lee, 1386:339 & 340).

- Few critics claim that Akhavan is not authoritative in imagery (Pournamdarian, 1379:205).
- Doctor Hassan Lee wrote: Contemporary social poets are conceptual people and adherents of Nima's social thoughts. Their main concerns regard the problems of their society. They are committed to claim the social agonies through which the aesthetic aspect of their works was ignored (Hasan Lee, 1386:41).

According to Hamid Zarin Koub, Akhavan's poetry sometimes is full of beautiful imagery and sometimes is devoid of any image (Zarrinkoub, Hamid, 1370:104). Some of elegant devices display his images "emotional, rich, representational, disappointing and wondrous (Dastgheib, 1373:91-95). Before discussing his similes and metaphors, I draw the reader's attention to this beautiful image:

"The dawn was dark and cold and the frustrated painter was bringing a yellow bowl".
Procedure:

In this part, the method of rhetorical devices application will be discussed for disabusing the critics of the paucity of imageries in Akhavan's poetry. In this research the imagery in Akhavan's poetry is discussed alongside rhetoric, because his works are called weak in terms of imagery. The main objective is evaluating the accuracy of this assertion according to his poems. Accordingly his known poems are selected here as touchstone. Hence the imagery and rhetorical devices in Akhavan's works are extracted and then analyzed and concluded. The selected items are as below:

From Zemestan collection: the angel bounty, without fort, winter and from The end of Shahname: heritage, the end of Shahname, dandelion, snow and from AZ in Avesta: epigraph, the story of Sangestan, the sunset of which star and from Douzakh Ama Sard: clouds and an inferno but cold. The poems are not included for avoiding verbosity.

Rhetorical Devices:

Simile:
Through the twelve poems selected from four collections, simile is used about 130 times. This number represents the paucity of imagery in poetry. Basically Akhavan did not believe in imagery. What attracts the reader in Akhavan's poetry is the balance existed in the context. This balance bears no extremes. Akhavan tried his best to preserve this balance. This balance reminds the 'Easy and Abstainer' in Sadi's works. It easies Sadi's and Akhavan's poems. Doctor Hamidian declares "When all the elements of a poem are kept in harmony, balance is preserved and it is the ease and abstention"(Hamidian, 1383:295).

However Akhavan did not preoccupied his mind for collecting images. There are other devices which enrich his works. Therefore his descriptions include novelty beside explicitly. He compared "snow" to "the feather falling of the forgotten angels" and the "wind" to "a secret authoritative agent governs a frustrated, sad agitated army, maniacally"(Barf, Akhar Shahname).It is one of his dynamic similes that obtains a social-political concept. In the poem"Abrha(clouds)", there are great vehicles for clouds as:"the forests of water and beauty", "the restless nest of fascination spirit", "the homeless dream of seas", "the caravan of Wave Mountain and the fear of misery. The both sides of his similes are: 26% emotional to emotional, 34% emotional to rational, 14% rational to emotional and 26% rational to rational.

Through the 130 similes mentioned in twelve poems: 60% of the tenors are emotional and 40% of them are rational and in vice versa, 40% of the vehicles are emotional and 60% are rational. Natural and inanimate vehicles are included in Akhavan's imageries which paved the way for the poet's fantasy. For instance he simulated the snow as feather scattering of the legendary angels, the cold message of oldness and the agitated message. He compared the cloud to these vehicles: the restless nest of fascination spirit, the restless free sinner, the homeless dream of the seas, the caravan of Wave Mountain and the fear of misery. The both sides of his similes are: 26% emotional to emotional, 34% emotional to rational, 14% rational to emotional and 26% rational to rational.

Ninety percent of the simile reasons are imaginary and 10% are real.
Fifteen percent of Akhavan's similes are in a form of simile addition. Simile devices are mentioned in 41% of the whole similes and omitted in 59% of them. Simile reasons are mentioned in 52% and omitted in 48% of the similes.

Through the simile additions and mentioning or not mentioning the simile reason and simile device, it can be concluded that Akhavan's target was not summarizing the simile. If we do not take it as Akhavan's influence from Khorasani genre in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we ought to inquire it into his own personality. Akhavan explains the issues for readers. He prefers teaching art of exposition to abridgement. According to Doctor Pouramandarian, "Unlike Nima, Akhavan narrates everything and leaves no doubt and ambiguity" (Langeroudi, 1370, v2:308).

It can also be inferred from the comparison of the simile device in his poetry. Simile device is usually single in 90% and various in 10% that is not related to the style. Akhavan's aims of following his similes are as follows:

- Praise vehicle: 33%
- Blame vehicle: 52%
- Expression vehicle: 10%
- Possibility of vehicle: 4%
- Other purposes: 1%

Expression simile is related to his narrative poems which is visible in the description of different voices. Possibility of simile is a purpose which is followed in most of the natural images. Akhavan employs the image for enhancing the content, not for describing the nature. So the unnatural matters that constitute his works, avoid images being only for imagination.

Akhavan's natural tenors are: moonlight, night, day, light, star, earth, grass, wave, snow, wind, path, water, wolf, sun, stone, sound, tree, crow, cloud, morning, evening and sky.

The vehicles which he selected for the mentioned tenors are: magician, city of the silver, agent, governor, everywhere, Simurgh, distressed message, prostitute island, crystal skeletons of Ajin, fear, hope, lament, dream, caravan, departure, caprice.

Through the tenors and vehicles, it is inferred that Akhavan's social-political point of view existed in his images. As it is observed, through the purposes of similes blame vehicle and praise have higher percentage. The reason can be understood by reviewing the simile reasons.

Some of Akhavan's simile reasons are: light turning off, bleakness, narrowness, darkness, deception, bloodbath, emptiness, groan, oldness, infertility, a long time, giving antithetical rules, being everywhere, turbulence, inhibition, depression, stillness, tragedy, antiquity, partiality, enchantment, failure, humiliation, unfamiliarity, filth, blindness, lack of rain, restlessness, heartlessness, firing, lightheartedness, having spot on face, certainty, disproportion, freezing.

These are pessimistic words that somehow are initiated from the poet's point of view. Therefore it is not a wonder that Akhavan blames these matters because he praises the beauty in the world opposing the ugliness. The tenors which Akhavan praises are more included in the romantic and lyric world.

Through the simile types, the plural simile is predominant in Akhavan's poetry (about 43%). The influence of Khorasan style especially from Manouchehri is obvious.

The influence of Khorasani style can be seen even in Akhavan's ways of illustration including:
1-Giving reason for imagery such as: It is gloomy, doors are closed, people are sad, hands are hidden, breathes are cloudy, trees of crystal skeletons of Ajin…it is winter. These all images are for the sake of winter.
2-mentioning various vehicles for one tenor. An example of Manouchehri is as the following: "The morning raindrop sits on the bud (Manouchehri collection: 43)". He mentioned 17 tenors for a raindrop. An example of Akhavan: Abrha(from douzakh ama sard) bears about thirty vehicle.
3-Expanding on images, somewhat ones affected by the third and fourth centuries, occurs in one stanza or few verses. (Fouladvand, 1379:322).

Metaphor:
The employed metaphors in Akhavan's selected works are about eighty seven which is a low number. Zarghani wrote:"Contrary to Nima and Shamlou, that their main device is metaphor, Akhavan's is simile"(Zarghani, 1384:438).
One the main reasons of metaphor paucity in Akhavan's poetry is its narration. The second reason is Akhavan's utilization of other literary devices which enriched his works as the lack of metaphor is not felt. The third main reason is Akhavan's insistence on keeping balance of the elements in poetry. This insistence avoids using metaphors. Metaphor paucity did not decrease Akhavan's elegant poetry though. Seventy four percent of the metaphors are implicit and 26% of them are explicit. This fact decreased the value of his metaphors. Fifty three percent of the metaphors are predominant metaphors and 47% of them are subdominant. Metaphor addition constitutes 30% of the total implicit metaphors. Most of the explicit metaphors were absolute and relative metaphors. Reviewing his total metaphors depicts the poet's pessimism. Pessimistic explicit metaphors are: malignity, divagation, depression, insistence, frustration, sadness, darkness, malignancy, envy.

Allegory:
One of the reasons of allegory currency in literature of a certain period is dominancy of cruelty. Akhavan's pessimism is obvious in most of his allegories. There are few of allegories: being trifled, taking risk, being nowhere, cattle waiting for goats, looking for dungeon, leaving clan, fuming thirsty people, a light behind the sun(the last allegory resembles "spiritual creatures"(Golestan Sadi:93).According to the selected poems, the sixty allegories are constructed as: 12% noun, 73% verb, 2% proportion and 12% adjective. Fifty five percent of his allegories are allusion and 42% are implicitly. Allegories include only 3% of symbols. Seventy eight percent of Akhavan's purposes of allegory is avoiding explicitly due to the social-political situation. His other purposes of allegory are: exageration7%, humiliation5%, courtesy5%, evaluating reader's ingenuity3% and fear2%.

Adjective:
Noun, an important device attracting the reader, is the subject. Adjective is a connection between the poet and the noun. Noun is either horizons like stone or souls like secret. Horizon nouns are subjects the poet selects from the external world and soul noun are those initiate from the inner world. Akhavan is called the poet of defeat. This claim is proved by reviewing his adjectives. Akhavan called himself the poet of disappointment and unfulfilled
dreams of Iran. Take these adjectives and nouns: dry fountain, quiet hopeless people, hidden sighs, lowly birds, buried noises, fearful night, lull night, sleeping night, faint sound, triumphed castles, fallen roofs, non-mounted dust, ruthless storm, disappointed hunter, old marsh, bleak city, filthy city, city of prostitute, foggy city, grave city, stupid city, a hut bound by chagrin, ignorant barmaid, bored cloud, bleak deserts, wicked sky, broken Chang(instrument), illegal Chang, false lights, villain century, crazy century, chaotic century, lamia century, immodest century, afraid sun, patient stone, winter snow, hunchback tree and snow, dusty secret, foreigner delight, tight tent, closed doors, curtains familiar with agony, narrow barrier, cracked wall, greedy restless look, hopeless heart.

All these adjectives represent Akhavan's pessimism.

**Word Formation:**
A-One of Akhavan's art in word selection is archaism. Archaism means employing archaic language that is depicted in four types in his poems:
1-Utilizing particle such as: in, such as
2-Utilizing verbs as: standing, stabbing, drying, ascending, I heard, desiring, I came, devouring.
3- Utilizing noun as: three times, pinnacle, taker, in hand, blame, fetid, poem, island, tent, war, impregnable, third.
4- Employing syntactic archaism such as: breaking the spell, trembling
b- A certain number of Akhavan's words and constructions are extracted from spoken language. For "Akhavan contemplated folklore and spoken language in different periods of Persian language"(Shafiee Kadkani, 1391:59). For instance: outcaste, tight, ruffian, lip, torn, losing one's gentility, intoxicated lion, valuable.
c- He himself coined some words and compounds as:mazar abad, people bored with cruelty, filthy time, coral bloody bush, being nowhere, mazar ajin, sleep, path, smoky breathe, clear bitter exciter(wine), inflammatory gentle of grape(wine), land of bleakness, nowhere.

It is obvious that through the words selected from three collections, the words with pessimistic concept have a high percentage. Hopelessness filled his works:

"Tell that it does not matter wherever it grows, for there is no gardener or passenger. A garden of disappointment anticipates no spring"(zemestan,baghe man)".

Fulsome confronting words such as ruthless, cruel, transgressor, dictator, demon and devil exist in Akhavan's poems. Perhaps the reason is that in Akhavan's opinion the society is divided into two parts: governor and convict. These words depict the poet's distinct social point of view.

Many of his words and compounds go beyond passivity and take on a meaning of rebellion and hatred. Example like:
"Is not the light of God holy anymore? Did nod Haft Anoushe sleep enough?"(Az In Avesta: 24).
Sometimes ironical statements appear in Akhavan's words which are the criticism of unfulfilled dreams. Such as:
"We have come to conquer the land of bleakness, raiding on nowhere. We are the conquerors of lost cities and the guests of wine and opium which are given by friends and enemies".
d- Another type of word selection in Akhavan's poetry is his heroic and mythical words. He had a full knowledge of history and myths of Iran and applied them in his works appropriately. There are some examples as:
Luminous court of kindness, the happy outlook of Zartosht, the frightening thunders of the drums, stone breaking arrows, the life bottle of demon, the enchanted castles, son of Dastan, traitor well, blessed son, Deghianous, Sekandar, Bahram Varjavand, Garshash, emblems of devil, Kavian's flag, blond Zal, feather of Simurgh, God, Gods, Emshaspandan, haft Anoushe, devoted, Sam, Mitra, Rakhsh.

One of Akhavan's intellectual foundations is his reference to Iranian gentility. This reference includes nostalgic emotions. This word selection is for drawing the new generation's attention to understand the history of their country.

e- Some of Akhavan's words and constructions represent his common opinion with Khayam and Hafez which revolves around wine: The example is:
"I have come here to settle with you, and put your money beside the rum"(Zemestan: 109)"

Conclusion:

Mahdi Akhavan Sales is one the successful and popular poets in Iran. One of his concerns was intellectualism. However the historical events bring intellectualism, they cause disappointment and pessimism. Akhavan was one of these pessimist intellectuals. The main subjects of his works are:
People's disappointment is caused by the political deceptions. Therefore hatred replaces fortune.
Revolt is another result of deception and hatred. People bear different social agonies. Emergence of satire is natural in these situations, but the laughter of satirist is a sneer rose from his pains. Disappointment of the aggregations is anticipated in such situations. Akhavan tried his best to depict it. He employed rhetorical devices appropriately. It is unacceptable to consider him as an unskilled poet in imagination, for a poet with such spirits prefers content to poetic tools for including his social thoughts. Although his main aim is not creating images, the ones he illustrated are dynamic and elegant.
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