The resonance of vulgar beliefs & superstition beliefs in Saadi’s works

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Abstract

Vulgar beliefs are a part of Persian culture, language and literature. The authors and poets have used people common and ordinary beliefs, as one of their prose and verse themes, in order to give it, a national and religious color. Also, it is to protect their society’s tradition and culture from oblivion and transfer it from ancestors to descendants. These beliefs of ordinary people and cultures have root in very ancient era, and transferred to modern generations through tongue to another or generation after another. Saadi, is one of the skillful poets in such field, who, has indicated to his era populace’s superstition and vulgar beliefs, in his prose and verse works. In this study, there are some superstitious outlooks in Saadi’s works in order to better understand public’s beliefs in his era. Consequently, we try to comprehend his works, explain such beliefs, and attempt to find and study their background.

Keywords: culture, beliefs, vulgar tradition, superstition beliefs.
Introduction

“Culture and literature of every nation indicate their outlook quality and thought method towards the world, since, this section of their viewpoints is closer to most people life, so, it may express and reflex their culture characteristics.” (Study & Research of Iran public culture, Beihaghi. Hosseinali, p39).

One most important factor in study and public culture fields is focusing on common beliefs and values among people. Therefore, poets’ verse resulted from the sets that might be a proper stage to express this condition.

“Sometimes, study of works of public culture, could enlighten its era social mood and moral condition more than books of history or sociology.” (Mahjoob, 2003, p68).

“Superstition and vulgar beliefs have originated, down from some factors. The quality and the reason of advent of superstition are that because people fear of the unknown and mysterious environment. Since, they did not know the cause and effect relations of incidents or the reason of the appearance of different natural events, they believed that spiritual or psychotic factors are the reason or a cause as a for every occurrence. This is in order to convince themselves and relieve their pain or sufferings.” (Ravandi, 1977, p67/1).

Existing countless vulgar and superstition beliefs cases in Saadi’s poems, indicates of his precision and care to traditions, customs, and common beliefs in most of his nation era, also, mentioning them in his poems, shows his contemplation in reality and facts of life. in this study, we’ve tried to extract all the distiches from Saadi’s collected poems, but, in order to prevent verbosity, we just mentioned a few examples quotation:

**Vulgar beliefs**

Saadi’s expression about commoners’ believes and values, and also, some of their ancient cultures / scientific beliefs like believe in “the evil eye”, and “vulgar medicine” are the issues that he has explained in his works. He has talked about vulgar beliefs such as charms, the evil eye, belief in existing treasure in ruined places, squatting snakes on a treasure, belief in alchemy, or being inauspicious owl, and so on …

Whoever is seeking a friend, should tolerate enemy oppression, because, there are treasure & snake, flower & thorn, happiness & grief all together (Gholistan, p153).

But, generally, we should say that, superstitious beliefs in Saadi’s works are:
1-Believing in the evil and bad eye

Which causes harms and injuries, thus, everybody should be careful and avoiding it. This belief has been common among Iranian for a long ago, as, the demon of the evil eye has called “AGHSHA“ in Avesta book.

(Headiet, 1977, p13)

The belief, which, exists in most of cultures, and is pointing out, in Quran and religious narratives made us consider these versions, as a true structure of religious beliefs. But, it seemed that, the foliage that comes into being through passing the time, and the deeds to prevent them, are all resulted from superstition, like breaking egg, burning seeds of wild, reading some religious versions and then, blowing air to him / herself, are deeds, which, some people do it to repel such harms. Some of the repelling harms, that, Saadi has indicated, too, are:

1.1-Saying “May the evil eye stay away “

“O, the lord of Iran and Tour,
May the evil stay away from your days ”

(Boosten, P204)

“ Do not imagine, my darling, that
This ass could stay away the evil eye from farm,
could not stay away this rein from its ear
How, it could stay away the evil eye any more”

(ibid, p287)

1.2-Burning seeds of wild to stay away the evil eye

This method is yet common in most of Iran regions.
“Burning fire does not do the affair with seeds of wild,
Whatever does smoke on painful Heart”

(Gholestan, p 49)

1.3-Amulet & Charm to stay away the evil eye

Charm or Amulet, as reading or hearing process, is not only just for evil eye, but also, has been useful
For other kind of calamity (Dehkhoda, 1946, below word Charm)
The ancients wrote these special charms or wise words on paper or animals skin, considering the place,
Day, or stars situation (individual fortune), in order to stay away harm, evil eye, or probable dangers,

Then, fastened it on their arms, or put it in their pockets, which called Yamani Charm & Shame Stature (Sharden, 1956, p439).

Whether, you are a wise man to stay away your enemy, Could keep close his tongue by charity charm

1.4-Believing in charm to stay away evil eye

This kind of Amulet is something that may stay away the evil eye from human-kind, garden, or house, like prayer, amulet, marble, relief eye, charms, and so on. But, generally, it was a pitcher, that, they poured money on, in order to stay away the evil eye, then, throw it to alley from roof, to break, and passer-by collect and take its money:

“The evil eye would stay away, as throw the pitcher of Money, as soon as people take the money”

(Boostan, p 245)

2-Believing in making a wish come true by a tree

Once, I was a guest in a wise and old man house in Bakr land, who, had lots of money and assets, and a child. A night, he narrated me the story of his life, so that, when he had not any children, there was a tree in that territory, which was a shrine for needy people, to make a vow, so, I went there and wishes to have a child. I moaned so many nights to God, to come true my orison, in order to give me a son. I heard that this boy said to his friend, gently,”I wish to know the place of this tree, in order to pray (to God),

My Father dies, but old master was glad of this fact, that his son was wise, but, the boy said,

Sarcastically, My Father is old and disabled
(Gholestan, p 135)

3-Believing in putting demon in a bottle, through charm & magic

“In the old days, the writer prayer tradition was to cure involved Jinn individuals, by citation of epode & orison, and then, capture predominated fairy, and put them in a bottle
(through some epodes), so that, could treat involved people (Dehkhoda, 1998, below word Demon) & (Khatib Rahbar,2008,p71)

4-Believing in existing treasure in ruin:

“Alchemist has died, because of suffer and grief
But a fool has found treasure in ruin”
(Gholestan, p 61)

“This faith is visible in “Saeb” ‘s poet, too:
He disguise treasure in ruin, before
But, now, disguise ruin in treasure”
(Saeb collected poems, p225)

5-Believing in enlacing snake on treasure
(existing Snake & Treasure besides)

The ancients believed that snake sleeps on treasure, meaning, wherever, there is a treasure. Probably, there would be a snake, which is squatted around treasure. In most of the time, the name of snake with Treasure indicates the allegory of existing difficulty & distress besides ease & pleasance.

“Whoever is seeking a friend should tolerate enemy oppression
Because, there are treasure & snake,
Flower & thorn, happiness &grief all together”

(sonnet , p 448)

“O, whoever, you were encomiast of riches, and persecuted on mendicant,
Know now, wherever, there is flower, there would be barb & thistle, and
Drunkard & there is snake on treasure, and wherever, there is thistle, seems
Kingly, there is a wild alligator to ambush people”

(Gholestan, p 153)

Or:

“Flowers were devastated and remained teasels
The treasure was stolen and remained snake”

(ibid, p125)
6-Believing in inauspicious the Saturn planet

According to derivative of ancient astronomy, and poets’ saying, individuals’ fortune malignancy or an event, is concurrent with Saturn planet. This planet is placed on seventh or the last orbit of celestial heptads, since, it is the most far away planet to earth (according to ancient astronomy), which is obvious from its name with such feature. In “Nezam”, lexicon has mentioned about this planet, like: ”Saturn, is the name of seventh planet, pronouncing ”zohal”, and in Arabic pronouncing , is the name of seventh planet of set of 7 planet, with Persian name “Keivan”, which is a big sinister in astronomer viewpoint” (Nezam lexicon, version fourth, below word Keivan).

In Dehkhoda’s lexicon, there is more detailed explanation, like:“Keivan planet is that Zohah (saturn), compound of two word Kei, meaning” big”, and Van, meaning “the same”, and because of this, they supposed it is a big, clear and more far away, in comparison with the other planets. The word “Keivan” is not a Persian name, but, it is a Babylonian word. According to our findings, Iranian people had not had any name for this planet. But, Arabic pronunciation means “High”. Because of its distance from Earth, they called it Keivan. Hence, according to this, Arab literati example everything” High” to this planet, and call it “Sheik olnogoom” (master of astronomy). But, this is called as a big sinister in astronomer. (Dehkhoda lexicon, Zohal & Keivan). Saadi has also pointed to its being sinister, briefly, as following:

“Get your position, as your art and craft
Do not seek height and not malevolent like Saturn”

(Boostan, p 268)

Or: I wanted to call you Saturn, by comparing
But, I resay that you are hundred more malevolent than
Quaker is not able to eat anything of you
I fear that you eat Quaker, because of your hunger
(Composition, p 789)

7-Believing in inauspicious owl

Sometimes, we hear common people say that, they heard nothing about such an inauspicious birds (for Example owl), or it is the resource of infelicity, adversity, or whenever, it sits on a roof of a house, inhabitants of that house would face with calamity, or vice versa. It seemed that some of these birds are resource of wellbeing, luck, and graces for human. These sayings have been common among the public for a long time. Some of people have a strong belief in it. It is remarkable to say that: in religious resources, there are some animals, which are the
source of blessing & felicity, but, there are not any unlucky or fateful animals in these narratives. Since, all creatures are the creation of God, and the phenomenon of being infelicitous does not mean even, the grim owl. Owl is inauspicious and settled in ruins. According to Iranian ancient narratives, owl (conversely of public beliefs), is a benediction bird, which, recitatives Avesta epode, while, reading it as puckish. But, in Islamic culture, this bird is called malignancy (Yahaghi, 1996, p164). Saadi has pointed into this superstitious and vulgar load in his era, and treated them as valueless, in comparison with the bird of good fortune:

You were narrow minded and lack of diligence
So that, amused in owl instead of the bird of good fortune (Boostan, p243)

**8-Believing in forming pearl inside of shard by dripping a drop of rain**

Old time, they believed, whenever a rain drop pierced to a shard, and it closed immediately,

That drop converted, gradually to a pearl. In omnibus thought, it is common, such as: Whenever, there is downpour rain, shards come to surface of water, open their mouthpieces
And drink rain drops, as soon as, these drops entered into inside, because of nature of shard,
Indicating that they are source of eternal power of God, the pearl would born, grow, until Reaches a certain level of plenitude (Khaje Nasir Tousi, 1984, p85).

A rain drop dropped from a cloud
Became shamed, when it beheld the ocean amplitude
Saying, “where the ocean is, what am I?
If it be, by God! Then, I am not
Whereas, regarded itself with the eye of contempt
A shell cherished it with fervor in its bosom
It accessed high, because, got down
Follow nullity, till became existent
A wise man should be modest
Since, the high yield branch brings its head down
(ibid, p 264)

**8-Believing in putting horseshoe in fire for**
Making lover or beloved, restlessness

Common people believed that, by putting horseshoe in fire, so that, it gets very hot, is a useful method
To make beloved, restlessness, and also, for increasing affectionate in his/her heart. Saadi has used these themes in his collection poems, like:

“Jumps fire from her horseshoe, when, puts my horseshoe in the fire
   If, the others die of this deed, I be alive more”
   (sonnet, p 559)

10-Believing in effect of heavens & stars on human fortune

Saadi has pointed to this matter. He has talked about his beloved, as:

While, youth, I was a warlike, happy, and hero. But in senility and weakness, he mentioned own failure

At fighting with Tatar, lack of help of his star or fortune:

   In the sake of lacking help of my starthey captured me like a ring  
   Once, I find the scape way but, a useless way, like a foolish combating with his fait  
   How could help shield & casing?Since, my clear star did not help  
   So many heads are cut by dart and spearlike a soldier covers his face  
   Our sward was sharpin the sake of our harsh star
   (Boostan, p286)

   “Do not complain of heaven movement  
   O, poor, you are always wretch, and die in this way, too”  
   (Gholestan, p154)

O, wealthy, eat, donate, since,
Thou will access to world & afterlife
Whereas, you are rich and gracious
There is no worse than hurter
While, do not suppose depravation Day, is agreeable with you
   (ibid, p162)

   “Never, I complain of heaven revolution, and neither, despair of it, but  
   When, I had no shoe, and ...  
   Whoever controverted with heaven, because of enmity,  
   The firmament lead him to his non-expedient  
   The pigeon would not see its nest  
   If, its mishap takes it to seed”
“Chance & fortune is not depended on skill
But, the heaven validity”

(ibid, p103)

“Your high star refurbish world
Your enemy star will die“

(Boostan, p191)

“Whenever, your fortune should be die
The lord will send somebody to kill you”

(ibid, p246)

“Guilty star is inversed from far away
But, how many butterflies are amazed of its light?”

(ibid, p266)

“Being lucky depends on God’s forgiveness not on arm or claw of vigorous
Whereas, wealth is not able to give height or grace it just come true by humanity
Whereas, accessing to heaven is not possible it is necessary to be allied with heaven”

(ibid,p284)

11. Believing in Fortune, Grace, and Luck

Also, Saadi has pointed into these matters, as fortune, grace, luck, handsel, and the other affairs of this Kind, in his work

Whether, there are so many contraption in your head These wisdoms might not be useful, if have a bad fortune

(chapter3,Gholestan)

In Saadi’s Gholestan & Boostan, there are lots of various narratives about believing in fortune and Grace, such as:

Artist to stay in a territory, should have a successful chance, otherwise
Whereas, the grace of him is not enough
Goes to an obscure place, where, nobody knows

(ibid, chapter 3)

Said, this way honest devotee I did not see anyone such an ill-fortune
That, not ethnic was in safe nor, muslim, in safe of his tongue
Inadmissible, who, has a good luck the wise men gave up their option
(ibid, p50)

In some of other narratives, luck or chance is an important factor of individuals’ felicity or calamity.
He places the crown of fortune on head on one
He brings another from a throne to the dust
One has paradise hat on
Other has ill-favored kilim
(Boostan, p186)

In the most cases, the source of fiasco and disaster is calamity or ill-favored, like, the narrative about Two sons of king, who, one of them, after becoming his successor, begins to overweigh and ingrane his Nation, and consequently, his fortune returned, and enemy overcomes him.

Whereas, his fortune returned of hunt
Friendly, his enemy overcame on
(ibid, p211)

Also, he believed that some of people, are the most unfortunate and desperate individuals.

A father tested his son, young, learn this advice
I saw a blockish man pretended to be an ambitious
I asked him, what is others’ guilt? If, thou are ill-favored?
Do not wish a disaster for real ambitious since, that unfortunate is in own disaster
It is not necessary to talk him such a way
Because, he has a bad enemy on his cervix
(ibid, p160)

“Pray to God, complain to God, when, becoming disappointed, amazed
Of such fortune, regret of having what a fortune, and duality of world”
(Gholestan, p123)

“Father said: o, my dear son, your fortune helped thou to have a nice times, so
You should confer it to others, in order to strength your own fortune”
(ibid, p107)

As soon as, one of his friend came back from a trip, who, were always poor, as he saw him
Rich and safe, said: ” praise without limit and lauds unnumbered befit the Majesty of kingdom-possessing might, that you’ve got wealthy, and your fortune directed thou to high position, and
Reached into such a rank.
(ibid, p77)

“ It was greed of my good fortune
The bird of good fortune outspreded its wing on my head
(Boostan, p202)

“The angel told him, o , good fortune
Do not hate me, because of your own fortune”
(ibid, p208)

“Whereas, his fortune turned ill-favored, they told him to bury
But, he did not do whatever, they have said
He replied that, I am sad of such a fortune,
Lest, think, it is really source of mine”
(ibid, p267)

“Hear more strange tradition
Ill-favored person does not have any value”
(ibid, p286)

“Who might get anything by force?
Who could sighted a blind under its shading?”
(ibid, p288)

12. Believing in the bird of good fortune & felicity

This bird, in the most of fiction, is the code of felicity and kingdom. Ancient public supposed that, Homa (the bird of good fortune) is a benedict bird, caused felicity for people, and whoever was under its shade, will be lucky, wealthy, and successful.

In the Zoology books, such as “Hayatolheivan”, “Ajaebolmakhloghat”, and “Alaie’s book”, there is not any issues about this bird, but, in the Persian poems and literature, existence of it, is a real process, making felicity & lucky for people (Hedaiet, 1977, p32).

“ No one ougth be under the owl shade
Otherwise, the bird of good fortune will inexistent”
“The bird of good fortune is beyond of all birds
Since, not eating everything and either suffering other birds”

(ibid, p43)

“It was greed of my good fortune
Do not hate me, because of your own fortune
Thou were narrow minded and lack of diligence
So that, amused in owl than the bird of good fortune”

(ibid, p243)

“Feeding passerine, partridge, and dove
Till, your portion will be the bird of good fortune”

(ibid, p224)

13. Believing in Demon

According to ancient narratives, demons, are agley, beamy, and captious creatures, who, eat meat of human. They are all unholy and cruel, with heavy power, and skillful in epode. They are able to turn up in ideal appearance (Yahaghi, 1996, p202).

Not everyone, who, has eye, ear, and mouth, is human
But, there are so many demons, who, have human face
(sonnets, p388)

Saadi believed that Demons are evasive of angels’ hymn, and covered from human eye, and also, they are cannibal. In the previous section, these beliefs were mentioned, such as: human could put these demons in bottle, and dominate them, through reading some epodes, like:

O, Saadi, Love may not admix with Lust
Before beadroll of Angels, cursed demon would not fade
(ibid, p519)

O, Saadi, Demon, is not bogey, fading by epode
But, think about attraction people by good saying
(ibid, p544)

Saadi has pointed to this fact, based on may draw off demons through reading epode or:
Whenever, Demon drawn off by saying
(Nothing will change, or move from
Its position, but, by the power of God)
It can’t turn back any more
(Boostan, p302)

But, there are some other verses about this more fearsome creature, too.

“ Whether, Angel lives with Demon
Learned dread, betrayal, and guile”
(Gholestan, p163)

“Thou can’t learn goodness from Bad
Is not wolf duty to dressmaking sheep skin”
( ibid, p116)

“Don’t give malice position & opportunity
It is better to keep away enemy and demon in bottle”
(Boostan, p248)

“There are lots of angels
But, evasive from people, day and night”
( ibid, p252)

“You asked a proper question
I will answer, and you admire
Plain, sea, mountain, and heaven
Fairy, human being, demon, and angel
All, whatever are, they are not so high
To mention about existence by their existent”
( ibid, p258)

“But, they don’t reflex light, in sake of their dimness
Whether, meeting demon or nymph face”
( ibid, p293)

“They disapproved that, this is hypocrisy and guile
He running away from people, like a demon”
( ibid, p316)
14. Believing in Fairy

Regarding to ancient narratives, we found out that, “fairy”, is a delicate, and very pretty creature, originated from fire. It may not be seen by eyes, and because of its magic beauty, and it deceives human-being (Yahaghi, 1996, p141).

This creature is not human like-minded, and runs away from them. Saadi has pointed to this issue and belief in his poems:

O, beautiful face, why are thou hide from my eye? 
Is it, because of your elite to hide from people eye?  
(sonnets , p430)

I know now, the reason of covering your face with sleeve 
It is your custom to be hided from people 
(ibid, p562)

I knew from the beginning that, this promise with me, is not strong 
Whereas, there is no compatibility between fairy and human-being  
(ibid, p438)

This creature has been used, repeatedly, in Saadi’s works, to explain his beloved beauty.

Lover is playing and laugh with his beautiful face beloved  
Despite, whatever, he orders I will tolerate her coquettishly  
(Gholestan, p117)

Your master taught you, humor, and effusing charm  
Cruelty, coyness, rebuke, and oppression  
I’ve never seen such form, disposition, habit, method  
Unless, you’ve learned these from a beautiful fairy  
(ibid, p126)

He gives to the seed of man, a form like a parity fairy painter  
Who, is the Go, Who has made a painting on the water  
(Boosten, p352)

You asked a proper question I’ll answer it, you admire
Plain, sea, mountain, and heavenfairy, human being, demon, and angel
All, whatever are, they are no highto mention about existence by their existent
(ibid, p258)

Whatever, claimants see fairy face
Learn why the crazy has torn his clothes
(sonnets, p382)

15. Believing in bird singing God’s praise & chanting

Last night, a bird was caroling towards the morning
It stole my patient & reason, fortitude and understanding
My lamentation had perhaps reached
The ear of one of my clearly beloved friends
He said, “I did not believe that the singing of a bird
Could so distract there!”
I answered, this is not the duty of human species
The birds singing God’s praise, and I am silent

(Gholestan, p 76)

16. Believing in bird

There are strange beliefs and interesting sayings about such a bird, such as, Christiansen, in his book, as: “in the primary period of creating, the God created a kind of bird, so very pretty, so that, everybody was astonish ed. This bird had all perfections in an even level. Its face was like a man, and its wings were in most beautiful and rich colors. It had two wings, claws, and a beak like Eagle, from the view of hardship. Then, God created a couple for it, called “Angha”.

After a while, God made a friendship relation between holy Mosa (the messenger) and them. In the period of prophet “Yosea”, the predecessors of this bird left Israel, and nested in Najd and Hejaz, the homeland of Gheisar Eilian. Then, it begin to hunt small animals, and quadrupeds. Finally, in the Era of Christ and Mohammad, there was a king, named “Khaled Ebn Safvan” in Anbar tribe, very upset about hunting the child of Men, who, were hunted by these birds. He prayed to God and asked him to destroy the generation of that bird. God, also admitted and overthrew them.”(Christiansen, 1974, p104). Saadi has expressed it this way:

I’ve been alone in all my life,
Like being captured, as a partridge by falcon
(Sonnet, p366)

How could turn around filtered wine?
Could sparrow be in Angha’s nest?
(ibid, p542)

17. Believing in Simorgh, based on its location in “Ghaf” Mountain

“Simorgh”, is that Senmru (in Pahlavi language), meaning “Sen”. In Avesta book (verses 24& 41), the word “Sen”, is called a hunter bird, and probably, Eagle. Also, in verses 12&17, “Sen”, is a fictional bird. The tree “Sen” is placed among “Frakhkert” Sea or Heaven ocean. This tree has lots of advantages to cure ill people, and grows all vegetables from its seed. Also, there is Senmuru’s nest on top of such a tree. In fact, it is a famous bird, with lots of power, and good fortune (ibid, p103). Simorgh is famous, because of its loneliness, without couple, and being hidden from sight. Saadi has pointed to its place on the peak of “Ghaf” mountain:

The God has given daily bread to all
Simorgh eats it on “Ghaf” mountain
(Boostan, p185)

Yes, they exampled carrion-feeder vulture
But, Simorgh’s position is on “Ghaf” mountain
(L.pieces, p749)

18. Believing in Mandrake

“Mandrake” or “people herb”, is a flora similar to Men, growing in china territories. It is downhill side, so that, its root is as its hair, and has male & female genre, with hands in each other neck. Their feet are fastened in each other. There is an ancient saying based on,

“Whoever cuts this flora, will die soon.” (Hedaiet, 1971,p18). Saadi has said:

Learn kindness from me, even, if, I were not alive
Come to my grave, and seek for Mandrake
(sonnets, p361)

19. Believing in existing Elixir
Ancient public believed that, there is a material, which, by using it on metals, they become gold.

Saeb has expressed this issue, as:

*Blood will become Elixir, by contentment, like pure musk
As love elixir poured on my copper, and I became gold*  
(sonnets, p497)

20. Believing in Charm & Magic

Of other beliefs in Saadi’s Era, believes in charm and magic. The recent explanation is about, whether, magic existed really, or not. There are differences among Shiea & Soni. But, we just study and review Saadi’s viewpoints, briefly, in this field. He has pointed into magic and charm, regarding Quran’s narratives, on practicing magic of “Sameri “, and

“Harout”:

*AS, her two pairs charming eyes
Made me sleeplessness, by magic*  
(sonnets, p362)

*Say, magic is illicit, in this period, but
Your eye did as, even, Harout done on Babel*  
(ibid, p 446)

*Your eye, lock of hair, and the ear lobe, are all magic, but
How these worshippers have adopted magic, such away?*  
(ibid, p 441)

*What a going, and thou make magic
Which, even, Sameri was disable to do it*  
(ibid, p563)

Conclusion

Study of vulgar and public beliefs in Saadi’s works, showed that, this poet was looking for such issues from social and psychological perspective. In this condition, his prose and verse works on beliefs, values, thoughts, and public ideas go back to about the seventh century.
Existence of countless cases of vulgar beliefs indicated the factuality of his explanations, in relation to his life and environment. His poems are windows on different dimensions, and show a direct relation with his audiences, on social and cultural problems. Saadi has tried to represent a familiar and proper expression, in order to make it better understood. So, the comprehension of them gets easier and more tenable. Moreover, he has attempted to remove gaps between himself and his audiences.
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