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Concept of Satire and Its Development during Umayyad Period **Hafiz Md Nazrul Islam**

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Abstract

Poetry was a way of disclosing feelings, making pride for any clan or a brave member of a clan, thinking as well as a way of confessing love for someone in pre-Islamic period. Later it became a source of describing various conditions such as expressing someone's sorrow, bravery, dignity, honour, real love, mean qualities etc. Some poets took poetry as a source of earning by praising some rich people or any King, or by defaming the enemies of that rich personality or the King. Thus the existence of a new kind of poetry became visible which is known as satirical poetry. It is difficult to say the exact date of origin of satirical poetry, but according to the literary history of the Arabs, it may be mentioned that the satirical poetry originated in the Pre-Islamic period. Because in almost all the poems, the poets made (مدح) praise or (فخر) pride to some person or a clan and made the other demolished.

Key Words: Pre-islamic, poem, satire, Umayyad, verse.

Introduction: As this article mainly will discuss about satirical poetry and its development, we should have a glance on its definitions as stated by various writers in their collections. Satire (Hija) means ridicule, taunt, sarcasm and satirical poetry means a literary composition containing irony.¹

Satire is known in Arabic language as (هجاء) Hija its plural, is (أهجوية) Ahjiyah, which means to ridicule, to mock, to satirized, to defame.² Nicholson remarks that besides fountain songs, war-songs and hymn to idols, other kinds of poetry must have existed in that times as for example love-song and the dirge. Another form of poetry mentioned by R.A. Nicholson is satire (Hija) in which the powers of the poet (Al-Shair) were chiefly exhibited.³

Jeffery says, "Satire is a composition of salt and mercury; and it depends upon the different mixture and preparation of those ingredients, that it comes out of a noble medicine, or a rank poison".⁴ Addition Says, "Lampoons and satires that are written with wit and spirit, are like poisoned darts which not only inflict a wound but make it incurable".⁵

Crousaz says, "A satirist of true genius, who is warned by a generous indignation of vice and whose censures are conducted by candor and truth, merits the applause of every friend to virtue. He is a sort of supplement to the legislative authority of his country, assisting the unavoidable defects of all legal institution for regulation of manners, and striking terror, even where the divine prohibitions themselves are held in contempt".⁶

Description:

Subject of Satire: The satirist's trade is to censure. It condemns whatever does not approve, and each age has had its own set of vices to ridicule. The satire, like the drama holds the mirror up to nature

and lashes out at contemporary follies and foibles. Chaucer and Langland attacked corruption in the Church and other vices such as dishonesty on the part of traders and men of law just as Amar bin Kalthum attacked Omar bin Hind, the then king by his satire although the king was a man of law (4th Sab Muallaqa, verse-25). The Elizabethans had their own subjects of satire: the courtier, the puritan, the women, the effected traveller, the dishonest tailor etc. The satire proper of Dryden and pope are more personal, directed rather against men than manners.⁷ Imraul Qays, the greatest Muallaqat poet satired the women and he directed his satires against men and women than manners (First Muallaqa, verse-17-19). The ancient age was an age of privilege, ceremony and artificiality, and of bitter political rivalry and controversy and there was plenty of food for satire as Dr. Johnson remarked in his book 'London' for English literature.⁸

Kinds of Satire: Satire is of two kinds, remarks Iliya Hawi, author of the book *Fann Al-Hija*. According to him the first kind of satire is in most cases easy, on the other hand the second kind of satire is very severe and in most cases permanent and everlasting. For example the defamation of Imraul Qays, the first and the greatest of the Muallaqat poet's to his beloved Unaiza is simple and easy but the defamation or satire of the Umayyad poets like Al-Al-Akhtal, Farazdaq and Jarir to each other is very severe and everlasting.

The satire may be inspired by either a personal grievance or a passion for reform. It is an attack on a person or group of persons or on a social evil or folly. It is, in the next place, intended to ridicule, not to abuse, though it may often be bitter. In general, it hates the sin and not the sinner and is more playful than harmful.

Satire, like an arrow, has to take the shortest route to its target. It must be tersed (clearly written) and concise so as to say a great deal in a brief space. Prolixity destroys its effect.⁹

However, it is difficult to say the exact date of origin of satirical poetry, but according to the literary history of the Arabs, it may be mentioned that the satirical poetry originated in the Pre-Islamic period. Because in almost all the poems, the poets made praise or pride to some person or a clan and made the other demolished. For example Imraul Qays, the first and the Greatest of the Muallaqat poets loved a beautiful girl Unaiza by name very much. But when she did not allow him to enter into her howdah (dwelling chamber) Imraul Qays became angry with her and defamed her saying that many maidens like her entertained him. This was the pride of Imraul Qays to defame and demolish Unaiza, which was in other words called satirical speech of Imraul Qays.

The satire is, of course, found in both poetry and prose. The satire is of classical origin etymologically, a satire is of impolished verse," and this has been the characteristic of it in English literature. The true end of satire, as observed by "Dryden" is the amendment of vices by correction.¹⁰

The defamation originated in the Pre-Islamic Age. It was of course light and indirect defamation and the same gradually became more and more tough upto the Umayyad poets like Al-Al-Akhtal (D. Hijri 95/713 A.D.), Al-Farazdaq (D.H.110/728 A.D.) and Al-Jarir (D.H.110/728 A.D.). These lampoons are called Al-Naqaid. In the golden Age of Arabic literature that is the Abbasid Age, also the poets composed verse satiring the kings, their patrons and the rival poets. For example Shaif Al-Dawlah was the king of the country when Mutanabbi was a poet. The poet in the beginning praised Shaif Al-Dawlah as he was the court poet of Shaif Al-Dawlah but in the long run

Mutanabbi defamed Shaif Al-Dawlah as well as Negro Kafur. In this way the other poets of Abassid period like Abu-Nawas, Abul-Atahiya and Abul Ala Al-Maarri also composed satirical verse.

Discussion: Satire (Hija), which was, unlike the Qasida not professional in the Pre-Islamic or early Islamic periods, became a prosperous earning vocation and penetrated deep into the Umayyad society. The Pre-Islamic or early Islamic satire rarely excluded the bounds of censure or reproof, but in the Umayyad period, it gets vulgar and foul. Only a fraction of the satire composed in this period has come down to us, the rest having perished, as no serious efforts to preserve it was made. The surviving specimens belong the lampoons of the three giant Umayyad poets, al-Al-Akhtal, al-Farazdaq and al-Jarir. These lampoons are called al-Naqaid or satirical glorificatory long poems in similar metres and end rhymes. The style of the Naqaid is dull and stiff yet they contain historical information of some value relating to wars and other affairs of the tribes of the three poets.¹¹

There flourished many poets during the Umayyad period of whom Umar bin Ali Rabia, al-Al-Akhtal, al-Farazdaq and al-Jarir have been regarded Pre-eminent by early literary masters. But Abu Rabia (716A.D) the son of a rich Meccan Merchant was a poet of love poems. Nicholson remarks that Umar Passed the best part of his life in the pursuit of noble dames, who alone inspired him to sing. His poetry was so seductive that it was regarded by devout Muslims as the greatest crime ever committed against God” and so charming with all that Abdullah bin Abbas, the Prophets cousin and a famous authority on the Quran and the Traditions could not refrain from getting by heart some erotic verses which Umar recited to him.¹² Dr. C. Brockelmann also pointed out that the love-poetry of this epoch is largely popular.

On the other hand the names of al-Al-Akhtal, Al Farazdaq and Jarir stand out Pre-eminently in the Umayyad poets. Nicholson earmarks that they were men of a very different stamp from the languishing Minnesingers who, like Jamil, refused to battle except on the field of love.¹³ It is noteworthy that all the three were born in Mesopotamia. They were know as the trio-poets of Umayyad period.

Al-Al-Akhtal: The oldest of the trio poets Al-Akhtal (Ghiyath bin Ghawth) of Taghlib, was a Christian, like most of his tribe they had been settled in Mesopotamia and remain in that faith to the end of his life, though the caliph Abdul Malik is said to have offered him a pension and 10,000 dirhams in cash if he would turn Muslim. Al-Al-Akhtal flourished as a poet as well as satirist in the caliphate of Umar bin Al- Khattab. Like Jarir and al-Farazdaq, his poetic career began while he was a boy and his first attempt consisted of a satire on his unkindly stepmother.¹⁴

Al-Akhtal was given to drinking and composed good poetry only when tipsy.¹⁵ Yet it is said that he did not compose a single verse that might blush a virgin. With Jarir and Farazdaque, he is the most prolific poet of the Umayyad Period. Like Jarir and Farazdaq, he is the author of some Naqaid directed against the former, but unlike the two, he is not obscene in his satire. He taunts his rivals for lacking mainly qualities, such as bravery, generosity, honesty and loyalty. He shows commendable skill, unshared by his two rivals, in vividly describing scenes of war and nature.

Nicolson remarked that Al-Akhtal is commended by Arabian critics for the number and excellence of his long poems, as well as for the purity, polish and correctness of his style. Abu Ubaida put him first among the poets of Islam, while the celebrated collector of Pre- Islamic poetry, Abu Amr bin al-Ala, declared that if Al-Akhtal had lived a single day in the Pagan Age, he would not have preferred any one to him. His supremacy was acknowledge by Farazdaq and he himself claims to have surpassed all completers in three styles, viz panegyric, satire and erotic (love) poetry.

The works of al-Al-Akhtal, like those of Jarir and al-Farazdaq, have their origin in contemporary events and reflect the feuds and political contemporary and the feud and political controversies of the time. The Diwan comprises panegyrics in Qasida form and also a large number of epigrammatic poems. The poetical form, the stereotyped terminology and the language resemble with but slight variations, those of the other contemporary poets. It is highly probable that the vogue which al-Al-Akhtal enjoyed during his life-time, was the result of an infatuation on the part of the Rabite Arabs, who rejoiced at finding in him a champion worthy to stand against those of the Bakrite and Tamimite Arabs. Later, however, when the literary centers of Iraq evolved their poetic ideal, it became the fashion to draw comparisons between the works of Al-Al-Akhtal, Al-Farazdaq and Jarir.

Example of one of his satirical verses.

Oh Jarir Do you set up or think that the Bani Kulaib (your own tribe) to be the leader of men, it will be a dishonor for the general people as mentioned.

Al-Farazdaq: He is Abu Faraz Hammam bin Ghalib, popularly known as al-Farazdaq. He was born and brought up in Bedouin environments at Basra towards the end of Umar's Caliphate.

Nicholson remarks that his (Farazdaq's) grandfather, Sa'saa, won renown in Pre-Islamic age by ransoming (saving) the lives of female infants whom their parents had condemned to die (on account of which he received the title, Muhyi-l-Maw'udat, 'He who brings the buried girls to life) and his father was likewise imbued with the old Bedouin traditions of liberality and honour, which were rapidly growing obsolete among the demoralized populace of Iraq.¹⁷

Like Jarir and Al-Akhtal, al-Farazdaq was a poet from boyhood and like the two, he started with satire, keen animosity sprang up between him and Jarir. He took the opportunity of pacifying his ill will towards Jarir by joining hands with Al-Baith another Terminate poet between whom and Jarir a satirical warfare had broken out.¹⁸

Example of one of his satirical verses.

How can he (Khalid al- kasri) guides the Muslims while his mother follows a religion which says Allah is not one.

Jarir: Jarir bin Atiyya belonged to kulayb, a branch of the same tribe, Tamim, Which produced Farzdaq. He was the court-poet of Hajjaj, the dreaded governor of Iraq. He eulogized his patron in such extravagant terms as to arouse the jealousy of the caliph Abdul Malik, who consequently received him, on his appearance at Damascus, with marked coldness and hauteur.¹⁹

Jarir's fame as a satirist stood so high that to be worsted by him was reckoned a greater distinction than to vanquish anyone else. The blind poet, Bashshar bin Burd (783 A.D.) said, "I satirized Jarir, but he considered me too young for him to notice. Had he answered me, I would have been the finest poet in the world."

Farique remarks that Jarir was the greatest satirist of the Umayyad period. About two third of his poetry is devoted to satire.²⁰ It was more an offensive than a defensive weapon in his hand. Of the eighty or so poets with whom he is said to have satirical fights, all gave up the fight for one reason or the other, except al-Farazdaq and al-Al-Akhtal, both of whom continued to strike till the last. His satire normally couched (expressed) in simple language, was easily intelligible. But he does not spare even their innocent women, mothers, grandmothers and wives to satirize if and when they are found guilty.

Example of one of his satirical verses.

“Indeed if you give money to Farazdaq on the condition to accept the Christianity, certainly he (Farazdaq) will be a Christian.”

Conclusion: After a thorough discussion we see that satirical poetry is also a notable kind of poetry through the ages. Though it started in pre Islamic period in a non-formal way it became capable of getting a position or a place among the variations of poetry. Many pre Islamic poets showed the quality of satirical poetry, but it flourished in Umayyad period having one special position for it. The notable poets like Al-Akhtal, Farajdaq and Jarir brought this kind of poem to the people with a peculiarity, which got the acceptance of the people worldwide.

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