Social Context of Folk Beliefs Illustration in Saeb Poetry

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Abstract
Undoubtedly, Saeb Tabrizi is the greatest master of content in all periods of Persian literature. His poetry is full of new themes, common allegories and valuable treasure of folklore culture and folkallusion. This article tries to investigate social contents usage especially folkbeliefs and superstition in poetical illustration in forms of simile, metaphor, allegory and allusion in Saeb’s poetry.

Key words: Saeb, Indian style poetry, imaginative forms, folk beliefs

Introduction
Persian poetry of Safavid period has undertaken changes in three steps:
Step one: the poetical school was founded after Baba Afzal Shirazi and it lasted one century.
Step two: in this stage a scientific school was established and Persian poetry was filled with folk beliefs, irony, allegory, new metaphors and proverbs. This school added to Persian literature treasure was founded in Isfahan and elite poets like Saeb were trained in this school.
Step three: the poetry of this stage was developed in Indian subcontinent (Golchine Mani, 1985).

In this article, step two of Safavid period poetry especially Saeb’s works are studied. Like most of his contemporaries, Saeb has employed folkbeliefs of different social classes and offered beautiful illustrations. Saeb has used following folkbeliefs in his poems:

Paridanecheshm (Eye twitching)
The common people believed that when someone’s eye twitches, he is waiting for something and twitching right eye is sign of happiness and twitching of left eye is bad omen which foretells of ill luck headed the way (Shakorzadeh, 1983). Saeb refers to eye twitching frequently as object of comparison.

The birth of Jesus is not without struggle
The eye of needle twitches to have Miriam’s thread
(Saeb, 1985)

At first, the second hemistich is object of comparison for the first hemistich. Secondly, in the second hemistich, the needle is personified and it has an eye. According to this fact that twitching is metaphor, so it is subordinate.

The eye of fire twitching for desire of my stack
The eye of needle twitches to injure me
(ibid).

In this couplet, in addition to metaphor for fire and needle and as explained in the similar couplet eye twitching is allusion to desire to something.

Although your teeth were grinded because of eating bread
But your greedy eyestwitch for bread

(ibid).

In the second couplet, twitching of eye is allusion to greed and desire and waiting for something.

By a wink at the sky

Yet the eyes of stars twitch because of desire

(ibid)

There is a metaphor in the second hemistich. The stars have been imagined to have eyes that they seem flickering for the observer on the earth.

Following couplets contain imaginary forms with similar contents:

The eye of star twitches for desire of him

The sun and stars are shining by his power

(ibid)

Twitching eye and beating heart are signs of receiving message of the beloved (ibid)

There is no droplet without desire

The eye of bubble twitches for love

(ibid)

**piyehgorg (Wolf suet)**

*MalidanPiyehgorg* means playing trick and holding in disrespect and detesting of somebody in public view (Golchine Mani, 1985).

Disrespecting of the dears by accusation is resemblance to playing trick and deceives (Malidanpiyehgorgroepirahane Yusuf) (Saeb, 1985)

*Malidanpiyehgorgroepirahan* is implicit allusion of calumny in order to show somebody valueless. There is a combined simile in this couplet, so that “uselessness of holding in contempt of good people” is likened to “uselessness of calumny of Yusuf”.

**Owl**

It is believed that owl is bad omen and it lives in ruined places with treasure. Saeb refers to such beliefs in his poems in artistic way:

There is treasure in apparently ruined places

Those whom percept see the owl as lucky bird

(ibid)

“Hiding of treasure in apparently ruined places as treasury of wealth” is likened to “being fortunate of owl because of showing place of treasure”. The object of comparison is “showing apparently mean person as being fortunate”.

If the meaning of solitude is avoiding splendor

The owl is not less than phoenix in its status

(ibid)
In the second hemistich, the poet uses an allegory for the first hemistich and he refers to simile about those who consider solitude useful.

Do not go beyond your confinement, be prosperous
There is no peer less than osprey whenever the owl is in the ruined
(ibid)

In this couplet, the reverse of previous couplet is proved; indeed, there is duality in these poems considered as characteristics of Saeb style.

What can life do with this melancholic person?
What can bad omen owl do in this ruined house?
(ibid)

Nobody is inferior in his position
He is great whenever the owl is resident of ruined
(ibid)

Cheshmeshoure (Evil eye)

It is believed that “evil eye is an eye that damages properties and human body” (Khoramshahi,1994)

Groan and prayat midnight that
The effect of crying and groaning is reduced in the morning because of evil eye
(Saeb,1985)

By poetical reasoning the poet refers to the evil eye as the reason for less effectiveness of praying during day relative tonight. Indeed, morning is personified that it has damaging eyes.

Oh Saeb, I am not secure from world evil eye
Otherwise, I was slept during flooding
(ibid)

In this couplet, the account of morning in the previous couplet is repeated for world and ametaphor is employed.

KhoroseBimahal(untimely cock)

The person who talks idle near great people
He is like an untimely cock that welcomes its death
(ibid)

It is believed that: “the cock that crows untimely should be killed or forgiven, otherwise its owner dies” (Hedayat,1963). Those who talk idle near the greats are like an untimely cock. Being killed due to untimely crow is subject of comparison in this couplet.

Revenge those who talk idle by silence
The blade responds untimely cock
(Saeb,1985)

Untimely speech is like to accepting death
On timecock is never killed
Dar shishekar danpari (placing elf in the bottle)

It was common to read incantation inside the bottle and closed its door for elimination of fairies. It was believed that the fairy is trapped in the bottle and the person is rescued. (Varavini, 1996).

It is unfair to imprison demon with fairy in a bottle
Ignore wisdom and think about love
(Saeb, 1985)

In this couplet “companion of wisdom and love” and “imprisonment of demon with fairy” are compared. The subject of comparison is coordination of two inferior and superior creatures and objects.

If you think that the fairy is imprisoned in the bottle
Look at its images in the mirror
(ibid)

There is a combined simile in this couplet. “The beautiful image on the mirror” is likened to “fairy imprisoned in the bottle”. The subject of simile is a “beautiful face in the transparent glass”.

The heart is never depressed by the beloved sorrow
Imprisonment of fairy in the bottle is not useful
(ibid)

The talisman of bottle could not solve my problem
The life does not hear my desire uselessly
(ibid)

Donbehgodaz (putting needles on sheep fat)

The witchcrafts put many needles on sheep fat and called name of the person and read incantation and hanged it on the old tomb and placed light under the fat to melt. By melting of fat that person was weaken and finally died (Golchine Mani)

The perfect people are only damaged by evil eye
The full moon is reduced only by witchcraft
(Saeb, 1985)

“Evil eye damages every beautiful thing” (Golchine Mani, 1985). An allegory of witch crafting with fat of sheep is addressed for comprehension of the concept that only the exalted people are damaged by evil eye. Indeed, “insecurity of the perfect people from evil eye “is likened to “reducing size of full moon due to looking of the observers from the earth”. In addition, the poet personifies the moon that it is subjected to witch crafting because of its beauty so its size is reduced.

The cup of who that is filled in this feast
He is decayed like decrease of full moon by witchcraft
(Saeb, 1985)
Ramal (Geomancy)

Geomancy was common practice in Iranian society due to interest of Iranians in superstition in the poet period. Tavernier writes: “there are people called geomancer. The geomancy tool is like a dice with paired spots that the future is told by it. The geomancer sits in his shop and he has subordinates. When people are gathered together, they leave their hands from their pockets and show their closed hands and they ask about what they have in their hands. The geomancer turns the dice and when people are gathered, he throws the dice on the board and after a while he says what the person has and that person opens his hand wonderingly. The people believe in geomancers and they give money him to do geomancy and he says idle talks” (Tavernier, 1984).

The eyes of sensual people are seeking continuously
While, there is no peace of mind in geomancy
(Saeb, 1985)

It is useful to study the purpose of the second hemistich. The geomancers had dies and they turned them and they stopped them in a moment. It means that the die is not static and it is dynamic. These boney dies had black spots. So the movement of pupil is likened to movement of die. In this couplet, the second hemistich is object of comparison of the first hemistich and “dynamcity of sensual people” is likened to “continuous movement of the geomancer dice”. The subject of comparison is continuous movement of the white object with black spot in the center.

I am surprised by my self
I have an ambition every moment like dice of the geomancers (ibid)

Star

The ancient Iranians believed in inauspiciousness and good influence of the stars and changing human fate by movement of the stars. Safavid kings also believed in stars. Shah Suleiman that Saeb was in his court for eleven years counseled with astronomers about war, acceptance of ambassadors, holding parties, hunting and horse riding (Kampfer, 1984).

The spot on the beloved face is harmonic
Everywhere is fortunate for lucky person due to the good fortune stars
(Saeb, 1985)

The first and second hemistiches are simile. “The harmony of the spot in every part of the beloved face” is likened to “being lucky due to good fortune of the stars”.

The heart of ill humored is bereaved
The star of the leopard is unfortunate
(ibid)

The unfortunate star of the leopard is reference to its black spots. “Forever indignation of of ill humored” is likened to “permanency and inherency of black spots on leopard skin”.

Its spots led to its misfortune accompanied by black hair
Avoid that stat which becomes a comet
(ibid)
Although, equalization is not used in this couplet for resemblance purpose, but there is a combined simile. The spot that continued by perfumed black hair is likened to comet. It can be said that a comet is a unit object, so in this simile, the compared is single and resemblance is combined and object of comparison is also combined and it is “continuous object”.

**GohareShabCherag (gemstone)**

It was believed that Gohareshabcherag is a valuable luminous gemstone and a cow living in the sea pastures with it at night and then returns it to the sea.

The fortune cow has taken gemstone at ambergris night (Nizami, 2005)

Independence of love for prove itself is likened to independence of Goharshabcherag for oil for lightening. The object of comparison is “independence of natural heat for heat of the gemstone and heating substance”.

Love does not need other to prove itself

The gemstone does not need other to shine (Saeb, 1985)

**Divination**

The people of eastern countries especially Iranians are interested in metaphysics. It can be referred to fortunetelling that attracts everybody, so some opportunists misuse it. Tavernier writes: “The Iranians are interested in knowing future and they respect astronomers and counsel with them. The king has four astronomers and they say fortunate and unfortunate days. Many calendars are sold every year in Iran. These calendars contain length and width and conjunction and dispersion of the stars. Wars, diseases, drought, times for wearing new clothes, phlebotomy, traveling and other affairs are predicted according to these calendars” (Tavernier, 1984).

“The fortune tellers have a book. This book contains paired numbers and figures and they foretell happiness and unluckiness of the people” (ibid).

Lost his clear sighted eyes who divined from his book (Saeb, 1985)

In the second hemistich, “book” is simile. The face of lover is likened to Quran in virtue. It is common to consult with Quran. In Mafatihoaljenan, it is referred to preliminaries of consulting with Quran: “open the Quran and consult and begin from the first line from the first part without counting pages and lines…” (Gomi, 2006).

Saeb what do you divine about the secret

Nobody could divine from divaneGiyamt (comprehend resurrection) (Saeb, 1985)

Divination by poems is common today. Especially, it is done with Hafez divan. In order to comprehend the subject matter, the second hemistich is explained. It seems that divination from divaneGiyamt (resurrection) means comprehension of resurrection and it also means court. In second hemistich DivaneGiyamt means poems and the resurrection is likened to poetical work that informing its contents is impossible. Miracle 34 of Loqmansurrah refers to this subject matter.

Indeed, Allah [alone] has knowledge of the Hour
There are witnesses for aware
Who divine from this book
(ibid).

In the second hemistich the book is metaphor for heart. Indeed, the poet likens the heart to book and reading the book means divination.

Although the butterfly does not need to consult for its anguish
It should be consulted by leather and flying of the butterfly
(ibid)

**Conclusion**

Saeb has used social contents in his imaginary forms and he has offered new figures of speech. His similes are mostly allegory due to entering events and states into imaginary scope.

Saeb has considered folk beliefs and his divan is full of allusions of folk beliefs. Superstition was common in Saeb’s period and these beliefs were employed by Indian style poets in order to illustrate the social conduct.

The poet has employed folk beliefs like “PridanCheshmā” (twitching eye), evil owl, “Piyehgorg” (wolf suet) and “donbegodaz” in simile, metaphor and allusion.
References