

A Reflection of Budhistic Thoughts on contemporary Poetry of Iran

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ABSTRACT

Iranian people have been familiar with Buddhism since a very long time. Historical documents imply that before the advent of Islam to Iran, Buddhism had its followers among eastern neighbors of Iran. Constantly Buddhist apostles and ascetics were teaching Buddhism in Balkh, Soghd, surrounding lands from China to India. One of the greatest Buddhist temples is called "No Bahār" (New Spring). Almost everyone who is familiar with Persian literature, has heard the name of this temple-" No Bahār ". Iranian Poets, such as Daghighi, Ferdousi, Masoud Sa'ad, Nezami, and Anvari, have used its name in their poems. In fact, Iranian contemporary poets' poems, like Sohrāb sepehri and Houshang Irani, are threshold for Indian and Buddhist teachings.

KEYWORDS: India, Iran, Budā, thoughts 'contemporary poetry.

INTRODUCTION

In the present modern society one of the most important things that is lacking is human's spiritual and non-mundane development and knowledge (theosophy). It seems that human beings have forgotten themselves in the chaos of machineries, technologies, devices, and industries; and as societies get involved more in these, they would lose themselves more and miss more values. Among other repercussions of machine life, is causing a gap between human and nature. Once human being had seen himself as a part of the nature and felt the nature's pulses. But today is a stranger to it and the most known things for him are iron, steel, machines, etc. However, humans have understood well that they must develop their spiritual aspects too and return to their original nature. Definitely, one can say that the increasing tendency of the modern humans towards theosophy and spiritual sports is to meet these needs. It seems that among them the most tendencies are directed to "Yogā" and Buddhist teachings-especially "Zen". Although, contemporary poets and writers of Iran have had access to the great Persian theosophical treasure and have had fewer tendencies towards foreign theosophical schools, they have not completely separated themselves. In this article we have studied some of these influences. Some researchers have divided the Indian religious epochs into four epochs:

1. Vedā Epoch (1500-600 BC)
2. Epic Epoch (600 BC to AD 200)
3. Sutrā Epoch, since the second century AD.
4. Madrase Epoch, which started from the second century AD (Bahar, 2003,155). Because Budā had lived in the epic era and the Vedānta had had a lot of followers, second epochs, and explain them.

VedāEpoch

Vedās are the ancient heritage which survived in written form of Indian literature. They were carried into India by Aryans. "The word Veda which means knowledge, has a long-standing root in Aryan language and the English words "vit" and "wisdom" have been derived from that ancient word, (Nas, 2003,135). Another meaning of Vedā is "theosophy" or "sacred knowledge", derived from vid-which means "to know" that is corresponding with "navid" in Persian (Bahar, 2003, 140). Vedās generation is about the middle of the second millennium BC. That is when Aryan tribes passed over the Hindu Kush mountain range; they entered India from north-west and dominated the natives. Aryans conquered there. Vedās are divided into four-the Rige- Vedā, Sāma- Vedā, Yajur -Vedā, and Āthrava- Vedā. Among them the "Rige- Vedā" is the oldest and the most important part of "Vedās", it consists of 1028 songs. The songs of the "Rige- Vedā" are some songs of eulogies for god's grace, the praise for a lot of blessing acts, and ask for mercy. (Bahār, 2003, 159)

Epic Epoch

Epic era began from the sixth century B.C and continued till the second century AD. "The basic ideology schools of that era, in addition to Upānishāds, were the creation of some independent religions such as "Budā and Jain", which seek the right path to righteousness, and also "chārvāke", which is not concerned with theology and theology and believes in the principle of the matter, and denies the origin of the "Ma'ad" (resurrection day). Then the development of "Vasudeva Kriṣṇa" and "Bhā gvāta" creeds that are concerned

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with Unitarianism and love; Finally the creed of " Paśupata " which believes in " Shivā ", the terminator principle of the cosmos. (ibid, 191)

Budā's Biography

His name was " Siddārtā "and his surname was " Gotma ". He was born in 560 B.C, in a family of" Kṣātrya " class (they were rulers and sultans). His father was the ruler of " Sakya tribe ", who settled in north of modern Nepal. Budā had great wealth, he married when he was 16. Budā had a very easy life, but observing four events (scenes) shocked him. Once when he was wandering, he observed an old man; Some days later saw an influential scene of a patient; Some time later he saw the corpse in the way. Observing these and pondering that all humans are exposed to aging, disease, and death made him upset. Once, when he was walking with his servants, he saw an ascetic who had left his home (and family) and had chosen to be a fakir (poor). Budā asked about these people (poors) and his servant explained about their creased, then Budā approached that fakir(poors) and was impressed by his speech and manner. While his child, "Rahūle", was born, he decided to leave his wife and new born baby. He promised to return when he would be a "wise and aware" Buda. He was 29 at that time. First he met one called "Alāre Kālāme", then another one called "Udke", to learn the introductory teachings of Indian wisdom. But his spirit had not been satisfied, so he left them and started sacrificing for a deity. He had too much edification till a day he fell down so that his fellow-fakirs though he had died, but he was alive-after becoming conscious he decided to stop edifying. After six years of edifying and self-control he felt failure. Once when he was sitting under a tree, later known as "budhi", a lot of thoughts came in his mind. A lot of questions arised in his head and he thought for hours. Finally he found the right truth and the solution for the sufferers. He felt that he was free of the usual and constant world- He felt as if he reached the truth of nirvānā. Budā was the " wise and aware" one and knew it was the time to instruct/ educate people. He was 35 at that time. First he went to see the two masters, but they had died. Then went to see the five accompanying masters, and found them in a plain called "gazelle resort". Then educated them and gave some lectures, later known as "gazelle's garden rhetoric." From then, Budā had spent all the rest of his life with his apostles, as traveling north of India and distributing their creeds. Budā passed away at the age of 80.

Budhist Teachings and Instructions

The most basic and important principles which are expressed in Buddhism, are four fundamental truths: suffering, the source of suffering, releasing from pain, and the way to release from it.

1. About the first superior truth, suffering Buddha says " Being arrived is really suffering, aging is suffering, ailment is suffering, death is suffering, being with unpleasant things is suffering, being far away from pleasant things is suffering, and failing to get dreams is suffering," (Pashae, 1999, 133).
2. Budā knows the origin of the suffering as a thirst or voracity, and that causes the rebirth.
3. He says about the third superior truth, i.e. releasing from suffering, "Freedom from suffering is the same as releasing from thirst or craving. Leaving it means release or freedom. Turning away from it equals release, until no trace of it is left (ibid, 134).
4. Budā believes that releasing from suffering is possible through the eight superior ways, which are: right understanding, right thought, right words, right behavior, right life, right try, right awareness, and right Empathy.

Nirvānā

The final target of Budhism is to reach to the Nirvānā, and to set free from suffering and sequences of life and death. Nirvānā is a Sanskrit word which in the Pail is verbalized "nibbāna". "This word derived from √vā- which means "blow", and nir-that means "out" and "far". However nirvā- means "extinguish" or "wane", and nirvana has the meaning of "extinguished" (Ashtiyani 1998, 408) that is extinguishing the desires and wills.

The Relationship Between Buddhism and Iran

Although in Safavid age a lot of Indian- Persian poets invented Indian style. But in those days Budhism was almost vanished. According to some scholars, it was the cause of Muslims Invasion to that land. A scholar pointed out in this case that "after the beginning of the 12 century, when India was conquered by Muslims, a lot of Budhist temples and monasteries were ruined, and Buddhism almost eliminated from India," (Pashae, 2001, 31). Sultan Mahmood Gaznavi between the years 392- 416, seemingly for expanding Islam, eliminating idols and idolatory, had some expeditions towards India. In fact, he wanted the precious treasures of that land, expeditions was one to " Sumenāt " (416 Hejrat), and Faroukhi Sistāni had a poem(old) regarding that. Later, Muslims could have more influence on Indians, and create a strong dynasty called Gorkanian. The dynasty was founded by a man called Baber, a descendant of Timour Gorkani. Even so Iranian knew the Buddhism much earlier. Historical documents show that before the entrance of Islam into Iran, Budhistic religion had a lot of followers among eastern neighbors of Iran. Nevertheless a lot of eastern Iranians were Budhises, and it concerned the Sassanian; for it wasspresding over the country." Dr.Zarrin Kub"explained that Buddhism was spreading increasingly from the eastern of Iran, and in Balkh, near China and India some ascetics and messengers were distributing the creeds. In the last days of Sassanian age, an example of Buddha was diffusing around Iran under the name of " Budāsoph and Bluer "(Zarrin Kub,2000,280). In these areas, Budhists had

great temples, one of the greatest of them was "No bahar Temple" in Balkh. Almost all those who know Persian literature, have heard the name of "No bahar Temple". Earlier some historians believed that "No bahar" was a fire temple of Zoroastrian, but later, finding some historical documents and more excavating, it was clear that it was a Buddhist temple. A lot of poets, such as Daghighi, Ferdousi, Sistani, Masoud Sa'ad Salman, Nezami, and Anvari, had spoken about this temple in their poems. The impact of this religion on other religions, such as Manicheism, is tangible. Some of the teachings of Manicheism, like the "Taboo" of killing the animals, cutting down the trees, traveling of Manichean believers to convey the message of that religion, eating only one meal in a day, and the belief of reincarnation, and so on, are very similar to Indian thoughts and Buddhism. After the advent of Islam to Iran, some beliefs of Buddhism remained in Iranians' beliefs. The most noticeable part of the Buddhist impact on Iranians' religion is about the theosophy and Sufism; that is because of the similarities between Sufism and Buddhism. In fact, "Sufists" themselves believe that "being as a sufist" is the essence of "being a Muslim", and some features of some sections (ayats) in Koran, mercies, compassion of Great Messenger (peace be upon him) (Mohammad) his simple life and high spiritual levels could be used as criteria for "sufists". Essentially, the essence of "Sufism" is nothing else but Islam, but through history some other factors were added to it. According to some, among factors which were derived from Buddhism, is "traveling" or "wandering". Budā and Buddhist monks traveled all seasons except three rainy months, and these traveling Buddhists were seen occasionally out of Buddhist territories. Some sufists, for example "Shams Tabrizi" and "Hossein Ebn Mansour Halaj" spent most of their lives traveling; it is said, also, that "Ebrahim Khavas" stayed in no city more than 40 days (Zamani, 2002, 74). Unlike mentioned sufists, some people like "Mowlana and Bāyazid Bastami" were not willing to travel or wander. Any way, wandering was originated through Buddhism teachings and entered Islam (c.f. a comprehensive description on "Masnavi Ma'navi", 2nd vol. 167). Another similarity between Buddhists and Muslims, is ragged (wearing old and torn cloths). Old cloths (hair shirt) and different types of that and related issues, such as cloth throwing in enlightenment, hair shirt principle and conditions which the person must require to do so, are long stories. The "sufists" themselves assign the ragged and similar things to the great Messenger, Muhammad; as we know a lot of the Islamic leaders and holy people, like Iman Ali wore simple and rough cloths. However, "sufists relate themselves to an Iman or great hold person, as hair shirt dynasty has related its root to Imam Reza, saying Maroof Karkhi received his old cloth (hair shirt) from that Imam (Sajadi, 1997, 251). Despite all these ideas, some researchers see ragged wearing as an influence of Christian's clergymen (The History of Sufism in Islam, 73). Some counted this habit of sufists as a theosophical tradition of Indian. (ibid, 166). As it is clear from the name, hair shirt, it has sometimes colorful patches. Thus, sometimes it is referred to as "Molmmae", "moraghae" or "dalgh-e-"molammae and dalgh-e-"moraghae". It is very similar to Buddhists' cloths. "wanderer, in addition to ragged pieces that obtains from garbages and different places, is allowed to wear six other types of cloths, that is cotton, thread, silk, wolen, sackcloth, and fiber (Shāyḡān, 1999, 286). Another common point is "Diana"- as an axis of Indian theosophy and Buddhism. Some researchers believe that Muslims Sufism is originated from Indian culture. However, sufists supervision is properly comparable with Indian Diana and Buddhist traditions. (ibid, 165-166). The similarities between these two are not only those mentioned, for brevity, we summarized it and finish the paragraph with a word of Doctor Hossein Zarrin Kub: "Poverty, traveling," Kashkul, Saje, Kashkol (a vessel suspended by a chain and carried by a dervish)", and sufist rituals are very similar to the Buddhists poor. These remember Adham Ebrahim situations, Buddha's story and the well-known history of "Yuzasef of Bluer" (Zarrin Kub, 1998, 14).

The Impact of Budā on Contemporary Poetry

"Houshang Irani": His poems should be thought as an entrance towards the Indian and Buddhists thoughts in Iranian poetry. He had great knowledge about theosophy and his poems were full of theosophical words and phrases, especially Indian theosophy. Some researchers called him "the inventor of theosophical new (modern) poetry", (Langroodi, 1998, 259). Iranian poets had a lot of innovations in modern poetry, but could never represent themselves as a great poet and find a proper place among famous and well-known modern poets. The importance of "Hoshang Iran's works" is the influences on other poets, especially "Sohrab Sepehri": The effectiveness of Hoshang Irani for Sepehri is so important and observable that "Mr. Shams Langroodi" calls the language changing of "Sohrab" from "Nima" to Irani as the most noticeable event in 1332, due to new poetry. "Sohrab Sepehri" was the only poet effected by Irani's comprehension whose language was highly developed, that is if his great talent and tactful perseverance would not help him, he might had left poetry and in those days one of the most delicate parts of new (modern) poetry would be left incomplete," he adds (ibid, 553). Here an example of "Irani poems", an extract of Eteraf (confession), (from "A blame burnt the drape and the devil came in) is:

My Budā

In your ever last sight
Were aware of every one's deep pain
You knew the wonderful power of death
Which is separator of men's lives
Never mocked the priceless life

And called homeless desolate eyes to yourself
 Oh, my Budā!
 Your familiar smile is the last shelter for this escaping ghost and, his extinguishing flame of dreams
 (Which once were extremely blazing)
 Are falling and extinguishing before your feet
 Fearing from fallen mounts and gone songs
 Where pain songs find a petting hand
 And the roar of wrecked souls is not strange
 You are a shelter silence, calmness is found
 My Budā!
 Oh, you, an eternal none
 Oh, message of nothings
 In this whirl you are terminator
 In the altar of deaths and vacancies
 On you and only you
 I open my heart
 And those deep cracks which prison bars of unfaithful strangers had made in my life
 On you, and only you
 I discover (to you)
 It was your familiarity beam on me,
 On my endless loneliness,
 On my horrible stand and tolerance
 That is finishing moment reached
 If you weren't, I could never do it a lone
 If you weren't, I was unable to find the life
 My Budā
 No left brawn in my flesh to move my tired feet towards your bright city, nirvānā
 As I found your blessing presence inside hidden solitudes
 I believe your bless will shed on this fathomless river
 And you listen to his sad story... (Tāhbāz, 2001, 149-151).

In this extract, Budā is addressed several times and his life is mentioned in a way. His decision to take the pain of human beings is expressed too. For example, when says "My Budā", in your ever last sight (you) were aware of every one's deep pain, you knew... "It refers to Budā's freedom and pain- familiarity, or when refers to him as "ever lasting" or "message" of vacancy (nothings)", it refers to the essence of constancy. In the every poem, some where we read "in the altar of deaths..." which is the same is the same as reincarnation or "Sansare" cycle in Buddhism, that all creatures involve it before reaching to the "nirvānā". Shortly, "Hoshang Irani" in this poem, like a lot of other his poems, due to words and expressions is deeply under the influence of "Budā" and his teachings. "Sohrab Sepehri": among the famous modern poets Sohrab Sepehri is the most effected poet with Buddhism. According to his works, family, and friends, "Sohrab" had a great deal of studies about the culture, art, and religion of the Orient. However, without any knowledge related to this (the Orient), understanding his works, especially "the Blue Room" (Otaghe-abi) is difficult. "Sohrab" traveled to Japan and India, even stayed in Japan for a year to learn wood carving. During a year staying in Japan, he studied the culture and religion of Japanese more deeply. Among published works of Sohrab there are some translations of Japanese plays and poems, which indicate his interest and desire towards Oriental art and culture. When he was in Japan, in a letter he write for his friend: "these days I am studying the Buddhism and Taoism precisely. As you know better, without understanding these two important and spread religions, understanding of the Oriental arts is impossible." (sepehri, 2001, 100) Sohrab Sepehri "had a lot of trips to western countries too. As he knew western languages (English and French) and studied their art and literature, it is possible to be inspired by western ideologies and schools. But reading his "The Blue Room", letters, and diaries, one can see that Sohrab loved the Orient and adored eastern culture. "In this country (Japan), among its people, you don't find yourself stranger. It was not so in the west. The eastern modesty is appreciated by me. Between these Oriental men and us (Iranian) there are some relationships. Basho poem and Hiroshing painting have some familiar points. Their Buddhism and our theosophy, despite seemingly differences, have some congruities. Sometimes I paint and sometimes I read books. I visit museums and Shinto temples (also Buddhist ones) to find out Taoism and Buddhism. (ibid, 47-48). In some of his poems, "Sohrab" speaks about his trips to these lands:

"Travel took me to tropical lands
 Under the shadow of green and huge "bānyāns"
 A phrase which entered into mind's wamrth:

Be wide (generous), a lone, rough, and proud. " (sepehri.(Eight Books), 2003, 319).Here, probably" tropical lands" refers to India, and "green and huge banyan" refers to the same tree that Buddha sat under and reached intuition. "Bodi" stanza at the last, also, makes one remember the famous "Rhinoceros" part, as:

"Like huge and powerful elephant, similar to a " lotus "

As wishes to go inside the jungles

Leaves the herd

Travel like a rhinoceros, lonely.

It's not for those who like to live together

To reach a temporary peace

Listen to the words of the sun's relative:

Travel like a rhinoceros, lonely. (Pashae, 1999, 514)

This part, invites the followers to leave the worldly love and possessions, then take steps towards Sufism and soluk. In author's eyes, Sohrab paid attention to this part! It is interesting that after these stanzas, Sohrab says: "I come back from sun's companion ship. " As we know a meaning of Buddha is "Brightness".

Sohrab in "Traveler" anthology says:

"and I as a sparrow of Gonk dale (valley)

Put the theosophical earring, "Tibet" emblem

For non- wearing ears of "Benāres"

On the road of "Sernat".

Put on my shoulders, you all the Vedas in the morning

All the freshness weight: (sepehri,(The Eight Books), 2003, 321).

" Dr Sirus Shamisa ", to example the first stanza, explains that "Gang" is a holy river that is near " Benāres and Allāhābād ", and every year millions of Indians hold ritual washings there. In some cases "sparrows" are Indian codes; as they wash their bodies (feathers) in water, their short, sharp sound is vague (like Indian voice), and they fly in groups- they can be found everywhere."Tibet" is a country at the foot of the Himalayas; its capital is "Lahasa". In Tibet an especial kind of Budism called "Lamaism" exists. Sernat is the same place where in Buda's time had been called "Isiptene" or gazelle garden. It was the same place, where Buddha explained his religion to his former leaders (Pashae, 1999, 116). In another place he says:" and in the middle of the way, in the shore sands of "Jamna" I sat and watched the reflexion of "Tāj Mahal" on the surface."(sepehri,(The Eight Books), 2003, 323). "Jamna" is the name of a river at Allahabad, which enters Gang. Taj Mahal is a very famous building (edifice) on the banks of Jamna at " Āgreh. Tāj Mahal " was built by Shāh Jahān, a Teymori Indian Sultan.He built the edifice after the death of his beloved wife "Momtāz Mahal" (or Noor Mahal, or even Noor Jahān), she died as giving birth to a baby. It started building in 1621 and finished in AD 1643 (Shamisā, 1997, 170, 76, and The Persian Dictionary of Dr. Moein- entry: Tāj Mahal)

In the same anthology he says:

"and in the road of journey the birds of "Happy Garden"

Took away the experience dust from my sight

And showed me the health of elation.

And I the prayer of feelings,

For the brightness of mood,

Warmly murmur, as sitting near "tal". (sepehri,(The Eight Books), 2003, 354-323).He explained in the first edition of the anthology, that "Happy Garden or Elation Garden was built by Jahangir, a Gorkani Mongolian king. Poets composed poems for it. "(Shamisā, 1997, 172). "Sohrab " constantly complained about "habit dust in looking ", here says: Happy garden birds cleared this dust and freshened its view. Perhaps he meant that its freshness is for introduction with Indian religion and philosophy.In the case of "Tall" (or Tal), and according to the first edition appendix Dr.Shamisa pointed out "Tal, a famous lake in Kashmir where Neshat Garden commands it." (ibid, 173). It should be said that Sohrab's loneliness, solitude, and traveling desire make one to remember Budā.

" Sepehri " was influenced by Buddhistic belifes even to use literature language, and somewhat was a follower of Buddha. The most frequent literary language in Sohrab's poetry are "personification" and "sensation". It seems that "personification" in Sohrab's poems" are influenced by veda natural gods and Zen naturalism.

"In summer hand was a handy- fan" (sepehri,(The Eight Books), 2003, 282).

I hear the garden's breathing

And darkness sound, as falling from a leaf

And coughing sound of brightness, behind trees

And hear water sneezing from stone pores (ibid, 286).

Sensation, in Sohrab's poetry, plays an important role, and gives a colorful air to his poems.We believe that being as a painter, increases his sensation. For example, in some parts he calls canary song as "yellow", love and truth feathers as "blue", God sleeping as "green", and sadness as "pink". Here, we present some of his sensation usages in poems:

"canary ties his yellow thread of songs to peaceful sense (ibid, 397).

Not reached the tree

There's an alley where is greener than God sleeping where love is as blue as truth feathers (sepehri,(The Eight Books)2003, 359).

"In the way of pink pains of things

Spare pebbles still glittered" (ibid, 444)

"Human in the soft laziness of a plain

Was pleased with azure philosophies" (ibid, 424).

"The morning

Shades the saltiness of Eid corners" (ibid, 411-412).

"Sohrab" expresses a lot about colors in his book, *The Blue room*. He, also, speaks about sound and color relationships, colors and words relations and those beliefs of different eastern and western nations." Sohrab " was influenced by those beliefs. For example, according to "Basho", he says " canary calls his chick with yellow song." (sepehri,(*The Blue Room*)2003, 29). As we read before Sohrab himself knows canary song as yellow. In his book *"I'm Still Traveling"*, in one of his diaries named "song and color alliance", he writes "This poetic integration of senses depends on the Budhistic "six senses and five usages." That's an organ substitutes another organ or an organ functions as all of them; this is a feature of "Budā,".(sepehri,(*I 'm still traveling*, 2003, 34). However, one can say that using this language, Sohrab paid attention to Buddhism. Sohrab's influence from the Orient and Buddhism is much more that what has been said.He not only used words from the eastern, but used expressions, contexts, and extracts of culture, art, and the oriental religions- especially Budhism.For brevity, we avoid explaining all the details.

Conclusion

According to what has been said and historical documents, before the advent of Islam in Iran, Buddha religion had a lot of believers (followers) at eastern nations of Iran, especially on the Silk Road. The only things to trade, in those days, were not goods, but language, culture, religion, and civilization were among them. Iran as a bridge country between nations was influenced and accepted the religion. Now we observe the reflex ion of Buddhist thoughts on some poets, such as Sohrab Sepehri and Hooshang Irani. There are some other common points between these creeds, that we briefly explained them in the present article.

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