

**Contribution Of Women To The Modern Persian Poetry With Special
Emphasis On Simin Behbahani And Forough Farrokhzad**

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THE growth of journalism and emergence of news papers in Iran in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century , which opened the way for political and literary magazines , the written consequently the literary language , was one of the essential elements towards modernization of persian poetry . Added to this was exposure to Western literature which spurred on the poets , writers and literatures in Iran to experiment with new techniques . As a consequence of this an attempt was made in change the language , from and subject matter towards exploration and experimentation in Persian poetry . Ali Esfandiari or Nima Youshij as he is popularly known , carries the reputation as the founder of modern persian poetry . Having studied France in Tehran and gaining proficiency in it , he had the opportunity to view poetry from an altogether different angle . He moved away from the classical forms and employed rhymes to suit his subject matters .

The transformation brought about by Nima Youshij in the twenties of the last century , who freed persian poetry from the fetters of prosodic measures , was turning point in a long literary tradition . It broadened the perception and thinking of the poets that came after him . His artistry was not confined to removing the need for a fixed -length hemistich and despending with the tradition of rhyming but also focused on a broader structure and based on contemporary understanding of human and social existence . His main aim in renovating poetry was to commit it to a so called ``natural identity`` and to achieve a modern discipline in mind and linguistic performance of the poet . His successor Ahmed Shamlou continued with the work of Nima Youshij with greater zeal.

Ahmed Shamlou completely abandoned rhythm and rhyme but maintained the natural music of persian language by using soft and harmonious words to make his poetry different from ordinary prose , example of which can be seen in his two collection of poems : " The fresh Air " and the " Garden of Mirror " . He also tried to create some compound words and new images . However , these attempts were partially successful which gave a short of independent character to his poetry . Mention may be made of another poet of this gener by the name of Sohrab Sehpuri who is also regarded as a modern artist . His veres poems are distinguished by abstract symbolism and mysticism , and Zoroastrianism .

Modern persian poetry to be focused as that poetry which demonstrates and addresses important social and political issues . Modern persian poetry began to emerge from 1905 A . D .and it gathered momentum after the world war II and , by the late 1950 s , it had become the dominan mode of avant garde persian poetry .

In the half of the 20th century a new generation of poets come down in the field of persian poetry who started writing prose - poems or free verse as it is commonly known , and experimented with Dadaism , automalism , and other trends of persian poetry like as the New Wave poets .

I shall discuss now about eminent persian poetesses who serve during 20th century in Iran. Simin Behbahani was born in 1928 in the city of Tehran . Her father name was Abbas Khalili who was a great scholar during that time , he was writer and editor .

Simin began composing poetry in very early age and published her first poem when she was 15 years old . She used the tradition of Nima Youshij in the begining in his writing , and subsequently turned to Ghazals . She developed herself in the field of historic ghazal writing as she used daily events and pathetic condition of the down class society of Iran . She was known as greatest ghazal writer of the modern age .

Simin Behbhani has expanded the range of classical prsian verse forms and produced some of the most mignificant works in field of modern persian literature in early part of 20th century . She has reinvigorated the traditional lyric form re costrction it so that it partially addresses the condition of people of Iran and handship involved with everyday life in contemporary Iran . Unlike many of her literary colleague , she has been barred from giving public readings . She was nominated fo Noble Prize in 1997 . She has got innumerable Noble Prize for her poetry and for her freedom of expression in Iran .

Poetry of Simin : A few specimens in English translation of poetry of Simin are given here

Tr. *Gracefully she approached
In a dress of bright blue silk
With an olive branch in her hand ,
And many tales of sorrows in her
eyes .
Running to her , I greeted her ,
And took her hand in mine :
Pulse could still be felt in her veins
Warm was still her body with life .
But you are dead , mother I said ,
Oh many years ago you died
Nither of embalmment she smelled
Nor in a shroud was she wrapped .*

The poem " Banu , Our lady " is an outrange by Simin , for her struggle for freedom of expression in Iran . This poem composed by Simin in 1999 when soldiers invaded a dormitory

at the Tehran University against a protest by students to the new censorship laws and forced closure of the news paper " Salam ". The poem focuses on scene of this rampage : an attacker invoking the name of Fatehma Zahura (R.H) , the beloved daughter of the Prophet , while pushing a student to his death .

Tr.

*Banu our lady ,
This my gift to you .
Accept it
This said , he raised his offering
and threw it down the stairs .
Oh the ground , the sacrificial victim
twisted with pain
A stream of blood followed his fall ,
Silence followed his screams .*

Banu is a term of respectful address for women , here applied to one of the most beloved and respected women in Islam : Fatehma Zahura (R.H.) , the radiant , embodiment to many virtues , including selflessness , purity of heart and compassion . She is the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (S.H.) ,

In analyzing the poetry of Simin , Dr . Shadab Vajdi , herself a poetess , says " One important characteristic of Simin's poems is that , in them , she talks to us from outside ideological frameworks . They are full of humanistic characteristics . " It is these humanistic sentiments which emanate from love and affection especially in a age characterized by vindictiveness and vengefulness that endear us to her poetry .

The death of Neda Agha Soltan drew international attention after she was killed during the 2009 Iranian election protests . Neda in Persian means " Voice " or " divine message " and she has been referred to as the " Voice of Iran " . Her death became iconic in the struggle of Iranian women poets . Simin gave her tribute in the following words on 28 June , 2009

*For Neda Agha Soltan
You are neither dead , nor will you
die ,
You will always remain alive .
You have an eternal existence .
You are the voice of the people of
Iran .*

Simin has been consistently an advocate of individual rights , regardless of gender , class , religion , political affiliation , or ethnicity . With her skillful mastery of poetic devices and techniques , she has integrated a classical genre with a modern vision , blending the old and the new thus bringing together the discourses of modernity and tradition .

Simin is among the most outstanding contemporary Persian poetesses , known affectionately as the " Lioness of Iran " for her outspoken defence of human rights .

In the 1st half of the 20th century of Iran , a confluence of social and cultural factors led a growing number of Iranian women to write poetry . Most crucial for the development of poetry of women in Iran , some of the early poets initiated poetic conventions that were especially pertinent to women's experience . One of the most intriguing of these conventions is a poetic conversation , that is at one and the same time , very public and very private . Simin's poetry exhibits this emblematic poetic habit .

Her poetry weaves interactively the social and the personal for a compelling statement .

For many years work of Simin was overshadowed by that of Forough Farrokhzad , another of the contemporary modernist poetess . It was not until 1990s that work of Simin began to garner the recognition it merited . Until that time , her work was largely missing from the collections of Persian literature and her poetry had not been translated into English .

Simin's revolutionary work to Iranian literature have ensured her legacy as an innovative poetess whose developments of the ghazal form of poetry opened new vistas of expression for women previously closed by prevailing styles of classical poetry . Her eloquent uses of both the modern and traditional style have belied the notion that the two are incompatible , thus laying the ground work for further innovations in style and content .

Forough Farrokhzad was another distinguished poetess of modern Iran , she was born on 5th Jan. 1935 in Tehran in a military family of Iran . By the time Forough was sixteen , she was already composing lyrics in the tradition of old masters . She was a daring , petite and attractive young woman the first to wearing tightfitting clothes in Ahwaz . After her divorce , she moved back to Tehran and published her first volume of poems entitled 'Asir ' (The Captive) in 1955 .

Forough is reported to have a series of swift relationships . As a divorcee and by composing a controversial poetry , where she used a slightly mild erotic language , she drew much attention and disapproval in her community . She published two more volumes of poems , 'Diwar ' (The Wall) in 1956 and 'Esiyan ' (The Rebellion) in 1957 . She went to Tabriz to make a film about lepers in 1962 . In 1959 she composed 'Tavalladi Digar ' (Another Birth) which was published in 1964 . This was considered to be fresh and profound in modern Persian poetry . On Feb. 14 , 1967 Forough died in car accident at the age of 34 . Her poem " Let us believe in the beginning of the Cold Season " was published posthumously and is hailed as the best structured of modern Persian poem in Persia .

Poems of Forough speak directly of the social aspects and dynamics affecting both social and political away by her poetry . She was come off when at a time when women in Iran were seen inferior , lacking the physical and mental abilities that men possessed , and therefore having no need of formal education .

Dissatisfied with her marriage , and with her role in the Iranian society in general , she expressed her discontent through acts of defiance such as wearing tight fitting clothes , leading an unconventional life style , composing controversial poetry , using mild erotic language and her out spokenness . She came to be viewed as a disgrace and an outcaste for defying social mores .

In 1955 Forough began her life as a public intellectual and poet , protesting in print against Iranian social status for women . She justified this move to personal expression saying :

" One of the reason for indulgence in work is the subconscious need to combat decadence." Forough's poetry is known for open discussions of her emotions in her verses , discussions which were taboo and suppressed by religious authorities , community self appointed watchdogs , and the conservative literati . The efforts of understanding and benevolent critics could not successfully dispel her ideas , images and approach to versification which fell on deaf ears . Had she lived longer perhaps the community would have a better understanding of her thoughts and ideas . If her later poems are an indication she foresaw all that happened to Iran in the decades that followed her death .

In her poetry Forough voice her enthusiasm about the conventional marriage , the plight of women in Iran , and her own situation as a wife and mother no longer about to live a conventional life . These are amply reflected in poems such as : " The Wedding " , " The Captive " , " Call to Arms " , " The Sin " , " To My Sister " .

Two of her celebrated poems " Gona and "Tavallodi Digari " with their translation in English are given here

Tr.

*I sinned , a sin all friend with
Pleasure
Wrapped in an embrace , warm and
fiery
I sinned in a pair of arms
That were vibrant , virile , violent .*

*My hole being is a dark chant
Which will carry you
Perpetuating you
To the dawn of eternal growths and
blossoming .
In this chant I sighed you sighed*

*In this chant
I grafted you to the three to the
water to the fire .*

Forugh Farrokhzad is important in the literary history of Iran for three things . First , she was among the first generation to embrace a new style of poetry , introduced and pioneered by Youshij . Second , she was the first modern Iranian women to graphically articulate private sexual landscaped from a women's point of view , as for instance in the poem "Gona " . Thirds , she translated her own literary role and experimented with acting , painting , and documentary film -making . Her poetry was banned for more than a decade in Iran after Islamic Revolution of 1979 . Forugh Farrokhzad is the leading feminist of Iran of the 20th century and one of the greatest Persian poetess of modern Iran . Her " Tavalodi Digori " represents a break through in women' s writing in Iran . Female eroticism and passion are explored in a context of the traditional life of female exclusion in household activities , finally breaking free from those bounds and bonds.

Today in Iran , Forough has become an iconic poetess and has been embraced by a new generation of men and women bedevilled by the same cultural and religious forces against which she often railed . Inspired as much by the example of her life as artistry of her verse , Iranians now find in Forough the long suppressed voice of feminism and human right in contemporary Iran . Simin and Forough both are usually considered as the most famous modern Persian poetesses of Iran .

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