

## THE ADVENT OF FOLK LITERATURE AND ITS ROLE IN PROGRESS OF LITERARY GENRES

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**Abstract:** Folk literature is an important part of the culture and spiritual and material heritage of a society rooted in the common events. It involves thoughts, rituals, customs, arts, songs, myths, tales, proverbs and all topics of life transferred from one generation to next generation. It cannot be considered a defined origin for advent of folk literature since it had been invented since creation of man and the man has communicated with internal and external world by speaking, so the advent of folk literature is rooted in human creation history. Not only has it progressed besides official literature but also its history is longer than official literature indeed, the literary works and literary genres are considered as the origin of the literature and it is the building material of literary prose and verse works.

**Key words:** Folk literature, Persian literature, Literary genres, Literary works, Verse texts, Prose texts

### INTRODUCTION

Folk literature that is called verbal literature or folklore involves those literary works which have been transferred verbally from one generation to next generation and they are common among people.

The ideas, thoughts, rituals, customs, tales, songs, myths, legends, dances, witchcraft, riddle, proverbs, theater, elegy, couplets, compositions, king tales are the topics of the folk literature which introduces different nations cultures. The goal of folk literature is clarification and highlighting of the common people life, reflection of social and cultural issues, manners, revealing visions, thoughts, feelings, religion, ethics and beliefs of any society.

Folk literature was one of the tools for studying the past nations that transfers their useful experiences in the different forms of legend, tale and song to the next generation. It strengthens social norms and ethical principles.

It can be said that folklore and folk literature are plentiful resources of human societies that teach lessons for people. Hence, any ridicule and disdain of the nation's literary treasures is indeed disdain of those nations and people shaped human societies in the form of different nations.

"In relevance to advent of folk literature it can be said that we cannot define the specific origin for it, folk literature has been emerged since creation of man and the man has employed it for expressing his thoughts and utilization of the nature and eliminating of problems"(Hydari, 1990).

"Accordingly, the advent of folk literature is originated from material and spiritual life since humans have tried to realize their dreams and meet their needs and fight with internal and external conflicts and toady the result of their unlimited efforts is manifested in material and spiritual life shaped different topics of folk literature"(Hedayat, 1963).

"But if we want to investigate shaping of folk literature as a science among literary men, writers and poets it should be pointed that this tendency is rooted in interest of the Greek and Roman writers in their nations and people which among their texts it can be referred to Greece by Pausanias as a reference book of folklore but the main folklore science was emerged in seventh century. In England Thomas Brown "Common errors and folks", Jean Batiste "Treatise on superstitions" in France and James "Old songs" in Scotland and Herder in Germany with book "Treaties on the Odd" are popular all over the world and they are pioneers of folk literature"(Mahjoob, 2003).

"But Ambroise Morton used folklore as an extended field for the first time in 1885 and the nations accepted it and it gained international aspect (Mahjoob,2003).

"Mirza Habib Isfahani famous for Dastan in Nasserrdin Shah Period worked on folk literature with western knowledge on this subject. He published "Divan-e-Albaseh" and "Kenzoleshtah" when he was in exile in Ottoman and he researched on the native dialects. Recently in the research by Jamalzadeh it was clarified that the real translator of "Haji Babaei Isfahani" by James Merrier is Mirza Habib Isfahani. It can be referred to Ali Akbar

Dehkhoda who wrote "Charand va Parand" and "Amsal va Hekam" and Ashreffedin Gilani by "Nasim Shomal", Reza Ganjeei "Baba Shamal" and Jamalzadeh "Yeki bud yeki nabud" and also Amir Goli Amini who worked on proverbs and folk culture. Also, it can be mentioned Kohi Kermani who collected and published seven hundred and fourteen legends and Saedeq Hedayat who introduced folklore in Iran. Furthermore, "Neirangestan" published in 1933 proposes a regulation as a general plan for research on folklore with divisions into material life including economics and income and spiritual life including language, accent, common knowledge, art, mysterious life, folk religion and family relationships and then expresses research method and collecting documents and methods of research. It is necessary to mention the names of Sobhi Mahti, Jalal Al Ahmad, Mohammad Jafar Mahjoob, Ali blookbashi and Ahmad Shamlu as famous figures in folk culture".

Of other published works on folk culture it can be referred to followings:

"Mahjoob Algolub containing legends and narratives by Mirza Barkhordar Turkmankhahi, Rozatol Shohada about elegies on Karbala by Mulla Hussein Vehez Khasefi Sabzevari, Jame Tamsil containing Persian proverbs by Mohammad Hablehroodi, Meratolbalhah containing folk terms by Shariyatmadar Tabrizi, Dastannameh Bahmanyari involving proverbs by Ahmad Bahmanyar Kermani, Tehran-e-Makhuf containing customs by Moshfeg Kazemi, Ganjineh Farhange Mardom by Anjori Shirazi"(Beihagi, 1986).

"Of the books written by foreigners about Iran folk literature it can be pointed to "The anthropology of Iran" by Henri Field, Zhukovsky, Christensen, Henry Masse, Galono, Donaldson, Lorim, Ramaskovich and Zarobin which Hedyat has referred them in his treaties and also it can be pointed to Delacroix, Sacrman, Handok, Rosenfield and Kimsarove(Ethnography and Folk culture research center, 1974).

"Arthur De Gobineau has written tales in the style of Persian folk tales, Christensen has Persian stories, ,, has composed couplets in Persian and Masse has written about Iran customs".

"Although some poets, writers and researchers have introduced folk culture primary and fruitless genre but some of Iranian poets and writers have emphasized the valuable of folk literature and folk culture and creators of these works have had ultimate goals and expressed their ideas in the folklore form. Hence, they have employed customs, rituals, legends, proverbs and folktales in their works"(Masse, 1976).

"Some of the works with outstanding influence of folklore are as follows: Firdausi's Shahnameh, Balami History, Vis and Ramin by Fakhreddin Gorgani, Beihaghi history, Hedayatolmotaalemin, Divan of Khaqani, Nizami's Khamsa, Saadi's Boostan and Gulistan, Molavi's sonnets and Masnavi, Ohadi poems, Divan of Hafez and particularly Obeid Zakani prose and verse work.

However, some contemporary poets and writers not only have used verbal literature but also they have written in folk language. Some of these works are:

Ibrahim Beigh travel book by Zeynolabeddin Maraghei, Divan of Nasim-e-Shomal by Mir Ashraf Husseini, Haj Agha stories, Alavieh Khanum, the stories of Sadeq Hedayat and Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, Iranian plays, poet laureate Bahar poems, Al Ahmad stories, Sadeq Chubak stories, Kalidar and Saluch stories by Mahmud Dowlatabadi and poems of Mohammad Hussein Shahriyar, Akhaven Sales, Alef Bamadad, Sohrab Sepehri, Salman Harati (Anjavi Shirazi, 1992).

Therefore, folk literature is a treasure of written couplets and literary genres and it plays an important role in sustainability of the culture. By survey on the important literary works we find that these works have been influenced by verbal and folk literature directly and indirectly.

"According to the division of the verse and prose works in terms of form and content there are many genres and folk literature and culture have played an important role in empowerment of each genre.

Brief glance on the Persian literature one millennium landscape reveals that folk literature has shed its light on all aspects of our literature and literary genres since old times as a result of talent of the naïve and low literate and even illiterate people"(Razmjoo, 1993).

If we investigate each literary genre and analyze the role and place of folk literature in shaping of each genre undoubtedly the result of our effort will be written in hundreds pages and it is out of limit of an article to study each of them. However, we refer to some literary genres which folklore has effect in shaping and progress of them:

### **1-Legend**

From literary viewpoint legend is an imagery event of humans, animals, birds or imaginary animals like demons, fairies and dragons accompanied by secrets, moral and teaching objectives and it has been written mostly for entertainment of the readers.

“Iranian legends constitute significant part of our rich folklore and folk literature and Iranians life and customs have been combined with legends and tales for centuries. Generally, legends are important in life and literature of any nation. Some folklore scholars believe that India is origin of many legends narrated in the world countries including Iran. After advent of Islam these legends were translated from Pahlavi into Arabic and Persian by Iranians and these translations were influential in preservation of these legends.

For instance, it can be referred to the gods’ books which were references used in Firdausi Shahnameh or Thousands legends that was reference book of Arabian Nights. Also, there are many legends on the heroes and their battles, evils and fairies stories and the stories of just rulers and the legends on the animals and birds which were common for centuries in Iran so that literary works like Gulistan, Marzban book, Masnavi- Manavi and Obeid Zakani book and other literary works were influenced by these stories and legends”(Razmjoo, 1993).

## **2-Myth**

“Myths are rooted in the superstitions religious thoughts, magic and witchcraft and their symbolic aspects have caused to be existed beyond humans’ events and they gain divine forces. Furthermore, myths were accompanied by miracles and religious beliefs and they possess contents rooted in the real events. In other words, myths involve narratives of humans’ extraordinary acts or ideal creatures conducts originated in imagination of the individuals or nations and historical and real events changed by passing of time”(Razmjoo, 1993).

“Myth is a story narrated from one generation to next generation explaining the origin of the natural phenomena, rituals and beliefs in naïve way. In this type of story the effect of supernatural events in natural and humanistic affairs is expressed. Since this type of story can be perceived by common people and ensures justification of superstitions it is considered as folk tale but any folk tale is not myth. Myth is a story that justifies the natural events by explaining the imagery relationship between supernatural events. The boundary between legend and history in the myths is shifting so that sometimes a historical human lived in objective and defined period is converted into myth and belongs to subjective and unlimited time and plays an important role in justification of advent of the phenomena and rituals as supernatural forces”(Zarrinkoob, 1996).

“The most important point is that myth meets the deep religious and moral needs. Even in some cases, it can meet the humans’ daily needs. Myth should be considered as an inseparable part of human civilization not fruitless story. Myth can be used in progress of the social and religious ideals and goals”(Zamiran, 2000).

“In primary communities, myth was considered as a real report on the events happened in the past and by referring to the myths in spite of ignorance, ambiguity and disbelief the people had a reliable response. Of the important myths it can be mentioned nightmare, Mashi and Mashyaneh, Gaf, Simourgh and dragons”.

## **3-Folk verses and songs**

As we know folk verse is one of the literary genres in the verse work in terms of content.

“The poets of these poems are unknown but they have composed elegant poems remained in the minds of the people and these poems have been narrated from one generation to next generation without any interference. These poets were unaware of the literary devices and difficult compounds.

The common form of the folk verse is tetra-stitch that is common in Iran. It is short couplet proportionate for expressing the effects without using rhythm and meter and it is common among people”(Mahjoob, 2003).

“It can be said that the origin of the songs is singing of the shepherds. These poems were composed by the unknown poets who had not claim to being a poet. Folk verse in any form and genre reflects the spirit and thoughts of the people expressing their intimate and pure feelings. These poems are whispered with simple images and similes among the common people. Sometimes these songs and folk verses become so famous that go beyond geographical borders and introduced as national songs including Baba Tahir and Faez Dashtestani songs and Hydar Baba poems by Shahriyar.

The great Persian poets have written poems in their native language including Saadi and Hafez by Shrazi accent and Bahar with Khorasani accent. In the constitution period the poets such as Ashraf Gazvini and Aref Gazvini have composed poems with social content.

Songs, compositions, southern songs, elegy, euphuism, lullaby, riddle and different types of prose and verse narratives are considered folk verse with diverse usage in the society. The folk verse types are used in daily life in different situations and times including birthday parties, wedding parties, lamenting and preying, religious and national ceremonies. These poems

express the people inner feelings and religious beliefs, social and moral values”.

#### **4-Proverbs**

“Proverbs, expressions and idioms common among any nation and people constitute one of the main elements of the language and literature of that nation that depicts the talent, spiritual and moral traits and customs and rituals and beliefs of the people. Most proverbs are expressed by metaphor, irony or in the form of the rhythmical speech carrying deep and useful thoughts or criticism and satire explaining ethical ill organization in the society. These proverbs have been created by the wit and high minded people in the past”(Shakorzadeh, 2001). “Yan Ripika believes that proverbs are a good resource for ethical concepts of Iranians”(Ripika, 2004).

“Without any doubt a proverb contains philosophy so that covers the people social life, training, civilization, customs, ideology and literature.

Proverb is a specific field of literature and some scholars believe that proverb is the oldest literary work that has been originated from human thoughts and human has created it before he could write and he has used it in his communication. A short sentence in prose or verse sometimes contains moral and social advice that in spite of simplicity and fluency influences the reader significantly”(Afifi, 1992).

#### **5-Riddle**

“Riddle means intricate and unobvious speech in dictionary but in rhetoric it is meant the speaker speaks about something without direct referencing to it. It was common in the nation literature since old times. Different samples of riddle can be found in Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Anglo-Saxon literatures”(Dad, 1996).

“Riddle neither possesses poetical rules nor has complexities but it expresses the best and elegant meanings with local terms”(Behroozi, 1971).

“Riddle constitutes some part of folklore and folk literature of a nation and it has different forms but it is mostly seen as verse. It has no specific meter and does not follow poetical rules but it has simple and fine expression. The riddles structure is different and sometimes is expressed in an extraordinary complex way and sometimes is expressed in very simple language with allegorical references. Like other verbal literature types riddle is narrated from one generation to next generation. The writers of these riddles were unknown and they were aware of poetical techniques since in some riddles they have used irony, visualization, philosophical and emotional points. People use diverse riddles with similar meaning. They represent people ideology and carry different contents expressing desires, tendencies, rituals and customs.

Riddles were common since old times even in the meetings of great men and courts so that the representatives of the kings had competition in telling riddles. We have read in the legends that the heroes could save the people by finding the respond of the riddles so it was very important”.

### **CONCLUSION**

Development of the societies and passing from traditional life to modern and industrialized society have led that some people disdain the folk literature and folklore. But it should be bear in mind that the culture, custom, rituals and in other words, folk literature is transferred from one generation to next generations and the nature and foundation of the culture, customs of the societies and in other words, present and official literature have shaped it and it plays a determinant role in the scope that nothing can replace it.

Undoubtedly, a poet, writer, literary man or an artist of a society cannot create an outstanding work without knowing the different aspects of life in the past and he cannot write to the people that he is unaware of their culture and literature.

The important point is that most of the addressees of these poets and writers are common people and the poet, writers and literary men have employed folkloric language for establishing relationship with people since their life was part of that society and for this reason their works can be considered separated from the people. Fortunately, most of the poets and writers were familiar with the effect and importance of the folk beliefs and they were aware of this great treasure so while introducing different aspects of spiritual and material life of the people folk literature covers creation of literary works and their different types and these works have accompanied humans since the past time.

Today literature with any quality and any capacity is product of the past literature and folklore considered as a biography of a nation representing all intellectual revolutions and personal and social life progress and it is

reflector of the arts, talents, spirits and moods, customs, values, culture, intellectual and belief orientation, introducer of the songs, tales, proverbs and legends of any nations and it has accompanied official literature and even it is older than official literature and indeed, it is considered as an origin of official literature and literary genres. Hence, folk literature can be considered originator of the works of the poets, writers and literary works and it also can be introduced the mother of the official literature. The effect of the folk beliefs in the Persian poetry and prose is so that without familiarity with the references and foundation of the stories, legends and folk literature perception of most concepts in official literature is difficult. According to the survey on some literary genres it can be claimed that most of the literary genres like legends, myths, folk verses, proverbs and riddles that constitute significant part of our literature not only are originated from folk literature but also they represent the people talents, intellectual foundation, spiritual and moral traits, the past rituals and customs and they have folk literature identity and even they have caused to creation of most prose and verse works including Masnavi Manavi, Gulsitan, Shahnameh and other literary works.

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