

## **The Cast of Religious and Ashura (A Day of Mourning for the Martyrdom of Husayn Ibn Ali, the grandson of Muhammad at the Battle of Karbala on 10 Muharram) Poetry in Representations of Ritual Literature from Contemporary Poets' Viewpoint**

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**Abstract:** Religious poetry and ritual literature originate from people's religious beliefs and ideals which have their roots in Holy Quran and take shape integrating feelings, emotions, language and particular form of religious beliefs. Ashura free verse is also one of the robust branches of the ritual literature which has absorbed attention and interest of many enthusiastic and devoted poets. Ritual literature encompasses great epics about guardianship, imamate and crusade. Sometimes it has waved the red flag of such a considerable crusade as Ashura. Themes and doctrines of the religious literature have been emanated from superhuman, divine and heavenly inspirations and are manifested in artistic and rhythmic expressions. Ritual literature involves the most genuine terms in provoking feelings and emotions. The bloody epic of Ashura within the range of ritual literature is undoubtedly more remarkable than other religious themes since it emphatically demonstrates the innocence of human against the cruelty of tyrants in the course of history by the red ink of sacrifice and heroism of the martyrs. The poet considers martyrdom as a superior goal and by mentioning this he intends to release everyone and everything from constraints of this worldly life. Some interesting examples of these ritual and religious poems can be found in works of the contemporary poets. The present study deals with examining the created artworks and conducted researches in this field, besides it investigates the role of Ashura poetry in religious beliefs and attitudes of people in an excellent way.

**Key words:** Contemporary literature, poetry, religious, ritual, Ashura

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Some significant incidents happen in the course of history and certainly result in fundamental changes and transformations. Sometimes this transformation itself undergoes deviation or change. Religious beliefs enable the devotee to accomplish a marvelous action and save a significant event from oblivion. Humans are intrinsically endowed with religious beliefs from the day of creation; these beliefs are gradually represented in a variety of ways as the human evolves toward perfection. Poetry is also an area within which beliefs and creeds are embedded. Emotions, concerns, sufferings and frustrations are occasionally appeared in poems and their impacts are emerged in readers even after centuries.

The current research deals mainly with the ritual literature and its profound impact on political, social and religious lives of Muslims. Poet's commitment to express religious beliefs since human creation on earth has adopted versatile patterns and presented in different ways in the course of time. The present study aims at investigating the role of the ritual literature and Ashura poetry in contemporary literature and also examining the

function of Ashura poetry composed by contemporary poets in characterizing effective events, particularly Ashura epic in Muslim's religious and spiritual beliefs. It also introduces some successful works in terms of analyzing religious poetry and depicting affection, faith and martyrdom in the contemporary literature.

Presenting the significance and greatness of Ashura as an outstanding symbol of Muslims in history is inevitable. Imam Khomeini claims that: "Ashura has kept Islam alive" or "Muharram and Safar are months of blessing for Islam and keeping it alive."

Nowadays ritual poems about religious subjects such as Ghadir (refers to the appointment of Ali ibn Abi Talib by the Islamic prophet, Muhammad as his successor according to the Shia beliefs. Ashura and Appearance (Zuhur) have dressed the verses of every poet. This flavor has aroused from the purest feelings of those who are devoted to their Imam. Holy Prophet Mohammad (SAW) said: "people's grief for the loss of Imam Hossein will be always fresh in their heart and never fade away".

The purpose of this study is elaborating upon the ritual poetry, particularly Ashura poetry which is considered an eminent symbol for Muslims and the

Shiites who have learned a lot of lessons from Ashura epic and have sacrificed their lives for keeping its truths alive forever. By having strong impacts, Ashura poetry has demonstrated its message to the devotees of honesty and defense of the innocents. Transformations in the fields of language, feelings, frameworks and forms of verse differ from a nation to another. The answers for the following questions are to be sought for the purposes of the present study:

- What is the role of the ritual literature in characterizing the religious beliefs of Muslims
- What is the reason for survival of ritual poetry and Ashura epic
- What are contemporary poet's opinions about the ritual literature
- How can distortion of ritual poetry damage people's beliefs

#### **ESSENTIAL NATURE OF THE RITUAL POETRY**

The essence of the ritual poetry is revealed, in fact, from the beliefs and creeds of the guardianship-devoted poets. The nature of the ritual poetry has been defined as: any category of verse with a religious theme falls within the range of the ritual. Moreover, a general definition proposed for literature is a sublime discourse dealing with global values in relation to human beings its sayings are realistic and explicit and should meet the requirements of simplicity, morality and courtesy at the same time (Ahour, 1984).

The ritual literature originates from beliefs and creeds of every poet who is dedicated to the Alavi guardianship. These poets have proposed their thoughts in rich concepts inspired by divine verses and knowledge of the Prophet Household (Ahl-ul-Beyt) talking about Ashurai and religious subjects. The Ashurai literature comes to life with the theme of the ritual poems and endures permanently thanks to being combined with art.

Ashurai literature comprises the widest field of the rich literature in Iran. In the introduction to the *Thunderbolt Light*, Ali (2007) claims that: the record of the literary lamentation and mourning can be traced back to very early time. The most well-known example of such works is Rudaki's mourning in an elegy for Shahid Balkhi (Darqahi, 2003).

The ritual poems composed by Seyed Hassan Hosseini, Gheysar Aminpoor and Salman Harati are regarded wholly as a turning point in the trend of the ritual poetry with deep roots in this theme, after Islamic revolution. Panegyric poems in praise of and tribute to the

Prophet Household are significantly evident even in works of the traditional poets. The glory given to names and memories of the Prophet Household possesses a high degree of attraction so that the ritual literature has no way other than inducing calmness and tranquility in hearts of the devotees through appealing to the good and pure souls of those nearest to God. Every poet's reason is a crystallization of Quranic and religious thoughts in the Ashura culture and literature, since the Ashurai poems are rich in Islamic knowledge and involve the biography and praise of the Prophet Household.

Each Ashura poet acts as a mirror through which he endeavors to link people with the artworks that are accomplished with the best theme in terms of religion and describing the scenes of Ashura, Ghadir and awaiting taking requirements of the present time into account. The ritual literature forms the identity of the ideological poetry and the Islamic values for a Shiite nation.

The ritual literature is a comprehensive book that has attracted the attention of every class of society. Affection for the Prophet Household has impressed every. The ritual poetry involves, in fact our beliefs and. Manuchehr Atashi argues that: free verse, similar to other cultural items is closely connected with the social matters of the day and provides appropriate answers to people's questions:

Read Quran  
Then, Attack the dragon  
With Zulfiqar (Zulfiqar is the name of the legendary sword of Ali ibn Abi Talib which is said to have been given to him by Muhammad)  
Pound the wall  
Heretic sun  
Is waiting for you (Hossiany, 1992)

Human being has an intrinsic inclination to idolize heroes, so he creates legends about religious heroes. The myth of Karbala includes an extraordinary epic that profoundly depicts the confrontation of right and wrong (innocence and cruelty) integrating both with principles and doctrines of Islam and Quran (Nedoshen, 1999):

You, the distorted-turban devotees to attraction of sacrifice;  
Bastards in the throes of defeat;  
Are making their wills through the mouths of their guns;  
The successive verses of Jihad; Are interpreted on the basis of storm of the machine guns relied on your love;  
You were born along with dawn;  
The end of awaiting (Hossiany, 1992)

Human battle with demon is the most clear common feature between epic and mystic literature with many similar concepts in both. Missionary and message

delivering works in correct ways are heavenly actions, since they are strong ultimatums to not obey the myth creation of others. We live in the era of probability. In the era of uncertainty, the new era. The era in which nothing is certain but the principle of probability. But there is no probability, even a single moment of my existence without your name. Your eyes show me the certainty. Decisiveness in your look is my religion (Khoramshahi, 1996)

Gheysar is the poet of exemplars he bravely wishes the facts of history without any loss. Ashura is a profound example of an epic event since Imam Hossein confronts a tyrannical despotism lonely and unarmed, refuses to pledge allegiance to Yazid and heroically prefers dignified death to humiliating life. In one of his epic-mystic poems entitled "Presence at Class", Gheysar enters the mysterious world of symbols and involves the reader in battle fields and scenes of martyrdom: The first day of Mehr (The time when Iranian schools begin) came again; Teacher was calling the roll calmly; "Asghar Poor Hossein", he called; "Present", one replied; "Qasem Hashemian", he called "Present", one replied "Akbar Leylazadeh", he called but no response; He read the name again: "Akbar Leylazadeh" There was a blast of shout. All replied: "Present!" "We all are Akbar Leylazadeh!"

Gheysar Aminpoor is in favor of such a theosophy that aims at soul purification with an effective theme. Now a days the ritual poets try to create effective focuses in integrating religious, epic and artistic concepts through modeling the religious and historic events: I would doubt certainly; That just window. That innocent wall. If you had not used your daggers (Hossiany 1992).

The ritual poetry has glimmer of divine light and engages mystical zeal and godly brightness. Mental and Quranic origins in the ritual literature are of the most sublime religious concepts which are represented in the poems of the ritual poets through symbolic forms. Unless a poem is woven into the doctrines of Quran, enlightens the heart of history as a guiding light and sheds the divine light on souls it cannot be considered as an Islamic poem. Such light has shed on Tahereh Safarzadeh's poems: We should know; There is no thirst for power in the realm of God; If greed leads to war; Then the cruel hoodlums; Are exploiters, not powerful; And also should know; They all will yield to rule of God; Soon the manacles of God; Will be around the wrists of demonic criminals. And those who are against Quran (Saffarzadeh, 2006).

Conformity with Quran is clearly evident in this part and it's consistent with an identical concept in Mohammad surah, verse: 37: Fairies have hidden the

original terms beneath the white sands; And angels have put them into the coils; And into hands of the leaf; Where are you going so fast? (Khoramshahi, 1996); Was the homework of Karbala children; To rewrite water! water? To write dad gave water? (Aminpour, 2007).

The Holy Abulfazl-al-Abbas was one the most loyal and the most gallant people who interpreted the real meaning of sacrifice in Karbala event. In one of his poems (below), Mousavi Garmaroodi describes the heavenly spirituality of the Holy Abbas and Alghameh-the creek near which he was murdered: Fallen on soil close to Alghameh; And the sun; Bore celestial fruits; Upon him the salute from florescence of the palms! Whose high arms; Are as meaningful as Quran verses (Mosavai and Roudi, 1994).

Surveying on heroic characters of the Karbala event is regarded as a religious belief in viewpoint of the ritual poets: Hor is not a person; He is a virtue; Left behind the caravan; Joining across the river; The speech in your glance.

Is a bridge that leads the human back to himself (Mosavai and Roudi, 1984). Lamentation and mourning are invaluable ethic virtues, particularly crying for Hossein-ibn-Ali which also has spiritual reward. Today ritual poetry not only does regard the Karbala event in affection and death but also it describes it in terms of soul purification and edification: The veins are strained under pain; Our veins are strained from root; In boundless absence; You were split like the sky. And we were spread wide like land; Suddenly threw whatever we had from patience; You are witness to this uprising; On the intersection of martyrdom; Next to generation of martyrs.

By deepening the grief and weep, ritual poet tries to widen the religious theme and induce a comprehensive thought on the events that occurred in 61Hejira: The warriors of the right; Have a deep-rooted reason; With every single bullet they join; With warriors of the Badr battle; Those flags of freedom; From Badr to Ohod Battle; To West and South fronts

Hand in hand with all brave hearts (Saffarzadeh, 2006). Affection appears in various ways in the poems of different ritual poets. It occasionally takes on an attitude of infatuation, sometimes it leads to an attraction of God. In this poem by Harati, we can clearly see the source of light. He sees God in his own soul and has a feeling of cleanness and purity toward God, since it honors his soul and results in growth of his mind. It's not because of your absence here; Rather because I am blind here; Come to my home one night; You! the brightness, the light; How can stand against you; Unless a shadow makes us heavy; Come and bestow eternal love upon me (Haratti, 1997).

Deep affection for the Prophet Household demonstrates public acceptability of religion and significance given to Karbala event in terms of keeping the names of Islam and Quran alive. Karbala event has interwoven with souls of the Shiite. One the most emotive scenes that revives ritual poems of ritual poets is when Zoljanah (Imam Hossein's horse) turns back from battle field to the tents and neighs pitifully so that it flows over the heart they are feelings that are aroused when sadness and happiness reach their peaks.

Mourning and weep are of moral virtues about which there are many hadiths (collection of writings that document the sayings and actions of the prophet Muhammad) for example Imam Sadegh said: "weeping and fretting in the case of a tragic loss is hated (in Islam) except for mourning for Imam Hossein it rather has spiritual reward".

Poets of ritual poems have a deep affection for the Prophet Household, so they can express their feelings wholeheartedly and in a sincere way. Affection appears in various forms in the ritual poems. Sometimes it takes on an attitude that is saturated with devotion and in some cases it is combined with divine affection. Hassan Hosseini flies deliberately toward consciousness. Such affection is where thought and emotion are manifested and revives the supreme rank of humanity and devotion to Imam Hossein: "I need to get up; Entrance to ocean of waiting; I should hang my intention icon from the wall of kissing; My heart-the old prayer-might be accepted by God; In your name (Hossainy, 1992)".

The ritual literature has been strengthened since splendid victory of the Islamic revolution. Resistance literature and ritual literature both originate from an event. The main source of the Ashura poetry is in fact, from the events that occurred during the imposed war (Iran and Iraq war) and the holy defense. As the revolution tree grew, poets developed more novel images in creation of ritual works: We arrived; With a body aimed at breaking; We intend to break the idols; Lat and Manat are already broken; There is no more glory; We are wearing shoes of callus; Yet, these old shoes pain (Aminpour, 1984).

One of the great gifts of revolution in Gheysar Aminpour's poems is from religious doctrines and culture of resistance. Although such poems are composed about subjects of defense and resistance the main theme is based on the religious perspective and original Iranian identity.

Therefore, 8 years period of holy defense has caused a profound integration of social and revolutionary attitude of the ritual poets toward Jihad. Some critics such as Louis Goldman believe that writer's connection with the most important organization of a social level during a

certain period is not necessary but enough for correctness of thought or artistic value of a work (Anosheh, 1997). Any social change brings about a reaction in poetry. It's evident from global poetry that human has always had a similar reaction to autocracy, cruelty, coercion, political suppression and so on. We fight against anybody whoever is against Hossein, We have peaceful relations with friends of Hossein (Saffarzadeh, 2006). This inclination has more profound reflection and fertility in Salman Harati's poem:

You, the modest immortal  
The Imam's host the pure and my homeland  
Exercise with chain and bow (Tradition sport in Iran)  
Call Ali  
Utter praise to Mohammad (Harati, Bita)  
A name for dying  
A name for living forever  
A name for crying without knowing why  
The history of lovers  
Is a short list of infinite number of your martyrs  
(Aminpour, 2011)

Poets who are active in the field of ritual poetry always endeavor to know God and use the religious doctrines in identifying the influential transformative events on human spiritual aspects. Ritual poet doesn't consider the Ashura event only in love and death but he intends also to make positive contribution in purification of human soul. Mourning, lamentation and grief in ritual poems stand for the extreme affection for the Prophet Household.

By deepening the grief and weep, ritual poets today try to widen the religious theme and induce a comprehensive thought on the events that occurred in 61Hejira. The influence of Ashura event on martyrdom poetry is clearly evident. The damage experienced by Iran during 8 year of the holy defense was an unfair injury. Martyrs are regarded as symbols of eternal life according to Qurani culture. In the poem below Hassan Hosseini depicts how pure souls of the Karbala martyrs inspired the martyrs of the holy defense: Along a blood river; The sublime devotion was explained by lying in blood; Caravan erupted from veins of your forehead; My heart wore the red cloak of your memory; The sun drank drops of your blood; You assumed a posture of the ascension; To Hossein's wounds on Ashura noon (Hossainy, 1992).

Martyrdom and idealism are of human merits by which a muslim sacrifices his life assets for Islam and Quran. Similar to martyrdom and Ashura, the culture of waiting is also a divine criterion by which the ritual poets

are required to state. Bouris Pastark claimed: the most extraordinary discoveries happen when heart is full of saying. The secret of enjoying a poem wholeheartedly lies in this fact that after reading a poem you say if I were to compose this poem, I couldn't write a better one. Mousavi Garmaroodi is successful at maintaining the boundary between motto and practice. In fact, he is not such poet who seeks slogan in his poems but rather demonstrates to what extent he impartially believes in what says. A person who only pays lip service and makes listeners applause because of his slogans is not a poet but a motto maker. You, the green, the red green; More virtuous than purity; Nobler than soil; The eloquent, the iron arm, the pointer of scale.

Explanation for book, meaning for Quran (Khoramshahi, 1996). Kazazi argues that: why love is always young and blooming lies in the fact that each love differs from the other. Salman Harati bravely expresses his sufferings. Appealing to his internal emotional conditions, he tries to see the Ashura events through Zeynab's eyes. Contrary to other imaginative poets, Harati focuses on making a deep connection between personal and social values (Dehkhoda, 1998). The opposite obscure plains; Ruthless and dark deeps; The warm event; Tell us where Zeynab is? Where did she plant the seeds of patience? (Haraatti, 2007).

Harati is talking about predetermined impact of a plain that Zeynab is its poet and plain is its instrument. Harati expresses his poem in such a way that the reader can gain a deep understanding from the embedded marks in it (Pournamdariyan, 2003).

### CONCLUSION

Glory, resistance, complaint, uprising and vigilance of a woman such Zeynab emerge in Hossein Poetry along with a unique change. The flames of a woman's rage blazes out behind her brother's head and combined with sorrowful words. Thanks to his powerful imagination, Hosseini depicts Tasua sunset and martyrdom of Imam

Hossein and his friends in the season of autumn. Ultimately the poet assumes accomplishing the duty of martyrdom as the best moral of Karbala event.

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