

AN APPRAISAL OF TABAN ABIDI'S BEAUTIFUL POETIC INSIGHT

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Abstract:

Taban Abidi was an Urdu versifier and mainly wrote poetry on Hussain Ibn Ali (the youngest grandson of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him) in the Battle of Karbala. He has left his touch in poetry through different styles like Salaams, Soz, Nohas, Marsias, Manqabat and Sehre. He also penned down poetry on Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and his wonderful family also known as Ahl Al-Bayt. Some of his contemporaries were Abbas Yar Jung, Murtuza Saleem Moosavi, Sayeed Shaheedi, Captain Abbas Ali Abedi and Akhtar Zaidi. This paper explores some of the affirmative aspects of Versifier Taban Abidi's poetry.

Keywords: *Battle of Karbala, Sehre, Soz, Salaam, Marsia, Manqabat, Noha, Alaihis Salaam (means 'peace be upon him' in Arabic).*

Proem

Syed Ali Murtuza Abidi Alias Taban Abidi (Taban means resplendent in Arabic) was born in 1915 and expired on 29th January 2001. His father's name was Hakim Syed Ali Irteza Abidi and mother's name was Syeda Sadar Unnisa Fatima Abidi. He received his B.A. degree and later M. A. degree from Osmania University and L.L.B from Aligarh Muslim University. Taban Abidi was born in a modest, simple, down to earth family. He was basically a native of Bahera Sadat, Khaga, Zillah Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh. His father relocated to Hyderabad in search of a job and better living. Taban Abidi's basic education was done in Hyderabad. He was married to Syeda Anees Khatoun and after the demise of his first wife he remarried Syeda Sayeed Fatima. He had one daughter and six sons and their names are Syeda Khurshid Fatima, Syed Ali Mustafa Abidi, Syed Ali Mujtaba Abidi, Syed Ali Muqteda Abidi alias Gulzar Abidi, Syed Ali Iqteda Abidi, Syed Ali Abbas Abidi and Syed Ali Zaheer Abidi.

He retired as Assistant Registrar from the High Court of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad. He was a dedicated and hard-working person and held his prestigious position with dignity and never misused his position. By nature, He was a very simple, humble and down to earth person. He had a jovial temperament. Whenever anyone sought His help, He went out of His way to help them but He never unnecessarily interfered in other's affairs.

Some of his contemporaries were Sayeed Shaheedi, Murtuza Saleem Moosavi, Akhtar Zaidi, Abbas Yar Jung, and Captain Abbas Ali Abedi. He often attended Mushairas in Amaravati and Raipur. Some of the contemporaries he had in those Mushairas were Saaqib, Majrooh Sultanpuri, Shakeel Badayouni, Saad Lucknowi, Suleiman Khateeb and Janisar Akhtar. He has written Salaams (A Lyrical Salutation), Soz (poetic verses on Ahl Al Bait that burn the heart due to its melancholy), Nohas (a lyrical dirge), Marsias (an elegiac epic written to observe the martyrdom of Hussain Ibn Ali, the younger grandson of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him), Manqabat (a Sufi devotional poem, in praise of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and later Son-in-Law of Prophet Mohammad or a Sufi Saint) and Sehre (a lyrical wedding poem, usually a sonnet with praise and blessings of family members and it has the rhyming pattern as

'abab', 'bcbc', 'cdcd' or 'ee'

Poesy Analysis

It is an acknowledged fact that when power corrupts, poetry cleanses, for art establishes the basic human element which must serve the criterion of our judgement. Thus, whenever power corruption occurs in society, the poetry written on Imam Hussain ibn Ali's sacrifice establishes the basic human truth of humility and sacrifice. It becomes a guiding light for us to identify the truth from falsehood. It serves us to understand not to bend down before oppression and always follow the path of morality and piousness. The 'Battle of Karbala' occurred as the power of Yazid's rule corrupted the religion and society, and Imam Hussain ibn Ali's sacrifice established the basic human truth of humility and sacrifice.

The given lines are in the genre of Salaam (A Lyrical Salutation). The Majalis or mourning gathering starts with a note of respect and Salutation to the honourable souls of Karbala, the martyrs and family members of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon them.

Transliteration

Zindagi ka mudduwa yaade ghame shabbir hai
Dil ki dhadkan ek mussalsil maatam e Shabbir hai
Karbala ka maaraka hai aur ek Shabbir hai
La fatah Illa Ali ki dusrii tasvir hai

The Aim of life is remembering the Tragedy of Shabbir

Mourning of Shabbir is a continuous Heartbeat

Karbala is a fatal incident and in it Shabbir (also known as Hussain Ibn Ali) is alone

There is none (bravest) like Ali and He (Shabbir) is his second image (Translated by Fatima, Farhat)

The versifier Taban Abidi in the first two lines of the Salaam conveys that the aim of life is to remember Shabbir (also known as Hussain Ibn Ali, the youngest grandson of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him) and every heartbeat recalls the grief and mourning of Shabbir.

The word Karbala is a combination of two Arabic words 'Karb' means the land which causes many agonies and 'Bala' means afflictions. The mandate given to Yazid Ibn Muawiya (Umayyad Caliph) by his unscrupulous father to lead the Muslim Ummah, in truth was to liquify the Islamic existence. But the unwavering Islamic followers, headed by Hussain Ibn Ali (Alaihis Salaam) came to comprehend to the point of certainty, the goal line of this Un-Islamic character. Yazid Ibn Muawiya wrote to the Governor of Medina to take pledge of Allegiance from Hussain Ibn Ali, Alaihis Salaam. Imam Hussain Ibn Ali rose against an illegitimate ruler who was innovating faith and misguiding people of faith. He could not win the battle but he won the revolution. Author Alamdar H. Razvi describes the loneliness of Hussain Ibn Ali in his last moments at the battle of Karbala and says "A great spiritual leader stood upon the blood-stained sands of Kerbala, a towering giant exhausted and weary as a result of a massive attack launched by an army consisting of thousands of merciless and barbaric men" (Rizvi, 2) Thus, the versifier Taban Abidi says in the third line of the Salaam that in the incident of Karbala, Shabbir stood alone against oppressors.

To understand the fourth line of the Salaam, let us go back to the era of Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), After his Hijrath (Migration) from Mecca to Madina, Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him was forced to defend himself and his followers against oppressive forces and was thus forced to fight many battles. In the second such defensive battle 'Uhud' by Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) against Meccans led by Abu Sufyan ibn Harb in December 624 CE, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, saved the life of the Holy Prophet. Thus, 'The Holy Prophet declared that the Angel Gabriel was loud in the Praises of Ali and

had said, 'there is nobraver youth than Ali...' (Jafery 29) which spells in Arabic as *La FataIlla Ali*. This virtue has been branded by Angel Gabriel because of his (Ali Ibn Abi Talib) sacrifice and gallantry. Thus, the versifier Taban Abidi in the fourth line of Salaam says that, Hussain Ibn Ali is the image of his father, Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Cousin and later son-In-Law of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him) as both of them in their capacity tried to save the rules of Islam.

In the following lines of the Salam (a lyrical Salutation) each couplet describes a heart rendering tale of the martyrs of the battle of Karbala. Poet Taban Abidi uses simple, lucid and clear language in the arrangement of words which appear lovely to perceive and has lyrical goodness in them.

Transliteration

*Be zaban ka muskuradena jawaab e teer hai
Iss tabassum mein adaye naraye takbir hai
Jawan Bete ki mayyat kitne armano ki mayyat hai
Udhar Shabbir rotein hai idhar taqdeer roti hai
Kis qadar bhai behen mein hain masayab mushtarak
Be kafan Bhai agar hai berida hum sheer hai
Naheef wa Nizar Abid aur hain Jakde salasal mein
Tapakta hai lahu yaan pao ki zanjeer roti hai*

The smile of the infant is the answer for the arrow
In this smile is the magnification of God
The corpse of a young son, how many longings are attached to it
Over there Shabbir cries and here destiny cries
How much afflictions are common in the brother and sister?
If the brother is without shroud then the sister is without veil.
Ailing Abid is gripped in chains
Blood is dripping here and the chains of the feet are crying (Translated by Fatima, Farhat)

In the first couplet of the Salaam, the poet had sketched a picture of the Battle of Karbala, when all his friends, relatives and family members left to a destination of no return, by sacrificing their lives in the cause of saving Islam, Hussain Ibn Ali (the youngest grandson of Prophet Mohammad, peace be upon him) was left alone. He rode towards the battlefield all alone and raised his voice and called out 'Halmin Nasirin Yansurana' Is there anyone to help me? No one from tyrant Yazid's army replied to Hussain Ibne Ali's call for help. But he heard the sound of crying coming from his camp. He returned back to his camp and told his sister Zainab; I am still alive why are you crying? She replied brother on your call for help your infant son Ali Asghar has thrown himself from his cradle and is inconsolable. Hussain Ibne Ali told his wife Rubab bint Imra' Al-Qays, the mother of Ali Asghar (also called Abdallah) to get him ready so that he could take the infant to the battlefield and try to get some water for him.

Hussain Ibne Ali carried the infant Abdallah and went near the forces of Yazid's army, Abdallah was crying from severe thirst. Hussain (Alaihis Salaam) lifted him up in his hand and said, "O people, if you have no mercy on me, atleast have mercy on the infant." (Abu Mikhnaf, 138) O soldiers of Yazid, if according to you I have wronged you what has this infant done to you, give him some water he is dying of thirst' There was a revolt in Yazid's army when they saw an infant dying of thirst thus Umar Ibn Saad (the Commander of Ubayd Allah ibn Ziad's Army) told his best archer Hurmula ibn Kahl Al Asadi Al Koofi to strike the infant with an arrow. Thus, the tyrant Hurmula aimed a three headed arrow at the neck of the infant which brought him quick death. When the arrow struck Ali Asghar, it brought a smile on his face and

the poet says in his poetry line that the smile on the face of infant Ali Asghar is his reply to the arrow shot at him and the second line of Salaam portrays that in his smile is the retaliation of the little soldier to Yazid's soldiers. His smile was so innocent that it hit the hearts of Yazid's soldiers and they started to cry and became restless with anguish and guilt.

The third and fourth lines of the Salaam portray the grief of a father, Hussain Ibne Ali in the battle of Karbala when his eighteen years son Ali Ibn Al-Hussain (also known as Ali Akber) is martyred with a spear by Murrah Ibn Munqad a tyrant of Yazid ibn Muawiya (Umayyad caliph)'s army. The poet portrays that for a father to see the corpse of a young son with whom he has so many wishes (to see him grow and cherish) is heart-breaking. He further portrays that Shabbir (also known as Hussain Ibn Ali) cries 'there' near the corpse of his son and 'here' destiny cries on his woes.

In the subsequent lines of the Salaam poet portrays that Hussain Ibne Ali and his sister Zainab's inflictions were of similar nature. When Hussain Ibne Ali, Alaihis Salaam was martyred his head was severed from his body, soldiers looted his belongings and trampled his body under horse hoofs and he was lying on the hot sands of Karbala shroudless. In similar way, his sister Zainab had to face the inflictions of the army, her camp was burnt and she was unveiled by the disgusting soldiers. If Hussain Ibn Ali was without shroud then his sister was without veil.

In the last couplet of Salaam, the poet sketches a picture of what happened after the martyrdom of Hussain Ibn Ali in the Battle of Karbala on 10th October 680 CE. Yazid's cruel forces took Hussain ibn Ali's elder son Ali Zayn Al-Abidin, women and children as prisoners. Ali Zayn Al-Abidin could not take part in the Battle of Karbala because of his illness. He was forcibly thrown from his bed and shackled in heavy chain fitters. Then he was made to walk for miles to Kufa forcibly, thus the poet in forlorn words portrays the condition of Zayn Al-Abidin he says, the weak and ailing worshipper of God was shackled in chains and the blood was oozing from his feet and seeing his plight even the chains of his feet were crying. On his return back to Medina after his captivity Ali Zayn Al-Abidin was heard to say, "Had the Prophet positively commanded them to kill us, even he had charged them by his last will and testament to be kind to us, they could not have injured us more than they did at Karbala." (Mohani 5)

The next genre of poetry written by Taban Abidi is in Manqabat style which is a devotional poem in praise of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and later Son-in-Law of Prophet Mohammad.

Transliteration

Ali ko dekhkar soya huwa Ahmed ke Bistar par
Dare Rahmath pe marziye Khuda tehri huwii hogi
Seeing at Ali sleeping on the bed of Ahmed

On the threshold of mercy (i.e., Prophet Mohammad) the will of God was abounding (translated by Fatima, Farhat)

The Poet here refers to the service of Ali Ibn Abi Talib towards Islam and Holy Prophet, on this occasion Prophet Mohammad was forced to leave Mecca, making somebody stay in his place in such a way that his enemies would believe that he was still in the house and thus he might safely go away in the darkness of the night. Because of their hatred towards Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), forty men of different clans of Quraish formed a strong conspiracy and surrounded the Holy Prophet's house to kill him. Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) apprised Ali, of the impending danger and his intention to leave the house at once for good. Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) informed Ali in detail of the whole plan and of the positive danger of lying down in his place and covering himself with his (the Prophet's) well known green mantle, saying that he might be killed or tortured by his enemies. 'Ali asked "If I take your place and leave you alone to go through the gathered enemies will your life be safe?" "Yes" replied the Holy Prophet. "God has promised me a safe passage through them." (Jafery, 27)

He (Ali Ibn Abi Talib) lay down on the bed of Holy Prophet and covered himself with the Prophet's coverlet. "The task Muhammad entrusted to Ali was a major one, and no small an understanding for a youth of hardly twenty-three years; but the way in which he carried it out, showed Ali's astonishing capacity." (Lalljee, 15) Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him) was able to leave Mecca for Madina. "Thus, Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Alaihis Salaam) sold his life to seek 'Marzatillah' the Raza or pleasure of Allah" (Askari, 160). This departure to Madina is called Hijrath and the Muslim era is named after this event. It took place during the month of September, 662 A. D. thirteen years after the Holy Prophet started Preaching Islam. (Jafery, 26) Thus, the poet portrays in the above verse that, when Ali Ibn Abi Talib was sleeping on the bed of Mercy or Rahmat, (Prophet Mohammad is also called as Rahmat) on the door; the will of God was standing. That it was the intention of Allah.

Conclusion

*Marne ki tamanna dil mein hain Jeene ka irada kaun kare
Sunte hai ke turbath mein Taban Maula ki ziyarath hoti hai*

The Desire to die is in the heart, who intends to live?
Heard that in grave Taban, Masters visitation occurs (Translated by Fatima, Farhat)

Taban Abidi says in the above verses of poetry that, he had an ardent desire to die therefore, why will he think to live? The reason behind this desire is spiritual; as he has heard from his elders and it is a Shia Muslims' belief that Ali Ibn Abi Talib (Cousin and Later Son in Law of Prophet Mohammad, Peace be upon him) comes in the grave of a deceased person to meet him. This humble and bright luminary left this mortal world on 29th January 2001. He is buried in a graveyard of Hyderabad known as Daire Mir Momin. He left behind him, his seven children among whom one son was a poet and was recognised by the name of Gulzar Abidi. Versifier Taban Abidi's poetry is a wonderful reminder to us to follow always the path of righteousness and be human, brave and never to bend down before oppression. His poetry will always be present among the anthologies of Ahl Al-Bayt (family of Prophet Mohammad, Peace be upon him).

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