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AN EVALUATION OF BAHRAM SADEGHI'S STORY ENTITLED *EGHDAM-E MİHAN PARASTANEH* (PATRIOTIC INITIATIVE)

BEHRÂM-İ SÂDIKÎ'NİN *İKDÂM-İ MÎHEN PERESTÂNE* (YURTSEVER GİRİŞİM) ADLI ÖYKÜSÜ ÜZERİNE BİR DEĞERLENDİRME

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the story *Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh* (Patriotic Initiative) in which the author reflects his fictional world is analyzed. Although the artistic life of Bahram Sadeghi one of the strongest writers of contemporary Iranian short story literature, did not last long, he managed to be remembered as one of the remarkable names of Iranian literature thanks to the stories he wrote in this short period of time. In this article, which analyzes the story *Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh* (Patriotic Initiative) in Bahram Sadeghi's story collection *Sangar o Qomqomaha-ye Khali* (The Trench and The Empty Canteens) which consists of thirty stories, the author's life, style and works are mentioned after briefly giving information about the birth and development of the short story genre in contemporary Iranian literature in the introduction part in order to form the main material of the study. Then, the story was translated from Persian into Turkish and from this point of view, the story was analyzed in terms of plot, narrator and point of view, people, time, place, language and style, and narrative techniques. If we look in line with these titles, the subject of the story is the conservative reaction of a closed society against the outside world and the problematic of being happy with this closed "self" world and how mass psychology is manipulated in this way. The flow of the story is mostly achieved through dialogues. As in his other works, Sadeghi has opened the way for the development and expansion of the event by having his personalities speak instead of stream of consciousness. The end of the story, which has a solid fiction, ends with an ironic characterization. In the conclusion part of this article, evaluations on the story *Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh* (Patriotic Initiative) are included based on the analysis.

Keywords: *Bahram Sadeghi, modern Iranian literature, Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh (Patriotic Initiative)*

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ÖZ

Bu makalede yazarın kurgusal dünyasını yansıttığı *İkdâm-i Mîhen perestâne* (Yurtsever Girişim) adlı hikayesi tahlil edilmiştir. Çağdaş İran öykü edebiyatının güçlü kalemlerinden biri olan Behrâm-i Sâdıkî'nin sanatsal hayatı her ne kadar uzun sürmese de bu kısa süre içerisinde kaleme aldığı öyküler sayesinde İran edebiyatının dikkate değer isimlerinden birisi olarak anılmayı başarmıştır. Behrâm-i Sâdıkî'nin otuz öyküden oluşan *Senger ve Kumkumahâ-yi Hâlî* (Siper ve Boş Mataralar) adlı öykü derlemesinin içinde yer alan *İkdâm-i Mîhen perestâne* (Yurtsever Girişim) hikâyesinin tahlilinin yapıldığı bu makalede, çalışmanın ana malzemesini oluşturması bakımından, giriş kısmında çağdaş İran edebiyatında öykü türünün doğuşu ve gelişmesi hakkında kısaca bilgi verildikten sonra yazarın hayatına, üslubuna ve eserlerine değinilmiştir. Ardından ele aldığımız öykünün Farsçadan Türkçeye tercümesi yapılmış ve bu noktadan hareketle öykü olay örgüsü, anlatıcı ve bakış açısı, kişiler, zaman, mekân, dil ve üslup, anlatım teknikleri açısından değerlendirilerek tahlil edilmiştir. Bu başlıklar doğrultusunda bakacak olursak hikâyenin konusunu kapalı bir toplumun dış dünyaya karşı muhafazakâr tepkisi ve bu kapalı “öz” dünyasıyla mutlu olması ve bu sayede kitle psikolojisinin nasıl yönlendirildiği sorunsalı oluşturmaktadır. Hikâyenin akışı daha çok diyaloglar aracılığıyla sağlanmıştır. Sâdıkî diğer eserlerinde de olduğu gibi, bilinç akışı yerine şahsiyetlerini konuşurma yoluyla olayın gelişme ve genişlemesine meydan açmıştır. Sağlam bir kurguya sahip olan hikâyenin sonu da ironik bir niteleme ile bitmiştir. Bu makalenin sonuç kısmında da tahlilden hareketle *İkdâm-i Mîhen perestâne* (Yurtsever Girişim) hikâyesine dair değerlendirmelere yer verilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Behrâm-i Sâdıkî, çağdaş İran edebiyatı, İkdâm-i Mîhen perestâne (Yurtsever Girişim)*

Introduction

The emergence of the short story and the novel in Iran is a product of westernization and modernization, which began in the mid-nineteenth century and developed rapidly as a rising value from the early twentieth century (Örs, 2008, p. 90). The short story, one of the new genres of contemporary Iranian prose, began to be written after the novel in Iranian literature (Kanar, 2013, p. 124-125). It can be said that Iranian writers were influenced by European writers such as Edgar Allan Poe and Maupassant while writing their works in this literary genre (Âjend, 1363, p.130). Jamalzadeh was the pioneer of European style story writers. In 1300/1921, in his work *Yeki Bud Yeki Nabud* (Once upon a time) which consists of six stories, the author tries to reflect all segments of the Iranian people and the protagonists of the stories speak as they are (Âryenpûr, 1372, p. 281-282). Because of this book, Jamalzadeh is known as the founder of realism in contemporary Persian prose (Âbidînî, 1369, p. 60). After World War II, the development of the middle class, the rise of intellectuals, the formation of political parties and the emergence of literary magazines such as *Sokhan* created a favorable environment for the development of the short story. It is during this period that a new generation of short story writers emerges. The most prominent figures of this movement were Sadeq Chubek (1916-1998), Jalal Al-i Ahmed (1923-1969) and Ebrahim Golestan (1922-2023). After this generation, the best examples of stories can be found in the works of Bahram Sadeghi

(1936-1984), Gholam Hossein Saedi (1936-1985) and Hushang Golshiri (1938-2000) (Özçelik, 2017, p. 8).

About Sadeghi

Bahram Sadeghi was born on 08 January 1936 in Najafabad in the province of Isfahan. Until 1955 he lived in Isfahan and then moved to Tehran to continue his studies at the Faculty of Medicine of Tehran University. In 1955, from the age of 20, he began to publish his stories in literary magazines while studying medicine. Initially, he wrote poems under the pseudonym "Sahba Meghdari" in literary journals of the time. His first story *Farda dar rah ast* (Tomorrow on the Road) was published in *Sokhan* magazine when he was 20 years old, and his only long story *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom) was published when he was 25 years old and he became famous with this book. Some critics have compared *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom) to Sadeq Hedayat's (1903-1951) *Buf-e kur* (The Blind Owl) and Hushang Golshiri considers it, like *Buf-e kur* (The Blind Owl), one of the most enduring novels in Persian language and literature (Zihak, 1388, p. 4-95).

Bahram Sadeghi one of Iran's most important contemporary short story writers, was one of the most famous figures of the Jong-e Isfahan literary community formed in Isfahan by innovative young writers in the early 60s. After the 60s, many stories were written in imitation of his works. The influence of Sadeqhi's style and the content of his works can be observed especially in the works of Jong-e Isfahan writers (Âbidîni, 1380, p. 323). Many of his stories show the decadence and futility of urban life (Zihak, 1388, p. 93). In his own words: "What is important for him is first of all to write stories, pure stories, in any form and in any genre...The only important thing is to tell the truth." (Sâdikî, 1383, p. 4).

The story collection *Sangar o Qomqomaha-ye Khali* (The Trench and the Empty Canteens), *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom) and a few scattered stories constitute his complete works. These two published books were of such literary merit that they placed him among the best of Iran's contemporary short story writers and made him known as a writer with a progressive style.

The novel *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom) begins with the narration of Mr. Maveddat's body being possessed by a jinn: "At eleven o'clock on Wednesday of that week, the genie entered Mr. Maveddat's body". The story of the work was written in a few hour-long sessions and first read at the Jong-e Isfahan literary society. In 1976, Khosrow Haritash (1932-1980) made a movie of the same name, which was a free excerpt from this long story. Bahram Sadeghi passed away on the evening of 02 December 1984 at his home in Tehran due to a heart attack (Zihak, 1388, p. 4-95).

Sadeghi's Literary Features

Sadeghi was one of Iran's most innovative writers and a modern writer with his own distinctive literary style. He used a lot of "laconic" expressions in his stories and mostly dealt with psychological problems in his works. Executed in 1974, the socialist poet Hushang Golshiri of him: "Bahram Sadeghi's writings are the report card of two decades of the history of our social life." (Sâdikî, p.10).

Sadeghi wrote succinctly and briefly. His literary writings were generally in the style of newspaper writing. He avoided repetition and skillfully described the settings of his stories. His writings were sometimes accompanied by event-based humor, and he would arrive at psychological and social analyses. Sadeghi considered himself a follower of Jean Jacques Rousseau and read his works in the original. He also said that Dostoevsky was the first writer who influenced him (Zihak, 1388, p. 4-95). Among world literatures, Sadeghi admired Russian literature and believed that many of his works were similar to Pirandello's (Mahmudi, 1377, p. 100-102).

Especially in *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom), Sadeghi uses symbolic and mysterious language. Therefore, the direct relationship between the reader and the text was prevented. As a matter of fact, while reading the text, the reader either remains astonished or interprets the text in his own way and tries to establish a relationship between the story and his previous knowledge. The characters in most of his stories are real and contemporary people. In many of his stories, the characters remain anonymous. The names are chosen in accordance with the personalities. In Sadeghi's works, many of the clichés that existed at the time have disappeared in a postmodern manner (Zihak, 1388, p. 4-95). Except for one or two short stories, he exhibited a sage point of view (narration from the author's language) in the narration of his works.

Sadeghi's Works

Sadeghi wrote his stories between 1956 and 1967 and his stories, which were published in monthly magazines such as *Ferdowsi*, *Sokhan*, *Jong-e Esfahan*, *Sadaf*, *Cehan-e Nov*, were published in a book titled *Sangar o Qomqomaha-ye Khali* (The Trench and the Empty Canteens), in 1970 together with *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom) with the efforts of Abu'l-Hasan Najafi.

- *Sangar o Qomqomaha-ye Khali* (The Trench and the Empty Canteens): The author's collection of thirty stories.

- *Malakut* (Heavenly Kingdom), (long story): initially included in a collection of short stories and later published as an independent book (Özçelik, 2012, p. 5).

In addition, the author has 1 story and a theatre work that were not included in the compilation. Sadeghi also has stories that he started but could not finish during the periods when he was not writing. During these periods when the author was not writing, he often shared the stories he had invented in his mind orally with his friends. Golshiri said that he never committed most of his fictions to paper, that he completed them in his mind, and that none of them ever appeared in a written text. Likewise, the author also has a considerable number of poems (Özkan, 2014, p. 51-59).

Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh (Patriotic Initiative)

Finally, the elders of the tribe sat down and put their minds together and weighed their words and moved their eyebrows, perhaps to think of a remedy for this danger that would almost destroy the foundation of their village's tribe and nationality and unity, and the village headman, who was also the miller of the village and whose long, broad beard had turned white in the mill (according to another belief, old age had been placed on his beard), opened the session:

- Ladies, gentlemen!

The gentlemen brought their heads forward and the ladies pursed their lips like rosebuds and fanned themselves with their fans.

- We have lived a lifetime of piety, honor, nationality and patriotism...

The old women said through their false teeth, "It is true... It is true..." and the men, the veins in their necks about to bulge, took a sip of water.

- The people of no other country in the world are as interested in their homeland as the inhabitants of our village. The obvious village does not need a guide. We have documents, we have deeds, all of them are collected in the Central Museum and whoever denies it can apply there...

Someone asked the one next to him, "Which museum?" He said, "Oh! Don't you know? Çemenderkayçı Street, Nesrin Street, on the right side, 1st floor, a big building, they put the documents and deeds behind the glass, how understandable... how legible!"

- The Mukhtar continued:

- Recently, there have been a lot of naysayers (he had eaten eggs in the morning, but still felt embarrassed when he said eggs and corrected himself...) the point is that a group of people who are not sure whether they are the sons of their fathers or not, who are not sure whether they are interested in the values they are proud of or not, want to take away this admired custom from us by any means. So they have risen up against patriotism.

One said, "They're doing a good job." "They are doing badly," said another. A woman moaned: "Oh! How bad!". The shaykh-ul Islam said from the bottom of his belly, "No offense..." and the sweating mukhtar came close to the electric fan (the invention of the electric fan was only a few months old. As you can see... a useful invention) and when his sweat was dry, he came behind the tribune and said in a soft feminine voice:

- I can no longer speak because of my extreme emotions. I apologize a world of apologies to the ladies and gentlemen, of course you will forgive me...

When the mukhtar came and took his seat, the shaykh-ul Islam went to the microphone. The servants ran around and brought a big pulpit and pulled the microphone as far as it would go and the shaykh-ul Islam went upstairs and sat cross-legged on the last step and fixed his gaze on the ceiling so he wouldn't tease the ladies and started:

- Salawatullah! (Pray to God!)

The old women pulled their chadors right over their heads. The ladies pulled their skirts up over their bare feet and put their feet back so that they were out of sight, and the girls retreated behind their daddy so that their cleavage and ponytails would not show, and they all chanted in unison:

-Allahumma salle... (Oh God! Have mercy on...)

The shaykh-ul Islam commanded from the bottom of his throat:

- It is azhar min as-shams (brighter than the sun) and abyan min al-ams (clearer than yesterday) to all the women and men of this district that human beings must stand up and persevere against the opponents of their country with all the forces possible and available in this period of the world. For this reason, it is heard that recently, a few unidentified individuals have turned away from this universal law and the natural honor inherent in the nature of the universe and have started to make weak (weak-minded) attempts. What has resulted from this is the loosening of the foundation of nationality and the shaking of the foundation of tribalism...

A spiritual state had come over the ladies and gentlemen, a trance like spirituality and a spirituality like a nap... Maybe that's why the shaykh-ul Islam raised his voice:

- But we will not allow them to take away our pride in such a simple way and disgrace the God-worshipping people of this village among the people.

When the shaykh-ul Islam finished his speech, he came down the steps with a heavy heart and the servants ran and took the pulpit to a corner and pulled the microphone down and put the chairs back and put the table in front of the chair and put the glass of water on the table. The old poet came and sat on the chair and drank some water. The ladies and gentlemen who had come out of the state of spiritual feelings applauded him. He got up and bowed his head. Again they applauded and finally the poet took out his poem and began to recite it:

“Happy lovely spring has come again

After that, you should drink wine with your half one more time”

“How beautiful!” the maids said softly.

“It is necessary to place a kiss on the lips of the fair-faced

Then you have to do something else, one after another!”

The ladies said "Oh!" to each other and the old women smacked their mouths: “Alas, alas! Abstinence is gone!”. The gentlemen whispered: “It's wonderful! A masterpiece!”

"Our secret was hidden, but they told it in an epic,

With tambourine and tambourine, always on another street in the bazaar."

Adip shook his head philosophically: “Whose slave is Hafiz!? Look, he has not completed the meaning”. And the poet read and read and read and reached the betrayal that almost turned the village upside down:

“Look what the opposing peoples are doing to us

I fear many more will fall into the trap.”

The disgruntled were squirming.

“As long as you don't say that my creativity is not as exuberant as the spring

I will sing other poems until the Day of Judgment!”

But the poet read his poem and the applause thundered. There was a break, ladies and gentlemen drank sherbet and smokers smoked cigarettes and children and old women went and urinated and finally the chief secretary went behind the table and took out a piece of paper with the emblem of the village and read it in a clear voice:

- “Since the dinner is ready and the members of the orchestra are at the performance and the ladies and gentlemen, of course, are tired after hours of activity and their frayed nerves and bruised muscles need rest, we consider the meeting to be over, especially since brilliant results have been achieved on this historic night. It may not be necessary to remind you that our homeland was in dire need of this unprecedented initiative, and that our beloved citizens, whose peace and order are in the public eye, have long felt this great step... Yes, as you are aware, according to one of the great scholars, the lack of patriotism on the part of the common people, who were considered to be among the ignorant stratum, caused the price of food to rise day by day, and the number of accidents on vehicles, insecurity, theft, and the disease of despair to increase, and the people's bad opinion of each other to increase. Therefore, I propose that everyone should decorate the evening meal and the event at their own pace, with a light heart, a joyful spirit and a peaceful conscience, thanks to the blessedness of tonight's initiatives, which will put an end to all these worries and cause the ignorant stratum and others to realize their social and national duties and rights, and to strive wholeheartedly to protect our homeland and to improve and advance it day by day.”

Suddenly, gentlemen raised their hats and threw them in the air, ladies and gentlemen danced in pairs, old women winked under their glasses, children screamed in extreme panic, muftis shouted: “al-ḥamdu lillāhi rabbil-'ālamīn va's-samawatu...” (All praise and thanks be to the Lord of the worlds and skies.), poets composed anthems: “Homeland... saved... from... danger” and the headman and the secretary and other village dignitaries puffed out their chests because: “That's what grown-ups do, when it's necessary to do business!”

The blame goes to those who brought the old poet home in a drunken stupor while he was reciting a new poem about the events, he was awake until morning and writing lovely poems. Towards morning, when the servant heard her voice, he went out of the room and came to the garden and asked her:

- What's the matter?

“Our chicken...” the servant woman said excitedly.

The poet asked in anguish:

- Hurry up! Well, our chicken... What about it?

The maid couldn't speak.

- Answer me, what happened?

The servant woman finally triumphed over her strong joy:

- Our chicken... Double wrapped... laid an egg.

Nevertheless, the guilt is on the neck of those who said that they gave the world to the poet.

Analysis of The Story Called *Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh* (Patriotic Initiative)

Behram Sadeghi's story *Eghdam-e Mihan parastaneh* (Patriotic Initiative) is a 7-page story in the story collection *Sangar o Qomqomaha-ye Khali* (The Trench and the Empty Canteens).

As the title suggests, the story is about a small community's response to what it considers external threats. At a large gathering, the mukhtar makes epic speeches and calls for solidarity, claiming that a number of selfless and unidentified people are attacking the values that form the foundations of their nationality and tribe.

- Ladies and gentlemen!

The gentlemen brought their heads forward and the ladies pursed their lips like rosebuds and fanned themselves with their fans.

- We have lived a lifetime of piety, honor, nationality and patriotism...

The old women said through their false teeth, "It is true... It is true..." and the men, the veins in their necks about to bulge, took a sip of water.

-The people of no other country in the world are as interested in their homeland as the inhabitants of our village. A village does not need a guide. We have documents, we have deeds, all of them are collected in the Central Museum and whoever denies it can apply there... (Sâdikî, p. 149-150).

Only the village square is used as an outdoor space. There is no description of the environment as it is not important for the flow of the story.

The main characters in the story are the muhtar, the shaykh-ul Islam and the poet. The mukhtar and the shaykh-ul Islam, who take their place in the fiery speeches, are not personalities, but rather stereotypes symbolizing social figures. These characters represent the political and religious authority in the general society. The author uses a small community as a representative cross-section of society and concretizes and criticizes it in a sarcastic language. The poet also criticizes the local intellectuals for their hamas that caress the selfish feelings of the society. The rest of the large cast is portrayed as representing the "formless" and unqualified masses of the people, with specific ensemble names, youth, women, men, orchestra, etc., and as extras acting under the direction of the leaders of society.

The event is narrated by the observer narrator (the author). The conservative reaction of a closed society to the outside world and its happiness with this closed "self" world and the problematic of how mass psychology is manipulated in this way form the backdrop

of the story. This conflict of minds is in fact nothing more than a "fiction", but it is described in an exemplary event how the fate of society can be shaped by the use of certain collective reflexes and reactive behaviors by certain foci. All of society is seen in an artificial unity based on a common enemy. However, there is no concrete trace of this common enemy in the story. The Mukhtar, representing the "state" and the shaykh-ul Islam representing the "religion", label this "faceless" and perhaps virtual group as enemies of the nation and the ummah respectively, and use the emotions of the people to incite them against the degenerate and faithless enemies.

The Mukhtar continued:

- Recently, there have been a lot of naysayers (he had eaten eggs in the morning, but still felt embarrassed when he said eggs and corrected himself)... the point is that a group of people who are not sure whether they are the sons of their fathers or not, who are not sure whether they are interested in the values they are proud of or not, want to take away this admired custom from us by any means. So they have risen up against patriotism (Sâdikî, p. 150).

Moreover, by attributing all social problems to these opposites, it manages to keep the "ignorant" and "common" masses in submission.

The plot of the story unfolds on a linear plane. Despite its short structure and simple fiction, this story is rich in symbolic references. The village setting is conceived as a model of a country, and the actors who address the public and play with the consciousness of the common people overlap with the material and spiritual leaders of society on a macro scale. Thus, in a tidy scene, it is indirectly explained how societies are rendered unconscious and deceived against their real "internal problems" through artificial "external problems" with a primitive threat such as the fear of enemies.

The story uses relatively heavy language and, since most passages are written in the form of speeches, the language is generally colloquial and appropriate to the personality of the speaker. The shaykh-ul Islam 's language dominated by religious literature.

- It is azhar min as-shams (brighter than the sun) and abyan min al-ams (clearer than yesterday) to all the women and men of this district that human beings must stand up and persevere against the opponents of their country with all the forces possible and available in this period of the world (Sâdikî, p. 151).

The poet's language is the heavy language of a classical "early" man of letters, which gives the story a realistic setting.

"Happy lovely spring has come again

After that, you should drink wine with your half one more time"

"How beautiful!" the maids said softly.

"It is necessary to place a kiss on the lips of the fair-faced

Then you have to do something else, one after another!" (Sâdikî, p. 152).

The narrative technique used in the story is dialog. The speech styles used in the dialogues and the vocabulary chosen typically reflect the literature of a certain caste. In some entries, a fairy tale-like narration is also used to reflect the traditional atmosphere, thus helping to create the intended ethnic atmosphere. Despite the author's critical style, in order not to be biased, he prefers to put all the conflicts and knots in the dialogues of the personalities.

The end of the short story is also almost symbolic. The maid announces to the poet that her chickens have laid double yolked eggs.

- What's the matter?

"Our chicken..." the servant woman said excitedly.

The poet asked in anguish:

- Hurry up! Well, our chicken... What about it?

The maid couldn't speak.

- Answer me, what happened?

The servant woman finally overcame her strong joy:

- Our chicken... Double-wrapped... laid an egg.

Nevertheless, the guilt is on the neck of those who said that they gave the world to the poet (Sâdikî, p. 155-156).

In a sense, the extraordinary reaction to this ordinary event symbolizes how small the values of a partial worldview are and how hollow they are.

Conclusion

In the story, title-content matching is seen. It can be said that the author pays attention to the title-content relationship in Bahram Sadeghi's other stories because of the harmony of the title with the content. The main subject of the story is the author's striking pointing out how the fate of society can be directed by mass psychology through the example of the fictional world he has created. The protagonists in the story, the poet, the mukhtar and the shaykh-ul Islam, are portrayed as the leading figures of the society as representative types, while the rest of the cast appears as the public. In this story, which is written in a relatively heavy language, there is not much detail and there are no descriptions of places. The author used narrative techniques to introduce his heroes. In this 7-page story, Bahram Sadeghi has described a fictional world that has its counterpart in life with his own symbolic references, which has increased the success and reality of the story we are trying to evaluate.

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