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MURTAZA MUTAHHARI: HIS LITERARY AND REVOLUTIONARY CONTRIBUTION TO PERSIAN LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

When I was pursuing my Masters in Persian, it was always there at the back of my mind to carry out some research work on Modern Persian Literature. After discussing with my teacher and senior colleagues, I decided to research on a personality who has contributed tremendously in the field of Persian Literature through his literary and revolutionary works. Hence, the idea of this nomenclature was conceptualized and I decided to research on the literary and revolutionary contributions of Murtaza Mutahhari.

Murtaza Mutahhari was a great teacher, mentor, philosopher, theologian, jurist and mystic of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Mutahhari was all rolled into one and there is none in recent history of Iran who could come near, leave alone match, his scientific and academic credentials.

As the title suggests, the main purpose of this study is an attempt to discuss at length the life, time and works of Murtaza Mutahhari with special reference to his literary and revolutionary contributions to Persian. Under this nomenclature, an attempt will be made to highlight the history of Persian literature in Iran with special reference to the literary and revolutionary attainments of Murtaza Mutahhari.

In context of modern Persian literature – especially of the last century – the study and evaluation of Murtaza Mutahhari's works are so important that a researcher's work cannot be considered complete if his works are not referred to. For, Mutahhari has influenced generations through his works on various difficult topics such as positivism, communism, theology, philosophy, mysticism, history and socially sensitive subjects like rights of women in Islam, the Islamic veil (*hejaab*), etc. In fact, the anthology of Mutahhari's body of works is so vast that there is barely a social subject which has remained untouched.

This dissertation explores how Murtaza Mutahhari has used Persian literature in his writings over a period of time which influenced the people of the society and also the

revolutionary activities, during his time and even today, almost half a century after his death. I am sure this research work of mine will pave the way to many further researchers in future.

The subject matter of the present work is spread over five chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. At the end of the dissertation, bibliography and necessary appendices are also included. The description of the content is as follows:

- INTRODUCTION
- Chapter 1: PERSIAN LITERATURE IN IRAN
- Chapter 2: SOCIAL, CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITION OF IRAN DURING THE 20TH CENTURY
- Chapter 3: LIFE AND TIMES OF MURTAZA MUTAHHARI
- Chapter 4: LITERARY AND REVOLUTIONARY CONTRIBUTION OF MURTAZA MUTAHHARI TO PERSIAN LITERATURE
- Chapter 5: IMPACT OF MUTAHHARI'S REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHTS ON MODERN PERSIAN LITERATURE AND ITS REFLECTION IN PRESENT ERA.
- CONCLUSION
- BIBLIOGRAPHY

Chapter 1 - Persian Literature in Iran

Iran is home to one of the world's oldest continuous major civilizations, with historical and urban settlements dating back to 7000 B.C. The southwestern and western part of the Iranian Plateau participated in the traditional Ancient Near East with ancient Pre-Iranian civilization centered in the far West and Southwest, from the Early Bronze Age, and later with various other peoples, such as the people of ancient Near East and the Nomadic people on the border of modern Iran and Iraq.

Though existing fragments of Persian verse are believed to date from as early as the eighth century A.D., the history of Persian literature proper begins with the lesser

dynasties of the ninth and tenth centuries that emerged with the decline of the Muslim Caliphate.

The most ancient language of Iran as well as the Zoroastrian scriptures, written in that language are both known as 'Avesta'. It is erroneous, though common, to name the Zoroastrian scriptures as 'Zend Avesta'.

In this chapter a detailed study will be made of the Persian literature in Iran from the 8th century till the 20th century.

Chapter 2- Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Condition of Iran during the 20th Century

The Iranian society experienced various social and economic problems in the late 1960s and 1970s. The economic growth resulted from the oil boom of 1970s, industrialization and the consequent urbanization and migration of the rural labourers to the towns. Unemployment among the youth and the wide economic disparities among different social sections created resentment among the people. On the other side, while the Shah of Iran, Muhammad Raza Pahelvi II, introduced many social and economic reforms, he failed to reform the political institutions.

The Iranian Revolution was the outcome of various social, cultural, economic and political developments. It was a mass movement and various social elements like the Islamic scholars, workers, merchants, students, labourers, petty traders etc. took active role in the movement. It was their collective work that destabilized one of the most powerful governments and despots in West Asia. Of course, as in all such revolutions and mass movements, there were innumerable unsung heroes who were confined to archives of history and more often than not, their contributions neglected.

Murtaza Mutahhari was one such scholar who was not given due consideration as he deserved. His contributions and influences have been either ignored or underestimated. An investigation into the religious, social and political ideas of Murtaza Mutahhari will give us a definite picture of his role in the success of the Islamic Revolution of Iran. Hence, an objective and unbiased study of his social and political thought will be done here in this chapter.

Chapter 3- Life and Time of Murtaza Mutahhari

Murtaza Mutahhari a famous litterateur was born in a village some forty kilometers from the holy city of Mashhad, in Khorasan province, in 1338 A.H./1919 A.D. His father Shaikh Muhammad Husain was a religious scholar and a pious person. Mutahhari received his elementary education in theology from his father.

After a primary education mostly at the hands of his father, he entered, still a child, the hawza-e-ilmiyah, the traditional educational establishment, of Mashhad (aged 12), but left after 5 years for Qum, the center for religious education in Iran. He stayed there for fifteen years and completed his education under the supervision of celebrated scholars like Allamah Tabatabai, Ayatullah Khumayni and many other distinguished academics.

In 1952, Murtaza Mutahhari moved to Tehran, where, two years later, he became a faculty in the Theology Department of the University of Tehran. He established a council of university students and in 1955, began teaching philosophy and theology at the University of Tehran at the doctorate level and continued doing so till 1978.

In this chapter, all the available source materials pertaining to the life and works of Murtaza Mutahhari will be re-examined. Various aspects of the life of Murtaza Mutahhari which needs to be highlighted will be discussed in the chapter so as to present a comprehensive picture of this personality before the readers of Persian language and literature.

Moreover, the views of different scholars concerning the life and works of Murtaza Mutahhari will also be presented as there are many great scholars like Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini – the leader of the Islamic Revolution – who have written about Murtaza Mutahhari.

Chapter 4 – Literary and Revolutionary Contribution of Murtaza Mutahhari to Persian Literature

The works of Murtaza Mutahhari can be broadly divided into these three categories:

- a. Literary
- b. Islamic

c. Revolutionary

He contributed to Persian while he was teaching in Tehran University and thereby enriched Persian literature.

As he was an Islamic scholar, his literary works are less in number, but he has contributed in the Islamic field extensively. As far as his revolutionary works are concerned, they are scattered and mostly in article form but have a great impact on the society for the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

In this chapter, his literary and revolutionary works of Murtaza Mutahhari will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 5 - Impact of Mutahhari's Revolutionary Thoughts on Modern Persian Literature and Its Reflection in Present Era

Through his lectures and writings – articles and books – Murtaza Mutahhari became a famous and much respected figure throughout Iran, but it was mainly among the students and teachers of the schools and universities that he was most influential, setting an example and inspiring them as a committed and socially aware Muslim with a traditional education who could make an intellectually appropriate and exciting response to modern secularizing tendencies. His wide-ranging knowledge and scholarship are reflected in the scope of his writings, which cover the fields of law, philosophy, theology, history, jurisprudence and literature. He was also one of the few high-ranking scholars/clerics to be in continuous contact with Ayatullah Ruhullah Khumayni during the fifteen years or so in which the movement – which led to the Islamic revolution – was developing. He was actively engaged in all the stages of this movement.

In this chapter some of the religious, political and revolutionary works by Murtaza Mutahhari will be discussed which have great influence on the Modern Persian literature.

CONCLUSION

As this chapter indicates, the summary of the research findings will be presented.

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