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Topic- 2. Parvin Etesami

Online Class Materials

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Parvin Etesami

Parvin Etesami is regarded as one of the most distinguished women poets of modern Persia. Information regarding her place and date of birth is uncertain. She was born at Tabriz on March 16, 1907 A.D. or 1910 A.D. in a wealthy and socially esteemed family. Her father Mirza Yusuf Khan Etesami, entitled Itesamul-Mulk, was a well-known literary figure of his time. Parvin lost her mother at an early age. Consequently, she was brought up under the loving care of her father, who taught his daughter Arabic and Persian literature. According to Malikush-Shu'ara Md Taqi Bahar, she started composing poetry at the age of eight.

She studied at the Iran Bethel School in Tehran, an American high school for girls where she graduated in 1924. Afterwards, she taught for a while at that school. For her graduation, she wrote the poem, *A Twig of a Wish* (1924) about the struggles facing Iranian women, their lack of opportunities and the need for their education.

In 1926, she received an invitation to become the tutor of the queen of the new Pahlavi court, but she refused.

On July 10, 1934, she was married to a cousin of her father, Fazlollah Etesami, and they moved to the city of Kermanshah. But the marriage only lasted for ten weeks and they separated due to differences of interests and personality and she returned to Tehran.

In 1936, E'tesami was awarded by Reza Shah Pahlavi the third-degree Iran Medal of Art and Culture, but she declined. In 1938–39 she worked for several months at the library of Danesh-Saraay-e 'Aali, (currently known as Tarbiat Moallem University) of Tehran. Her father died in 1938, and she died only three years later of Typhoid fever. She was buried near her father in Qom, near the Masumeh shrine. Parvin Etesami's house became an Iranian national heritage site on October 19, 2006.

Work

Parvin was around seven or eight years old when her poetic ability was revealed. Through her father's encouragement, she versified some literary pieces which were translated from western sources by her father. In 1921 to 1922, some of her earliest known poems were published in the Persian magazine Bahar (Spring). The first edition of her Diwan (book of poetry) consisted of 156 poems and appeared in 1935. The poet and scholar Mohammad Taqi Bahar wrote an introduction to her work. The second edition of her book, edited by her brother Abu'l Fatha Etesami, appeared shortly after her death in 1941. It consisted of 209 different compositions in Mathnawi, Qasida, Ghazal, and Qet'a (another form of Persian poetry), and stanzaic forms. It totaled 5606 distiches.

In her short life, she managed to achieve great fame amongst her fellow Iranians. Parvin's poetry follows the classical Persian tradition, its form and its substance. She remained unaffected by or perhaps ignored the modernistic trends in Persian poetry. In the arrangement of her poetry book, there are approximately 42 untitled Qasidas and Qet'as . These works follow a didactic and philosophical styles of Sanai and Naser Khusraw. Several other Qasidas, particularly in the description of nature, show influences from the poet Manuchehri. There are also some Ghazals in her Diwan.

According to Professor Heshmat Moayyad, her *Safar-e ashk* (Journey of a tear) counts among the finest lyrics ever written in Persian.

Another form of poetry, the monazara (debate), claims the largest portions of Parvin's Divan. She composed approximately sixty-five poems in the style of monazara and seventy-five anecdotes, fables, and allegories. According to Moayyad: "Parvin wrote about men and women of different social backgrounds, a wide-ranging array of animals, birds, flowers, trees, cosmic and natural elements, objects of daily life, abstract concepts, all personified and symbolizing her wealth of ideas. Through these figures she holds up a mirror to others showing them the abuses of society and their failure in moral commitment. Likewise, in these debates she eloquently expresses her basic thoughts about life and death, social justice, ethics, education, and the supreme importance of knowledge".

Parvin E`tesami began writing poetry from a young age; her first published works appeared in the Iranian magazine Baharin the early 1920s, when she was just a teenager. Throughout her life, E`tesami's work was a marriage of the traditional and modern; while her poetic style eschewed the new modernist styles and adhered closely to the forms and structures of classical Persian poetry.

During Reza Shah Pahlavi most of the major reforms were introduced in Iran. There was an over all efforts to improve the social image of Persia. Parvin witnessed all this happening around her but she did not take part in any social movement. This aloofness is reflected in her poetry. However, in 1935 when the veil was officially abolished by Imperial Edict she expressed her enthusiasm in a very powerful way in a poem entitled زن در ایران .

An outstanding feature of Parvin's poetry is its deep and impassioned sympathy with the poor, the helpless and the mistreated people. Her poetry is filled with descriptions of poverty, old age, tears pain etc. no other Persian poet has created such powerful images to express the painful experiences of this world.

Monazara has been a fascinating art for the Persian poets. Many important Persian poets like Asadi, Unsuri, Muizzi, Anwari, Nizami and others wrote Monazara (stife poem). But Parvin Itesami surpasses most of the Persian poets in this kind of versification. According to Hesmat " Parvin's strife poems usually consist of three parts which express a thesis, the antithesis, and the judgement or conclusion of her own on some essential questions of the social life The statement may be an adverse criticism, a boast, a reproach, a complaint against the otherside of one's own destiny." The language of these poems is simple, clear impressive and devoid of obscure Arabic words.

Parvin remained firmly rooted within the classical tradition. But there are some poems in which western influence is apparent. The poem ای گربه (O cat) which reflects her emotional attachment to her pet cat may be cited as evidence of western influence. In this respect Parvin was the first to write of a household animal for earlier Persian poets wrote panegyrics in the Praise of their camels and horses.

Parvin's diwan including Qasaed, Manaviat, Tamsilat and Moqattat in its entirety is characterised by the simplicity of style. Her vocabulary is always rich and graceful in quality. The language throughout the diwan is mild smooth and

charming. It is true that some of her poems seem dull and tedious but, on the whole, Parvin shows greater performance than most of her contemporaries. If she had lived longer, she would have attained a greater depth of philosophy and feeling in her work.