THE POSITION OF WATER AND RIVER IN CLASSICAL PERSIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Water is one of the four elements (water, fire, soil and wind) that are most important in the history of human civilization. In the history of literature and religions in the world, water in the general picture is symbolized as a purification medium for humans to achieve happiness in life. For example, the story of the journey of Iskandar Zulkarnain and the Prophet Khidir in searching for springs of life, as well as the Prophet Moses who was washed away in the Nile, and so forth many stories and legends related to water. The Euphrates and Tigris rivers are two rivers whose water flows for a Mesopotamian civilization, even Babylon which became the capital at that time was built right on the banks of the Euphrates river. Rivers in the water system are included in the physical form of fresh water, in addition to ponds, rain and reservoirs. Where there is a river there must be life flowing with it, so that from clear water also appear phrases and terms like clear mind, light and holy, because the symbol of clarity in all things is always represented by the clearness of water. This paper will discuss how water including the river inspires Persian writers and poets in writing his works. In this paper only two poets focused on Jalaluddin Rumi and Hafez Shirazi.

KEYWORDS: Water, River, Persian Literature, Poetry, Prose.

INTRODUCTION

Water in Indonesian literature has an important role. It is mentioned in numerous Indonesian literary works, both legends, folklore, poetry, proverbs and others. Some examples of these proverbs are: menyelam sambil minum air (diving while drinking water), air beriak tanda tak dalam (rippling water signifies its shallowness), air tenang menghanyutkan (calm water slowly wash things away), lupa daratan (forgetting the land) and so on. This shows that the territory of Indonesia is a coastal area, both sea and river.

The same goes for the value of water in Persian literature. Persian land is based on its geographical location where water is not easily found, therefore the value of water is very important for the Persians because it is a form of nature that must be respected, because water is the source of life. Many poems and prose, especially during the classical period in Persian literature, address the position of water in life written by great poets.

The land of Persia at the beginning of the 7th century was conquered by Arabia and the entire Persian region came under Arab rule (read: Islam) in the days of the Abbasid Caliphate which began in 750 AD Abbasid Dynasty under the leadership of al-Manshur.
applying the system of vezir originating from Persian constitution, a model that was applied for the first time in Islamic government. Khalid ibn Barmak was the first person who held the position. After its conquest by Arabia, the land of Persia became the gateway to the joining of two eastern minds between Semitic and Arya, thus Persians began to recognize Islamic culture through Arabic. Due to this, most Persian scientists and thinkers were bilingual.

Classical Persian literature is more focused on the form of poetry, because from the very beginning the relationship of poetry with kings and palaces was very close. The poets were directly in protection under the king or crown princess, this condition also affected their work which was adjusted according to the will of the palace or the king. As a common practice, almost every dynasty in Iran was surrounded by a collection of poets, each of which has a distinctive character and style. This also resulted in the periodization of writers in Iranian or Persian history respective to their dynasties. So was the case with the history of literature.

Modern Persian language is a derivation of classical Persian language which belongs to the Indo-European languages. As a result, the grammar and vocabulary are very similar to Kurdish and Pashto. Persian also adopted a lot of Arabic, especially modern Persian. The script is a modification of Arabic script or the so-called Arabic-Perso script. This script also forms the structure in Persian poetry so as to produce poetic writing and metaphors typical of Persian.

After the arrival of Islam, Persian language and literature found were difficult to develop because Arabic literature was still overshadowed. Knowledge in Arabic was very important because the rulers of that period were Arabs and it was also for the sake of spreading Islam. Therefore, Arabic became dominant and the official language for approximately 1 ½ centuries. As a result, Persian scientists wrote their works using Arabic. Persian scientists who wrote their works in Arabic were Ibn Sina, ar Razi, al Biruni, al Ghazali and Syibawaeh who pioneered the sciences of Nahw. There were also many Persian poets who wrote poetry in Arabic, one of them who was very well known in the world of Arabic literature was Abu Nuwas, the poet born in Ahvaz, Iran.

Classical Persian poetry always has rhymes in each verse. The main forms of genre in Persian poetry are qasidah, masnawi, ghazal and ruba’i. Qasidah is a long monorhyming poem that contains didactic-style praises, usually inspired by natural beauty or spiritual values. Masnawi is written in rhyming stanzas with two lines, usually written for patriotic heroic works, romantic hymns, or narratives. Ghazal is a relatively short poem, usually filled with romance or mysticism whose verses vary between 4-16 stanzas and all in one rhyme. A distinctive feature of the ghazal, the pen name of the poet (takhallus) is inserted the end of its stanza. Ruba’i is a poem with a certain wazn, and the collection is called the ruba’iyyat quatrains (plural of ruba’i). The ruba’i genre in Persian poetry consists of four misra’/ lines which can also be in two couplets. The collection of ghazals of a poet and other poems is arranged alphabetically according to the rhyme, known as Diwan.

Although there are opinions that believe that Persian poetry started at the beginning of the 8th century, history also records that in the 9th and 10th centuries Persian literature began to develop especially in the era of the Samanid Dynasty (819-999 AD) in Bukhara, which
was declared by Saman Khuda. It was at this time that Ibn Sina - who in the West was better known as Avicenna - developed ancient Greek medicine and philosophy and wrote various works which had considerable influence, not only in the East but also in Europe. His major works were translated into Latin and used until the end of the 17th century. Ibn Sina wrote most of his work in Arabic in the form of poetry. The most famous poets of this time were Rudaki and Daqiqi. Rudaki was considered the Father of the Persian Poet who wrote a lot of poems, but few survived and reached our time. The style of Rodaki's poetry is direct and simple without additional elements. Whereas Daqiqi was an epic composer who was tasked with writing a work on ancient Persian kings, but he was only able to complete a thousand stanzas before his death. Some of his works were later included in Shahnameh: the Epic of the Kings, the story of ancient Persian kings and the phenomenal masterpiece of the Persian father of Firdawsi (940-1020 AD).

GHAZNAVID PERIOD TO THE BEGINNING OF THE SELJUK PERIOD

It was stated that there were four hundred poets who docked at the court of Sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavi (970-1031 AD), among which the most famous were Unsuri followed by Farrukhi, Manouchehri and Asadi. A prose writer, the most famous of which was Biruni, author of the Chronology of the Ancient Nations, wrote exclusively in Arabic.

The development of Persian language and literature actually occurred in the days of the Ghaznavids. Not only in the northern and eastern regions of Iran, but also in the western region of Iran, the Persian language replaced the role and position of the Arabic language. Banu Ghaznawi also actively spread the use of Persian to the east when he conquered India in the early 12th century. From that time until the beginning of the 19th century, Persian was used as a language of education and culture in North India.

During the Ghaznavid dynasty, the peak of Persian literature was increasingly apparent. At this time a famous epic writer appeared, whose work is still widely remembered and read by the Persians today. The author is Abu al-Qasim al-Firdawsi. The maestro's greatest work was Shahnameh, which was written about 60,000 verses for 30 years since 980 AD. This book was written in the form of beautiful narrative poetry, recounting the heroism of the old Persian kings, especially the kings of the Sassanid Dynasty. This work is considered a sign of the revival of the Persian language, because from all the verses of poetry in this book there is almost no use of Arabic vocabulary. Here is a fragment of the famous Syahnameh stanza:

For thirty years I have suffered against tribulations
In Persian language I have revived the Ajam (the Persians)

The Seljuk Era (1037-1194 AD) is considered the second classical period of Persian literature which was rich in both prose and poetry. The well-known and influential prose work of this period was the work of Imam Ghazali in Persian-language religion called Kimiya-e Sa'adat (the Alchemy of Happiness), Tarikh Baihaqi, Siyasat Nameh —a treatise on the art of government by Nizam ul-Mulk, a minister of Alp Arslan and Malik Shah—,
Qabus Nameh Kai Kawous, translation of a collection of Indian animal fables entitled *Kalila va Dimnah, Chahar Magala* or four Discourses of Nizami Aruzi, *Fars Nameh* of Ibn al-Balkhi. The four works above — *Chahar Magala, Tarikh Baihaqi, Qabus Nameh* and *Siyyasat Nameh*, are writers, as four great early works of Persian prose. A number of writers in this period wrote prose and also poetry. One of the most glorious was Nasir Khosrow, the author of approximately fifteen works in the form of prose and 30,000 poems, and less than half of his works survived. The most famous work of his prosecution is *Safar Nameh*, containing stories from his journey to Egypt. Much of Nasir Khosrow's poetry is a long ghazal with a religious and ethical nuance and was famous for its pure language and dazzling technical skills. Other famous poems from this period were the works of mystics Ansari, Abu Sa'id and Baba Taher Uryan from Hamedan, and Diwan from Masoud-e Saad-e Salman. There were also seven other poets from this period who achieved extraordinary fame; they were Omar Khayyam, Sana'i Neisyaburi, Moezzi, Anwari, Khaqani, Nizami Ganjavi and Atthar Neishaburi.

Between the 13th century to the 17th century Islamic-style works produced by Persian writers were more numerous than similar works produced by Arabic writers. Persian literature affected other Islamic literature, including the Small Continent of India, Central Asia, the Malay Archipelago and even Arab countries. The achievements of the Persians and other Muslim nations with Persian culture were also very prominent in these periods. These achievements were not only in literature, but also in Sufism, philosophy, architecture and others.

**WATER IN JALALUDDIN RUMI'S POETRY**

Jalaluddin Muhammad ibn Sultan al Bahauddin Ulama Muhammad ibn Huasain ibn khatibi Bakri Balkhi was the most prominent Persian Sufi great poet. He was born in Balkh, Afghanistan now on September 30, 1207 (6 Rabi'ul Awwal 604 H). Khudavandegar was his title. Rumi's name was attributed to him as *takhallus* (pen name) because he spent most of his life in Anatolia, Turkey now. Before being captured by the Seljuq dynasty, this region was part of the Eastern Roman empire or Byzantium.

Until he was 35 years old, there was no sign that Rumi wanted to become a Sufi especially poet. He had indeed studied tasawwuf in Sheikh Al Tarmizi, a prominent Sufi from Khorasan who had come to Konya in 1232. Even when Rumi studied at the Halawiyyah High School, Aleppo, he had a chance to deepen his studies in tasawwuf, literature and the Qur'anic interpretation of the Sufic method. Thereafter, he spent his life only teaching formal religious sciences. But at the age of 37 after his meeting with Syamsuddin Tabrizi, a Sufi wanderer from Tabriz Iran, who was present in Konya, in 1244, there was a spiritual revolution in Rumi's life and personality.

The deepest religious experience is a mysterium ineffable, an indescribable experience. That experience transcends time and space that therefore, it cannot be expressed adequately by words bound by space and time (Annemarie Schimmel).

The wise will always be familiar with the divine nature. The content of water flowing to him inherits the meaning of God. This refers to the Qur'an letter Fatir verse 32: "Then We inherit the Book to those whom We chose among Our servants, then among them there are
those who transgress with themselves and among them are the middle and among them there are (also) those who have done righteousness with the permission of Allah. That is indeed a great favour”.

Rumi the Persian Sufi poet mentions how water is so important to understand the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm. In several stanzas, Rumi’s poem always mentions water with the source of life. According to him, earth waves that refer to material things come from the life of this world, but waves of water come from God’s influence, which refers to the unseen. In other words, each part of the soul knows the veil for another soul. So that the soul cannot at once be in the area of profane and transcendence, because when a human being is busy with things that are real, in fact he does not know of his own inner existence. As written in the following verse:

*Abe heivan az kuja ta khahi yaft?
Mouj-e darya ra az kuja khahi Shekaft
Mouj-e khaki vahm ou fahmu fekr-e mast
Mouj-e ou mahvo sekari, az an sekari tu duur
Ta az in masti, az an jami tu kuur
Gutogui, zaher amad choon ghubar
Muddati khamush khui koon, hushdar (Masnavi 578-579)*

Translation:

Water of life from where until you meet
Ocean waves from where until you conquer
Earthwaves are full of doubts and know our thoughts
Sea waves will be erased and mortal
You're far from sweetness and the sweetness of the sugar
Upon becoming drunk and this cup you're blind
Conversations come from as far away as dust
A moment goes out, warn your morale

In another verse Rumi also mentions that only with water can this rigidity in the soul be removed. According to him, the human soul is considered as iron and rock which together creates sparks. This fire can only be turned off by the water flow of *hidaya* and *irshad*. They are the meanings that have been taught in different ways in sufistic teachings such as doing self-purification by meditation and self contemplation. As stated in the following verse:

*Ahan ou sang ast nafs ou but sharar
An Sharar az ab migirad qarar
Sang ou ahan ze ab sakin shavad?
Adami ba in dou key iman shavad* (Masnavi: 779-781)
Translation:

Iron and rock like soul and lust
All will disappear if water passes through
Are rocks and iron swept away with water?
How can humans be safe from both?

The flowing water is always symbolized by holiness, this is also believed in Islam. With running water, one can do purification. Water is the source of life, where there is a river where there is civilization. Rumi likens flowing water to age, because the water that has flowed cannot come back anymore, this life is just something that has flowed briefly because the flow is not forever. If a human sits on a river bank or flowing water, there will be peace there to be found. The role of flowing water and rivers in the story of all civilizations is very important. Rumi also wrote in the verse of his poem that in water that flows like a river is a blessing from God that brings peace and greenery. Rumi, in his explanation of the union of beings, mentions the following phrase: "We all came from a gem that spread throughout nature. In nature there is no starting point, beginning, end, limit, barrier or ambiguity". This jewelry is neatly arranged like the light of the sun shining to every corner, the light that is released free like flowing clear water. But this clear light when it appears in the real world and illuminates everything on earth, with the reflex of the beam branching and multiplying. Rumi likens this beautifully, like the sun shining around the wall, then the shadows are fragmented about the ground, if we collapse these walls, the sunlight will be clear and bright to us, and that is when we see no difference and diversity in this nature.

We come from the sea and return to the sea /
we came from above and returned to the top//
We are from here and not from there /
we come from no space and return to no space//
We are Noah's ark in the sea of spirits /
it never matters if we go there without arms and legs//

For Jalaluddin Rumi, mortal is the merging of a drop of water with the sea, it does not mean that the drop will be swallowed up by the sea but will sink and merge into the vast ocean. He likens it to the merging of river mouths into the open ocean. Mortality does not mean destruction but this is the imagination that every human being has to have. Shattered means that all the perfection possessed will disappear. Perfect is the perfection of a human being in protection while united with countless and infinite perfection. Departure and arrival don’t mean obtaining a "zero" result.

RIVERS IN THE POETRY OF HAFEZ SYIRAZI

Hafez Shirazi (1315/1317-1389/1390) was a great Persian poet. His works are composed of a series of Persian literature (Diwan) which can be found in the homes of most
people in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan. His life and works have been the object of many
analysis, commentaries and interpretations also influenced the post-fourteenth century
Persians who wrote more than others. Among the Persians, Hafez's poetry is very familiar
with his life. It can be seen in the collection of poems that were used as leisure entertainment
in the form of predictions. Here's one of the ghazals from Hafez translated by Bastian
Zulyeno:

Ghazal 3
If only the Shiraz girl gave her heart for me
For the sake of her pretty mole, I gave the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara

O servant pouring the cup, give me the final sip of wine
The taste is not found in heaven later

Especially drinking on the bank of the Rukna Abad river
My love that makes her beauty perfect

Imperfect love is meaningless for her beauty
For her who is beautiful there is no meaning of powder, lipstick and coloring

I always knew that the beauty of Joseph's character increased every day
Because of the increased love Zulaikha took off her curtain of shyness

I will pray even though you continue to despise and insult me
The bitter answer is sweet because

It comes out from sweet red lips
Speak from music and wine

Don't be too caught up with the secrets of the world
Because until today it has not been resolved and it will not be resolved

The river inspired Hafez a lot in his works. One of them describes the condition of the
Rukna Abad river which divides the city of Shiraz as interpreting the verse of the Quran
which tells the story of the surges flowing beneath beautiful rivers. Hafez also always gave
more meaning to each city through which the river flows. The river and the sea were the
main inspiration in his poems, like the following array:

Dear you who is relaxing on the beach
What do you realize about the fishermen who are in the storm (Divan e Hafez)

The above lines remind us to always be aware of the deception of the world. Don't
neglect upon the beauty because behind pleasure on the other side there are sailors who are
fighting the storm. Do not be complacent and distracted with the beauty of the world. For Hafez, this world is only a frail old grandmother who is preening and is waiting for a proposal from a thousand men.

CONCLUSIONS

As is known, the literary work of each nation is our window to witness the spirit of the nation. There are many ways taken by various nations in the world to convey feelings, emotions, desires and hopes, one way and especially through literary works. There are theatre, tragedy, comedy, there are also media stories and legends and poetry. Likewise, Persian literature also contributed to the diversity of classical Malay literature. In their works, many writers made water and rivers as inspiration for their works in writing their taste. In fact, it was not accidental that they made river and water as their the main inspiration, but also for the next generation to keep and preserve the beauty of the river these writers have written, because in any history records of human civilization there was always a river that flows along with their lives.

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