

Investigating the Role and the Position of Women in Bidel Dehlavi's Sonnets

Naemeh Toluie Eshlaghi¹; Reza Fahimi²; Manijeh Fallahi³

1. Ph.D. Student, Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Saveh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Saveh, Iran
2. Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Saveh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Saveh, Iran
3. Department of Persian Language and Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Saveh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Saveh, Iran

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Abstract: Literature and poem is a mirror which always reflects the facts existing in different societies and periods. Studying the position of woman is of high importance as one of the fundamental basics of each society. In order to study the type of poet's view to woman and her different roles, his/her works may be the most important sources. Mawlana Abdul-Qadir Bidel Dehlavi is one of the most distinguished and the biggest Indian poetry poets who has been always considered important by researchers due to the special lingual and spiritual features of his poems. Mystical theme of Bidel's poems makes poet's special view to the universe, human and his position important. Recognizing women's character and nature is recognizing a part of humans' position in the universe. Despite commitment to the common tradition of misogyny in the literature, Bidel Dehlavi's sonnets have used women symbols in mystical literature like Layla and Shirin. Symbols with mystical and super-humanistic dimensions and demonstrates true love. The present study aims at investigating Bidel's view to social and spiritual issues related to woman in his sonnets.

Keywords: Bidel Dehlavi, sonnet, woman, mystical literature

Introduction

Due to economic and social relations dominating societies, the men have had the key role in increasing production and capital accumulation from a very long time ago and the women stayed at home and were secluded. Men's economic, social and physical power formed patriarchal societies. Education was allocated to men in such societies and the women were less allowed to educate. Literature as the mirror which reflects soul, beliefs, values and norms of each society was naturally dominated by men and patriarchal literature expanded. The lion's share of history and literature has been written by men. Naturally, women's face has been described with this patriarchal and misogynistic point of view. "Misogyny and disgracing women in Persian literature is an accepted feature that most Iranian cultural critics have mentioned it. Reviewing Iranian poets' and writers' works conforms this claim" (Hosseini, 2009: 94). But there are some examples of wise and knowledgeable women in the works of Nizami, Attar and Ferdowsi. The advent of mystical thought to the field of poetry and literature leads to a kind of symbolic view to women which provides two different aspects "woman is the devil's assistant, deceiver and is the reason of human falling and... in mystical Sufism and according to the romantic Sufism she is the complete and perfect symbol of intuition" (Zeyni, 2015: 42).

Problem Statement & Research Questions

The current study which has been conducted in descriptive-analytical (library) method and aims at recognizing women's' position in Bidel Dehlavi's sonnets and investigating his view to women, hypothesizing that the poet's poems demonstrates his inner beliefs, the following questions have been raised:

- 1- How is it possible to achieve different cases with woman theme among Bidel Dehlavi's sonnets?

¹ Email: hejazifar38@yahoo.com

² Email: fahimi.reza1980@gmail.com (Corresponding Author)

³ Email: Mahdisfallahi1377@gmail.com

- 2- Despite mystical themes in Bidel's sonnets, what is Bidel Dehlavi's value criteria and view to women?

Literature Review

So many books, articles and studies have been written by the researchers of Persian literature and history on Bidel Dehlavi's thoughts and his poems' feathers such as: Bidel the Poet of Mirrors by Shafiei Kadkani, Bidel, Sohrab Sepehri and Indian Style by Hassan Hosseini, Criticizing Bidel by Salaheddin Saljoughi, the Key of Mysticism by Abdulhamid Asir known as Qandi Agha, the Dictionary by Bidel and several other books by Asadollah Habib and various theses and articles. Therefore, the present study has not faced with any independent study on the manifestation and position of woman in Bidel's poems. Among the close and related items with the subject of this study are: Birth Archetypes of Birth or Eternal Mother and their Appearance in Sonnets by Bidel Dehlavi by Mahin Panahi and Fairy in Bidel Dehlavi's Divan by Mohammad Reza Sarafi and Fatemeh Taheri. As well as Bidel Dehlavi's divan, the current study has used the works of Asadollah Habib, Mohammad Abdulhamid Asir and Hassan Hosseini to recognize Bidel. Among the most important sources used in the field of women are The Bandit of Reason and Religion by Mehri Zeyni and Misogyny Roots in Persian Classical Literature by Maryam Hosseini and the Ideal Woman and the Seductive Woman by Azin Hosseinzadeh. An Introduction on Sufism and Mysticism by Seyyed Ziaoddin Sajjadi has been used in mysticism field and the Horizons of Persian Sonnet by Dariush Sabour has been used in sonnets field.

Discussion

The Image of Woman in Mystical Literature

The image of woman in mystical literature is an unreal and mysterious image with multiple dimensions. Sometime they are devils who encourage humans to follow their desires "in mystical literature and couplet poems where women do not exist prominently and they are seen less really, woman has been regarded as a symbol of desire and carnality such as the story of the ascetic and the woman, the woman and Amrudben in Masnavi and Sheikh Sanan in the Conference of the Birds and the story of a boy who is in love with the fairies king's daughter in the story of caliph and his six sons in Attar's Ilahi-Nama" (Karachi, 2002: 3). Attar's point of view in the story of Sheikh Sanan more shows the complexity and multidimensionality of woman character. "Woman is both a deceiver and a guider. She is both poison and antidote. She is both misleading and lighting the path of right and reality. She both pushes man to heresy and on the other hand saves him and saves herself" (Hosseinzadeh, 1989: 61). Woman has been illustrated differently in mystical literature like sly and charming woman, patient woman who approximates the following man to God and woman as inhibiting badness and punisher "in all three images, woman is a divine test to measure the purity of men" (Zeyni, 2015: 160).

On the other hand, there is a kind of mysterious and symbolic language in mystical literature. "Sufism and the mystics have extracted determined words from their apparent meanings and have made them mysterious to only Sufis understand and perceive them and others do not understand them" (Sajjadi, 2007: 269). Conflicts and contradictions between the universe and its supreme creature that is humankind are expressed as a result of this mysterious language "secrete is a contradictory phenomenon in its nature, because it associates and coordinates two contradictory forces: right and creation, human and evil, the heavens and the earth and so there are at least two kinds of interpretations which one of them is ascending and another one is descending" (Sattari, 2006: 185). This approach illustrates a dual image from woman in a mysterious and symbolic language. Ideal woman or flirtatious and deceiving woman. "But this similarity between woman and desire or between woman and devil is the ambivalence diagram of woman which may be monster or angel, the angel of hell or the earth or heavenly and divine spouse" (ibid: 108). Symbolic Sufis have used woman in mystical poetry to express the features of desire, the mother of reality, divine sweetheart, divine manifestation and divine promise for Sufi men. Layla is a symbol of real sweetheart and the symbol of divine light in mystical and lyrical literature "there is an association between virtual love and real love, between earthly love and heavenly love in Sufism poetry. This comparison in poetry led to attributing the characteristics and features of earthly sweetheart to divine sweetheart. Consequently, Majnun' love

to Layla which is an example of unattainable love is the best example for expressing Sufism expressions and Layla is a woman who is God's first female secret" (Hosseini, 2009: 133). So many of these secrets are used to express meanings related to desire, soul and struggle between Sufi and desire or the mystics express romantic stories to show love to the real sweetheart which is inaccessible and indescribable. "It worth mention that woman is nothing more than a virtual existence in part of romantic mysticism which is expressed through these symbols and secrets" (Zeyni, 2015: 215). Generally, the mystic does not mean from sweetheart as its earthly and substantial form in Persian mystical sonnets but if he mentions earthly sweetheart, he means eternal and heavenly sweetheart "the mystic considers earthly sweetheart as an example of divine beauty and the perfection of goodness which deserves worshipping and show His features and beauty to approximates from the creature to the creator" (Sabour, 1992: 315). Loving woman also includes this view and it has been mentioned as an imagery of real love and sometimes she is a mystical excuse to reach God" (Zeyni: 2015: 158).

Bidels' Thoughts

The theme of most Mirza Abdul-Qadir Bidel Dehlavi is mystical concepts and progress. The stylistic and lingual features of Bidel's poetry and ambiguity and complexity in content and verbal context have made unconventional syntactic structures analysis and abnormality in his poems welcomed more. However, researchers like Salaheddin Saljoughi and Mohammad Abdulhamid Asir have studied the content of poems and mystical concepts of Bidel's poetry. "As Abul-Ma'ani has been among the greatest mystical poets in his time, he founded his Sufism which has the form of unity of existence based on poetry and literature and distributed it among those who are interested in God" (Asir, 1997: 2). Bidel is the last poet with Indian style. Bidel got interested in mystical interpretations and concepts after referring to Sufis sessions and considered this as the theme of his poems "Bidel make efforts in his own style to compensate for the one-century absence of deep mystical concepts in Persian poetry and blows the warm breath of mystics in the reed of poetry which has been cut in Indian style and finishes the work" (Hosseini, 1990: 17). Sufis have many ways for approximation and reaching sweetheart and God that these ways are generally divided into asceticism way and love way. "As far as Abul-Ma'ani's works show, this great mystic has freed the way of love and so he prefers love to asceticism" (Asir, 1997: 7).

Bidel's Point of View to Woman and Women's Position in his Sonnets

Woman as a Tempting and Deceiving Creature Who is the Symbol of Carnality

Like so many other mystics, woman is deceiving, charming, motivating and encouraging carnality in Bidel's mental space. The mortal world and its glamor is alike a deceiving woman who wants to deceive man and distances him from progress and approximating to God. This theme has been repeated in Bidel's sonnets, for example:

Not being deceived by the world is not human possibility / the zeal of men could do nothing, they have seen the face of a woman (Bidel Dehlavi, 2011: 707)

Infallibility is escaping from the anxiety of the world / the desire makes this prostitute, adulteress (ibid, 465)

The servants of the wicked world are all dominant / the one who ransoms men as a man is a woman (ibid, 215)

We were halved by the deceiving world / our bow became a string for the wire of wheel our of our frailty (ibid, 135)

Who is broken from the porcelain building of heart / oh, the world! If you can, take this banana shopper dough of ours (ibid: 780)

However, the abnormal Bidel astonishes the audience in a couplet and unlike the ancestors' literary tradition and customs and abundant couplets which has regarded the wicked world as a deceiving woman in his divan, he introduces the world as the greedy like a husband.

Do not consider the world with the wicked greedy / a woman, it is another husband (ibid, 359)

The Priority of Men over Women

In Bidel's viewpoint which is the same as the view dominating the history of literature before him and the patriarchal society, man is preferred to woman.

*There is no one to lower the titles / the woman of man is zeal which is not the small man (ibid, 666)
Every glass of heart cannot compete with love / where a man is moaning what a woman is doing (ibid,
473)*

Bidel selects woman as a scale to describe the priority of men.

The men of desire shave in memory of moment / the field of love is not the session of women (ibid, 181)

Attributing Different Negative Features to Women

It is among the cases which has been repeated in Bidel's sonnets. Daydreaming, ambition, materialism, short-sightedness and bringing up carnality are among the features which have been attributed to the women in Bidel's sonnets.

*The carnality is loose out of the deception of this old world / as if an old woman is spinning in
darkness (ibid, 1282)*

*We have to live despite the desire of destination / the ambition of the world shows a man as a woman
(ibid, 70)*

*Like the natures of woman / the effects of shame are stuck in the magic of money and the goldsmith
presses man's hand (ibid, 70)*

*From the beginning, the tactful have related / mirror to woman's knee and blade on man's side (ibid,
667)*

*Although several desires are born from your thought / be shameful of the male boasts which are
naturally female (ibid, 212)*

Woman as an Instrument to Test Man against Desire and Measuring his Tolerance

Using woman as divine test to measure the fineness of masculinity and the purity of mysticism dates back to very long time ago in mystical and mysterious literature. Famous stories like Sheikh Sanan in the Conference of the Birds by Attar, the story of Ahmad Mortaesh in Kashf al-Mahjub by Hujwiri and many other stories have used this theme. Sometimes living with a woman is considered a divine test "in some mystics' point of view, matrimony has been like the fire of a hell that a man could release from it by tolerating a woman's bad temper patiently" (Zeyni, 2015: 161). Following this insight and common thoughts in his society, Bidel also has composed some couplets in his sonnets.

*Bidel! This world is not a place for testing today / as far as the world exists, woman tests man (Bidel
Dehlavi, 2011: 70)*

*Wheat has had nothing except the pest of human / oh God! If you do not accept like a woman, a man is
involved (ibid, 50)*

Using Woman and Femininity in Humiliation, Discount and Curse Position

There are some couplet in Bidel's poems where he considers a man as a woman, or like a woman or compared with female features to inform or punish men and misogyny has been attributed to the women during history.

*Reason cannot raise because of the magic of desire / the poor man is crying like a woman (ibid, 478)
Do not ask about the sheikhs and their moods / practically, the nature of this male tribe is female
(ibid, 184)*

*In each breath, several desires are born from your thought / be shameful of boasting masculinity that
your nature is femininity (ibid, 212)*

*The promise of men is blade with the hostility of heart / a man who discusses like women is a woman
(ibid, 412)*

*The world is acting coyly because of the munificent / a woman is not a widow as far as she is beside a
man (ibid, 507)*

Oh God do not consider cowardice as zeal / a woman is lewd if a man is beside a blade (ibid, 877)
The role of men disappeared from the shame of these men with female nature / as they bear beard as
they are very female as a result (ibid, 433)

Mother and Motherhood Position

According to some searchers study Bidel, Bidel lost his father at the age of five and also lost his mother one year later. Although there is not much information about her mother, it has been reported that after father, his mother was responsible for bringing up the child. His mother sent him to school at the age of six “mother sent him to school in the sixth month of the sixth year. He learned how to read and write during seven months and then he finished Quran during one year and then he started teaching Arabic syntax and Persian prose and poetry” (Habib, 2017: 47). Alas, her mother died and Bidel couldn't use the kindness of his mother perfectly. Bidel compares the world and the celestial sphere with an unkind mother in his sonnets whom one must not be fall in love.

I am that oppressed child that the mother of days / falls my lion in the view of a victim (Bidel Dehlavi, 2011: 1033)

As the horizons are so complicated due to unkindness of the world / it is surprising that a child plays in the dress of a mother (ibid: 1265)

Bidel attributes the feature of bloodthirstiness to mother in the following couplet which both ironically means suffering and the feature of bloodthirstiness.

Do not suffer hopefully here considering the kindness of the world' mother / who drinks much blood here to turns white (ibid, 41)

And sometimes he sarcastically considers the origin of humans' sins as a result of being born from women.

The effect of the earth is ready in the nature of seed / wickedness appears less if women do not give birth to men (ibid, 70)

However, Bidel cannot deny a mother's pains and mentions Mary's pains as Jesus's mother in a couplet.

Contemplation is ranked thoughts here / Mary burned in the silence of breaths until Jesus created (ibid, 620)

It is not possible to ignore the Earth as birth giver archetypes in Bidel's poems. This thought is not precedent in mystical literature. For example, this concept has been frequently repeated in Rumi's poems.

The sky is man and the Earth is woman in wisdom / whatsoever he throws she brings up

This earth is a housewife / she increases his births and nursing

“Being born from the Earth and considering woman and the Earth the same as they are both fertile are deeply rooted in different tribes around the world and it is vivid in myths and traditions.

Therefore, Bidel has considered being born from the Earth more than other elements” (Panahi, 2011: 1).

I am surprised that yesterday in the desert of nonexistence / I was soil as how desire made mud from me (Bidel Dehlavi, 2011: 464)

The maiden takes the heart of seed from the soil / no matter how difficult it is, come out from this place (ibid, 109)

Girl in Bidel's Sonnets

It has been said that at Bidel's wedding night, he revealed that he won't have a baby. But at the age of 66, God has gave him a son called Abdul-Khalegh. But this son lived short “but Abdul-Khalegh was only four years old when he died and made the poet sad, that is in the 9th morning of Rabi' II 1123 he was buried and as Bidel says he went to the skies for no good reason” (Behdarvand, 2017: 107).

But Bidel had no daughter to be the mirror of his personal emotions. The daughter of vine is a metaphoric expression in Persian literature with a history before Bidel which is not a new exploration. But in some Bidel's sonnets, the daughter of vine is a negative and deceiving character. Although the ultimate meaning of deception is wine.

It is the pest of creation from the system of arbitrariness / the daughter of vine makes pests from not having husband (Bidel Dehlavi, 2011: 1246)

There are many devil-like people in ruins / the daughter of vine is not a vulgar who does not marry (ibid: 656)

Ask the police officer that this born from deceiver / as they are heirs, the daughter of vine becomes aunt (ibid, 430)

However, Bidel sympathizes with the daughter of vine in a couplet.

It is legal why the daughter of vine is shameful / if you ask from fairness, the police officer has also a daughter (ibid, 571)

But this event is rare. There are some couplets with the theme of humiliation that the number of such couplets is very less than the number of couplets with the theme of woman.

What was the effect of human's sin that out of being passive / all daughter was revealed in the firms of wheat (ibid, 123)

The shameful ascetic came out from the session of the astute / it has been girl in the house of this ridiculous (ibid, 447)

Using Obscene and Blameworthy Features instead of the Name of Woman or Female

Although these unbeautiful features and words have metaphoric nature, they are found in Bidel's sonnets. Words like harridan has a very long history in literature. Procuress, magic beautician, prostitute, deceitful and female. The feature of lewd which has been substituted with word for several times, it is ignored as it is not clear whether it is used instead of woman or not.

It is not deception without job as desire remained from corruption / as the harridan prostitute who becomes a procuress (ibid, 430)

Except the magic beautician whose hair has heart beating / such a snake is ply playing in the hands of a magician (ibid, 1276)

Do not ask from sheikhs and their moods / practically, the male nature of this tribe is female (ibid, 183)

Who competes with desire except the world belonging / it was a strange competence not to ignore this deceitful

Man and Woman, Adam and Eve Meaning Creature or Humankind

Bidel uses the word of human or humankind instead of woman or man in few couplets and introduces the people of the mortal world as human without gender.

It is useless as the eye of the victim was troubled with man and woman / everything was changed and the face of darkness was buried (ibid, 1309)

There is a creature appeared in the illusionary field / a lost man and woman like no eunuch (ibid, 417)
Adan and Eve has been used as creature or humankind in Bidel's poems.

This is me and us who have gone away from the people of the world / it is blown from the reaction of Adam and Eve (ibid, 236)

This Adam and Eve are the dignity of universe relation / Bidel cannot call the name of relation (ibid, 762)

The Position of Layla in Bidel's Poems

The story of Layla and Majnun has a long history in Arabic and Persian literature. "Layla has been preferred to Majnun in Persian literature and it is called Layla and Majnun. As the Layla is Majnun's way to reach a mystical love which is possible through God" (Ghanimi Helal, 2015: 24). This interesting story has been mentioned in the works of many great Persian poets like Nizami, Saadi, Jami, Amir Khusrow Dehlavi and others. The name of Layla gradually changed into a symbol of divine light and the manifestation of real love and Majnun's expressions to express mystical expressions. "Layla became a secret for real sweetheart in Arabic poetry and later in Persian lyrical poetry" (Hosseini, 2009: 133). Layla is a symbol of love and reality and soul thirsty for mystic is searching for her like Majnun to reach divine union. "Layla is a woman who is the God's first female

secret” (ibid: 2009: 133). Layla exits from the earthly position and changes into a celestial idol in mystical poetry. Layla is widely used in Bidel Dehlavi’s sonnets. Bidel considers Layla as a mystical love. He has used this symbol for several times in his sonnets as the ultimate of desire and the final purpose which is reaching reality. The position and symbol of Layla in mystical literature is so common that a mystical poet like Bidel has no way to escape from it and uses it to express his enthusiasm towards God. Bidel considers Layla as a mystic considers real and divine sweetheart. Bidel considers Layla not only as a woman but also as the manifestation and symbol of reality, desire and divine God. Considering the high frequency of Layla symbol in Bidel’s poems, this part has more capacity to be researched.

This is the association of love which disorganizes systems / one Layla and several Gods, one Joseph and several Canaans (Bidel Dehlavi, 2011: 22)

Both worlds are revealed Laylas but not use / the zeal of our Majnun is the fire of camel-litter (ibid, 183)

The net of politeness has been taken in the dust of swains / who knows that Layla hides the net (ibid, 221)

The enthusiasm of colorlessness is not found outside / be astonished by Layla and ignore the dust if camel-litter

The Position of Shirin in Bidel’s Sonnets

Shirin has a complicated character in lyrical and mystical Persian literature. She is sometimes appears as the symbol of earthly love and sometimes as real sweetheart. “The first dimension of Shirin’s character which is her apparent dimension in story, is her being sweetheart which is shown in the background of earthly and physical love and Nizami shows a virtual love to the audience in describing her apparent beauty especially in Khosrow’ point of view. But the key role and better to say the real love of Shirin appears in her mystical and super-humanistic dimensions which has two different and supplementary dimensions. Shirin enjoys inner beauty and spiritual superiority beyond apparent beauty and face superiority” (Mashhadi, Esfandiari, 2019: 165).

In Bidel’s point of view Shirin’s position is same as her mystical position and Shirin is a secret of real sweetheart and divine beauty. So that he confronts Shirin against Farhad in all couplets and so he considers her celestial dimension. But these couplets have less paid attention to Shirin’s character and her features and they are more related to Farhad and his pains to reach his beloved and Shirin has the position of sweetheart.

Bend yourself in her imagination that the effort of mountain-digger / kills when Shirin’s face reaches the ax (ibid, 581)

The lover is not ignorant of the loyalty rule pain / the portrait of Shirin must not be over the grave of Farhad (ibid, 767)

The mountain-digger created a stream of milk in pains / as if the name of Shirin has been on the language of ax (ibid, 301)

If dusts are not the work of love / the mountain-digger does not run ax over Shirin’s face (ibid, 143)

Bidel only mentions Khosrow Parviz in one couplet whose beloved is Shirin and reached each other and this has made Farhad hopeless.

How happiness wine does not become bitter in mountain-digger’s mouth / that Shirin’s sweet syrup is for Parviz (ibid, 227)

Conclusion

Studying and investigating Bidel Dehlavi’s sonnets shows that the poet’s attitude towards women’s position is same as the patriarchal and misogyny view. Bidel has used undesirable and negative features instead of the name of woman or female gender in his sonnets. Bidel believes that man is preferred to woman. There are many couplets in Bidel’s sonnets which consider him as a woman, similar to woman or compared with female features and uses woman and female gender in the position of humiliation, discount or curse. Also negative features like daydreaming, ambition, materialism,

short-sightedness and bringing-up carnality have been attributed to women in his sonnets. Even he compares the world and the rotating wheel with an unkind mother that one must's fall in love with it. Bidel researchers consider most Bidel Dehlavi's poems enjoying mystical theme thought. Woman is deceitful, tempting and encouraging carnality in Bidel's sonnets like many other mystics. But various cases have compared the mortal world with a deceitful woman who wants to deceive the ascetic man and distances his from divine approximation. The language of mystical literature of mysterious and symbolic. Layla is also a symbol of real and divine sweetheart in Bidel Dehlavi's poems who is the ultimate of desire and the final purpose of mystic. Also Shirin is considered a secret of real sweetheart and divine beauty that Farhad' pains means reaching her. Despite misogynistic and patriarchal thoughts, there are some cases in Bidel Dehlavi's poems which use the word of human or humankind and or creature instead of woman and man and or Adam and Eva.

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