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CIVILIZATIONAL AND CULTURAL DISCOURSE IN CONTEMPORARY URDU POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Urdu poetry is enriched with a spiritual and metaphysical dimension of our intellectual and cultural tradition. Therefore, different dimensions of our intellectual and cultural traditions are inherently evident. It contains metaphors, allegories and symbols regarding our cultural tradition, which along with its association with our cultural ideology, seems to introduce this tradition to future literature. Hence, our views regarding the concept of God, the universe, life, humanity and the very purpose of life are abundantly clear.

Every era's literature reflects its specific political and social background. Likewise, the literature of every era results from the specific cultural ethos and civilizational ideology of its proponents. Literature is not only a record of the events of its era, but it also reflects the feelings, emotions, and lifestyle of its age, as well as the intellectual tendencies of individuals. Their beliefs, customs and traditions also find a place in literature. Therefore, understanding literature cannot be confined to a particular context. In his book, "تہذیب کا ارتقا", Sibte-e-Hassan has described literature as the essence of history in which the role of spiritual values is very significant. When we describe literature as a critique of life or a reflection of life, it reflects the overall intellectual tendencies of the human mind, giving life an impetus to move forward. Several motives behind employing civilization and cultural tendencies in contemporary Urdu poetry exist.

The discussion on national and cultural identity debates in contemporary literature has become necessary due to the fact that in the past three to four decades, these topics have been presented with specificity in Urdu poetry. The expression of our civilization's ethics, habits, arts, myths, and customs became special subjects of poetry. The literature presents the true form of cultural values. A historian cannot describe human emotions and feelings with such

reality and sincerity as a poet does. Many voices regarding our national and cultural identity have become prominent in contemporary Urdu poetry. Poets like Jilani Kamran, Abdul Aziz Khalid, Saleem Ahmed, Aftab Iqbal, Shamim, Munir Niazi, Khalid Ahmed, Aslam Ansari, Riaz Majeed, Ehsan Akbar and Jalil Ali have emphasized that the national and cultural ideology should be promoted in creative literature so that Iqbal's great thoughts could be cultivated in accordance with the requirements of the poetical stature of Hakeem-ul-Umat, in order for us to serve and advance our noble beliefs, objectives, morals and rituals regarding human dignity, justice and optimism.

It is of paramount importance for a literary figure to synchronize his national and civilizational tradition with the new horizon in an innovative manner so that our civilization can once again attain its proper form and phenomenon and reflects the possibility of a new dynamic and positive ideology at every level of beliefs system, practicality, intellectual tradition and social norms, as mentioned by Jilani Kamran said while expressing his thoughts:

“When the conscience of a civilization acquires nourishment, heaven descends on earth, and the hearts of multitudes become immortal with renewed enthusiasm.” (1)

Pakistan is the result of the revival of Sufi thought and vision. We find the same intellectual revival as an objective in the contemporary poets, as there is a continuation of the cultural tradition in the poetry of these poets. Manifestation of our specific cultural narrative and dialogue can also be clearly observed in their work:

ہم پہ غزلیں بھی نمازوں کی طرح فرض ہوئیں
 فرض نا خواستہ ایسا ہے کہ تلتا ہی نہیں
 یہ ہجرتیں ہیں زمین و زمان سے آگے کی
 جو جا چکا اسے لوٹ کر نہیں آنا
 اے خدا تو اکائی بھی لا انتہا بھی اور اکیلا بھی ہے
 اور انبوہ بھی، زلزلے، آندھیاں بے حسی
 موت یا نیند کی بے حسی
 (2)

According to the point of view of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the civilization or culture of every nation has three aspects; the values, sentiments and beliefs of this nation in which it believes; the second is its lifestyle, norms and morals; and the third is its fine arts.

If we look at the first aspect in the contemporary Urdu poetry produced in the past four decades, the poets have very aptly described these values and feelings, being the hallmark of the Muslim nation. We have always been the advocate of “khair” or good. For example, Izhar-ul-Haq says:

یاد رکھنا روشنی سے دیوں کو بھرنا
 کرم نہیں ہے
 کسی پہ احسان تو نہیں کہ ہم نے کرنیں بکھیر دی ہیں
 کہ روشنی سب کی زندگی ہے

گلوں کو پسپائیوں کی راہوں سے روکنا ہو تو نور بانٹو
(3)

Today the world is again looking for a saviour. People, towns, and the country are all looking for this love, so the poet calls out everyone to fulfill this duty, as this is the universal reality that the solution of this world's psychological, spiritual and moral problems and salvation lies only in establishing peace, and the route to realize this objective leads to Batha (i.e. Madinah Al-Munawwarah):

کئی سر زمینیں صدا دے رہی ہیں کہ آؤ
کئی شہر میرے تعاقب میں ہیں کہ چیلنے کے نہ جاؤ
کئی گھر لبِ حال سے کہہ رہے ہیں
کہ جب سے گئے ہو
ہمیں ایک ویران تنہائی نے ڈس لیا ہے
پلٹ آؤ پھر ہم کو آباد کر دو
(4)

That migration from Makkah to Yathrab (i.e. Madinah) was a sacred symbol for us:

کہ جب سے گئے ہو
ہمیں ایک ویران تنہائی نے ڈس لیا ہے
پلٹ آؤ پھر ہم کو آباد کر دو
وہ سب گھر
وہ سب شہر سب سر زمینیں
تمہیں بلا رہی ہیں
(5)

In the national and cultural ideology, the phenomena of کشف (inspiration) and القا (revelation) are very important in relation to the symbols of dreams or visions. Symbolic perspective and spiritual values are equally significant in the search for meaning. In this context, if we talk about contemporary poetry, we find that our cultural life gets reflected in the expression of spiritual values. Sufism, the main component of our cultural thought, could also be seen prominently:

در در دستک دے کر صدقہ آل نبی لیا
لاج رکھی رازق کی، نہ نام خدا کبھی لیا
رزق کریم کمایا اک امی لقبی پایا
ہار بھی نو لکھا تھا، تار بھی پنج تنی لیا
(6)

In contemporary Urdu poetry, allegories and concomitance are the expressions of our civilization ethos. Whenever the poet mentions grapes, olives, and Najd, his intellectual connection seems to be linked with this great fascination, which is the fountainhead of his beliefs. And the hardships of the times and the disloyalty of his relations remind him of Prophet Yusuf. Internal and external factors and mental and cultural phenomena have been introduced in a new form by the poets of this period. Thus, the cultural relationship has been highlighted in the past, present and future. These allegories and proverbs give a new meaning to the thinking of the poets of this period to their cultural affiliation:

آدم زاد کی دعا
 مجھے میرے بھائی نیلام کرتے جا رہے ہیں
 تک رہا ہے تو مجھے معذور آنکھوں کی سفیدی سے
 یہ کیسا شہر ہے
 جس کی ثقافت کی مچانوں سے
 مجھے مارا گیا اور میں شو کیس میں لٹکا ہوا ہوں
 (7)
 ہجو م درد اور انبوہ نامرادی میں وہ کہتا ہے -
 بلاتے ہیں ہمیں انجیر، زیتون کے پھل
 مگر وادی میں جانے کا کوئی راستہ نہیں ہے
 (8)

The poets have a firm belief and conviction that this valley is the shelter and refuge of his dreams.

یہ در و بام پر گنبد و محراب
 سر بسر ہیں میری نظر کا حجاب
 کاش پھر سے وہی مدینہ ہو
 پھر وہی شہر پر سکینہ ہو
 گو بہ کو نقش پائے احمد ہو
 سو بہ سو خوشبوئے محمد ہو
 صورتیں ہوں نبی کے پیاروں کی
 جس طرح مشعلیں ستاروں کی
 (9)

Among the cultural elements, the most important thing is what we call civilizational phenomenon or cultural dimensions. These phenomena are very important in a nation's intellectual and cultural traditions. They are the title of the story of our spiritual and cultural identity. Mentioning these phenomena in the history of the Islamic nation and the cultural centres and phenomena are actually the manifestation of our eternal and spiritual relationship and bond:

بصرہ، موصل، مشہد، قم رستے کے چار پڑاؤ
 ایک زمین کھلی لوگوں پر سب آؤ سب جاؤ
 کون سے شہر نے رومی بانٹا کس نے پیراں پیر
 دجلہ، نیل، فرات کا پانی کون کرے زنجیر
 (10)

Thus, Izhar-ul-Haq, in his poem "قرطبہ میں"، is seen mentioning his historical relations:

بدن میں کوئی ذرہ ہے نہ ہاتھ میں تلوار
 اور اشک زار میں صدیوں کے اندلس کا سفر
 اس آسمان کے نیچے کہیں پڑاؤ نہ تھا
 عجب طلسم تھا اور اٹھ سو برس کا سفر
 ماضی کے عذاب بھول جائیں
 اشکوں کے نصاب بھول جائیں
 (11)

The desire to build is our cultural tradition which is quite prominent in this era. The positivity of our cultural thought is visible in contemporary Urdu poetry. Looking forward to divine succour and help in the midst of grief is characteristic

of the poets of this era. Our most important cultural elements hope to survive in all circumstances while considering despair akin to disbelief and the revival and propagation of positive, constructive thought. Contemporary poets have duly described the most fundamental point on which the universe is based so that hope is not lost. This idea is reflected in the following manner:

انسان کو شعور و آگہی دینے والے
انسان کا خود آگہی عطا کر
صبحوں کو مدام و روشنی
ایسا ہو کہ اشک اشک آنکھیں
دیکھیں جو جمال روئے فردا
ماضی کے عذاب بھول جائیں
اشکوں کے نصاب بھول جائیں
(12)

This sense of positive thought and construction is characteristic of our civilization. And the poet advances this concept of such society as a representative of his civilization and culture. The very status of the ideology of constructive development and progress is characteristic of our civilization. This is why the poet, being the representative of our culture, always seeks help from the eternal fountain of divinity. In our cultural ethos and ideology, it is the very being of God who shows mercy and grace to us. Therefore, when we are overwhelmed by grief, difficulties and challenges, we seek refuge in Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful:

خالق لوح و قلم
تیرے کرم کے قرباں
ہو تری رحمت جاں تاب سے ارزانی ہو
سوچ آنگن میں کوئی تازہ ہوا کا جھونکا
حرف دو حرف آگے کا سفر
(13)

These cultural elements are the main focus and pivotal in contemporary Urdu poetry. These signs, metaphors, allegories and techniques also determine the direction of our intellectual journey and destination. The characteristic of our centuries-old intellectual and ideological history is still intact and kept by our poetic literature in order to protect it with our poets' sincere commitment to their socio-political and literary motivation and inspiration that has spiritually connected them with this civilization. This phenomenon determines the direction of social life. Our contemporary poets are seen reflecting their cultural attitudes in their creative works, as this is vital for the survival of our civilization in the present era.

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