

Poem for Children by Allama Iqbal: A Deconstructive Critique

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Abstract

Study aims at deconstructive analysis of the poetry Bachon key nazmen (POEMS FOR CHILDREN) by Allama Muhammad Iqbal. The poems in this collection are of great importance as they do carry moral as well as universal message for the children who are going to lead the nation in upcoming years. These poems are written by Muhammad Iqbal before the partition of India. The time in which the youth was seeking guidance and poets like Iqbal played pivotal role. He made the Muslims of that era realize by addressing the youth and those messages from him are still applicable. The theme of his poetry is mainly to make Muslims realize who they are and how do they share a different heritage from other nation around that are Hindus, Sikhs and Christians. The foundation of this work is laid on the theory of deconstruction in which Jacques Derrida suggested three levels of analysis i.e. textual, verbal and linguistic. The logical as well as connotative meanings employed by Iqbal would be unmasked to analyze the hidden meanings.

Keywords: Deconstruction, Muslim children, connotative meanings, nation, subcontinent

I. Introduction

The ultimate purpose of writing poetry, particularly for children can be no more than training the children who will lead the upcoming nation. Iqbal was born in a religious family and due to such background, he was aware about the glorious past of his ancestors whether in the subcontinent or Europe. He took his early education from the shining stars of Islamic Ummah at that time like Syed Meer Hassan. The teachers laid a remarkable imprint on his mind which can be seen clearly in his poetry. He initiated his career in poetry in his school times. He wrote in the era when the subcontinent Indo-Pak was under the British rule. In the beginning, Iqbal advocated the case of United India, but in the later part of life, he presented the idea of a separate homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent. The poetry he wrote was a remedy for spiritual injuries of Muslims. As a philosopher and a religious scholar, he realized

his duty and dedicated many verses to the people of India, which had a hidden meaning and message for the common masses around. The basic motifs of his poetry include self-realization, spiritualism, and the message of unity for Muslims around the globe and qualities of a Muslim who was best in his saying and deeds. He made the Muslims realized that they are distinctive in traditions, norms and culture from West. He made a realization that the dream of United India will because of insecurity for the Muslims so in the last years of his life he propagated the case of a new homeland for Muslims. He served as an eminent leader of All India Muslim league and his remarkable address of Allahabad in 1930 was a clear image of his thoughts. He wrote his poetry to make the Muslims clear that do not rely on other nations for your goals step ahead and work on your own. He gave a remarkable concept of “Khudi” i.e. self-realization according to him with self-realization you(the Muslims) can achieve the lost status of your ancestors. The famous poems and books of Muhammad Iqbal are translated in several languages in order to understand and propagate his message throughout the world. The contents of his poetry which we are going to analyze in this article are from his book *Bang e Dira* which can be known as *Call Of Marching Bell* too. There is a portion in that book which is named as “Bachon ki nazmen” the poems for children. These poems are entitled with the names which are appealing to the intellectual level of children. The poems in this collection are parinday key faryad, humdardi, bache key dua, ekgaye or ekbakri, ekpahar or gulehri, ekmakra or makhi. These all poems are known as The Bird’s complaint ,Sympathy, The Child’s invocation, A Cow and A goat, A mountain and a squirrel and the last one A spider and a fly. Two major contributors of the theory of deconstruction are Jacques Derrida and J.H. Miller. Derrida and Miller defined the theory of Deconstruction according to their own interpretations. According to Jacques Derrida, deconstruction is not of higher standards as a literary method. He was against the passive attitude of the reader and reading the text to interpret it. He wants a reader to be faithful to the inner injunctions present in the text. The injunctions implied will result in a difference in the method of reading that is why deconstruction cannot be regarded as method for reading. He divided the analysis of the text on three levels which are as linguistic, textual and verbal. J.H. Miller said that in deconstruction sentences appear to be a contradiction among them. It is ‘undeciability’ of all conceptual and general terms. It is similar to the other methods of interpretation in regard of exemplification and every example will differ from one another.

II. Research Methodology

Present work is analyzed qualitatively as well as descriptively. *Poems For Children* by Iqbal is thoroughly read to deconstruct the text at Verbal, Textual and Linguistic level. Different couplets from different poems of Iqbal have been critically examined.

A. Research Questions

1. What is meant by signifier and signified with regard to Iqbal's Poetry?
2. How different Poems For Children could be deconstructed on Verbal, Textual and Linguistic stages?
3. Is the usage of figures of speech helping us to take insight view of the poetry according to deconstruction?
4. How the symbol of children could be analyzed as an indicator?

III. Discussion

The titles of these poems are a message for the reader. We may analyze from the titular of the first poem, "the bird's complaint", that the bird is not a bird in the real sense rather it is used as a simile for the Muslims of the subcontinent who were like an encaged bird. In the meanwhile, another poem, "sympathy", establishes a connotative message for the Muslims to sympathize on a smaller scale even if they do not have any supreme level of strength. In the next poem, "The child's invocation" there is also a message for children that they must keep a strong bond with Allah Almighty in order to have a proper living in this world and hereafter. The titular of the poem "A cow and A goat" is simile for the readers, particularly Muslim readers that you are not in this world to enjoy only we must stay loyal to the ones who have supported us in the hardships of life and we must be thankful to Allah for His blessings. In the next poem Iqbal talks about the fact of life that does not hesitate while performing your role for a cause because sometimes your minute role can be as a mountain like support for the followers of that cause. At the end of this collection, a poem entitled as *A Spider and a Fly* is a message for the Muslims not to become foolish in the hands of extraneous forces because they will praise and butter you for their own causes and then they will dispose you away.

A. Data 1

*I am constantly reminded of the bygone times
Those garden's springs, those chorus of chimes*

This couplet is beginning couplet of the collection of poems from the first poem. This couplet is depicting the situation of internal chaos which Iqbal is facing after acknowledging

the truth about his ancestors. He is using imagery about the thought which the bird is having after losing his independence, but in real terms bird refers to the Muslims of the subcontinent who were once ruler of the subcontinent but now in a miserable situation. They enjoyed royal protocols, and praises from their subjects and are left with nothing now. In the first verse of this couplet the phrase of “bygone times” refer to the glorious days of past of Muslims in the subcontinent.

B. Data 2

*How unfortunate I am, tantalized for my abode I am
My companions are in the homeland, in the prison I am*

This couplet is depicting the misery of Muslims in subcontinent that they are just like an engaged bird. The word homeland here refers to the Muslim countries in which Muslims around the world enjoy their lives with freedom and can offer their religious duties freely. In the second verse prison is simile of the problems and hardships which were available from the British authorities in the subcontinent. The problems which were faced by the Muslims of the subcontinent were due to two major reasons, firstly Britishers snatched the throne from Muslims secondly the Muslims were blamed as the masterminds of the war of independence in 1857 which is known as the war of treason in British records.

C. Data 3

*"With my heart and soul ready to help I am
Though only an insignificant insect I am*

This couplet is extracted from the poem “Sympathy” in which a firefly offers its services to nightingale as a guide in dark. In this couplet poet is making the Muslims realize that if you work with your heart and soul you can achieve anything in this world. He is making the Muslims realize that apparently sometimes small efforts tend to be of less significance or insignificant but they can bring a huge change. In order to bring the change there is compulsion that you have devoted yourself wholly as nowadays people do not try to play their part in several activities considering them insignificant but poet wants to tell us that nothing is insignificant in this world.

D. Data 4

*The good in the world only those are
Ready to be useful to others who are*

This couplet is the last couplet of the poem. In this couplet poet gives a message of great importance to the reader that how one can spend his life properly. This message is not a

racial bound message, but, this message is based on the basic principle of Islam i.e. to help others without any discrimination of creed, caste or color. In Islam the priority is given to the one with good character. In this couplet poet wants to tell the reader that if you want to have all good around you must help others around you and by following this principle you can become successful in this life and hereafter too.

E. Data 5

May my life like that of the moth be, O Lord!

May I love the lamp of knowledge, O Lord!

This couplet is taken from the poem *The Child's Invocation*. In this couplet it is a message for the upcoming generations of Muslims that they must be like a moth which is always attracted towards the lamp light a Muslim should be same as a moth. They should work hard and move ahead in the dimension of the light of knowledge which will take him back to the standards of his ancestors and elevate his standards in the world hereafter. The restlessness of moth is used as a symbol because that moth even burns itself that means finishing it in order to embrace that light a Muslim should do the same in order to acquire knowledge. The standard of ink of a scholar is much higher than the blood of a martyred in a war.

F. Data 6

O God! Protect me from the evil ways

Show me the path leading to the good ways

This couplet is the last couplet of the poem *The Child's Invocation*. This couplet is a pray from a child to Allah Almighty that may Allah guide him to the path of virtuousness and protect him from all the evil happenings around. This prayer is also important in the context as a one who is used to of good habits is a productive member of the society while it has a great importance according to the context of Islam that one who performs good deeds is granted with high ranks in Jannah (The Paradise). The one who is good in his actions will be a source of comfort for the ones around him due to which Allah Almighty will forgive him as Allah Almighty said there is no forgiveness for the rights of men while there is forgiveness in case of the rights of Allah Almighty.

G. Data 6

The poor ones like us are powerless

Misfortunes surround the ones like us

This couplet is taken from the poem *A Goat and A Cow*. This poem is based on a dialogue between a cow and a goat. These are the lines from the cow. The cow here is a symbol of the common Muslim masses. In this couplet the poet wants to express the mental situation of the Muslims of that era. They were thankless to Allah Almighty due to the crisis, they were facing in that era, despite of the fact that they were themselves responsible of that situation. The miserable situation which they were facing was due to their own disobedience from the prescribed pathways of Quran and Sunnah.

H. Data 7

*We are heavily indebted to him
Unjust is our complaint against him*

This couplet is also extracted from the poem *A Goat and a Cow*. These lines are from the goat. The goat is a symbol of the wise men of the Muslim community in the subcontinent. In these lines a message is given to the Muslims that it is unjust to complain Allah about all these misfortunes. It is an obvious fact if you would be leaving the prescribed path of Holy Quran and Sunnah, no one will be able to find your traces even. The Muslims decline was all the way due to the ignorance of the laws of Allah and after being thankless to Him the Muslims were intended to welcome new problems for them.

J. Data 8

*You are insignificant, still so arrogant, how strange!
You are neither wise, nor intelligent! not even shrewd!*

The couplet mentioned above is extracted from the poem *A Mountain and a Squirrel*. This poem is in the form of a dialogue between a squirrel and a mountain. The dialogue is based on a general perception about the conversation between a squirrel and a mountain. These are the lines of the mountain which can be used as a symbol of English authorities who consider Muslims foolish, silly and arrogant. They were treating the Muslims of the subcontinent in a very inhumane manner. The Muslims of the subcontinent were awarded with the same titles which the mountain is awarding to the squirrel. They were full of hatred due to the past historical events in which Muslim ruled Europe for several centuries and due to human nature the prejudice in Britishers had against them.

K. Data 9

*Nothing is useless in this world
Nothing is bad in God's creation*

This couplet is the last couplet of the poem *A Squirrel and a Mountain*. These lines are part of the squirrel in which it is replying back to the mountain that does not underestimate anything in this world. This is a message to the Muslims that do not consider the caste system which is an imprint of the Hindu culture. It is a message to the Muslims that do not underestimate anything due to its triviality. In this couplet another important message is that do not consider your efforts small, sometimes small pebbles can stop a river.

L. Data 10

*Though you pass this way daily
My hut has never been honored by you*

This couplet is extracted from the poem *A Fly and a Spider*. In this poem a dialogue is shown between a fly and a spider. In the title the representation of the spider and the fly is a symbolic representation of British clever rulers and the Muslims. The hatred which Muslims faced was due to the following of the laws set by Allah and Holy Prophet P.B.U.H. 1400 years ago. In this couplet the spider is flattering the fly that you do pass the same couplet is representative of the offers made by several Christians tried their level best by flattering to convert them in Christianity but mostly all of their efforts went in vain. It is also a message to the Muslims that do not get trapped in the glossy appearance of the systems opted by the Christians because they will lead them to a trap and will let them lose their final destination that is Jannah the paradise.

M. Data 11

*Dainty drapes are hanging from the doors
And I have decorated the walls with mirrors*

This couplet is also part of the address which spider made after looking at the fly. In these lines, Muslims are made to realize that the glossy world leisure's and facilities are not permanent. A genuine Muslim must give his best to make secure his life hereafter. He must not go for the things which are the cause of his pleasure rather he must go for the happiness of Allah Almighty. The beautiful appearance of the lifestyle of the new rulers or the Britisher's may be appealing for the time being but they are not a source of comfort for a real Muslim.

III. Conclusion

Poetry is a medium of conveying and provoking emotions. Iqbal's *Poems for Children* is written at the time of foreign rule in the subcontinent, the time, when the Muslims of subcontinent were in a really miserable condition. They were facing several issues and the old generation was not capable of solving the issues as they were quiet away from the modern

knowledge and some of them had personal grudges with one another that is why the children are addressed by Allama Muhammad Iqbal in this poem as according to William Wordsworth “Child is the father of the nation”. The key aspect of his poetry is universality as he wrote the poems and was translated in English and other European languages. Several couplets have been critically analyzed through deconstruction. Iqbal used imagery in the poems for the children’s appeal, but in real terms the connotatively employed imagery was a message to maintain their identity in the state of identity crisis. He also gave an outline to the Muslims that what are the expectations from a real Muslim and how they may be achieved to their excellency. Iqbal’s work laid stress on being a good Muslim because a good Muslim is a good human too. His poetry is proactive message for the Muslims around the globe.

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