

Nazik Al-Malaika: Her Poetic Themes and Contribution towards Identity Crisis of Arab Woman

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Abstract

Among modern Arab poets, Nazik Al Malaika is very famous as the first Arabic poetry theorist. She was capable enough to smash the barriers of old classical poetry and write free verse poems. Parvin Etesami and Nazik al Malaika have similar interests and scholarly language although one cannot compare each fresh Persian and Arabic poet but there is always resemblance and delicacy between poets and writers of many countries which need to be focused for example some correlate Nazik al Malaika with Nima, Forough Farrokhzad with Parvin Etesami. This paper presented the biography of Nazik al Malaika. Further, the poetic language of Nazik along with his contribution to highlight the identity crisis of Arab woman. And arguments about Nazik being first free verse poet of Arabic Literature are still in play. In newspaper, Al-Nahar, the literary reviewer Salah Hassan said that Nazik was depressed over the fact that people did not realize the importance of her work. Thus, in 1963, contradictory to this, she began a movement against free verso thinking that people might get back to original classic poetry. But rather than being welcomed, this concept got her disowned by many literary circles. Even still after this switch from free verso movement to revolution against it, most of her work is a combination of both concepts. This blend of emotions and concepts made her stand out in literary societies and world.

Key Words: Nazik, Arabic, Poetry, Theorist, Parvin, Salah Hassan,

Introduction

Now a day, Arabic poetry is where it has been able to exempt itself from the command of former literary terms and figures. Until now, Arab poets mourned over the demolition of their loved ones houses and were enslaved by iron made substructure of the archaic poetry. Nevertheless now a day Arabic verses are one of the most creative and influential poetries of the world which is perceived in choosing a particular and specific style and breaking the barriers of the traditional poetry. Shafiei Kadkani insisted that the present Arabic verses resemble theirs (Persian) due to resemblance in the communal and cultural situations both have and newly discovered Arab poets, its rising generation have close circumstances as ours for example Al Bayati, BadrShakir al Sayyad and Adunis recall us about the fresh Persian poets such as H.A Sayeh (Hooshang Ebtehai), Siavashkasrai, Ahamad Shamloo, Forough Farrokhzad etc¹.

Among modern Arab poets, Nazik Al Malaika is very famous as the first Arabic poetry theorist. She was capable enough to smash the barriers of old classical poetry and write free verse poems. Parvin Etesami and Nazik al Malaika have similar interests and scholarly language although one cannot compare each fresh Persian and Arabic poet but there is always resemblance

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and delicacy between poets and writers of many countries which need to be focused for example some correlate Nazik al Malaika with Nima, ForoughFarrokhzad with Parvin Etesami. Nazik al Malaika has setup some changes in free verse pattern and Parvin Etesami has presented certain changes in the style of presenting and poetical themes, demonstrating up to date meanings and concrens in old traditional and classical structure in her own style. Nazik as a writer gave her first performance in 1947 with "Ashiqat Al-layl" which moves around the idea of hopelessness and disappointment. The form was similar to the former Arabic romantic poetry of the 1930's and 1940's. Her second assemblage 'shazaya wa Ramad'(1949, ashes and shrapnel's) assisted her to introduce free verse type poetry as a new type of advance poetry². The type of two old half verses one rhymed type has evolved unchallenged for nearly fourteen centuries. Demonstrations outside the strict rules of Arabic poetry started in the beginning of 20th century but it was mid-forties when rhymes were accomplished in introducing free verse which is a new type of literary classification. Al-Malaika's book (Shazaya wa Ramd) had eleven poems and a formal presentation. In introduction Al-Malaika elaborated the benefits of fresh and new free verse rhyme pattern as compared to old traditional ones.

Biography

Nazik Al Malaika took birth in a dignified and cultured Shia family (1923) in Iraq. Her father liked poetry and Arabic language and her mother was partial towards romantic poetry who left an assemblage of poetry" Song of glory". From the start of childhood Nazik liked writing verses. After her high school she start to contemplate Arabic literary texts in the college of Baghdad and after her graduation she went to USA in order to proceed with her studies and learned English language and Comparative literary texts in Princeton University. Her University days in USA familiarized her with the world literary texts that later added a significant factor in her verses. After departing from USA she began to teach at the Higher Teachers' Training College in Baghdad but she leaved Iraq in order to live in Beirut for two years. Again she came back to Iraq and started teaching in the universities of Basra and Mosul and then married the president of university Abdel- hadiMahabouba. Nazik and her spouse emigrated to Kuwait in 1970 and she started teaching there with Iraq's occupation of Kuwait she moved to Egypt in 1990 with her spouse and stayed there till her last breath. Atlast she died in Cairo at the age of 85 because of Parkinsons disease³.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nazik Al-Malaika's Poetic Language

Nazik's poetry like many other rhymes is a flood ascending from the core of her presence and demonstrating her inner feelings and concepts.

ShafieKadkani thinks that Nazik's poetry is very modified and to some extent romantic in which the harshness and severity of Al Bayati and Al Sayyab's poetry is not found. Her verses are understandable far from any cognitive difficulty as compared to Adunis and Al-hawi's poetry in which their secrecy can take one's thoughts anywhere. In all her verses one can see the indications of communal ideas and concepts. An imagination of community issues which might have been experienced by a girl's age after the Second World War. Her vocabulary scope used in her verses is so high which unfolds many doors for her readers. She expresses whatever she thinks, saying:

Whatever my life feels, I express/ and I design the feeling of my strange soul, when the years into me/plunges the frightening knife, I cry/at whatever fate brings for human, I laugh⁴.

Nazik Al-Malaika and the Beginning of Free Verse

No doubts, an Iraqi poet Mrs Nazik Al- Malaika is the first one who launched new poetry by breaking the Arabic poetry barriers and as an expert she tried and tested to appraise this movement and present its ideas. Nazik Al-Malaika's introductory and incomplete demonstrations in an assemblage of her rhymes "Sparks and Ashes" a fresh style called free verse by herself and later people changed it into proper definitions and estimation of measured boundaries in this type of poetry⁵. The assemblage of her critical articles "issues of contemporary poetry" was very argumentative making movements in literary censure that has been unmatched recently.

In the introduction of her second assemblage of poems "sparks and Ashes" that was printed in 1949 she explained that poetry takes birth out of life circumstances and life does not have any specific regulations⁶. In this introduction she explained two important aspects poetic language and classical Arab meters⁷. Her observations in this introduction are the same as NimaYushij who talks about the emancipation of poetry from the equality of lines in poetry and that the rhymer should be authorized to write poetry free from all these fetters. However as per ShafieKadkani Nazik composed her first poem 8 years after publication of "phoenix" poem in 1947.

In "issues of contemporary poet" which is considered as one of the most significant books in the discipline of free verse poem and its regulations and meters by Shakib Ansari and considered by ShafieKadkani as one of the most complete books published in the present time with respect to evolution in the Arabic poetry⁸. Nazik Al-Malaika speaks about the free verse movement "this movement started in Iraq from Baghdad in 1947 spreading in many Arab countries. The first free verse poem was composed by me called "Cholera" after which I went to Beirut. It was printed in Alorubba and then I composed an assemblage of rhymes "Sparks and Ashes" in which there were few free verse rhymes. She further said that she has written significant stuff with reference to the essential phase of this poetic style in the introduction heading towards a lot of

discussions and before the end of press irritation she printed examples of free verse poem in the newspaper⁹.

Nazik Al-Malaika scrutinise the following four as the basic component of new poetry;

1. Inclination towards real life, allowing the rhyme to make connection with life more easily.
2. Inclination towards captivation; any rhyme in free environment expresses itself more frequently as compared to traditional type of poetry.
3. Running away from pattern dissimilar to old pattern in free verse there is no pre made repetition.
4. The authority of theme over form¹⁰.

Nazik Al-Malaika favours the acceptable freedom of the rhyme in the free verse in using variety of measures in every line (called Shatar by her). She accepts that poetry is the only captivation of a poet. Therefore she distinguishes new pattern from the traditional one. However all regulations presiding the strophes are also valid for this structure. She explains that the originality of free verse lies in the certainty that she has assimilated the complete lines into part of lines. Despite of all this Nazik Al Malaika does not think that one should go for free verse poems and forget traditional poems. Just like Nima who did not write new poetry after launching it but wrote traditional classic poetry in order to show that new poetry is not proposed because of inability to write old poetry. In "Issues of contemporary poetry" she said that in summary, free verse shall not be against our contemporary poetry since the metrical rhythms of free verse are not suitable for expressing all things and this is because of the bonds like metrical rhythms unity and the lack of pauses and musical abilities. Though, I do not want this movement be stopped but total submission to it shall be prevented¹¹.

In "Contemporary Arabic poetry Approaches" it has been observed that Nazik free verse poetry does not assure the innovation and desire of free verse but it slowly became a method by which present day human can express his/her mental and physical point of view and wishes¹².

Common Poetic Theme of Nazik Al Malaika

Nazik Al-Malaika was the first one who introduced free verse poem and it was because Nazik's acquaintance with western literary texts and particular studying English poetry succeeded her. By composing some poems which were translated from English into Farsi by his father. The main idea of Nazik's poetry is affection and woman believe in luck and death.

Love

One of the main idea of her poetry is affection. Her love is far away from disposition. She made an effort in protecting her affection mixing with disposition. Love in her poetry is the most significant factor. Indeed her love

shows her faith, valuable and high love in which ego shall be immolated for the loved one as said in her poetry "The truth and non truth" Aroma has filled every place and pretty faces are everywhere. There are jasmines, cypress flowers everywhere. The deep affection is the one which resides in heart and remarks are the one spoken verbally. A true lover immolate her affection for the loved one. Nevertheless these are just words. These should be implemented in practical life¹³.

Both poets due to circumstances dominating the society experience some restrictions in showing affection. Both of them faced love loss. Nazik fell in love at university but she did not disclose it because of people's fright. Her love is confidential as in "joys and sorrows". How our life progressed?/How?/Among the remains of our wishes and sadness/ yours and my heart prevail with wishes and affection/ but we want to keep it/despite the fact my eyes tell about affection/ I castigate them for this attitude/. Other poets also say same in piece of "Wishes". It's good for affection to reside in heart and not become obvious by eyes, wisdom and research be put in the core of existence¹⁴.

Nazik's womanly love oscillate between two points one locus at the lowest level and other at the peak, her love can be defined by two words; we will reconnect and will segregate from one another, move closer / do not move closer¹⁵. After taking her reprisal on her love remissness she noticed that she even ruined her loved one memories in her romantic cache. Nevertheless she observed what she was intricate in was just an imagination which affected no one but herself. Despite the fact Baghaie thinks that Nazik sing the song of reconnection when she considers her love as a cause of emotional grief¹⁶.

Love language of Arab poet Parvin still remains on top. Pour, NikAbadi, and Hemati said about her that her poetry is based on spiritual thoughts supplemented by moral values. She wanted morality in her poetry thus, maintaining an equilibrium in faith and act. In short she displayed the life from a wider aspect beyond limits of worldly needs. Thus, she thought that love can only be attributed to Almighty and the rest world gets its expression from him. Thus, book of Love has only name of God on it. Everything in this world represents Almighty. He is the truth and reality of life and is to be worshiped.

Woman

Nazik Al Malaika plays a pivotal role in making women of Iran understand their role in society by getting knowledge regarding society and culture. She also stresses about their prestige being a mother on one hand and a wife on the other. In an excerpt taken from "Hadith of kindness", she has shown light upon the duties of a woman being mother. She says that only a mother can make reward less efforts for her child and there is no other

beautiful and selfless relationship like this up till now¹⁷. In another poetry, named "Seedling of Wish", she has mentioned the importance of education for women and their pivotal role in the society. Moreover, she highlighted the efforts made by a mother throughout her life in raising the child. Knowledge made women attain even a more respectable position in society. High ranks can never be achieved without suffering from difficulties.

What reason compels women to not raise voice for their due rights and to even abolish their names from texts and books? Mother is the first guide a child ever gets. And an uneducated mother can never raise a well-mannered child in accordance with standards of society. In her poetry, "Honour to Shame", she raised voice for protecting rights of women. She mentioned that, young girls are victims to baseless suspicious thoughts of men and get killed in the name of their honour, which indeed is a brutal act.

In the poem "Bottom of Wave", published in 1957, she has mentioned that she looked upon society from a different view, leaving her comfort zone in order to understand the hardships faced by women of the countries of East. She has mentioned an eleven year old girl in poem "Sleeping in the Streets" who has no family to take care of and no house to stay in. Thus, she stays on road all day and sleeps there. This concept and viewpoint is supplemented by literary works of many other female poets, the most supporting one being "Poetical letter to Anushirvan" which clearly depicts the despair and despondency of homeless people. This will ultimately over take brutality.

Belief in fate

Nazik's poetry is ruled by concept of inevitable fate to which, she submits. This is mentioned in her poem "Grace of the Truth (God)". She said that the time in this world should be enjoyed to best since everything decided by fate has to happen one way or the other. And humans have to bear them open heartedly (ibid). Nazik called fate rigorous hill and asks to be patient rather to compete with it because if someone tries to harness time and fate, they will tire away and will be left with nothing but despair at the end. Everything is already decided by Almighty Allah and it will definitely happen. She stresses the fact that the environment prevailing in Arab was need of time and the only way to get through decisions of fate is to pray. On the other hand, many Arab literary poets have asked people to fight with fate because even if things do not change, they have at least played their role for bringing a change in society. Nazik thinks of humans as slaves governed by decisions of fate.

Death

The fourth motif of Nazik's poetry is the concept of Death. She has a firm belief that every soul has to taste death sooner or later. Authors relate the song written on her grave to her stress about unprecedented life events and

death of human beings. These uncertainty concepts resemble with the poetry of NaserKhosrow and Sa'adi from literature point of view. They stress upon feeding the soul of humans. Though, she acquires the concept of death and world here after but still, there is a wave of gloominess and despondency in her works. This concept is a lesson for people who seek insight knowledge. No matter from where you belong or at what position you are in this temporary world, the last thing to happen to everyone is death. No amount of wealth can help a dying person. Death is inevitable and sad truth to life but still Nazik al Malaika embraced this fact with open heart and mind. ZabiullahSafa acclaimed that she always remained truthful in her works, the one who sees things in depth and make people understand intricate thoughts easily. This is mainly due to her religious background. On the other hand, she terms it as one of the most difficult hardship of life. Excerpts from her book *AlmalaekheAlnaghed* reveal the fact that she thought about death since from a very young age considering it terrifying¹⁸. Her first ever poem "The tragedy of Life" is based on theme of life and death with its facts. She regarded life as a despair experience which ends at the peak with death. This was mainly after World War 2 when people faced great difficulties and deaths of closed ones. Thus, seeing this, she offered peace and kindness to everyone.

Her poetry n poems reflects the world being filled with despair and despondency supplemented my feeling of loneliness. The first free verse poem written by Nazik is "Cholera" in which she also highlighted the facts of death being faced by every human being. A little excerpt from her poem says that till date I am alive, gloominess and tears are my companions and I adore them really much and you should stay with me as long as i am alive and death makes us apart. But life should pass with the wink of an eye and end in time.

Al-Malaika Contribution in Arab Woman Identity Crisis

With advancement in various life fields, supplemented by cultural and societal awareness internationally, a huge difference can be felt in terms of self-awareness of people. The term 'Identity Crisis' can be used in many regards, such as from political, economic or literary views but mainly, it is considered to be a psychological fact. It has a really broad meaning and can be used from multiple perspectives. Thus, its meaning from aspect of literature needs to be focused. It focuses on literary view namely "personal psychosocial conflict". This when occurs in young age, confuses a person about their personality traits and bizzarres them from their habits.

This explanation of the identity crisis in relation to adolescence is opposite to that of psychology glossary. In psychology, Identity crisis is developed in relation to Erik Erikson's stage. It can either fail to develop ego which is of prime importance in order to act mature and get into adult life. Thus, this inability lead to identity crisis in adulthood and the person stays away from society or may indulge in various crimes. The person also gas no

life goals to proceed with ahead. Identity crisis in Cambridge Dictionary is being unaware of a yourself¹⁹.

Likewise, in English Oxford Living Dictionaries, it is defined as the duration in which a person has insecurities about oneself mainly due to a drastic change in environmental situations. Identity crisis can be related from social and cultural aspects as well due to the role of people in society in addition to national and cultural identities. The term identity is derived from Latin word "idem" which from literal aspect means "the same". It may either be regarded as an individual trait or collective identity of a societal group²⁰.

Discussion and Analysis

Thus, the main motto and concept of her poetry revolved around the history of Iraq supplemented by themes of optimism or hope on one side and pessimism or gloominess on the other. But all of her work had an exceptional level competing with that of English poetry. Nazik al Malaika portrayed Arab women in a beautiful way in her poems reflecting their revolutionary thoughts, addressing identity crisis and struggle to fight the odds of society which she lived in and colonial system. And many other socioeconomic problems. She is the pioneer of Arabic free verse poetry. In her time span, she wrote 15 poetry and prose volumes. She also worked as a literary critic. Her first book is termed as "Ashiqat al-Layel"²¹.

This poem kept nature and night as its main themes. This reflects idealistic thoughts with a tinge of sorrow and depression. In her Diwan, published in 1947, she wrote a poem with title "The Cholera". This poem is based on free verse which later on started a free verse movement in Arab literature. This revolutionized the traditional methods of writing poetry. She addressed this in her book "Issues of Contemporary Poetry" in which she described four essential elements to kick start a movement. The first one being the determination to start it, second is to enlarge the group of people for the purpose, third being the capability to indulge audience and create havoc and the last one is to provoke other poets to adapt the same method. Nazik had familiarity with music. This enabled her to break the stereotypes of Qasida. "The Cholera" focused on sufferings of people of Egypt regarding this fatal disease Cholera. In her book "The Issues of Contemporary Poetry" she mentioned that the main element of energizing the poetry is its meter and musical tinge, only imagery and emotions cannot give it sparkling effects. The famous critic of literature Fakri Saleh mentioned in a newspaper, Al Mustaqbal that Malaika reached new heights of fame through modernization of her poetry but originally she did not intend to do so. She gained critical reviews from magazine namer Al Sh'ir. In 1949, she put forward her second book "Sparks and Ashes". It set a new landmark in literature. She argued in the introduction that obsolete literary figures did not allow Arab literature to advance in

competition with poetries from other areas of world. The main issues addressed in this book are problems faced by women, killing women in the name of honor, nationalistic thoughts, alienation and various other social issues.

"Depth of Wave" was her third collection of poetry. This was published in the year 1957. It was a mixture of both traditional forms of poetry and free verse. Tafīla is the term used for free verse in Arabic. The other word used is "Sh'ir al hur". Nazik introduced new thoughts, images and poetries in Arabic Literature. Thus, she is pioneer of modern Arabic poetry and revolutionized thousand year old patterns. In an Arabic journal, Al jadid, it is said that this revolution was a really difficult step to procure but she faced all criticism really bravely. The critics included traditional poetry supporters as well as her own family members²².

While explaining Nazik Al Malaika's eulogy in New York Times, it was said that Nazik was one of the few poets of Iraq who broke the stereotypical Arabic poetry and its rhythms. She was influenced by Shakespeare, Byron, Shelly and some other poets of Arabia. They used modern Arabic literary figures to describe their life²³. The first free verse poem of Nazik was "Cholera". She thought of writing this poem by listening about misery of Egyptians radio due to Cholera. In her autobiography she mentioned that she wrote the entire poem in one hour. After that, she went to her sister Ihsaan's home and told her about the poem. But she had reservation over the form of poem because it was different from traditional ways. But after reading that, her sister appreciated and supported her. But she faced opposition by her mother who said that this poem is of no use without rhyming tones. Same were the reviews of her father who said this poem will only bring resentment to her. But despite of this, she was really confident about her poem and believed it will bring a revolution in Arab literature. Presently, free verse poetry is very famous in Arab literature solely because of her poem Cholera. Though, it was rejected initially²⁴.

She carried on experimenting with new literary figures. In starting days, she faced criticism on free verse from traditional poets which mainly suppressed the process of modernization. The fact has been argued upon that whether the poem Cholera is actually written by Nazik al Malaika or not . And is it really the pioneer free verse poem of Arabic Literature? Some literary reviewers stated that this poem was written after the free verse poem movement headed by Nazik and some other poets. Later on, Badr Shakir al-sayyab wrote the second free verse poem namely "Was there a love?" which was there in his book "When the flowers Decay" in November 29, 1946.

This was actually written and published an year earlier from Cholera. Nazik praised free verse poetry of Ali Ahmed Bakattheer in 1932. In one of the

most celebrated books of Nazik, "Issues of Contemporary Poetry", published in 1962, she acknowledged Mahmood Matloub's poem "Free Composition" written in 1921²⁵. And arguments about Nazik being first free verse poet of Arabic Literature are still in play. In newspaper, Al-Nahar, the literary reviewer Salah Hassan said that Nazik was depressed over the fact that people did not realize the importance of her work. Thus, in 1963, contradictory to this, she began a movement against free verso thinking that people might get back to original classic poetry. But rather than being welcomed, this concept got her disowned by many literary circles. Even still after this switch from free verso movement to revolution against it, most of her work is a combination of both concepts. This blend of emotions and concepts made her stand out in literary societies and world²⁶.

Conclusion

From the start of childhood Nazik liked writing verses. After her high school she start to contemplate Arabic literary texts in the college of Baghdad and after her graduation she went to USA in order to proceed with her studies and learned English language and Comparative literary texts in Princeton University. Among modern Arab poets, Nazik Al Malaika is very famous as the first Arabic poetry theorist. She was capable enough to smash the barriers of old classical poetry and write free verse poems. Parvin Etesami and Nazik al Malaika have similar interests and scholarly language although one cannot compare each fresh Persian and Arabic poet but there is always resemblance and delicacy between poets and writers of many countries which need to be focused for example some correlate Nazik al Malaika with Nima, ForoughFarrokhzad with Parvin Etesami.

Nazik Al-Malaika was the first one who introduced free verse poem and it was because Nazik's acquaintance with western literary texts and particular studying English poetry succeeded her. By composing some poems which were translated form English into Farsi by his father. The main idea of Naziks poetry is affection and woman believe in luck and death. Further, with advancement in various life fields, supplemented by cultural and societal awareness internationally, a huge difference can be felt in terms of self-awareness of people. The term 'Identity Crisis' can be used in many regards, such as from political, economic or literary views but mainly, it is considered to be a psychological fact. It has a really broad meaning and can be used from multiple perspectives.

Thus, its meaning from aspect of literature needs to be focused. It focuses on literary view namely "personal psychosocial conflict". This when occurs in young age, confuses a person about their personality traits and bizarres them from their habits. In conclusion it can be said that the main motto and concept of her poetry revolved around the history of Iraq supplemented by themes of optimism or hope on one side and pessimism or gloominess on the

other. But all of her work had an exceptional level competing with that of English poetry. Nazik al Malaika portrayed Arab women in a beautiful way in her poems reflecting their revolutionary thoughts, addressing identity crisis and struggle to fight the odds of society which she lived in and colonial system. And many other socioeconomic problems.

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