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Forugh Farrokhzad: A New Bold Iranian Voice

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Abstract:

Forugh Farrokhzad, a bold modernist feminine voice from Iran, wrote controversial poetry. She dealt frankly with issues that hurt the sentiments of her land, because her poetry strongly expresses the hidden feelings and emotions of Iranian women. By using sensual images and metaphors to reflect and reveal her inner longings, she is thought to stand at par with poets like Kamala Das, Sylvia Plath, Parveen Shakir (a famous Pakistani Urdu poet) and others. Her poetry is an open diary of her desires, a powerful weapon to break the shackles of patriarchy and bonds of slavery in marriage, and a window which automatically opens when she goes to it. Candid metaphoric display of private female geographical landscapes is the hallmark of her poetry. This paper attempts to view Forugh Farrokhzad as a new bold Iranian voice.

Keywords: marriage, patriarchy, love, betrayal, sensuality, revolt, independence.

Controversially modernist feminine voice, Farugh Farrokhzad- an Iranian female poet- was born in January 5, 1935, and died early just at the age of 32 in a car accident in February 13, 1967. She attended school until the ninth standard. Then she was sent to learn painting and sewing at a girl's school. Like Kamala Das, a celebrated Indian feminist-cum-poet, Farugh Farrokhzad was married at the age of 16 to Parviz Shapour. Dissatisfied with her marriage and her role as a wife in a patriarchal community, she- the daring, petite and attractive woman- was the first to dress up in tight-fitting clothes in Ahwaz when the female folk of her age there wore the chador. This bold attitude of hers fetched anger and disgrace to her from the society she was dwelling in. If on the one hand, her getup showcased her as an alarming call to the masculine regime in Iran, and a sign of woman's freedom and independence; but on the other hand, this valiance of hers marred her conjugal life. Because of her bold nature and way of dressing herself up, her husband divorced her immediately after the completion of the 2th year of their marriage.

Farrokhzad, from the very beginning, viewed marriage as bondage of slavery. She doubted it and the ring she was made to wear at the time of her wedding seemed her nothing more than a hand cuff. She was brought into confidence when she posed a question:

‘Tell me the secret of this brilliant, this bright band?’

Astounded, the man replied: This ring?

This is the ring of happiness, the ring of life...”(The wedding Band)

But one night, some years later, she came to know the betrayal and desertion hidden in this band and realized it as nothing but a “*mind forged manacle*” which is used to exploit the women folk like slaves. Therefore, she laments:

“This band, still so bright, so brilliant is really a collar
A collar of bondage, of slavery”.(The wedding Band)

ForughFarrakhzad, when divorced, didn't lose her heart but faced the challenge bravely. She, like many poets either writing in English or in their native tongue, emerged like a tornado intending to uproot the phallogocentric social norms prevailing in Iran at the time when a woman in Iran was seen as inferior, lacking the physical vigour and mental ability that a man possessed. She went back to Tehran to compose poetry and made her debut with the volume, entitled *The Captive*, in 1955. This volume, because of its sexual candour, shook the boundaries posed by tradition. Talking about *The Captive*, Dr MirzaNehalBaig writes:

“The Asar (The Captive) poems are no joyous mostly, but the readers find in them vitality, sensuality, hopefulness of the youthful speaker emphatically portraying the significance of love. She reveals a whole spectrum of moods: anticipation, regret, joy, remorse, loneliness, abandon, sexuality, repentance, doubt and reverie’ (Defiance in the words, an article published in Greater Kashmir, the leading daily of Kashmir).

Her strong, protesting and candid writing marks her a modernist iconoclast female voice among myriad other Iranian poets, who like her didn't write deeply sensual subjective poetry where she expresses her beliefs, concerns, and problems, employing literary techniques which suits her subject. Notoriously famous, ForughFarrakhzad, like Kamala Das, an Indian poet, wrote outstandingly outspoken poetry to breach the fetters women were subjected to and became the first Iranian poet who wrote openly about sex, love, female private geographical landscapes and addresses male- ‘*self-centred creature*’ - to let her free from the cage, he has imprisoned her in:

“I readily give my lip and its sweet kiss,
My body and its sweet fragrance,
My look and its hidden flames
My heart and its blood-filled laments
To you, **O self-centred creature**
Not to malign my poetry, not to call it infamy
Do you know how confining cage is?
For the liberal at heart? It is confining, it is. (Rebellion)

Intellectually fertile and emotionally rich, her poetry makes a reader feel all that the poet had felt in her life deeply and truthfully. Her poetry, aesthetically beautiful and metaphorically copious, engulfs a reader magically in the powerfully magnetite diction she employs:

“I sinned, a sin full of pleasure,
In an embrace which was warm and fiery;
I sinned surrounded by arms
Which were hot and avenging and iron...
...His lips poured passion on my lips,

I whispered in his ear the tale of love:
 I want you, O life of mine,
 I want you, O love-giving embrace,
 You, O crazed lover of mine..." (I Sinned)

The above cited extract is a bold confession of romantic sexual love and in it, the speaker talks about the moment she was locked in an embrace of love in the warm arms of her lover when they were busy making love to each other and how she felt that moment.

Farrakhzad's poetry, in fact, is a fine expression of libido. But it would be wrong to confine her poetry to this term only, because her poetry, in other words, is an emotional display of her emotionally strong feminine feelings that voices her protest, especially against the mediocre people at the helm of affairs who had become a stumbling block for her, her novel use of images, her iconoclastic style of writing and of dressing.

'*Seal not my lips, nor silence me*' is collective call to all those who became a full stop in her literary pursuit where she aspired to relate her '*untold tale*' which weighed so heavily on her heart. She wanted none to come in between her, her thoughts, style, attitude, expressions, memories, etc. She longed eagerly for the freedom she was not given. And every moment, she begged the male-centred regime to let her go from the cocoon they locked her in. She beseeched them to let her breath and explore freely the world of muse to express and jot down her inward eye:

"O man, you self-centred creature
 Come forth
 Open the door of this cage
 Wherein you hold me prisoner for life
 Allow me a breath of freedom" (Rebellion)

"...my rose will adorn the garden of poetry/... allow me a book of poetry..."

To sum up, Farrakhzad's forte was nothing but poetry which she began writing when she was a teenager. She penned some masterpieces- though controversial for the society she was living in- which earned her a place in the literary world. Had she not died in a car accident like Pakistani writer, Parveen Shakir, she surely would have been one among the world's famous poets. But unfortunately, she bade adieu to this literary muse very early. Above all, her premature demise is thought as a collective loss to the world of literature.

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