Studying the Anti-colonialism in the Poems of Maarouf Rasafi and Mohammad Mahdi Javahiri

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ABSTRACT
Background: The contemporary literature of Iraq has undoubtedly experienced an era full of ups and downs because colonial countries attempted a lot of effort to dominate on Iraq and plunder its great resources and reserves. Objective: Meanwhile, committed and obligated poets like Maarouf Rasafi and Mohammad Mehdi Javahiri were not indifferent to the society and its existing problems and, armed with pen and poem, started to fight against the foreigners and their mercenaries and took a lot of efforts for awakening their nation. Results: The present study attempts to analyze the aforementioned poets’ anti-colonial poems and describes the most prominent anti-colonial concepts in their poems. Studying the forenamed poets’ anti-colonial poems, the shared concepts of their poems have been extracted and compared. Conclusion: The study indicated that both poets used shared concepts in fighting against the colonial phenomenon of which the most significant ones are: criticizing the presence of foreigners in the country and condemning the colonialists, condemning the contracts and false promises of colonialists, condemning and blaming the local governors, members of parliament, ministers, etc., and calling for awakening, independence, freedom and Jihad (fighting) against the foreigners.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of the problem:
In the field of literature, the poets of Islamic countries face a lot of challenges that caused literary reactions from the poets of that country in different styles and posed topics related to these challenges in their works. Among these topics that require a special consideration in the field of literature is the issue of fighting against the colonialism and arrogance. Colonialism (Este’mar) is an Arabic word meaning to want flourishing, however, as the colonialist commonly intended to plunder the others’ assets, hence nowadays it is used as influence and interference of powerful countries in weak countries under the pretext of development and construction.

The presence of colonialist in weak countries at first was by means of war and contention, but in later periods with the raising awareness of nations towards their domination, and seeking independence, colonialism dominated itself indirectly and with controlling the situation and governing affairs of those countries in the form of puppet governments[3]. So, although most of these governments were seemingly acting independent, in fact, they receive their executive order in compatible with the interests of colonial powers. It is necessary to mention that colonialism has an old history, but it is widely used in its contemporary meaning in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and divided into new and old colonialism. Therefore, it is considered that among the contemporary poets of the Arab world, Iraqi poets like Rasafi and Javaheri had a widespread and effective influence between the poets and literary communities[10]. The works of these poets have been percolated dig deep in the heart of every addressee and their patriotic poems have become the representative language of the people because they have called the compatriots to fight against the colonialism and resist against the tyranny and corruption. The name of these poets shines at the apex of contemporay literature of Iraq, because with their political, patriotic, and cultural poems they fought against illiteracy, poverty, discrimination, despotism, and colonialism.

These Iraqi poets (Rasafi and Javaheri) with the help of their knowledge, politeness, politics, patriotic
sense, and liberality managed to rise against the despotism and colonialism dominating the society, and the darkness and ignorance which prevailed the society, and could demand the freedom of speech, development, and progress of their countries and depict the problems and misfortunes of the society in those days. In this study it has been tried to compare some concepts and themes of anti-colonialism in the poems of contemporary Iraqi poets and finally the results were presented[10,5].

2.1 Significance and the importance of the study:
Since the contemporary Arab era is an era that the domination of colonialism and oppression over the Islamic countries has increased, therefore, it seems necessary to address the life and poem of freedom-seeker poets. Poets like Rasafi and Javaheri allocated most parts of their Diwans to political and anti-colonial and as the result of composing such poems lead a long period of their lives in displacement, poverty, and isolation. In fact, awareness of the life, works, and thoughts of anti-colonial poets because of the current situation of Islamic world will have a significant role in revealing the ominous goals of colonialists and dealing with these matters and investigating the Diwans of the anti-colonialist penmen acquaints the people with the political situation of their countries[10].

This study is written in the form of descriptive-analytic and the method of the study is literary-social. Indeed, author intended to reveal the social and cultural problems due to the presence of foreigners and colonialists by means of literature, poetic language, and poets for the readers to cause awakening and independence of the society.

3.1 literature review:
In Arab literature no independent study has been done with present title, but some articles have been written with this title. The aspects that distinguish this study from other works are as follows: 1. in this study, fiery poems proportionate to dominated situation on Iraq society has been described that shows the intensive and clear position of every poets in fighting against colonialism and criticizing the presence of foreigners. 2. This article is mostly emphasizes on the conceptual dimension of anti-colonialism and fiery poems regarding to fight against the colonialism[8].

4.1 Social-political situation of Iraq during the era of these poets:
Among the Islamic countries Iraq is a country that has always been at the center of foreigners’ voracious attention for long because of different reasons such as special strategic and regional situation, hence, suffered from severe and irreparable damages. The vast and fertile land of Iraq that became most important scientific and cultural foothold of the world during Abbasid caliphate (132-656) fell from the apogee of its glory and flourishing to perigee of stagnation and destruction by aggression of Holaku the commander of plunderer Mongolian army in 656. The succession of two periods namely Mongolian and then Ottoman era (922-1213) cast a shadow of stagnation and degeneration over the entire scientific and cultural fields [3,2,10]

The predominant status of Iraq was still in its ups and downs until the World War I broke out in 1914 and again the state of Arab countries including Iraq became full of chaos and crisis. With the start of World War I, England invaded Iraq by its military forces from the mouth of Arvandroud under the pretext of confronting the infiltration of Germany which was allied with Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman army couldn’t resist against the English forces, therefore, Faav, Basra, and regions around it were occupied by English forces. Syria and Lebanon were handed over to France and Palestine to England [11]. After the domination of Britain over Iraq in December 1917 the revolutionary poets of Iraq were fully aware of ominous intentions of foreigners and put the awakening of the nation, freedom-seeking, and anti-colonialism on their top agenda, consequently by means of their pen and poem contribute to the independence and promotion of their country.in this regard poets like Rasafi and Javaheri performed a striking literary role and their political approach was anti-colonialism[10].

2. The most prominent anti-colonial concepts in contemporary Iraq poetry:
From the moment that colonialism cast shadow on the Arab world and its tyranny and oppression reached to the extreme point, the contemporary poets of Iraq had an eminent role in awakening their nation and inviting them to independence, freedom, and fight against colonialism and tyranny. In this subject we deal with some aspects of anti-colonialism in poems of contemporary poets of Iraq:

2.1 opposing the presence of foreigners in country and condemning the colonialists:
One of the themes of anti-colonialism that contemporary Iraqi poets had a special attention was opposing the presence of foreigners that under the pretext of flourishing the weak countries was ransacking the oil resources of the dominated countries. The colonialists that plundered the assets and oil and gas resources of dominated countries. Meanwhile, poets considered the fighting and giving awareness to people with the pen and soul as their national duty and obligation and turned against the colonialists. From among the poets who were seeking the reformation of government and society Maarouf Rasafi can be named. An intrepid and adventurous
person who didn’t afraid of Ottomans’ power and attacked Ottoman government by composing courageous ode (Qasida) and frankly demanded reforming of government. In some verses of one of his Qasidas with the title of “England in their colonial policy”, depicts the nature and essence of colonial England in the most harshly and loathly form. He considers the nature of England as the essence of all the guiles on the earth which is boiling in a cauldron of malignancy, lying, and deceit; and by pointing out to the calamities they brought about, says: “The world gathered all the guiles in a cauldron made of malignancy and poured in all the horrible, lie, and sin from the wells of catastrophe with a long pail. As if they are moth and the people are the wool. Does the wool remain healthy beside the moth? How much they planted tyranny and oppression, the ugliest and worst planting, in the lands they colonized. They allocated the pick of the productions of the colonized lands to themselves throw the scums and leftovers to the local residents.” [5].

Maarouf Rasafi describes the discontentment of Iraqi people with their country’s protectorate to England: “Heigh! People of London! Your policies has not contended any Iraqi, neither rural nor urban people. Being your protectorate is a sore in the heart of our land that how much we treat it, it is still swollen.” [5,4].

We consider that the poet likens the matter of protectorate to a deep sore in the hearts of Iraqi people. He opposes with an elegant and conclusive method to foreigners specially Italians that committed every sort of crime in Libya. He compares this to the Qiamah (Judgment day) with a narrative approach and depicts it this way: Satan the greatest of the colonials gathered his comrades and tells them about the deceit and trick on God’s servants. He finally concludes that no one is worse and more deceitful than Italians and says: (ibid, p. 497)

“I saw the Eblis (Lucifer) the enemy of the humans who was speaking to the audience while masking his ugliness and pigmented his beard and shaved his hair and congratulates his group: Hey, rebellious groups against the God and infidels, today the damn of God which was determined by him, welcomed to us. Today, that eternal (torment), which God determined in hell came close, but Italians are the most deceitful and traitors.”

Mohammad Mehdi Javaheri is also one of the poets who were angered by the presence of foreigners in Arabic lands. In a Qasida (ode) titled “regarding the Syrian revolution” opposed them and courageously and frankly expressed the truth on the basis that says occupiers should leave Syria and that is for their interest: “Syria was the most bellicose of lions, now it became the foothold and pasture of the wolves. It turned into the birds’ carcass which the dogs in turn sniff around it (for eating). Although everyone refrain from telling the truth or tells unjust words, I don’ afraid of telling it (honestly tell the truth). The time should bring change and vicissitude to my land and those who occupied and resided in it should know that it is to their interest to get back and leave our land.” [8,11].

2.2 condemning the contractions and false promises of the colonials:

Condemning the contractions, sham elections, and false promises of colonials is one of the themes that the poets came into and elegant and conclusive method to foreigners specially Italians that committed every sort of crime in Libya. He compares this to the Qiamah (Judgment day) with a narrative approach and depicts it this way: Satan the greatest of the colonials gathered his comrades and tells them about the deceit and trick on God’s servants. He finally concludes that no one is worse and more deceitful than Italians and says: (ibid, p. 497)

“...”

Rasafi’s interpretation of the relation of England to its colonials as wolf and sheep relationship appropriately shows his harsh tone in condemning the concluded treaties. In another place, he refers to the false promises and highfalutin words of colonials and states: (ibid, p.467)

“They say we are working for your salvation, however, their proceedings brought us nothing but sorrow and calamity. How much they bring about horrible wars in the east that were like the dooms day in the degree of their bitterness and calamity!”

In another Qasida named as “Wilson from speech to action”, Rasafi addresses the then president of the US, Wilson, and with a painful tone describes the outcomes of trusting Wilson and his peaceful principles and disappointment of Iraqis and the other Arab nations: (ibid, p. 433)

“Wilson told to Arabs: My goal in this battle is the people’s freedom, but he pulled the wools over their eyes. People turned to him, thought they are some steps away from the goal (and in the near future will be freed). Wilson approach was the cotton fields to (gave some promises then break them). Therefore, that was for some a morale and for the others an element of hostility.”
As it also conceived from the Rasafi’s poems, some people trusted his promises and some others believed that those promises were false, so the hostility was still existed. Javaheri also ridiculed the Britain colonialism and their false promises in a Qasida named “Cyprus jail”, and say: [8,4]

Consequently, by investigating the Diwans (book of poems) of these poets, we find that they clearly and definitely opposed to colonial treaties, and in their poems invited the people of their countries to awakening and rising against the colonialists.

3.2 Condemning and blaming local governors, members of parliament, ministers, and:

The contemporary Iraqi poets blamed some local governors for their association with foreigners and their tyranny and oppression towards the people. Although these governors pretended to be working for the people, actually they were ignorant of the miseries of the people and just were some stooges of the foreigners, since colonial policy after the grasping of a country is always seeks to appoint some proxies to be an axis for integrating their internal agents. These foreign agents who are the high representatives of their mother countries have no goal except keeping the interests and rights of adopted country in their colonized country.

Javaheri was one of the poets who had courageous and satirical positions in defense of his compatriots who were suffering from the negligence of the members of parliament and believed that country’s problems are because of the razzmatazz of the members of parliament’s slogans. He ridiculed the sick justice and the extensive tyranny of the rulers in this way:

“Dream came and turned around me and I saw pigeon and crow. I saw that justice became sick and wretched, and injustice became young and strong. Oh, my country, you are stricken with adversity. I wish you remain secured and good fortune looking forward to you.” (ibid, p. 144)

These verses are the signs of the pessimistic view of the poet that are full of satire. The poet dreamt of justice as a human whose body has been spoiled by the disease and the pains ruined his strength and made him thin and lean, whereas, injustice is dreamt of as a stout and strong young and ... the poet’s irony towards the condition of society reaches to its climax when he invites the children of the country to kindness and light-heartedness which in fact with this bitter irony aims at blaming his compatriots who adopted the manner of leniency and light-heartedness instead of fighting against the aggressions and problems[6].

Maarouf Rasafi also opposes all the ministers of the state and regards them as hireling and mercenaries of the colonialism and with poignant and perspicuous poems and calls the behavior of ministers as ignominious and says the ministry chairs they are sitting on are close to shatter from the intensity of shame: [10].

“Oh, ministers! For God’s sake, what happened to you that whenever we talk to you, you pay no heed to the fairness? And on of you is like a drunkard who lied with wine poured in his both sides. Does that suffice you just the name of government, while you have not much management and responsibility for that? These ministry chairs you are sitting on are close to shatter from the intensity of shame. You are sitting on them while foreigners over (dominated on) you and one of them controls you with his power.”

In another Qasida the poet condemns the ministers with an iron style. He holds that the ministry is like an egg laid by a cock and this is a strange issue. The ignorant people are proud of ministry, but from the view of intellectuals and wise people it is something worthless. He expresses: “nowadays bedouins and nomads became ministries and rule over civilized people, and this is an ungraceful matter. (ibid, p. 409)

“The rooster of time laid the egg of ministry in Baghdad. This is a strange matter that cannot be explained. In the eyes of an untaught ministry is the source of nobility, but seen from the viewpoint of the wise people, it is the source of ignobility. Bedouins rule over urbanites. Your right was sold off in that land. It seems that the relationship between the state and the justice is much like of the mouse and cat (justice will not be applied in the state).[2]

Maarouf Rasafi describes the corruption of the government and criticizes the rulers without any fear and dismay. These rulers will annihilate the people, so how long should be afraid of death? Why shouldn’t resist and fight against them? If we are not supposed to die for our homeland and freedom doesn’t the death come to us itself? [3].

“How long should we be the plaything of a government that constantly instills the bitter syrup of Hanzal (colocynth, a very bitter fruit) in our mouth? Does he propels us towards the road of annihilation and death with his tyranny and coerces us with a terrific torture? Why should we fear from being killed? If we don’t be killed, does the death doesn’t come to us?

4.2 Inviting to awakening, independence, freedom-seeking, and jihad (fight) against the foreigners:

Colonialism and occupation of Arab countries provoked literati and poets to address their nation and call them for awakening, independence, and fight against the foreigners. It was from this time on that the literature got the form of resistance and poets and writers invited their nation to awakening and resistance against the colonialism.

Mohammad Mehdi Javaheri also attacks those who are silent against the tyranny of rulers in a Qasida with
the title of “the hungry hypnagogic”, and with an irony associated with his heart bleeds says: [8].

“Go to sleep, hey! The hungry people! Sleep! the gods of the food (the rich) protect you! Sleep with the false promises which are combined with honey-like words. Sleep to those beautiful advises of the false leader. He advises you to leave the happiness and enjoyment for the ignoble ones. Sleep! For expediency of the (devastated condition) is in sleeping.”

Rasafi also condemns the ignorance and unawareness in one of his poems and indirectly and ironically encourages people to awakening, revolution, progress, and development[10].

Oh, people! Do not speak for the speaking is illegal for you. Sleep and don’t awake, because the only way of success is sleeping. Drop behind of everything that causes progress and put the knowledge aside since the ignorance is better. It is obvious that these verses with an irony form is much like the Javaheri’s “the hungry hypnagogic” Qasida which renders this negative and ironical picture of the ignorant and unwise people. Indeed, these verses are an indicative of poet’s pessimistic view that is full of ridicule and irony towards the status of the society. It comes to its climax when the poet invites the children of the country who instead of fighting against the aggression and the problems adopted the way of leniency and light-heartedness to good-temperedness and carefreeness[2].

Javaheri also wails all the derivation around him in his poems, and brings them in his poems with a harsh and pounding beat. He invites people to uprising against their downtrodden rights and robbed freedom in such a way that provokes every asleep to rise up. Javaheri in a Qasida named “Iraq revolution” states: [8].

“Rise up! Circumstances of antecedents are enough to learn from. Rise up! How does a lion fall into the sleep of negligence before his den?”

In “feudalism” Qasida says about the negligence of the people and their silence against the tyranny and injustice: (ibid, p. 315)

I’m wondering about the people who struggling with difficulty and put their wages into waste!”

Javaheri obliges himself to go after mobility and change and we can see this matter vividly in this verse of the Qasida “the Halocaust”: (ibid, p. 209)

“I try in the way of making a change in my life, but it didn’t. My sorry would be for that I end the life and nothing would remain of my name. I’m suffering from the thought that soon I will go without any profit and loss.”

In fact, by composing these verses the poets addresses the people who in their life, dynamism and movement against the tyranny and justice, is not observed.

For reaching the freedom we observed many bloody revolutions and uprisings in different periods. Every poet and writer in every place and time has a special attention to these issues and demands the freedom of himself and his compatriots in the intellectual and social scene. One of these freedom-seekers poets is Maarouf Rasafi. In one of his Qasidas called “regarding the road of freedom of thought” he calls the people to uprising and movement for country to reach the independence and freedom, and encourages them to emancipation from captivity and dependence: [10].

“I love the young who thinks independently and his thoughts are free. If he is sequacious, I grudge against him and he will be mingled with the captives in the world. The motherland is like gardens that blossoms with freedom of thoughts and I only love it for the freedom which in this way provokes the dignity of the people. If a young does not live a free life in his country, he is dead and the country would be his grave.”[1]

5.2 drawing the oppression of Palestine people:

Resistance poem refers to those Qasidas composed after the catastrophe went to Palestine. These poems were the cries and groans which rose from the wretched hearts ailing from the loss of their home and fatherland, the first Qiblah. These groans were not just limited to Palstine and its people, but many Arab and Islamic poets and even outsiders also composed such poems. In fact, intellectual revolution was started since the Napoleon attack but political revolution formed in west after that since the domination of technology, and all the silent power of Arab nations erupted after the domination of Zionism. The poets tried to express that revolution and pains caused by the inappropriate situation and engaged themselves to compose poems in the classical or so-called free forms. One of these poets is Mohammad Mehdi Javaheri. He associated himself with Palestine issue since he started to compose poem. In his famous Qasida under the title of “about the bloody Palestine” which has 43 verses he says: [8].

If I could, I would have shown my grief and sorrow to Palestine everywhere with a black flag. The calamities of Palestine make my day full of sorrow and thinking of these mishaps at night makes my nights bitter. In the day of Palestine fall I intended to take silence as the sign of my mourning and if I were free to do, I would have not broken my silence. Should we put pen and paper to our service for sighing and moaning when every tempest winds against our nation? Could what the writers wrote set free the Levant (Syria) from the grasp of enemy or could a poet keep the Baghdad away from falling with his poem[6]?”

However, the poet does not become disappointed for the defeat of Palestine; because this Ommah (nation) worth praising for its solidarity and patriotic emotions while enemy thinks about reviving the racist and religious
conflicts to hereby defeat the Islamic nation (Ommah) internally. Javaheri states[8].

Oh, Palestine! Although we lost you, it was not the first time that our rights were downtrodden by and deception cheating. Muslims were like a strong citadel in unity and solidarity that terrified the enemy. So, they made a great crack in this citadel, therefore, Muslim’s solidarity was broken. Your tragedies struck up the heart of a revolutionary nation in the east and instead of joyful tone a sad ton arose from it. The young Muslim arose, and who can arise like the young when their honor and dignity are threatened and the fire of their zealotry flames? They held demonstrations in every corner while their flags and slogans were the same. My life devoted to those who cut their tresses short with extreme sorrow when a misadventure takes place in the east. This shared sense of sorrow draws different religion, ideas, and together. If they know that by their martyrdom the safety of the nation would be guaranteed, they would have no fear of terror or being killed when their angers are flamed.”

In somewhere else Javaheri encourages Gamal Abdel Nasser, the leader of Arab combats, to liberate the Palestine from the foreigners’ occupation. The poet gets help from the history in this subject and links a woman cry who received help from Motasam (Abbasid Caliphate) to the cry of a woman who begs to an ombudsman for her liberation from occupation and abduction in Quds and for purging the Beitol Moghadas (Jerusalem) from the occupiers’ filth. He advises Gamal Abdel Nasser to liberate the occupied land of Palestine and raise the name of Allah there. Poet believes that nothing but the blood could purge the Beitol Moghadas (Jerusalem).”

“Save the Palestine and give the Masjid Al Aqsa to its owners and raise the flag of Islam in that land. Comply with the cry of a woman who calls you from the Quds like the woman who was saved by Motasam of Abbasid in the Roman Empire. Purge the Masjid Al Aqsa from the dirt that contaminated it and will not be cleaned except by blood.”

Conclusion:

By studying and analyzing the anti-colonial Qasidas of Iraqi contemporary poets [10], we understand that Iraqi poets take all the Arab countries as their land used the weapons of pen and language to defend it. They tried in their political poems to uncover the true nature of colonialists in addition to unveiling the true face of the traitor governors and hirelings who was unjustly, tyrannically, and discriminately following the interests of the foreigners. The anti-colonial poets endured torture, exile, deprivation, poverty, and many other troubles on their way.

Consequently, the poets in this study whose poems and thoughts were analyzed allocated most of their composed poems to anti-colonialism and expressed their critique against the colonialists with harsh and sometimes ironical tone. They depicted the crimes of colonialists with every means at their disposal and tried not to censor the events even in extreme apprehension. It is necessary to mention that the anti-colonial poems of contemporary Arab poets are mostly in line with the principles and criterion of realism school, because for the picturing of the critical situation of the society and straining to reform it and reaching to national goals, nothing would have more effect than realism. This does not mean that poets didn’t make use of classic and symbolism or other literary schools. Among the contemporary Iraqi poets there were poets who followed the other literary styles. The other noticeable point is that their political poems are more beautiful and prominent than their non-political ones. Therefore, in the works of these poets the depiction of nature, flower, sunset, lake, and things like these, are less talked about and instead they dealt with subjects like modern civilization, poverty, tyranny, captivity, slavery, exile, and sometimes the secrets of human existence[7].

Notations:

1. Maarouf Abd Al-Ghani Al Rasafi (1875-1945) is regarded as one of the greatest anti-colonial poets in contemporary Arab poetry[2]. He was born in the strict of Qaraqol in Baghdad. He was the student of Iraqi Allameh “Mahmud Shukri Al Alusi” for more than 10 years. He became member of Iraq parliament for five times during eight years and in 1930 when he was a member of parliament extremely opposed and rejected the treaties between Iraq and England. He published his Qasidas and writings in newspapers of “Al Muayad”, “Al Muqataatat”, “Baghdad”, and etc. most of Rasafi’s Qasidas are social and patriotic. He also composed poems in the styles of Ghazal (sonnet) and Wasf (epithetic) and examined most of the existential and philosophical issues.

2. Mohammad Mahdi Al Javaheri (1900-1997) the prominent contemporary poet is considered one of the greatest of classic poetry. He was born in Najaf, the city in which religious and literary circles were being held[10]. He was born in a noble family and rooted in science and literature. He gained his fame from the Sheik Mohammad Hassan the author of the book “Javaher Al Kalam”. Javaheri is the greatest poet that the epigonic style in Arab poetry and in other Arabic land was ended to him. He has a big Diwan of his poems in the title of “Diwan Al Javaheri” in seven volumes in which political and social poems, and description of nature and woman, and the other relations can be found. He traveled to Iran several times. “His travel to Iran and observing its attractive nature and beautiful landscapes contributed to the flowering of his aptitude, talent, and wide vision.” [8,7].
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