

The Continuity of pre-Islamic Beliefs in Iran as Evident in Modern Literature

Poetry of Fereydoun Moshiry : *The Wolf Inside*

Afshin Zand

Fereydoun Moshiry (1926-2000) is one of the most accomplished poets of Iran in the modern era. This poem of Moshiry contains profound statements about human nature that provide some guidance to the interested to spiritually purify and cleanse ourselves. It also sheds light on the events of our time as well as times past.

The sages of ancient Iran, in an attempt to trace the problems of humanity to their root cause, were preoccupied with the entities that comprise the complex human spiritual compound. These entities are each referred to as *nafs* in Persian. They are the various constituents of our 'selves', our faculties which can be autonomous, but not in the sense of faculty of mind. Rather, they are primordial, in the nature of the human being. They vie for control inside the human spiritual compound. By suppression of other such faculties one or other may express itself to the outside world through the actions, or status, means and wherewithal of the human being.

Thus there is the *nafs* of *ammareh*, autonomous faculty of lascivious concupiscence, a yearning for earthly possessions, power and lewdness. There is the *nafs* of *lavvameh*, an autonomous faculty of conscience that feels remorse in immoral acts. In the following

poem Moshiry characterizes the former as the "wolf inside". Among the poet-philosophers of Iran who have often weighed in on this issue are Rumi¹ and Sa'di. It is part of the body of knowledge that was first developed orally and passed down the generations through the oral tradition, whereby then it was at one point committed to writing and transmitted along with the oral tradition.

گفت دانایی که گرگی خیره سر	هست پنهان در نهاد هر بشر
لاجرم جاری است پیکاری بزرگ	روز و شب مابین این انسان و گرگ
زور بازو چاره این گرگ نیست	صاحب اندیشه داند چاره چیست
ای بسا انسان رنجور و پریش	سخت پیچیده گلوی گرگ خویش
ای بسا زور آفرین مرد دلیر	مانده در چنگال گرگ خود اسیر
هرکه گرگش را دراندازد به خاک	رفته رفته می شود انسان پاک
هرکه با گرگش مدارا می کند	خلق و خوی گرگ پیدا می کند
هرکه از گرگش خورد دائم شکست	گرچه انسان می نماید، گرگ هست
در جوانی جان گرگت را بگیر	وای اگر این گرگ گردد با تو پیر
روز پیری گرکه باشی همچو شیر	ناتوانی در مصاف گرگ پیر
اینکه مردم یکدگر را می درند	گرگهاشان رهنما و رهبرند
اینکه انسان هست این سان دردمند	گرگها فرمان روایی می کنند
این ستمکاران که با هم هم رهند	گرگهاشان آشناپان همند
گرگها همراه و انسانها غریب	با که باید گفت این حال عجیب

Rendition into Englishⁱⁱ:

A sage of old once observed a rash wolf
Hides inside every human being

Inevitably there is a war on-going
Night and day between human and the wolf

Physical strength and prowess are to no avail in this war
It is only wisdom that may guide the way

Many a human being suffer and are distressed
With arms virtually at the throat of the wolf

Many a brave, strong man are
But captives in the claws of the wolf

Whoso shall joust the wolf inside
Shall attain to true status of human

Whoso should make compromises with the wolf inside
In time shall acquire disposition of the wolf inside

Whoso should constantly get defeated by the wolf
Though human in countenance, is in fact wolf

Slay the wolf inside in your formative years
Alas, that it might grow old with you

In latter days even if brave as a lion
You are helpless trying to face down the wolf

Witness people literally tearing each other apart
It is the wolves inside who are their guides and lead

Witness humanity everywhere suffering
It is the wolves inside who rule

Witness oppressors in company of one another
It is the wolves inside who are acquainted and know each other

Wolves in company, humans in enmity
Why, to whom shall I lament this travesty?

Renditions by the Author
© 2012 Afshin Zand
www.richardfrye.org

ⁱ See Afshin Zand, *The Continuity of pre-Islamic Thought in Iran as Expressed in Rumi*, 2011

ⁱⁱ <http://www.parand.se/seda/dikt-moshiri-gorg.htm>
<http://www.seemorgh.com/culture/2085/122198.html>