

SYMMETRY IN TRADITIONAL PERSIAN POETRY

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Abstract: *A great many Persian poems have been composed by many famous or obscure poets throughout the centuries which Persians have learned, memorized and recited throughout their lives. Regardless of their meaning, there are other aspects that make learning these poems simple and pleasant. It seems that the rhythm in traditional Persian poems is an important factor that makes it possible for non-Persian speaking people to enjoy Persian poems. As Marco polo, writes in his itinerary: 'Persians are people who speak in poetry and walk on beautiful carpets'. Since Poem has a rhythm beyond the usual rhythm of the language, Which is due to the positions of syllables and how they sound, in this study with the help of graphs relating to syllables, we try to analyze the rhythm in different structural types of traditional Persian poems like elegy, lyric, couplet, etc. To this end, using dedicated software developed to analyze the music of poem through transcription of poems; samples of traditional Persian poems are analyzed.*

1 POETRY, RHYTHM AND METER

Regardless of their conceptual meaning, from structural point of view, poems have various types of form that offers the listener more orderly rhythm compared to ordinary talk. This can be considered as the structural characteristic which defines poetry from

prose. In other words, poem structure is a mold that forms a repeating order which arranges the words. In sentencing structure too, poem distances from the ordinary form which both enhances the poetic aspect as well as coordinates the phrases within the chosen mold. Yet the phrases remain comprehensible and thus, besides the words which are fitted in the mold, general structure of the language also appears in the poetic mold with a little distinction or displacement which according to Shafee Kadkani, a prominent Iranian contemporary poet: “enables the resurrection of words”.

In the eyes of Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, a poem is a discourse organized in its completely phonetic texture. Repetition displays the rhythm. Requirements of the desired rhyme and its molds constitute the meter of the poem. In fact, the meter in a poem not only refers to the general concept of rhythmic structure but also include every mold that conveys the rhythmic sense. The rhythmic molds such as sea, meter and the like define limitations that develop the sense of repetition and alternation in the rhythm. It is because of these molds that a poem (rhyme) has a rhythm far beyond the usual one in the original language. For instance if a rhythmic mold is based on a specific alternation of accented and non-accented syllables, the felt rhythm is different from that of usual alternations in a prose of a language so that it offers more rhyme and a specific alternations of syllables. There are various meters in poetry of different languages such as quantitative meter (differentiated by quantity of syllables), accent meter (differentiated based on accent, mostly accent intensity), meter based on differentiated vowels or a combination of meters often based on the number of syllables. In the same way poetic molds with differences in the original language make arrangements of outstanding elements among the ordinary ones and employ this arrangement repeatedly.

2 SIMIA SOFTWARE

Simia is a dedicated software for the Persian poetry written in Delphi which analyzes the music of a poem based on criterion of repetition of phoneme, consonantal clusters, type of syllables, parallelism of syllables in a verse, conformity of words of a verse with foets of metrical pattern, change of vowel quantity in the poem and also compare rhyme. A similar software is being designed in the University of Cambridge with the characteristics of English language for the analysis of accentual poem. Persian consonant phonemes for transcription of poems in this software are shown in Table 1 and vowels are shown in Table 2.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|
| Voiced | ب | د | گ | غ،ق | و | ذ،ز،ض،ظ | ژ | ج | ل | ر | ی | م |
| | /b/ | /d/ | /g/ | /q/ | /v/ | /z/ | /ʒ/ | /j/ | /l/ | /r/ | /y/ | /m/ |
| Voiceless | ن | پ | ت،ط | ک | ع،أ | ف | ث،س،ص | ش | خ | ح | چ | |
| | /n/ | /p/ | /t/ | /k/ | /ʔ/ | /f/ | /s/ | /ʃ/ | /x/ | /h/ | /tʃ/ | |

Table 1: Farsi consonant phonemes

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|
| Vowel | اَ | اِ | اُ | آ | ای | او | اَو | ای |
| | /a/ | /e/ | /o/ | /ā/ | /i/ | /u/ | /ou/ | /ey/ |

Table 2: Farsi vowels

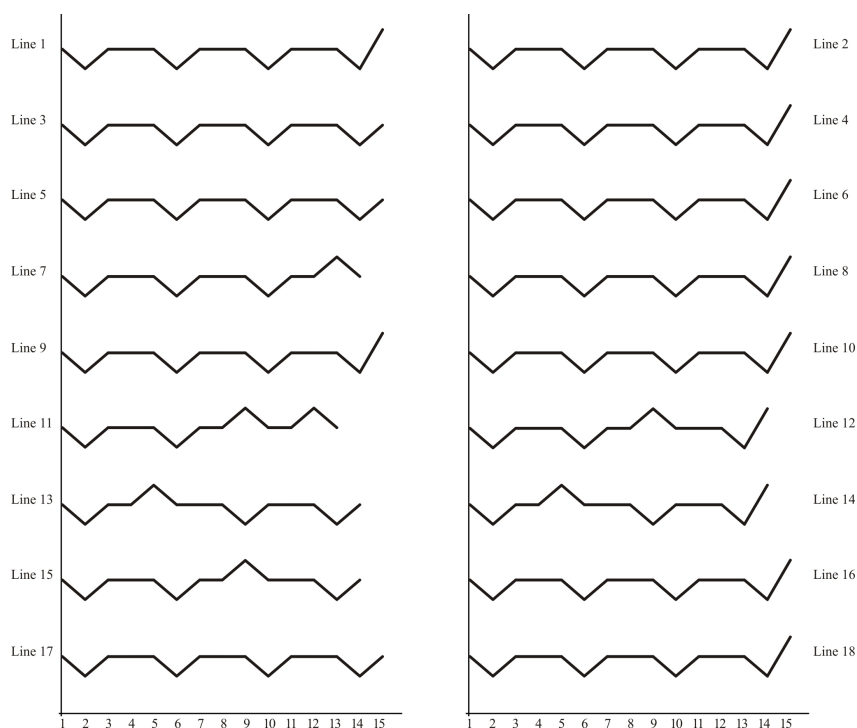
Syllables in Persian are a continuous flow comprising of a vowel and up to 3 consonants. We can define word as combined phone unit which is made up of one or more syllables that begins and ends in a pause.

Repetition and symmetry of consonants and vowels creates a kind of music in the poem which is called inherent music. In Shafiee Kadkani's opinion "inherent music is the most important domain of poem's music and solidity, accomplishment and ascetic basis of many literary masterpieces lies in this same kind of music." Also in another instance he exclaims "series of factors that distinguish the language of poem from that of the daily language is the virtue of rhythm and symmetry." In fact, it is due to this musical system that words resurrect and are recognized. This can be referred to as "musical group."

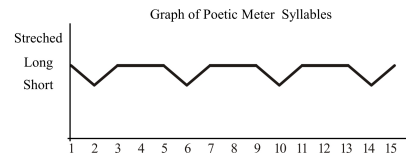
Below are samples of transcriptions and graphs of syllables related to a poem from a renowned Iranian poet Hafez e Shirazi which are prepared using this software:

/ʻan šabe qadri ke guyand ʻahle xalvat ʻemšabast/

/yʻâ rab ʻin taʻsire doulat dar kodʻâmin koukabast/



As it can be seen, graphs have symmetry. Of course, as in nature that symmetry is not complete, in these graphs too, there are symmetric to some extent but not totally. It should be noted that the priority in analyzing the language is based on speech and not text.



But here with the help of transcription, a text is

used which is very much similar to the spoken language. Nevertheless, with the analysis and comparison of these graphs to those of the meter, the following points is arrived at:

For this poem, which has 9 verses and thus 18 lines, it is evident that the meter of the poem consists of 15 syllables. However, 12 lines of the poem have indeed 15 syllables (67% of total lines) whereas 5 lines have only 14 syllables (28% of total lines). Also one line has only 13 syllables (5% of total lines).

The total number of syllables of the poem are 263 and the total number of syllables based on meter should be 270, thus the compatibility of the poem with the meter based on the number of syllables is over 97%.

The total number of missing syllables and the ones not corresponding to the syllables of the meter are 24. In other words, 91% of all syllables in the poem are compatible with the meter.

In 3 lines (17% of total lines) all syllables are compatible with the syllables of the meter and in 9 lines (51% of total lines) only the last syllables are different from the meter.

The last 3 syllables in lines 1 and the lines with even numbers are exactly similar which is due to the rhyme in these lines. This arrangement of rhymes proves that the poem is a lyric.

3 CONCLUSION

Studying the graphs of syllables of sample poem (shown above) and some more examples, it becomes clear that various molds of Persian poems like elegy, lyric, couplet, etc, in each different meter have specific graphs (basic graph) and similarities between the graph of each line with the basic graph will define the level of conformity with the poetic meter. Similarities between graphs of each line of a poem are one of the factors in developing repetition and ultimately rhythm. Also comparison between latter parts of the syllables graph of lines in a poem reveals the existence and placement of the rhyme in the poem, based on which structure of the poem (elegy, lyric, etc.) can be predicted.

References

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