



Phenomenology of the Transcendental Experience of Naʿt

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Abstract: Poetry emanates from a creative mind totally absorbed in conceiving a theme emotionally, intellectually and imaginatively contriving eloquence and linguistic dynamism through a transcendent phenomenon transpiring in tranquility. Fervent love for the Messenger of Allah and the spirituality overwhelming the creative psyche generates theme, lexical activity and articulacy involving imaginative lingual expression and ignites poetic aesthetics. This becomes a transcendental experience beyond ones activated soul. The Naʿt poetry created to extol the Holy Prophet is such a transcendental experience that takes on creative souls to experience ecstasy of aesthetic expression of Prophetic love. That is the theme this paper proves.

Keywords: Naʿt, Transcendental, Phenomenology, Islam.

Transcendence and Naʿt:

A Naʿt poet, while feeling, imagining and expressing in words his contact with the beloved Messenger of Allah a, undergoes a transcendental experience which is angelic and divine in nature and not a worldly event; he becomes alien to the world in these creative moments. We have already seen it with Abu-al-Muttalib, Abu Talib, the venerated mother of the Prophet Syeda Amina, his foster mother Halima Sa'dia, Hassan b. Thabit and numerous other Naʿt poets of the Holy Prophet; they poured out noble tributes to the Prophet a in aesthetic format spontaneously; even the idols in the idol-houses and the walls of the Sacred House would drone and hum his glorification. That is absolutely a supernatural bliss enlivening this experience and an extrasensory activity.

The Reality of Muhammad a:

We can well understand the phenomenon of the creative experience of Naʿt and a divine panegyric by a spiritual scan of Allama Iqbal's creative, linguistic, poetic experience; I call it a transcendental ecstatic experience. Here we must consider the creation of Muhammad a and his commissioning as the Final Messenger of Allah, the greatest divine event of the universe. The revelation of the Word of Allah, the

Holy Qur'an again is an equally momentous and miraculous event of the terrestrial as well as celestial realms. According to the Word of Allah, the Lord of all the worlds preserved the Qur'an in the "Protected Tablet", *Lauh-im-Mahfuz*, and sent it down into the heart of Muhammad and protected it there while Allah washed the sanctified heart of Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel (Jibril). This proves a divine connection between *Lauh-im-Mahfuz* and the Prophet's pristine heart. See the Qur'anic evidence:

﴿بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ ۚ ۲۱ فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ ۚ﴾

œIt is indeed the Glorious Qur'an, (Inscribed) in the very Well-guarded Tablet (*al-Lawh al-Mahfu*□).¹

﴿قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ عَدُوًّا لِجِبْرِيلَ فَإِنَّهُ نَزَّلَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ﴾

œSay: 'Whoever is an enemy to Jibril ([Gabriel] is doing injustice), because he is the one who has brought it (the Qur'an) down upon your heart only by Allah's command.²

﴿أَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ ۚ﴾

œHave We not broadened your breast for you (for the light of knowledge, wisdom and spiritual gnosis)?³

The Qur'an has also revealed that Muhammad, the beloved Messenger of Allah a travelled to the realm of light and divinity in the Ascension Night after a thorough heart-wash. All these events are transcendental, ecstatic and divine, unveiling the reality of Muhammad, Allah's beloved Messenger a.

A Jinn's Verses about Umm-e-M'abad:

Ibn Hashsham has narrated in *al-Seerat al-Nabwiya* that Asma' j, daughter of Abu Bakr g reported that she was deeply concerned about the Messenger of Allah a and her father when they had left for Medina and there was no means to learn about their journey and safety. The Meccans were mad to find some clue and reach them but they only met frustration. In the meanwhile, a jinn passed Mecca's lower valley, reciting these verses that served a pointer to the Meccans about Umm-e-M'abad. The Jinn would loudly rhyme:

جَزَى اللَّهُ رَبَّ النَّاسِ خَيْرَ جَزَائِهِ
رَفِيقَيْنِ حَلَّا خَيْمَتِي أُمِّ مَعْبَدٍ

Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, reward best,
Both companions who visited Umm-e-M'abad's tent

¹ Qur'an 85:21–22.

² Ibid., 2:97.

³ Ibid., 94:1.

هُمَا نَزَلَا بِالْبَرِّ ثُمَّ تَرَوَحَا
فَأَفْلَحَ مَنْ أَمْسَى رَفِيقَ مُحَمَّدٍ

Both of them came for good and moved on,
He who accompanied Muhammad a, triumphed

لِيَهْنُ بَنِي كَعْبٍ مَكَانُ فَتَاتِهِمْ
وَمَقْعُدُهَا لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِمَرْصَدٍ

Felicitations to the lady of Banu K'ab,
Blessed be her shelter and the safe stop⁴

Hearing the voice, people sprinted towards it but failed to find any reciter.

A Jinn is a supernatural creature. He observed the Messenger of Allah a and his Companion staying at Umm-e-Ma'bad's place. Pleased on the sight, the Jinn felt a Na'at inside him that bloomed on his tongue and he started rhyming it around in a rapturous mood. The verses depict his character and love for the Prophet a. It seems ironical that he rhymed these verses loudly in the Meccan valley so that they could learn that the Prophet was on his way, safe and sound and out of their reach. He declared their failure. See the sentiment these verses have flashed.

That is Na'at.

We need to meditate what phenomenon is at work when a Na'at is produced by the idol, the Jinn or the Ka'ba walls.

Prose Na'at Uttered by Umm-e-Ma'bad:

On their way to Medina, when Allah's Messenger a accompanied by Abu Bakr g reached Umm-e-Ma'bad's tentage, he enquired if some milk was available. Not knowing who she was talking to, she regretted and submitted that her goat was too feeble and spent to yield any milk. He asked her if she would allow him to milk it; she agreed. Allah's Messenger a prayed to Almighty Allah, then milked the cow and it milked so profusely that there was hardly any utensil in the tent left unfilled. Everyone there took milk to his fill and milk would not ebb.

When her husband returned and asked about copious milk, she voiced 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings', uttering Na'at fervently and fluently:

"I saw a being with evident beauty, charming countenance and excellent noble conduct; didn't have a bulging belly that looks ugly, nor thin neck and small head seeming awkward; he was charismatic and highly beautiful. With big black eyes and long lashes, he had a booming voice. Shining neck and thick beard, with thin eyebrows joined together, would look honorable when quiet and glowing while talking, most gorgeous; impressive when distant and elegant, pretty and sweet when close. Clear while talking, would never utter anything meaningless, his speech was revved pearls' downpour; medium height, neither imperfectly tall, nor inadequately short; a healthily green and comely branch amid two branches.

⁴ Ibn Hashsham, *al-Seerat al-Nabawiya*, 3:14.

His companions had encircled him, listening to him actively, doing what he said there and then. Everyone's master, venerable; neither bitter, nor disobeyed, nor opposed."⁵

Umm-e- Mağbad saw him first time and then, overwhelmed, described him to her husband, uttering this prose-Nağt. Whenever she mentioned him, she would call him "Mubarak" (مبارك). When she visited Medina to see him, her son, seeing Abu Bakr g there, said, "Mom, this is the man who was with 'Mubarak'; and he took them to 'Mubarak'. Later, the whole family embraced Islam."⁶

Iqbal's Revelatory Poetry and his Nağt:

Faqir Syed Waheeduddin writes in his inspiring book "*Ruzgar-i-Faqir*" Part-1:

"Respected Doctor! How do you compose poetry? He said: Once an annual session was held in Forman Christian College Lahore and its Principal, Dr Locus, invited me to grace the occasion. Refreshments were served after the session. While we were taking tea, Dr Locus came to me and asked not to leave without meeting him for an important matter. Then, after tea, he took me aside and asked: "Iqbal! Were the meanings and contents of the Qur'an revealed to your Prophet, and later, since he was an Arab, he supplied those meanings to the Arabic language, or was the Arabic text directly sent down upon him?" I said: "It was the text that was revealed to him." Feeling astonished, he said: "Iqbal! Despite being such a great scholar, you maintain that it was the text that was revealed to him!"⁷

I replied: "Dr Locus! Faith! My experience is that complete verses of poetry are sent down on me; then how was the text of the Qur'an not revealed to the Prophet as it is?"

Describing this incident, Iqbal enlightened us: "When the poetic excitement awakens my creative self, verses storm me and I write them down fast like a fisherman catching the fish. The fish so plentifully swarm the net that the fisherman becomes puzzled how to catch the whole lot. The verses flow into my mind at such a speed that I fear my hand fails writing some verses and missing some others."

I enquired: "Does this creative experience always happen to you the same way?" He said: "No. It happens to me once or twice a year. However, this affluence continues for several hours and I keep taking it down. Amazing! When second episode occurs, its first verse is always semantically connected with the last verse of the preceding occurrence even after months' gap as if they are interconnected links of a chain. When this creative experience ends, I feel fatigued and consumed."

After a pause, he said: "Once the intervening gap extended over 5 to 6 years. I started feeling as if Allah had taken this blessing away from me, and turned towards writing prose. Yet it came and captured me all of a sudden. What a pleasure it sent inside me. I felt like a sea in commotion and the transcendental delight lasted so long that it made up the dearth of 6 to 7 years."

⁵ Hakim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:10–11, § 4274.

⁶ al-Bayhaqi, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwa*, 2:492.

⁷ Faqir Syed Waheeduddin *Roozgar-i-Faqir* Part-1.

Saying that, he again paused and then said: “The famous German poet Goethe wrote in a book what he shared with his friends: ‘When I read the translation of the Qur’an, my soul trembles in my body. In truth, when a poet reads the Word of Allah, he finds his soul compatible with its meanings. He feels a quiver inside him, others do not.’”⁸ Here again I should mention the infinite meanings of the hadith of Allah’s Beloved Messenger that “Allah Most High indeed helps Hassẖn through the Holy Spirit” in writing Naẖt. That is an irrefutable evidence of the transcendental nature of the creative and aesthetic experience Naẖt is! Rather it is from Almighty Allah, as the hadith reads:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى يُؤَيِّدُ حَسَّانَ

Indeed Allah helps Hassẖn.⁹

Conclusion:

The Naẖt poets have been generating love and praise poetry to extol the exalted Messenger of Allah, ever since Almighty Allah pronounced raising His Final Messenger. The Creator of the Universe has revealed through His Word in all his Scriptures. The Mauwliid of the Holy Prophet gave birth to Pre-Prophethood period Naẖt and those experiencing this lingual creative experience would express their love and admiration for the Messenger of Allah under an automated phenomenon and he would appreciate and like their sacred effort. Even Jinns produced and melodized their panegyrics and the camping lady Umme Maa’bad would fluently, truly and emotionally express her wondrous experience with the blessed visit of the Prophet to her place. It was her eloquent expression of powerful feelings uttered aesthetically not prosodic though. What a devotional poetry that is!

We see Allama Iqbal producing poetry in an involuntary and uncontrollable lingual experience. Raptured and lost in ecstatic state, he would be directed transcendently to take his pen and paper at any moment unknown before and would start writing. He feared missing to write certain verses coming down on him owing to fast revealing. That was transcendence activated in his spiritual self beyond his conscious mind. The Prophetic tradition about Jibril’s support in creating poetry vividly proves the theme. The love of Allah’s Beloved Messenger ardently mastering one’s soul seeks to extol his exalted personage; it becomes sublime, celestially linked with holiness and becomes a transcendental Naẖt experience.

⁸ Faqir Syed Waheeduddin, *Roozgar-i-Faqir* Part-1.

⁹ Tirmizi, Al-sunan, Vol: 5, P: 138, Hadith No: 2846 ; Abu Ya’la, Al-musnad, Vol: 8, P: 67, Hadith No: 867