

The Concept of the Term “Freedom” in the Poetry of Mohammad-Reza Shafiei Kadkani

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Freedom is one of the primary necessities of life and human growth and excellence. From a religious and cultural perspective, man has also been created free. Basically, human maturity and perfection will be possible in the shadow of enjoying the blessing of freedom, because it is considered the most essential divine blessing to man to ensure his growth. That is why, although contemporary man faces numerous issues such as poverty and inequality, he never tolerates the lack of freedom. The role of a committed and freedom-loving poet in awakening and awareness of society is clear. This research, which is conducted in a descriptive-analytical manner and using library resources, intends to examine the qualitative and conceptual strategies of the word freedom in the poems of Mohammad Reza Shafiei Kadkani, a contemporary Iranian poet. The results indicate that he is a poet known for his cries and struggles, and since he is in control of the circumstances of society, he speaks his mind in any way possible to play a role in his society.

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Introduction

Freedom represents an essential prerequisite for human growth, intellectual maturity, and sociopolitical self-actualization. From cultural, philosophical, and theological perspectives, human beings are endowed with free will, making liberty an indispensable condition for personal perfection and social justice. In contemporary literary history, literature—especially modern and resistance poetry—has served as a vital vehicle for voicing socio-political critique, challenging autocratic regimes, and raising collective consciousness. In 20th-century Persian literature, poets have critically engaged with freedom, reflecting both classical traditions and modern socio-political discourses following the Constitutional Revolution (*Mashruteh*).

Among prominent contemporary Iranian literary figures, Mohammad-Reza Shafiei Kadkani (M. Sereshk) holds a unique position as a distinguished scholar, literary critic, and pioneer of the second generation of Nimaic poetry. His poetic oeuvre is profoundly intertwined with social commitment, the pursuit of liberation, and resistance against tyranny. This study aims to investigate the semantic and strategic dimensions of the concept of “freedom” in Shafiei Kadkani’s poetry, identifying the primary stylistic and symbolic devices he deploys to represent socio-political suffocations and the enduring struggle for liberty.

Method

This study adopts a descriptive-analytical methodology utilizing library and textual archival resources. The corpus consists of selected poetic works and collections across different periods of Mohammad-Reza Shafiei Kadkani’s creative career. The analytical framework concentrates on textual content analysis, examining:

۱. **The Semantic Conceptualization of Freedom:** Analyzing how the poet defines and integrates freedom within modern Iranian socio-political contexts compared to classical conventions.
۲. **Symbolic and Allegorical Imagery:** Deconstructing natural and mytho-historical motifs (e.g., night, dawn, desert, wind, rain, and caged birds) as vehicles of socio-political critique.

۳. **Poetic Discourse of Resistance:** Evaluating the interaction between the poet's aesthetic choices (social symbolism, formalism, and allegory) and his stance against ideological suppression and social apathy.

Results

The qualitative and textual analysis reveals several key patterns regarding the concept and expression of freedom in Shafiei Kadkani's poetry:

۱. **Freedom as the Central Core of Human Existence:**
- Shafiei Kadkani conceptualizes freedom as the foundation of modern human consciousness, asserting that contemporary humanity's quest for liberty is inseparable from self-recognition and existential dignity. In his perspective, basic sustenance without artistic expression and freedom (*Water, Bread, Song*) renders human life incomplete.
۲. **Symbolic Representation of Despotism versus Liberation:**
- **The Metaphor of "Night" (*Shab*):** Symbolizes authoritarian oppression, stagnation, and socio-political suffocation. The poet frequently depicts society under autocracy as an inescapable prison or an abyss of silence where individuals are alienated from one another.
 - **Natural and Allegorical Elements:** The poet systematically employs natural imagery to illustrate resistance. For example, the desert (*Kavir*) represents repression and wasteland, while rain (*Baran*), blossoms (*Shokoufeh*), and dawn (*Sepideh*) signify regeneration and liberation. In the celebrated poem "*Safar Bekheyr*" (Safe Travels), the dialogue between the anchored desert thorn (*Gavan*) and the wandering breeze (*Nasim*) allegorizes the tension between the immobilized, oppressed citizen and the free-spirited traveler escaping desolation.
 - **Fable and Allegory:** In poems like "*Shogh-e Residan be Azadi*" (Longing for Freedom), the poet utilizes animal allegory (the rooster's morning call) to urge intellectuals

and fellow poets to shatter ideological constraints and awaken a dormant public.

۳. **Poetics of Protest and Martyrdom:**

- Shafiei Kadkani valorizes fighters and dissidents (*Rendan, Asheghan-e Sharzeh*) whose courageous voices puncture the oppressive darkness. Poetic words are explicitly likened to drills that bore holes through the night to let the light of freedom penetrate, memorializing those who sacrifice their lives for collective emancipation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that freedom in the poetry of Mohammad-Reza Shafiei Kadkani transcends a simple thematic motif; it functions as the structural and ethical backbone of his poetic commitment. By bridging classical Persian heritage with modern sociopolitical sensibilities, Kadkani creates a sophisticated symbolic language where social commitment is articulated through nature, allegory, and mythical resonance. His poetry serves as an active medium of collective awakening, unmasking autocratic repression while continuously affirming hope in eventual democratic renewal and social justice.