

## HADRAAWI'S POETRY:AN INTRODUCTORY REFLECTION

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"Mr.Hadraawi is indeed an artist of awesome force whose lyrics have helped to inspire a generation of Somalis,including myself.In the past ten years,a period during which the Somalis have been through severe national crises,owing to their state's steady slide towards anarchy together with relentless outbreaks of civil wars,Mr.Hadraawi's voice has been a source of solace and comfort to many Somalis in the great demoralization of the land."(1)

(Professor Said S.Samatar)

And it is not for nothing that,as a whole,the Somalis were called "A nation of poets"(2).Their admiration for poetry is indeed so deep to the extent that a mysterious presence of divine aurora suggesting mystical devotion is detectable.But in order to further underline this rather hard-to-explain peculiarity,suffice it to cite,the exceptional power which the verses of the sayid Maxamed Cabdilla Xasan held over the Dervishes.An anecdote widely held by the Somalis has it that,if not all,at least a sizable number of the lower ranks of the Dervish movement used to perform ablution before attending any ceremony in which the Astad's(3) poems were to be recited.And at least one modern Somali poet,namely Maxamed Xaashi Dhammac,Gaarriye,while bearing the above point of view in mind,had said the following line in one of his poems:

"Dadku waa u waysaysan jiray,

Deellaydaan furaye"i.e

"People used to execute ablution

For the Deellay(4) initiated by me".

But Hadraawi whose poetry is characterized by profound depth,classic harmony and artistic beauty handles this same topic differently.As usual broad outlook sets him apart.Stepping hence into the shoes of the enthusiastic connoisseur rather than those of the composer he says in CREATIVITY:

"Qof kastaa hab gaaruu  
u higgsadaayoo  
waxay ugu haboon tahay  
sida uu u haystiyo  
halka uu la doontoo

.....", which means roughly,  
"Each person is apt to interpret  
poetry in his own way,  
and each draws from it

his own conclusions thus". And by these lines thus  
M.I. Warsame, Hadraawi, puts the emphasis more on the  
critical appreciation than the passive admiration for the  
poetic rhythm. The creative appraisal actually holds for  
him supreme. And to his credit, the Somali cultural history  
bears him out.

Similarly accentuated by massive lexicon, witty  
fables, and allegorical anecdotes, the past, fully  
resurrected, steps out of Hadraawi's laureate muse. Indeed  
a remarkable continuation of the priceless classics it  
is. Hence honouring their memory, and anticipating the old  
masters of the golden age of Somali poetry, to step  
forward, as their names are one after the other called  
out, let us pay them homage with Hadraawi:

"Hal abuurka niman baa  
hawraar u bixiyoo,  
toddobaatan hebeloo  
hana-qaad is xigey baa  
hasa maali jirayoo,  
haaneedka Raagaa(5)  
qaban jiray hadhuubkoo,  
Cali Dhuuxna(6) hooduu  
ragba kaga horreeyoo,  
hidda raac Qamaan(7) bay  
habar wada jaceenoo,  
ha'da gabay Salaan(8) baa  
dhigi jiray higgaaddoo,  
hammi Faarax Nuur(9) baan  
ledi jirin habeenoo,  
hitiqsiga Gammuutaan(10)  
hamrashada aqoonoo,

.....". And that is to say in  
English, "Creativity owes it's grandeur  
to the classic bards of the past.  
Numbering seventy these men had  
taken turns in milking the she-camel.  
Raage used to hold the wooden bail  
at its right-side unfailingly  
And Cali Dhuux had left all men behind  
by the good fortune he was blessed with  
Suckled by the same mother  
with Qamaan it shared common origins  
Salaan was an authority in teaching  
the subtle art of the poetic rhythm  
Sleepless many a night  
Faarax Nuur remained on its account  
And fully committed to it  
Gammuute knew no wavering  
.....".

But classical poetry was a typical product of a nomadic society. And the only means through which it was transmitted was ,from A to Z ,oral. Hence the prerequisites of memorization limited the length, the literary structures employed, and the issues handled within each poem. And underscoring this very point too, the sagacious professor B.W. Anderzejewski is known to have said,

"As Somali poems are never of epic length accurate memorization was not too difficult to achieve." (11)

But Hadraawi's poetry had successfully freed itself many a shackle, the one cited above included, that humstrung the Somali poetry. Among the living Somali poets he is the leading dean indeed. Eminent master-pieces that scale new literary heights and epics of exceptional splendour qualify the prolific Hadraawi's poetic contributions.

DEBEDYAAL(12)-is so remarkable in its dramatic portrayal of a society (Somali) paralysed by tribalism and manipulated by a foxy generalismo.

GOL-JANNO(13), is a living portrait of critical symbolism, cutting irony, and hard-hitting political satire.

GUDGUDE(14)-is a lyrical eulogy for prudence that anticipated with awesome foresight the current Somali crisis.

And SIRTA-NOLOSHA, or THE SECRET OF LIFE, is a song of peace so human in its world outlook. All those mentioned are actually trail-blazers. Each were a literary limelight in its day. And to elucidate further this point, let us make a pause, and briefly dwell on the merits of the poem, last mentioned. THE SECRET OF LIFE, alliterated in the letter S, of the Somali alphabet, is both by form and genre classical. Renovating the poetic rhythm of a traditional work-song-namely that of butter-churning ,Hadraawi actually gave this genre a new lease of life. Hence by the masterful touch of an accomplished guru

within this poem the spectacular unity of the past and the present is achieved. So modern by content indeed it is. The outstanding, concrete or philosophical, issues of the twentieth century are within it highlighted. In a word, from the privileges, as well as the responsibilities strongly implied by the Man's leading position in Nature, through the catastrophic threats posed by the defiled technological revolution of this Space Age of ours that excels in the madness of producing nuclear means of mass death and suicidal self-destruction, to that of Earth Matters that urgently call for, if we are to rescue our endangered planet from tragic end, immediate cessation of our reckless, barbaric mis-activities versus the natural environment-are within it aptly discussed.

Ethics and modernism, cultural awareness and aestheticism are also among the topics given a place of honour. Inevitably too, peace and the tenets of non-violence enjoy prominence at the epic's lofty rostrum. Thus a characteristic stanza of THE SECRET OF LIFE says, "Erey sami wuxuu gooyo

Allow yaan ku jarin soodhka  
garashada ka dhigan seefo!", which when roughly translated means, "By a gentle word what could be achieved  
O Lord, how becoming it would have been,  
preferring not the blade over the intellect  
.....if never by the sword it was sought!"

Addressing Sahra(15), a central character, symbolizing the rational component of the third world, the following stanza paints also in bold colours the poem's humane message:

"Weligaa ha tumin seefo  
iyo sabaradaa mawdka,  
dar samaysan baa yaalla!  
Nin ku siin karaa haysta!  
.....  
Ninka sida xilkeenaa leh  
ka sar-jara heddeenaa leh!  
Salab ciiddu hayn weyday  
ninka sudhay xiddigahaa leh!  
Naftu waa sir xeel dheere  
nimaan suubin karin baa leh,  
wedka qudha sameeyaa leh!"

And that is to say, "Never bother to forge swords  
nor the other lethal means of death,  
around you they are arrayed, readymade!  
A man prepared to give you owns them.  
The very one looked up as our leader  
but devises too our death owns them!  
Weapons the earth could ill contain  
the man that transferred  
up to the stars owns them!  
Deep is the divine secret of life  
hence a man uninitiated  
in it's basics, but well versed  
in that of death owns them!"

And finally I would like to conclude with a Somali proverb alliterated in the letter 'Q'. Censuring hypocrisy in general it says, "An elder that fails to honour his word, is a tree that lost it's bark!" But unfortunately, in these critical times, inconsistency has become among the Somali men of letters, a common practice. But as usual, Hadraawi had, quoting a witty Somali fable, refused like the legendary tortoise, "To degrade himself by munching the dry Jilaal(16) grass in the same mouth that enabled him to enjoy the delicious pasture of the rainy season!" In Haraawi indeed, exceptional talent and committed humanism had met. And to substantiate this

statement conclusively, no authority less than the distinguished professor B.W. Andrzejewski, I quote, "He (Hadraawi) is also esteemed by Somalis because of his uncompromising moral principles. He refused to collaborate with the dictatorial military regime, though lured by great rewards. Instead he fiercely criticised them, risked his life and had to flee into exile in order to evade arrest.

I know him personally and have found him to be a man of peace, wisdom and discernment."