

A Study of the Poetry of the Pre-Islamic Poet al-Hutaya' with a Particular Reference to His poem, 'Watawi thalathe'**Sabbar S. Sultan**

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Received: 3/12/2022

Accepted: 4/19/2022

Published: 5/24/2022

Abstract

The present paper often called "mukhadhram" (living in two eras (Jahiliyat or pre-Islamic and Islamic) and the difficulty he encountered in reaching a compromise between the norms ,conventions and priorities of these two eras. Jarwal bin Aws bin Malik al-Abbassi, who is known by the nickname al-Hutaya' (600-678) is the pivot of this study. The significance of the current study lies in highlighting his favorite topics, especially eulogy and satire, his allergic relationship with people and his fellow poets and his self-centered views. Also it pays much attention to his type of poetry and its characteristic tone. The approach used here is biographical, albeit sounding outmoded or outdated, i.e., in that it tries to study his poetry in the light of his experiences and different situations he has passed through and their impacts on the type of poetry he has written. This will be followed by a translation (conducted by the present researcher) of his magnum opus 'watawit halathe' (starving for three days) which he wrote in his last year. The formal and thematic aspects of the poem will be discussed. A final assessment of this poem will be provided as a work that has been rightly classified as a landmark in the poet's career.

Key words: Al-Hutaya, desert, eulogy, poverty, slander, 'Starving for three Days'

Cite as: Sultan, S. S. (2022). A Study of the Poetry of the Pre-Islamic Poet al-Hutaya' with a Particular Reference to His poem, 'Watawi thalathe'. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies* 6 (2) 70-83. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol6no2.5>

Introduction

Jarwal bin Aws (al-Hutaya') occupies a distinct position among Jahiliyat (pre-Islamic) poets in the Arab peninsula. Part of the perennial interest in his poetry which has lasted from the seventh century down to twenty-first century is attributed to his peculiar disposition and idiosyncrasy. Essentially he was maverick and rebellious in mood and perception of life. At heart, he used to feel that life and people were unfair to him and that he did not get what he deserved. In other words, in al-Hutaya' poetry, there is the implicit and sometimes explicit conflict between the individual and community, a point that has led to his excessive egoism and introspective nature. This point has been illuminated by scholar Blohi(2014) who argues to this effect, "It is the sense of being overwhelmed , as far as time is concerned, that made the Jahiliyat poet insert in many of his visions and perceptions the sense of pessimism and determinism"(p.44).The nickname by which this poet is known 'Hutaya' is derived from 'hata' which means ,"a man who is miserly and mean.'Hutaya', moreover, is the short and hideous man'(Waseet Dictionary 2004,p. 182).

Seen from another angle, al-Hutaya' does not represent the norm since his attitudes and reactions spring mainly from certain individual experiences and situations which eventually led to a kind of rift or estrangement between him and other poets. Al-Hutaya' " is a man who feels alienated since childhood even if people are kind to him, because he knows that they do not like him at heart"(Husysis2015, p. 32). It is a tautology to state that poetry has been the only art that the Bedouins would enjoy and often cite in their different daily concerns and affairs. How society reacts to poetry and its effects can be summed up in the following view:

:

Poets are held in high esteem, and they frequently mesmerize and motivate audiences to action. The Bedouin used poetry as a way of preserving their history and traditions. People gathered around storytellers who would regale them with tales of love, bravery and chivalry (Gannon & Pillai 2015, p. 66)

As regards the attitude of people toward al-Hutaya's poetry, it can be said that it is ambivalent: a mixture of both pleasure and discontent for personal or impersonal reasons.

Due to the painful circumstances in which he has undergone and the way people looked at him,al-Hutaya' succeeded in sharpening his satirical poetry so that people began to keep away from his biting and scathing satire. The reader is struck to realize that" people feared him and his sharp tongue"(Khinari,2001, p. 3). A famous example of his satire is when he describes his wife in a very sarcastic and unacceptable tone:

She has a flea's body and a mosquito's leg لها جسم برغوث وساق بعوضة

(Laha jism barghooth wasaq ba'oudha)

and a face like an ape's or rather uglier ووجه كوجه قرد بل هو اقبح

(wawajh ka wajh qird bal huwa aqbah)

Her eyes glitter if you see her

و تبرق عيناها اذا ما رايتها

(watabruq einaha idha ma raiytaha)

She frowns at the sitter's face and turns gloomy وتعبس في وجه الجليس و تكلح

(wata'abas fi wajh aljalees wataqlah)

(Shamuldin, 2002,p.66)

The cynical and satirical images in these lines are self-evident and spare the reader any further interpretations. But when it comes to his satire of Zabarqan, the situation gets serious as the one who is satirized is a big shot, one of the outstanding figures in his tribe. Herein lies the gravity and seriousness of al-Hutaya' blunder that eventually led to a two-weeks imprisonment according to the orders of Caliph Omar bin Al Khattab. There is a need for elaborating the circumstances behind the satire and its drastic impacts on al-Hutaya' as a man and a father of some kids. The synopsis of this situation is as follows. Al-Hutaya' left his dwelling place in the Arabian Peninsula due to the terrific famine there, heading to Iraq. By coincidence he met Zabarqan who knew the reasons behind his emigration and suggested that the poet and his family be his guests till the ordeal ends. Al-Hutaya' agreed and his family settled in Zabarqan's guesthouse. However, his wife was fed up with serving the guests for a long time and convinced her husband to put an end to their residence. Once again al-Hutaya' found himself homeless and helpless. In fact, sometimes one toys with the sense that al-Hutaya was a tramp-like figure that caused much discontent for himself, his family and other people. Luckily, al-Hutaya met another wealthy man, called Baghith who offered to host al-Hutaya's family provided he satirize Zabarqan, a thing which al-Hutaya welcomed and implemented immediately:

It is not Baghith's fault to have seen a man

ما كان ذنب بغيث ان رأى رجلا

(ma kana dhanb Baghidh in ra'a rajulan)

in need, living in a wild and lonely place

ذا حاجة عاش في مستوعر شاس

(dha hajaten asha fi mustawa'ern shas)

جارا لقوم اطالوا هون منزله

A neighbor to a folk that persisted in downgrading his rank

(jaran liqawmin ataloo hawn manzilihi)

and abandoned him dwelling among the graves

(waghadarook muqeeaman beina armas)

They were fed up with hosting him

ملو قراه

(mallou qirahu)

and their dogs growled at him وهرته كلابهم

(waharrathu kilabahum)

They injured him by fangs and teeth وجرحوه باتياب و اضراس

(wjarahoh bianyab was adhras)

وغادروه مقيما بين ارماس

leave generosity aside, don't go in pursuit of them دَعِ الْمَكَارِمَ لَا تَرْحَلْ لِبُغْيَتِهَا
 (da'a Imakarim la tarhal li bughyatiha)
 Sit down and be content with food and wear واقْعِدْ فَاَنْتَ الطَّاعِمُ الْكَاسِي
 (wauqui'd fa anta alta'em alkasee)
 (Al Tabbaa' 2016, p. 23)

Al Hutaya's poetry is part and parcel of a very harsh and demanding environment in which he lived and upon which he capitalized to write his type of poetry and earn his living. This desert environment is the space that has molded al-Hutaya's poetry and his vision of life as well as the primitive society he lived in. As Al Qalfadh (2016) cogently argues in this regard:

Space in Jahiliyat poetry is not a mere luxury or an accessory; rather it is an artistic constituent that has symbolic implications and dimensions. Also the Jahiliyat individual selects the hardest and most uncommon places as he finds in such places his own poetry, life, joy and lasting name. The place in such poetry is determined by the duality of accepting the hard and remote localities and rejecting the protection of familiar places, given the duality of masculinity and femininity. (p.41)

The above-cited quotation about the sense of place that Gaston Bachelard has devoted a whole book to its aesthetics (*The Poetics of Place*, 1958) is a reminder that the place is not just an ancillary construct but a vital element that plays an indispensable role in the contents of literature and its orientation. The desert as perceived here represents a kind of ambivalent relationship for its dwellers. Adonis, the living Syrian poet, (2011) argues in similar terms when he asserts, "The place, according to the Jahiliyat poet has two faces: attractive one as it is the place where the features of chivalry and knightly dimensions are concretized. The other is the terrible one from which the surprises of fall come into being" (p.11).

One of the prominent features of al-Hutaya's poetry is the painful sense of inferiority as a result of his extreme poverty and people keeping away from him. Psychologically speaking, al-Hutaya as any of the poets living in the desert realizes that:

the inner psychological world of the people living in the desert and search for the simplest manifestations of life in it by any means is the real exponent for knowing the authority of the desert. The place and style of living is the only authority here. (Yousuf, 2017, p. 164)

From a psychological viewpoint, poetry for him is a sort of sublimating act, if we borrow the Freudian term that has been viewed as follows "The work of art is not different from symptoms and defenses against symptoms which are compromises that also express and conceal forbidden wishes" (Gay 1992, p.12). By means of poetry, al-Hutaya can vanquish verbally his opponents and those who have evil intentions toward him. As such, his competence in poetry, its power and impact on people, become one of his priorities. Accordingly, he exerted great efforts to make his poetry capable of affecting his audience since most people at that time were illiterate. Thus he devoted much time to polishing and refining his poetic diction, its imagery, music and rhythms. Thus "his sense of humiliation has been sublimated through his thoroughgoing efforts to the best selection of the poem, its organization, checking and revising it" (Qamhiyya, 90). In other words,

al-Hutaya's poetry can be approached from a psychological viewpoint as there is every reason to justify such an approach. His dissatisfaction with people and the way they used to see him is enough to make the perceptive reader infer that he is the outsider and stranger, whose only tools of facing and even torturing his foes is the biting poetry he kept on writing all his life.

Al-Hutaya's skill in satire is distinct and matchless. Indeed his satire of Zabarqan has become exemplary and proverbial, especially the last line which has already been pointed out. His satire brings to mind the great satirists in English literature (Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and Alexander Pope 1688-1744). The difference, however, lies in the fact that the British writers never thought of using satire as a weapon of extortion or earning money. Pope and Swift employed satire for ethical, social and behavioral targets. In al-Hutaya's case, satire is a sharp means of infuriating some people for not earning money from them or social interests. Because of his poverty, al-Hutaya invested his satirical skill in compensating his low rank in society. Al-Hutaya's passion for this art was great as it fitted his social position and abject poverty from which he could never find a release even in his last days. Indeed in his satire, he excelled all by even satirizing himself, when he says:

ابت شفتاي اليوم الا تكلم بسوء فلا ادري ما انا قائله
(abat shafataya lyoum alla tukallima bisoui' fla adri ma ana qailahu)

My lips refrained from saying anything abusive today

Therefore I don't know what I am saying

ارى لي وجهها قبح الله خلقه ففبح من وجهه وقبح حامله
(ara li wajhana qabaha Allahu khalaqahu faqubbiha min wajhin wa qubbiha
hamilahu)

I see that I have a face God rendered ugly

What an ugly face it is and so is its bearer

(Al Tabba' 2016, p.16)

In contrast, praising people, especially rich people and influential rulers, is another field that al-Hutaya and his peers manipulated for earning money or some positions in society. By implication, the reader feels that the poets' lot is ill-starred, as in most cases they were needy, and what they say should not be taken for granted, as it is motivated by financial reasons. A good example is provided by scholar Rasheed who reminds the reader of the paradoxical situation when "praise turns suddenly into satire when the one praised fails to fulfill the poet's original target (money) ""(Rasheed 2021,p.144).

In this regard, it is apt to refer to one of the prominent topics in the Jahiliyat and early Islamic ages are the elegy or dirge which has preoccupied poets of that time. Indeed many poets have excelled in this field like Duraid bin Al Syumma (530-630) Hassan Bin Thabit (554-674) Al Khansaa(575-645), and many others. For a man of al-Hutaya's disposition, one expects that such

interests did not appeal to him as he lived a life of poverty, inferiority and continuous feuds with others. Moreover, he is not a sentimental man. Rather he is the emblem of rationality. His judgment of the dirge is indicative, as he sees it as a futile and meaningless act, "He simply wonders about the validity of mourning the death of any individual, and showing grief and impatience in such situations"(AL Nahar,2018,p.49).He is quoted to be writing the following line of verse questioning the usefulness of writing this type of poetry:

على اهله فاجهد ببكاك على عمر

تأمل فان كان البكاء رد هالكا

(taammal fain kana albuka radda halikan ala ahlihi fa ijhad bibikak ala Omar)

Consider if weeping can bring back a dead person / to his family, then carry on weeping over Omar (Qamhiyya 2003, p.289).

Main Argument

Al-Hutaya' last poem which is the central issue here has a special flavor and unprecedented treatment of its subject matter. Not only is it different in terms of content (choosing a new direction from his customary topics of eulogy and satire) but also in its approach and treatment of his topic. Here the poet pays great attention to the hospitality which is an outstanding feature of Bedouin conventions and customs. The poem titled 'Watawi thalathe' (Starving for Three Days) might be taken as al-Hutaya's expiation for his offensive and aggressive mood which has characterized all his earlier poetry. This is a moment of self-realization and resolve to keep away from his pugnacity and stinginess.

The poem makes use of a mounting dramatic technique where the author holds the reader's suspense according to the rhythm of the poem. In the first lines, the poet describes graphically the poverty-stricken family. The narrative voice describes the position of a family that is completely destitute and the psychological and sociological impacts of that on the behavior and attitudes of the family toward others. In general, they prefer to be aloof and cut off from other people. If al-Hutaya' was known for his miserliness and his relatives shunned him as a result, here he gives a memorable account of the advantages of being generous and open-handed, a point that is fully attuned to the Arab traditions in the desert.

Al-Hutaya' scholars and his own peers are surprised to see a man who has spent all his life showing miserliness, now sees the other side of the coin: generosity. According to one of his critics, this poem 'Starving for Three Days' is " enough to obliterate all the weaknesses (miserliness) in al-Hutaya's character through his lavish praise of generosity as represented by the main figure in the poem"(Al Harrani,2017,p.115). It begins with a static situation: isolated life of the Arabian and his three children in an abode in total isolation from all people. The imagery used here is very successful as the first four lines succeed in delineating the drama in the poem. The aesthetic sides of the poem are highlighted in the following terms:

The yoking between the poem's content and its artistic side drives us to see it as a sort of poetic story—so to speak—as it contains the technical components that render it a literary story---characters, time, place, events, dialogue, beginning and an end—and all are linked to a coherent, well-knitted plot.(Okelan,2014,para4)

The beginning of the poem is devoted to the question of fixing its setting : a lonely and isolated place where human beings are hardly visible:

(wattawi thalathe a'asib albatn) وطاوي ثلاث عاصب البطن 1

Aman starving for three days, tying his abdomen

(bibeida'a lam ya'ruf biha skaun rasma) ببداء لم يعرف بها ساكن رسما

in a desert whose dwellers have no notion of any house

(akhi jafwatin fihi min alins wahskatan) اخي جفوة فيه من الانس وحشة 2

An unfriendly man who abhors the company of people

(yara albu'sa feeha min sharasatihi nu'ma) يرى البؤس فيها من شراسته نعمى

He finds his misery to be a bliss as a result of his surliness

(waafrada fi shua'bin ajoozan izaaha) وافرد في شعب عجوزا ازاءها 3

In a road between two mountains, he singled out an old

woman around whom

(thalathata ashbahin takhalahum bahma) ثلاثة اشباح تخالهم بهما

three ghost-like children whom you might take to be young sheep

(huffatun uratun ma ightadhow khubz mallat) حفاة عراة ما اغتذوا خبز ملة 4

Barefoot and naked that never fed on mill bread

(wala arafu lilbur mudh khuluqoo taama) ولا عرفوا للبر مذ خلقوا طعاما

Nor have they ever known the taste of grain all their life

It is quite obvious that the first four lines of this remarkable poem give the impression that he was ahead of his time in that the poet was fully aware of the art of writing and its devices. He is 'painting with words', as it were, as the contemporary Syrian poet (Nizar Qabbani) entitles one of his volumes of verse (1966), describing and exemplifying the excellent poetry. Within four lines, the poet presents different things simultaneously: the lonely place, destitute family whose great wish is to have a loaf of bread and above all the disposition which has been roughened and toughened as a result of intolerable circumstances. The similes and images in this prelude of the poem are impressive in his poetic texture. He sought to convey his poetic experience to the recipient and capitalized on the different constituents that form the milieu besetting his characters"(Al Hadi2017,p.,64).The three ingredients of the initial scene are: obscure place, ghostly figures and a state of emotional and psychological desertification.

Any reader of this poem is expected to think about the social factors that have driven the Arabian to keep away from other people living in the environs. Poverty or richness is a crucial criterion by which the individual is judged and assessed. Psychologically speaking, the Arabian is, practically speaking, the alien who fears people and their stratagems or any contact with them, for that matter. He feels constantly slighted, injured and abused in the Dostoevskyian sense of the word. The impact of this morbid relationship between the individual and his community leads to all types of paranoia and other psychological aberrations. "If people feel unrecognized or cannot see themselves as valuable agents of change, their contribution to society and the sense of community will fade away" (Reimann 2021, p. 35). In the present situation, the individual appears unable to have any sort of communication with other, let alone any contribution.

Having set the extraordinary position of his characters and their physical and psychological status, al-Hutaya' adds a further element to his narrative-dramatic poem. A new figure suddenly appears in the darkness and disrupts the entire scene by adding fresh elements of worry and bewilderment:

(ra'a shabahan wast aldhalam fa ra'ahu) 5. رأى شبعا وسط الظلام فراعاه

Amidst darkness, he saw a shadowy figure and he got frightened

(falamma bada dhayfan tashammara wa ihtamma) فلما بدا ضيفا تشمر واهتما

When it transpired that it was a guest, he prepared himself and was concerned

At this critical moment of suspense, the poet shows the poor Arabian, or to be more exact, the alter ego of the poet himself, to have inborn goodness. Given his poor financial status, it is no surprise to find him completely at a loss. He has no food to cater for his guest while his barren environment entails satisfying and feeding his guest under any circumstances. He could only resort to God for a solution for his predicament:

(fa kala rabbah dhayf wala qara') 6 فقال رباه ضيف ولا قري

He said. " O my God , a guest and there is no food.

(bi haqiqa la tahrimhu al lahma) بحقك لا تحرمه اللحم

By your majesty, my Lord, let him not be bereft of meat tonight

(fa qala ibnahu lamm ara'ahu bi hayratin) 7 فقال ابنه لما راه بحيره

His son said ,when he saw his father bewildered

(yaabati idhbahni wa yesser lahau ta'ama) ايا ابت اذبحني ويسر له طعاما

O father, slaughter me and provide him with food.

In this situation, the poet uses intertextuality although such a term was non-existent at that time. In the Islamic religion as well as other monotheistic religions like Christianity and Judaism, the father (Prophet Ibrahim) intended to slaughter his son Ismail according to God's orders. Prophet

Ibrahim, as a result of a revelation he saw as given in the Biblical account,(Genesis,22) that he should slaughter his son, but he was exonerated from that task.

In the Islamic version we learn that:

he took his son to a mountain ,kept the head of his son on a stone, and he tried to cut off the throat of his son with a sharp Knife. At that moment. Holy Allah spoke to him," O Ibrahim.You have fulfilled the dream!"(Desai, 2009, p. 67).

Of course, the two versions of this episode share one significant feature: the hard test to which Prophet Ibrahim was subjected and how he accepted the order of sacrificing the son according to Divine Will. Although the situation in the poem is not religious, the intimate relation between father and son and unshaken confidence in the rightness of their cause is a common topic in this poem and brings to mind remote echoes of that memorable story.

Significantly enough, the son reminds his father of the risk of not hosting their guest. He believes that the guest might imagine this family to be well-to-do and if they refrain from hosting him, he will do his best to slander them and make all neighboring tribes know and defame them by all sorts of libels. This sagacious note given by the son drives the father to ponder his situation and see what is going on:

(wala ta'atadhur biladam allaa lladhi tarra')ولا تعتذر بالعدم على الذي طرا 8

Don't make your poverty a pretext for not hosting

(yadhun lana malan fayousaana dhamman)يظن لنا مالا فيوسعنا ذما

As the man might think us rich and will keep on slandering us

(farowwa qaleelan thumma ahjama burhatan)فروى قليلا ثم احجم برهة 9

He meditated a little and refrained for a while

(wa'in huwa lam yedhbah fatahu faqad hamma) وان هو لم يذبح فتاه فقد هما

Even though he did not slaughter his son, he was about to.

It is worth mentioning that al-Hutaya was not a devout believer. Neither was his conduct throughout all his life in line with Islamic creed. However, in this poem, he used this religious event to reinforce the validity of his narrative poem at this crucial moment of its development. As already suggested, this poem is meant to be a kind of expiation for his long period of living a selfish ,aggressive and utilitarian life. Without reading the rest of the poem, one can immediately guess its resolution: happy ending, just like the religious story. Here is the account provided by the present secular poem:

(fa baynama huma ala annat alabu'di a'a natun)فبينما هما عنت على البعد عانة 10

While they are so, a herd of wild asses loomed from afar

قد انتظمت خلف مسجلها نظما (qad intadhamat khalfa mishalaha nadhma)

They kept pace behind their wild ass.

11 عطاشى تريد الماء فانساب نحوها (attasha tareed alma'a fa insaba nahwaha)

Thirsty for water and he moved stealthily toward them

على انه فيها من الى دمها اظما (ala innahu feeha min ila damiha adhma'a)

As he is more thirsty for her blood than theirs.

12 فامهلها حتى تروت عطشها (f'amhalaha hatta trawwat atashiha)

He allowed them some time to quench their thirst

(fa'arsala feeha min kinanatihī sahman)
her with an arrow from his quiver.

He shot فارسا فيها من كنانته سهما

13 فخرت نخوص ذات جحش سمينة- (fakharat nakhous that jahsh sameenat)

(iktanazat lahman waqad tabbaqat shahma)
full of meat and tallow

She was اکتزت لحما وقد طبقت شحما

These four lines are informed by one fundamental trait: dramatic action. The gift the poor family impatiently waited for turns out to be the she-ass that will be the dish for the guest. After the conflict of wills between father and son as regards how to overcome the dilemma of treating their guest with generosity while they are destitute, they reached a solution. It was resolved in the nick of time, much to the pleasure and elation of the host. The inborn generosity of desert people is not artificial or an attempt to show off. It is a trait engrained or deeply rooted in their consciousness described in the following account:

All Bedouin understand that automatic hospitality to all guests is a requisite for survival in the desert , as the attendant need of people to travel for one reason or another. This value is so engrained in the Bedouin mentality that even an enemy must be received as a guest.(Bailey,2009,p.152)

The last three lines of the poem elaborate the lesson or morale to be gleaned from doing the right thing to the guest in the desert world. All are satisfied and proud of what was achieved. What is more , this act did not cost the family's degrading budget any burdens, which is a further reason for great pleasure.

14 فيا بشراه اذ جرها نحو قومه (faya bushrah idh jarraha nahwa qawmihi)

What an overwhelming pleasure he had as he dragged it toward his kinsmen

(waya bushrahum lamma ra'ou kalmah ayadmi) ويا بشرهم لما راوا كلمها يدمي

How pleased they were at seeing its body dripping blood

(wabatu kiraman qad qadho haqqa dheifahum) They slept وباتو كراما قد قضاو حق ضيفهم 15
feeling dignified as they paid their guest his due.

(wama ghurrimu waqad ghanamu ghanama) They غرموا وقد غنموا غنما
gained a lot though that did not cost them anything

(wabata abohum min bashashatihi aban) وبات ابوهم من بشاشته ابا 16

Their father's cheerful mood rendered him a kind of father- -figure

(walu'm min bishriha umman) والام من بشرها اما

And the mother joy's made her feel as a mother figure

It is clear now that the above-mentioned poem occupies a special place in al-Hutaya's oeuvre, or Arabic literature as a whole. The poet paid much attention to the minutest details to make it one of his icons which is enough to confer immortality on him. It begins with the sense of alienation and aloofness characterizing the attitude of the obscure figure in the poem. It ends with his moment of triumph and elation. In between, there are moments of tension, hesitation and final resolution. What is striking is that al-Hutaya' is following the strategies of ancient Greek dramas such as dialogue, monologue, action, hesitation, coincidence, and final resolution. Given the state of self-enclosed life in the Arabian peninsula, it is really surprising to find a monolingual writer like al-Hutaya' handle his fine poem with tools which are not naturalized. Scholar Al-Zayoud reminds us of " the Arabs lack of knowledge of Western-sense theatre. The Arabs had no idea about this art until mid-nineteenth century when the Arab Lebanese MarounAlnaqqash, made them acquainted with it." (Al Zayoud,109).The only possible answer to this dilemma is that may be some visitors from the Mediterranean area used to come for different commercial purposes to the Arabian Peninsula.AlHutaya' might have borrowed or invented, the technique of this uncommon poem. It is one again a reminder that al-Hutaya' was an innovative poet . capable of presenting impressive poems with exceptional dexterity and aptitude.

Conclusion

One of the inferences the reader may come up with is that al-Hutaya and his poetry are inextricably bound as his poems do not go beyond his personal experiences and the difficult times and hardships he has been exposed to. Indeed, it is very difficult to sort things out when it comes to al-Hutaya's poetry. It is obvious that throughout his career, he has devoted almost all his poetry to two fundamental objectives: eulogy and satire. Of course, this is not just an individual situation in Jahiliyat poetry. However, in his case, there is too much emphasis on these two objectives, and actually al-Hutaya' was unparalleled as far as this point is concerned. His praise is often addressed to rich people or influential chieftains and tribal leaders. The purpose behind that is financial, given his deteriorating social and financial status. All the aforementioned discussion leads one to the inference, that life in the Arabian Peninsula in the pre-Islamic age (Jahiliyat) was one of poverty , hectic times, nomad living and tribal feuds. The position of the poet in such a harsh environment

is precarious , depending on the prevailing circumstances as well as the poet's mastery of his poetic craft.

Al-Hutaya' showed himself always ready to speak ill of all types of people, including the highbrows like Zabraqa. Indeed, Zabraqa succeeded at the end to retaliate and complain to Caliph Omar about the malpractices of al-Hutaya'. The outcome of this situation is the imprisonment of al-Hutaya' for two weeks. The release from imprisonment is again associated with poetry, as al-Hutaya' wrote from his cell moving lines of verse which brought the Caliph to tears:

(madha taqool li afrakhin bidhi markhin) ماذا تقول لأفراخ بذي مرخ

What can you say to too small chicken chicks

(zughb alhawaseil la ma'a wala shajar) زغب الحواصل لا ماء ولا شجر

with fluffy giblets, that have no water or. Trees ?

(alqeita kasibahum fi qa'irin mudhlimatin) القيت كاسبهم في قعر مظلمة

You have thrown the earner of their livelihood in a dark bottom

(fa ighfir

aleika Allah ya O'mar)

فاغفر عليك الله يا عمر

O Omar, forgive for Heaven's sake

By the way, the last line is striking in the informal way the poet addresses the Caliph, which indirectly inculcates the Caliph' modesty and piety. At the same time, it is a reminder that al-Hutaya' is not of the type of people that fears the authoritative or influential, as already suggested by his bitter quarrel with Zabarqa. Due to his painful circumstances and experiences, his disposition is marked by a great extent of melancholy, aggressiveness, morbidity and selfishness. These traits are the hallmark of his personality. Only in the last months of his career, did he have his moment of reconsideration or epiphany (in the Joycean sense of the term) when he wrote about the Bedouin generosity and self-denial, a point that has been missing throughout all his life. The poem that heralds and celebrates this radical change is 'Watawi thalathe' (Starving for Three Days). It is tightly-knit , compact and capable of appreciating serious and gracious acts. Among these is the hospitality to the guest in that lonely and destitute desert. The poem ends in a moment of ecstasy and self-satisfaction at the realization that the family have done their duty to their guest and thus warded off all types of blame and rebuke. The episode intertextualized within the body of the poem is a reminder that genuine and heartfelt words of litany can be beneficial in alleviating one's ordeal. The herd of wild asses on their way to the Gedir (puddle) is the long-awaited reward that all have been longing to. In a kind gesture on the part of the Arabian, he allows the animals to drink water first. Then he shoots one of them and kills it on the spot. The poem, both in form and content, shows the other side of al-Hutaya': his expiation and repentance for wasting a whole lifetime in discontent and selfishness. There is almost a unanimous consent among critics and scholars that 'Starving for Three Days' is a milestone in al-Hutaya's poetic career for its successful combination of brevity, richness of meaning, spiritual content, and the convenient and impressive denouement the poet provides at the end of the poem. Any serious study of al-Hutaya's poetry that

does not halt before the poem 'Starving for Three Days' will inevitably appear lacking as this poem, in particular, registers the poet's new perception of life and its rewards or buffets.

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