

Poetess “Vala”

The Toos Foundation presents a celebration event for “Lu’bat Vala” the prominent poetess and lyric writer on Sunday 29th October 2006, in London, where some of the recognized faces in the meadows of art and culture will be present. She studied journalism in London and Paris, and has correlated with cultural newspapers for sometimes, and now she is considered a genuine member of the Keyhan newspaper in London. She is one the most popular poetess of our time.

There have been two poetry collections by Lu’bat Vala so far: “*Raqs-i Yadha*” and “*Gusasteh*” and also a book in prose entitled: “*Vaqti ki Khurūs Mikhanad*” which have been published. She is also a conspicuous lyric writer who has been the head of Lyric and Music Council in the Ministry of arts and cultures in pre-revolution Iran. In preceding years, we have had discussions with her aspiring her opinion about the role of women in lyric writing in Iran. Now, in collaboration with her celebration event, we will



write some unpublished parts about the aforementioned interview.

Lu’bat Vala, considers the expanding change in lyric writing as an unavoidable process:

The change in lyric writing was necessary for every direction imaginable. When I began writing lyrics I noticed that all our women singers sing from men’s tongue, of the “Height of a Cypress” and “the

dishevelled Tress” and so on...If one didn’t have a familiarity with the way our poetry is composed, one would think that we are all homosexuals! Vala also remembers that she had mentioned this point of view in a seminar in those years:

In this seminar famous poets such as Rahi Mu’airi, Mu’ini Kermanshaji and Karim Fakur were also present and I started this discussion, stating that

when a lyric is composed it must be in line with gender of the singer. Rahi, stated that he was not concerned with this issue and he further emphasised that whether a man sings his poems or a woman would be irrelevant to him; because, he only expresses his feelings. Mu'ini's method of composing poetry did not interfere with this issue much.

Lu'bat Vala refers to another issue in regards with the faults of the Iranian lyrics prior to the period of change: the lyric composer does not concern himself with the mood of the music, whether the music is calm or jazz; therefore, there was no coordination between the music and the theme...this fundamental issue is still apparent in our lyrics, and I see them in numerous hits that are produced in L.A! For example; in a music which is composed for dance and benefits from a happy mood, the poem says: "Help Help" Our whole chattel is being plundered"!

It means that the themes which speak of tragedies are mixed with happy and fast music...

--Lu'bat Vala also speaks of other issues that for years created defects for the lyric writers and

reduced the lures of the song. It was impossible for us to use broken or informal language in poems, I think it was Mr. Imad Ram, who first broke this barrier, and thereafter, it was Mrs. Huma Mirafshar, who composed a lyric in which the broken verbs were used. Progressively, this method was being introduced and used. Of course, it was not an easy task in the beginning and the audience welcomed the local common music that was sung by common singers.

Vala, spoke of another defect that limited currents for the lyric writers of the time and that was the editing of words, which appeared within a theme. Most words such as Night, Dawn, and Forest that were presumed political and were placed in the banned lists, and if they appeared in the love poems, there too, it would meet obstacles.

Women and Music Making

Lu'bat Vala is asked about the methods of lyric writing in pre-revolution Iran.

Q-Did the lyrics sit on the ready made music or was it vice a versa?

A-Unfortunately, it was the first one: in the

Ministry of arts and culture, it was only Mr. Safa'i and I who composed lyrics and then we had about seven or eight music composers each of which had their own orchestra. The live programs were broadcast every night on television. We had to compose lyrics for all of them. In special periods such as the New Year, the size of the programs would even increase further. Sometimes, I had to make two or three poems, some with happy themes, and some with sad, one had to be sung by a woman and one by a man. One was sung by the young Parisa and the other by the middle aged Khatereh Parvaneh! As a result, I had to clarify the mood of the theme for the singer...What I am trying to say is that the problems were too many, and that, one could not writ what one had in mind.

Vala, further adds on: there was some chained programs in the television which were called musical frames. In these frames some stories with the aid of hits were played, which had some novelty in it and were very interesting.

Lu'bat Vala, asserts that although she had worked with many artists and music composers of her time, yet she did not and does not consider lyric

writing as her main occupation.

This work was outside her programs and was like writing articles for the newspapers and magazines, thus, she has not composed lyrics outside the Ministry of the arts and culture.

In her opinion the real change in lyric writing in Iran, is formed outside the government institutes and then she refers to the famous “triangle” which consisted of Iraj Janati ‘Ata’i, Shahyar Qanbari, and Ardalan Sarfaraz, whose works were usually sung by Googoosh. Their lyrics were also new in terms of music and theme and their combination. It was a novelty that became very popular.

In her presence, we ask the same question to which many times we had sought an answer:

Q-Why in the realm of music women are more interested in singing and playing rather than anything else? Has there been any cultural obstacles, or they simply had no interest in anything else, such as music making?

A-Look, we are living in a man-dominated world. In all areas men present themselves higher...besides, women have less time for creative

works like music making. Some of the women who have turned this way have had good achievements. Even in our time we can mention some talented female music makers such as Mrs. M. Zarrin Panjeh who has recently produced CDs of her works containing some very beautiful music. Mrs. Partu is also successful in the profession of music making in Iran. In the distant past also Mrs. Simin Aqarazi composed nice hits which were played in the programs set by the Ministry of arts and cultures, and also we can mention Mr. Khusravi who composes lyrics in Germany. There are probably other women outside Iran who are engaged in creative works too.

“The heavy weight of Home”

In approximately two years ago, in a radio interview with Mrs. Vala we asked her opinion about overseas literature. Q-Has this literature that is also referred to as the exile-literature, caused improvement to the literature of Iran in the past two or three decades or has it caused any harm?

A-It can be said that the exile-literature has improved and expanded

the political literature, likes of which we can see in some classical poetry of medieval poets. The talk is more about the poetry of Iran rather than the prose...for example, to find out about some political events of the medieval days we refer to Firdawsi, Hafez, Naser Khusraw and Mas’ud Salman Sa’d who have uttered about the hard times and political turmoil of their times.

Since the constitution the area of political poetry expanded and the poetry composed, targeted the intellectuals and the elite it had a blend of commitment and meaning so that anything else would encounter immediate rejection. Of course, this commitment had different meaning in different periods.

Repeatedly, I add on that the literature in exile has caused expansion in the fields of political literature and has increased the number of committed poets in this area of poetry. Now, can this progress be called a flourishing movement or should it be referred to as a trivial issue.

In another part of the interview, Lu’bat Vala spoke of the motivation and the appearance of this kind of literature.

A-The pain of lost identity, the pain of being in exile and the memories of the past, the envies of separations, desires, and inabilities, the embedded pains in the soul of the poets and the writers in exile are the kind of agonies that are shared and manifest in forms of love for the homeland. The homeland is like a mother of whose love is necessary for every human and at no age one can announce independence from a motherly love.

In relation with the foreign nature of our poets and writers in exile and in comparison with those in the homeland Vala says: I believe the society of the poets and writers in exile are more strangers to those inside Iran, than other way around. Naturally, they are the ones in flames and it is understandable that they conceive us as

strangers trying to reach in. Although, we in exile carry the “Heavy Weight of Homeland” on our shoulders and we live our every moments with the internal affairs of Iran, and we are aware of their pains and problems, but, because we are far from them, we are considered foreigners, of course, that is not the case.

Q-Is there any similarities between the works of other poets and writers scattered around the world?

A-The Iranians share the same sorrow with one another no matter where they are, and that is the sadness of being away from their homeland and this sadness is more or less apparent in every piece of literature produced in exile. It can only be said that the only thing different is their financial situations and the conditions of their

livings in different parts of the globe.

