

Deliberation on music in Persian culture

Maryam Habibi TABAR¹, Alireza GHARAKHANI²

¹Master of Science student, Department of Architecture, Savad koh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Savadkoh, Iran. Maryamhabibiiii@yahoo.com

²Professor, department of Architecture, Savadkoh, Savadkoh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Iran. Alireza_gharakhani@yahoo.com

Abstract

In order to perceive Persian- Islamic music, it is primarily better to study on recognition of human based on aesthetics and nature of art and position of music in arts. With respect to importance of impact of music on Persian- Islamic music in this article, authors have examined position of music in Islam. Then, way of formation and effect of music as well as relationship among Islamic wisdom and music has been explored. Initially, authors analyzed definitions and approaches about music in order to achieve better to perceive concept music wisdom in Islamic civilization. Following this trend, position of music has been examined in mysticism, philosophy, and aesthetic topics. Methodology of this study is of descriptive- analytical type. This subject has been explored in this essay by virtue of presented evidences and comparative researches.

With respect to the given results, it can be expressed that the art may characterize music and internal harmony and rhythm of music is similar to rhythm and harmony in world of being. Music has achieved aesthetics and sense from the soul inspired by God and its perfection is a part of reflection from divine beauty.

Keywords: Music, Wisdom of music, Aesthetics, Nature of art, Islamic civilization

1. Introduction

Since the time when human passed through processes of capturing earth planet, s/he was gradually ready to utilize from natural bounties by recognition and discovery of tools. S/he developed his/ her imagination in exposure to natural phenomena and employing frequent experiences and his first fantastic reactions were revealed within regular motions, drawing of lines and figures, and creation of harmonic voices. Following to further complication of communities and expansion of social and religious relations, the works derived from human's minds became more extended and diversified and music became well-known as the most abstract and subjective art.

Whenever it is discussed about music, its concept should be perceived. Music is the language of Humans' souls and internal desires and some experts assume it as spiritual

feeding for human being. Music is deemed as important in spiritual and religious culture for any ethnicity and tribe and nation possesses their own specific style proportional to their beliefs depending on their traditions and customs. In Islamic countries and natural Arab states, music was spread more limitedly than other countries and religions and similar to other Islamic arts, it was influenced by art and civilization of the given country after entry and it was integrated with them. Music possessed two faces: the sagacious people built a magnificent and splendid face of it while theosophists made gentle face and full of lovely zest of it in their mystic session.

However, the important point is here that in order to express effect of music wisdom on Islam and Iran some questions may strike in mind with which it should be dealt including what is the role and position of music in Islamic civilization? What is the origin of music? What is Islamic wisdom? And what is position and effect of music on our Islamic civilization?

1.1. Islamic wisdom

Term of '*wisdom*' is derived from God's attributes. This word means judgment and arbitration and prevention from corruption and stability. In Latin language, this term as '*Hegema*' denotes guidance and leading (Ghoreishi, 1973: 160).

The relevant wisdom and philosophical paradigm in Shiite environment at Iran suggests this point that any appearance comprises of intuitive nature and perceiving this essence is deemed as a secret and it prepares the ground for growth and excellence in path of human. Wisdom is born by coalescence of philosophical knowledge and spiritual experience and it leads the surrounding environment from abstract knowledge of philosophy to direct observation and presentational illumination that arises in soul. Wisdom is a type of religious paradigm that exclusively tends to spirituality and it relies on scriptures of the given religion.

1.2. Music

There are several theories proposed about lexical root of term '*music*'. This profession has been ascribed to Pythagoras from Greece and in Psalms of David prophet and tribe of Children of Israel in Persian and Arabic books. In some explorations, this is also attributed to Egyptians, Sumerians, and Assyrians (Mofakham Payan, 1950; Pourtorab, 1998: 161). It is argued in Latin language that term '*music*' is derived from root '*Moza*' that is ascribed to art and science angel and goddess (Razani, 1963: 59). In Syriac language, this term '*music*' 'موسيقى' is composed of two parts: 'مو' means air and 'سيقى' that means node; namely, the player creates node through air to produce euphonious voice. Some others also believe that word 'موسيقى' is composed of two parts i.e. 'موسى' means melody and 'قا' that means harmonious and pleasant (Dekhoda thesaurus, vol. 42; Dictionary of Borhan Ghate (*Definite argument*), vol. 4; كشف الطنون (*Exploration of tunes*), vol. 2). Greeks assume mathematics as forming agent for music but this only covers theoretical subjects and artistic part of this factor creates involvement among human's mind, soul, and heart as well as all of living organisms. Islamic and non- Islamic nature of music does not tarnish in its essence (Robertson and Stevens, 1990:32).

1.3. Wisdom and knowledge of art and music

In order to perceive intellectual value of art and the latent reality and concept in it, the mysteries of art and related aesthetics should be examined. Compared to other arts, this art induces deeper emotional relation and more excitation and calmness inside human and it acts as pleasant factor for soul. The point that characterizes music art is the presence of rhythm and harmony inside it which is similar to rhythm and harmony in the universe.

Avicenna expresses about this knowledge: هذا المرء اين العلم؟ (*This is knowledge but who is involved in?*). This statement can be mentioned about music.

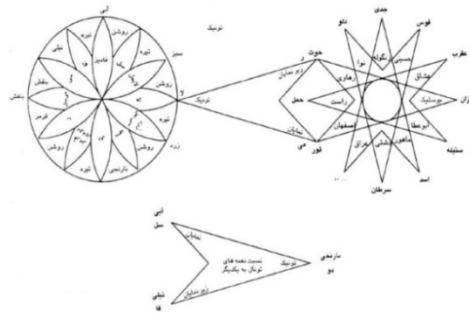
Molavi implies about numerical proportions of music as follows:

بر اساس موج ها اعدادشان در عدد آورده باشد موجشان

Their resonances are based on numbers

Their numbers are arranged by resonances

Among various arts, Plato and Aristotle attached great value and high position for music because they were committed to mathematics and rational proportions rather than art.



Greeks believed that there was a number latent in objects where their potential is hidden in transition of stars and it might influence in existence of human and his/ her behavior. According to their attitude, as numerical ratio of musical scale is simpler, that scale will be more pleasant and two euphonious voices have the similar composition while it is inversely in two cacophonous voices. The Swiss musician scientist (*Lagoutte*) invented a table including twelve points on a circle that has been connected to each other with specific order. Seven colors in solar spectrum have been conjugated with seven diatonic voice scales and chromatic voice scales and tonal degrees have corresponded in any tonality:

1. Comparison of seven musical voices with seven colors that resulted from synthesis of solar spectrum;
2. Comparison of 21 months of years with 21 zodiacs
3. Comparing of ratio of important degrees of scales in seven- degree scale with sunlight spectrum
4. Comparing of world of 21 zodiacs with 21 musical scales

5. Comparing of diverse colors with tonal melodies in music (ibid, 162)

Thus, it can be mentioned that melody without rhythm is similar to a spiritless body. However, what it releases melody from nakedness and covers it aesthetically is the synchronous voices which are called harmony or counterpoint. Coinciding these factors together with specific order along with different modes which are derived from humans various emotions are called nuance.

1.4. Role of art and music in spiritual excellence

Human's excellence is the most beautiful phenomenon in the world of existence as if Creator of universe has gathered all elements of beings to witness the best images of Him because *فان الروية الشيء نفسه بنفسه ما هي مثل رويته نفسه في امر آخر يكون له كالمراءة* (*Looking at something by the same thing is never similar to observation of that thing through another object that acts as mirror*) (Ibn Arabi, 1991: 48).

This divine nature is the highest degree of art in human and that beauty is undeniable. God is absolute beauty and aesthetic essence and achieving his court will transform Human's inferior attributes into his/ her excellent attributes. Then human is covered by divine color and to the extent s/he can achieve this perfection will possess beauty. Farabi says: *الجمال و البهاء و الزينة في كل موجود هو ان يوجد وجده الافضل و يحصل له كمال الخير* (*Beauty, splendor, and embellishment of any organism is subject to this fact the given organism realizes achievement of the highest and most excellent perfection degree*) (Farabi).

The form of artistic and beautiful work has been described according to different paradigms. For instance, it is said that 'beauty' is composed of order due to absoluteness and 'mystery' that reflects infinity. As long as these two qualities are balanced, perfection is realized and its effect on wisdom is both stimulated and pacified (absolute vision). Music is also deemed as art of beauty where it will also create beauty in addition to its beauty per se. music acquires beauty and emotion from the inspired soul by God and it possesses perfection caused by reflection of divine beauty. A group of music that emerged by praying and divinely may be formed in holy intuitive space that enjoys this feature but readiness of audience also plays essential role in deepening on their effect.

1.5. Nature of art

It is necessary for recognition of art to study on and be familiar with intrinsic features of any art. Several and different attitudes may be proposed in this regard where they introduces a group of examples that are called art as a whole because they have been created by human. However, art can have general and common relation for this group of examples with that concept.

In sentimentalism school (expressionism), the intrinsic feature of art is to express and convey internal feelings of artist to the audience thereby the audience passes through the same emotional steps that artist has passed by this conveyance. Namely, art is the only devices for communication and whereas it is important as communication role among individuals and personal and social prosperity thus it is necessary (Tolstoy, 1985: 55-57). One can refer to Aristotle and Plato as some of the great figures who have expressed

statements about beauty and aestheticism. According to attitude of Plato, beauty is not only manifested in art but also it has been explored in terms of its profitability as well.

1.6. Music and mysticism

Lexically, mysticism means achieving the realities of objects by revelation and intuition. Therefore, mystic music should be a type of music that leads us to revelation and intuition that results in perceiving reality of objects. If an artist could propose a type of music that creates sense of purity and spiritual connection in audiences thus s/he would create mystic music because it is related to the most complicated existential realities in human. The reality of Islamic music can be assumed in recital of Holy Quran and its miracles. Holy prophets (PBUH) expressed in this regard: 'If I recited Quran by my specific voice the people might not tolerate listening to it' (Hassani, 1984: 11).

It was narrated from Imam Ali (PBUH) that a day he heard voice of a bell tolled so Imam asked his friends: Do you know what this bell says; they replied no we don't know. Imam implied: سبحان الله حقاً، ان المولى يبقى (it glorifies the God absolutely and verily the God will only survive) (Ghosheiri, 61).

It has been narrated from Imam Sadegh (PBUH) that no prophet has been appointed by God except he had euphonious voice. Islamic Prophets (PBUH) implied: لم يعط امتى اقل من ثلاث: الجمال و الصوت الحسن و الحفظ (My community has not been granted by God except they will possess one of these three bounties: beauty, euphonious voice, and good memory).

Imam Sadegh (PBUH) said that Imam Sajad (PBUH) was most euphonious in recital of Quran so that when water-providers passed along his home they stood and listened to his voice when reading Quran and Imam Bagher (PBUH) was also the most euphonious one of people. Imam Musa Ibn Jafar (PBUH) expressed that When Ali Ibn Hossein (Imam Sajad PBUH) was reading Quran some of people who passed along with him might be fascinated by his euphonious voice and if Imam revealed something about his euphonious voice the people may not tolerate to hear. The narrator asked Imam that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) increased pitch of his voice to the extent that could be tolerated by the persons were behind him.

Mosab Ibn Omair was the first person who went from Mecca to Medina to promote for Islam and he could attract and invite the heads of two tribes in Medina toward Islam by his euphonious voice when reading Quran (Hassani, 1984: 16).

The Prayer's Call (*Azaan*) and specific anthems in *Fitr* and *Adha* Feasts are the euphonious music in Islam; emphasis of Islam on recital of Quran and praying by euphonious voice and good voice of *Azaan* reciter is some evidence for this claim (Irani, 1995: 31).

1.7. Mysticism and Persian music

If we intend to call a period as mystic era in Iranian ancient history this period started with emerging of Islam (early years at seventh AD century) and almost came to an end after 13 centuries with vicissitudes and by beginning of western influence period. All of art and science symbols of Iranian people were at the powerful hand of mystic persons at this

period and they have been improved and enhanced by their effort. The real science and art masterpieces of Iranian nation can be assumed as the outcomes of this period. Iranian music achieved specific form after emerging of Islam in Persian music in Iran and some group considered it wrongly as prohibited.

1.8. Islamic music

Review of Islamic music is composed of several important aspects: In comparison with music in other religions in Iran, Islamic music possesses higher quality because of influence in culture of our people. Islamic music covers the wide range of Persian music-with its extended branches. In the past and present, this music has been/ is widely used. Given texture and performance of Persian music, it can be divided into different branches and certainly each of these branches is also divided into sub-branches or more subsidiaries per se: Ashura music, Taaziyeh music, praying music, and Khaneghah Music. These titles of Ashura and Taaziyeh music are widely performed by Shiites. However, this does not mean those two other types of music have not been noticed by Shiites. The other Islamic religions perform soliloquies, soloes, and Khaneghah music (Dervish).

1.9. Praying music

Study and investigation about praying music based on Persian music has been assumed as important activity and it requires a lot of patience and efforts. Regarding this type of music, singers and present individuals believe that whereas most of Islamic texts such as Quran and prayers are written in Arabic language therefore following of Arabic musical patterns is deemed as natural for them. Presence of some of Persian tunes in religious music has proved that this paradigm based on which following of Arabic musical patterns is natural may not be correct and such imagination is only wrong (Darvish, 2009: 16).

Praying music enjoys a lot of varieties and most of Islamic religions including Shiite and Sunnite deal with it. This is an advantage this music may possess compared to Ashura music and Taaziyeh music which are performed exclusively by Shiites. Praying music has major features including all these types of music comprise of religious contents and praising and glorification of God and praising of Islamic Prophet (PBUH) and Imams and religious saints that constitute the great part of this music.

1.10. Today original Persian music

We can define simply original music in Iran as music which has been studied and trained by thinker and real clergymen from generation to generation and using oral training that has been conveyed to use at present. Persian music has been defined as follows: This is a type of melodious music that composed of a great number of small melodies which are called refrain in music and those refrains which follow an integrated accurate system is called tune. The tunes are also called the refrains in Persian music and they have been performed by great figures of Persian music.

Use of decorations was one of the Persian classic architectural axes. When we accidentally refer to classic music with specific scale or tune, decorations are assumed as important axes (Majid Kiani a researcher and musician).

1.11. About ballad (غنا) and music

Term 'غنا' (*ballad*) has not been used in Quranic verses and no specific recommendation and prohibition has been explicitly devoted to this term but ones who have resorted to Quranic verses assumed it as prohibited due to external reasons such narrated Islamic traditions from Imams. Some terms have been mentioned in Quranic verses which have been translated into subject of *ballad* (singing music or غنا) including 'قول زور' (*false words*), 'باطل' (*Evil*), and 'لهو الحديث' (*frivolous discourse*). There are a lot of Islamic traditions (Hadith) and Quranic verses about ballad and music and at the same time some similar as well as very different attitudes are seen among Islamic jurists but none of them has issued fatwa about permissiveness or prohibition of this subject definitely. Many evidences indicate that the existing of these narrations is because of prohibition of erotic and sensual singing music. We can conclude from this brief investigation that erotic and corruptive singing music is prohibited in Islam and something for which there is no reason to assume it as prohibition so it can be deemed as permissible and with no prevention.

1.12. Religious music in Iran

No ceremony and rite had been performed in the past time without using the specific art to that ceremony and this feature is highly important in all of nations particularly in Asian people who played more prominent role in performance of religious traditions. So, one can refer to music and literature as the arts with more importance in such ceremonies. For this reason, religious and ceremonial music has been considered as the foremost events of art and music in the given country among Asian nations and also skill in playing musical instruments was also as important as skill in playing of legendary or secular music.

Also following to entry of Islam in Iran, music in other religious minorities plays more prominent role only within framework of their religious rites and whereas Zoroastrian belief was the official religion in Iran before Islam thus following to entry of Islam, Zoroastrians have preserved their religious music within religious ceremonial framework while effect of both of religions are tangible as well. Similarly, one can find trace of Persian songs in Christian songs and melodies and vice versa. Effect of Christian notes and musical books on Persian traditional music is visible but in comparison between these two religions with Judaism we may find this point that Jewish music is continued very strangely and with restriction. Among secular music, one can refer to New Year melodies, Lullabies music, heralding melodies, anthems upon working, specific melodies to odd and legendary traditions, wedlock, lamenting, treatment and therapeutic melodies.

2. Review of aesthetic studies of music and aesthetics in Islamic mysticism

(Hafez) تا نگردي آشنا زين پرده رمزي نشنوي گوش نامحرم نباشد جاي پيغام سروش

You do not hear secret if not familiar with this scale

The outsider's ear could not hear mystic message

The mystic person looks for reality and loves beauty; there is love where the beauty exists and seeking and dynamism and motion (Tajeddini, 1997: 28).

For better perception of topic of aestheticism in epistemology of Persian paradigms in Islamic period, we should initially explore and inquiry position of aesthetic studies in books and theories of Persian music during Islamic era. Western critiques assume attitude of Islamic scholars regarding aestheticism under influence of Plato's doctrines. This influence by Greek philosophers is due to their belief in presence of absolute reality and fact higher than this world. God has implied about beauty of nature and animals etc. in each and every points of Holy Quran because in order to perceive divine reality of worldly beauty firstly should be understood and one can achieve heavenly beauty by perceiving subject of Islamic wisdom and art (Rahimi, 2012: 41).

Today, two meanings may be assumed for term of aestheticism: a) the first meaning is the epistemological concept and also relating to the field of human perception (e.g. sensual perception) where general nature of such a concept has been supervised by thinkers in art field. The second meaning is related to age of intellectualism at the end of 18th century (Saraei, 2008: 260).

2.1. Position of music in epistemology of thinkers- musicians of Persian culture in Islamic period

In ancient Iran and during Sassanid kings, music has been supported by most of kings and it was considered as one the main cornerstones for religions such as Mazdakian belief but what it causes cultural difference among this era and Islamic period is that primarily configuration of culture of ancient Iran and Islamic culture was formed where for the first time this was done in Baghdadi scholastic school systematically and pervasively by Iranian theorists e.g. Farabi. Accordingly, rather than entry of Persian words into musical lexicons of Islamic Arabs, scale system of Khorasani tambourine from ancient Persian culture and intervals of scales from Islamic Arab culture were formulated and mixed by Farabi in melodious vocal scale. At the next step that was invented from Islamic- Persian elements in the field of Islamic world after a few centuries and by seventh hegira century (13th AD century) in Islamic world these elements were welcomed and used without change. But after this date in systematic school (مكتب منتظميه) the classic musical tuning was adjusted for more coordination with diatonic principle and then it was spread in countries at Middle East up to present.

2.2. Music in intellectual system of scholars

According to attitude of scholars, music is classified as a sub-branch of mathematics. For example, in his book 'احصاء العلوم' (*Statistics of sciences*) in which he has accurately classified the sciences into five chapters and in third chapter, Farabi describes types of human sciences based on training sciences including geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music, science of landscapes, gravity, and mechanics (احصاء العلوم). In third chapter of mathematics section in treatise of الشفاء (*Cure*) and also in *Alaei Encyclopedia*, Avicenna included music in mathematics (جوامع علم الموسيقى) (*Generalities of musical science*): 152; *Alaei Encyclopedia*: 17; قس مقاصد الالخان (*Compare of tuning entries*): 154).

2.3. Continuity of music with science and industry in Islamic- Persian doctrine

What is visible in exploration of music position in classification of sciences over historic period of Persian music always assumed as a subordinate for mathematics and/ or moreover in more recent time, it possessed combinatorial bases of various sciences and/ or industrial science for medical and/ or psychological treatments thus it is identified as a category of science as well. Thus, music has special position in culture of our people and it is not separated from this culture. This lack of detachment of music from beauty is the other logical result.

The important point is here in that term 'industry' is derived from science as well because industry denotes employing skill and technique of training as it appears due to imitation and innovation.... In contrast, industry may be used as another concept as well where that concept returns to scientific identification: Identification includes all of practical rules relating to job and technique as well as recognition of activity along with intricacies and details of it and also way of execution of an activity according to the related rules and methods; likewise, it has been also defined as meaning of a group information and experiences.

3. Conclusion

In order to define Persian music and main branch of the mentioned subject i.e. Islamic music in Iran, we should initially consider this point that musical science in Iran dated back to before Christ and secular music i.e. dance and ballad and singing returns to Achaemenid period while there is no accurate information about that era and this may indicate music was not highly importance but it shows entry of Islam was not the start point of music for us.

To compare Arabic music with other types of music which indicates difference in Islamic and non- Islamic types we probably express explicit attitude regarding compositions and type of dialect, high and low volumes of melodies and tunes. While there may be some similarities among Islamic and non-Islamic melodies in terms of scales, they apparently differ from each other in terms of rhythm. Islamic- Persian music has impacted on Christian music and other religions inside Iran and vice versa Arabic music does not exclusively exist in Persian melodies; the melodies that possess beautiful and plain appearance compared to the past and by mixing them with melody of recital of Holy Quran they may include spiritual and mystic property in many cases so that for this reason, they possess specific balance and tranquility free of rhythmic decorations.

Regardless of song, music lack corruption per se and only improper use of music may be led to corruption and that depends on spiritual mode of given person per se. The difference of attitude among thinkers who feel pacifying sense in Persian melodies and west-stricken paradigm in which they are considered as boring indicates difference among emotional rhythm in western music with mildness of Persian musical melodies.

Finally, music may have different effects on mind, soul, and heart of any person and attitude of any person may not be similar to other one and as a whole music may not be prohibited with any rhythm and by any melody and it is one of the best and most different arts and no one can express how to perceive music.

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