

Poetry during the Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire and the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906

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1. Introduction

Each period of history carries its own zeitgeist. Turkish literature and poetry started to play a more important role in shaping the culture and political life, after the official inauguration of the Second Constitutional Era on July 24th, 1908. In the meantime, Persian intellectuals and thinkers, inspired by the ideas spread by the French Revolution, acknowledged the importance of concepts such as freedom, equality, justice, and constitutionalism while disseminating these ideas in their country. Although it was a short period, the Second Constitutional Era was a major milestone that reflected the spirit of the time and triggered subsequent developments.

In the Islamic world, the term “meşrutiyet” (constitutional government) was first coined by the Ottoman intellectuals to denote a type of government based on the rule of law. This term was adopted in 1876 in the first constitutional era during the period of Mithat Pasha. Later on, other Islamic countries used the term to describe reformist ideas related to the government style based on the rule of law. Thanks to the accelerated pace of the reforms, Ottoman reformers introduced these terms and concepts to the Persian intellectuals living in the Ottoman Empire.

Although the origin of the word “meşrutiyet” is unknown, the Persians certainly took the term from the Ottoman Empire. According to Ali Ekber-i Dihhudâ, the term was neither used in Arabic nor

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Persian. This term was first coined in Persian by Ottoman Turks.¹ According to some experts, the term “meşrutiyet” included both an Arabic word and a French word: a combination of a feminine Arabic noun derived from the Arabic word *şereta*² (conditions) and the word “la charte”, which meant “constitution” in French.³ The Dictionary of the Turkish Language Association defined this term as follows:

It is a form of government based on the rule of parliament, headed by the monarch in a country ruled by a monarch. The constitutional era first began with the 1876 Constitution of the Ottoman Empire and lasted until the Armistice of Mudros in 1918. This period encompassed the First Constitutional Era and the Second Constitutional Era.

In other words, the term first denoted a form of government based on the *Kanun-i Esasi* (The Constitution) of the Ottoman Empire.⁴ It was also noted that the term “meşrutiyet” (constitutional government/constitutional monarchy) also meant “the rule by a parliament under the presidency of a ruler, or a form of governance which involves the participation of the elected parliament in a country governed by a Sultan.” Turks have always used the term with these meanings and the term gained popularity after the second half of the 20th century.⁵

Within the scope of Westernization in the Ottoman Empire, the first reforms were introduced early in the 17th century and implemented in the military field. The reform process gained momentum with the Tanzimat Era. The movement reached its peak with the First and Second Constitutional Era, which sought to find remedies for

¹ Gökhan Bolat, “İran Meşrutiyet Hareketinin Türk Liderleri: Settar ve Bâger Hanlar”, (Turkish Leaders of the Persian Constitutional Revolution: Settar ve Bâger Khans) *Zeitschrift für die Welt der Türken Journal of World of Turks (ZfWT)*, 5, no. 1, (2013): 47-64.

² According to a number of studies, the term “meşrutiyet” was derived from “şart”, which meant condition in Arabic. See also Gürkan Yavaş, “Meşrutiyet Devri Türk Edebiyatında Manzûm Tiyatro” (Poetic Turkish Theatre in the Second Constitutional Era), Master’s Thesis, Kocaeli University, 2008, 105.

³ Gökhan Bolat, (“Turkish Leaders of the Persian Constitutional Revolution,” 52.

⁴ Abdolvahid Soofizadeh, “Osmanlı ve İran Meşrutiyeti Karşılaştırması” (A Comparison between the Ottoman and Persian Constitutional Movements), *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 7, no. 35 (2014): 287.

⁵ Yavaş, “Meşrutiyet Devri Türk Edebiyatında Manzûm Tiyatro” (Poetic Turkish Theatre in the Second Constitutional Era), 105.

the salvation of the weakened state. Turkish people considered the ascension of Abdulhamid II to the throne as a milestone in every sense especially in terms of constitutionalism.⁶ The First Constitutional Era began during Abdulhamid II's reign (23 December 1876), the era ended with the suspension of the Ottoman Parliament and the constitution by Sultan Abdulhamid II on 13 February 1878. He was also the one who restored, the constitutional regime which started the Second Constitutional Era (23 July 1908), the term "constitutional era" mostly referred to the period after 1908.

The Ottoman intelligentsia, who grew up with the ideas of modernization and innovation, faced one of their most important challenges with the reign of despotism that followed the abolition of the First Constitutional Era. During this period, unfair practices became widespread in the country that was governed by a very strict regime.⁷ Due to the repressive practices of the Abdulhamid regime, the reform movement also came to a standstill. The idea of freedom gained a stronghold among the people between 1903-1905.

The intellectuals, who grew up in the West, influenced and carried out the constitutional movement. The group, also known as the Young Turks, played a critical role in disseminating the idea of constitutional government. This group also included people who did not know much about state administration such as Mithat Pasha and Mahmut Nedim Pasha.⁸

The Young Turk revolution of 1908 was a milestone in the history of modern Turkey. The constitutional monarchy was established effectively for the first time and the government became solely responsible before a parliament elected by the people. During this period, the power of the civil and military bureaucracy which often served the interests of the monarch, was curbed from the political process. The Second Constitutional Era came after prolonged period

⁶ Muhammed Ali Yazıbaşı, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Batıcılık Akımının Ahlâk Anlayışının Değerlendirilmesi" (A Study on Ethics of the Westernism in the Second Constitutional Era), *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 3, no.1 (2014): 119.

⁷ Selda Kılıç, "İran'da İlk Anayasa Hareketi "1906 Meşrutiyeti"(The First Constitutional Movement in Persia : The Constitutional Revolution of 1906), *Ankara Üniversitesi Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 20, no. 32 (2002): 147-148.

⁸ Yılmaz Karadeniz, "II. Meşrutiyet'in Ön Denemesi: İran Meşrutiyet Hareketi ve Sebepleri (1906)", (A Preliminary Testing for the Second Constitutional Era: Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and its causes), *Bilig*, no. 47 (2008): 195.

of repression and it aimed to save the collapsing Ottoman Empire. Its declaration was greeted with great enthusiasm throughout the Empire, especially in Istanbul. Besides a heightened individual and social creativity in society, art, and literature, this era also witnessed the awakening of national consciousness and the emergence of national identity.⁹ Almost all the dark clouds over the state dissipated, and all Muslim and non-Muslim populations of the Ottoman Empire came together. The Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Ulahs, Turkish people, Arabs, and other ethnic groups filled the streets with loud cheers for “justice, freedom, and equality.” A new order had finally begun with the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era after peoples’ voices and participation in government were repressed for centuries.¹⁰

The concept of constitutionalism was introduced in Iran with the reports written by Mirza Hussein Khan Sipahsalar, who served in Istanbul as the ambassador of Iran. In his reports, Mirza Hussein Khan Sipahsalar aimed to explain the citizens’ or some classes’ participation in government by using this concept.¹¹ Some statesmen of the period preferred to use the English word “constitution” instead of using the Ottoman term of “meşrutiyet” in their correspondence. This term was described as “constitutional government” in the *Vekayi’i İttifakiyye* Newspaper published by Mirza Taki Khan Emir Kebir. In the edict issued by Muhammad Ali Shah, both English and Ottoman terms were used. The Ottoman Empire played a very influential role in the introduction of these values in Iran. Religious and neighborly relations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire

⁹ Celal Aslan, “Bahçe Dergisi (1908-1910)” (“The Journal of Bahçe between 1908-1910),” *Bilgi*, no. 47, (2008): 168-169; Gökçe Ulus, “II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Bir Çocuk ve Gençlik Dergisi: Talebe Defteri”, (Talebe Defteri : A Journal for Children and Young Adults in the Second Constitutional Era) Master’s Thesis, Hacettepe University 2014), 4,8,13; Soofizadeh, “Osmanlı Ve İran Meşrutiyeti Karşılaştırması,” 292; Birecikli, “Yüzüncü Yılında II. Meşrutiyet’in İlanı Üzerine Bir İnceleme” (A Study on the Second Constitutional Era in its 100-year anniversary), 78; Bilge Ercilasun, “Meşrutiyet ve Edebiyat,” (“Constitutionalism and Literature,”) *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Türkoloji Dergisi* 17, no.1, (2010): 78.

¹⁰ Ulus, “Talebe Defteri”, 1.

¹¹ Osman Karacan, “1906 İran Meşrutiyeti”, (The Persian Constitution of 1906), (İnönü University, Master’s Thesis, 2013), 110-111; Kaan Dilek, “İran’da Meşrutiyet Hareketi ve Dönemin Siyasi Gelişmeleri” (Persian Constitutional Movement and Political Developments of the Period), 51.

allowed for the Persian constitutional movement to be inspired by the Ottoman Empire.¹²

The Persian constitutional movement and its modernization process emerged in the 19th century as an effort to ameliorate the economic and political weaknesses of Iran. Hence, the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906 was considered as an outcome of a struggle against internal and external problems that prevailed in all segments of the Persian society in the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus political, social, and ideological clashes between the state and society paved the way for the constitutional movement in Iran. Tanzimat Era and constitutional movements in the Ottoman Empire also influenced the Persian constitutional movement, which emerged largely within the borders of the Ottoman Empire.

At the beginning of the 20th century (1906), a national parliament and a constitutional government were established in Iran for the first time thanks to the constitutional revolution led by the intelligentsia and clerics. Jamaeddin Afgānī struck the first blow against the evasive despotism with his slogan: "The wind of change has just begun in the East, the despotic governments are now doomed to collapse."¹³ Nāsıruddīn Shah was killed by one of Jamaeddin Afgānī's students in 1896 and he was replaced by Muzaferuddīn Shah, who was more pro-freedom than his father. On the other hand, Muzaferuddīn Shah heavily relied on Russia and Britain on financial matters and he did not fulfill the wishes of Persian nationalists. Thus he created great confusion in the country. Persian nationalists, with the help of clerics, forced the Shah to declare the start of the constitutional era.¹⁴

The Persian constitutional movement, which had both a religious character as well as a national character, also included the ulama (religious scholars).¹⁵ The movement initially started in December 1905 when the Governor of Tehran punished sugar merchants and

¹² Karacan, "1906 İran Meşrutiyeti," 133.

¹³ Dilek, "İran'da Meşrutiyet Hareketi ve Dönemin Siyasi Gelişmeleri", 50; Karacan "1906 İran Meşrutiyeti," 23.

¹⁴ Kılıç, "İran'da İlk Anayasa Hareketi 1906 Meşrutiyeti," 147; Nurgül Kına, *Fereydün-i Muşîrî ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri* (Fereydün-i Muşîrî and Contemporary Persian Poetry) (Ankara: İraniyat Yayınları 2018), 11; Güller Nuhoglu, "İkinci Dünya Harbi Sonuna Kadar İran Basını ve Mecelle-i Rûzigâr-ı Nev" (The Persian Press until the end of WWII), *İstanbul Üniversitesi Şarkiyat Mecmuası*, no.21, (2012) 81-110.

¹⁵ Karadeniz, "II. Meşrutiyet'in Ön Denemesi," 202.

bastinadoed them for not cutting the price of their products.¹⁶ The tradesmen considered this event as a form of great oppression and managed to gain the support of ulama by visiting them in groups. Other groups of ulama and social classes acknowledged the movement after Tabātabāī and Ayatullāh Behbehānī negotiated the situation and took the first step against the government. Disturbed by Aynu'd-Dovle's activities, the common goal was to dismiss Aynu'd-Dovle and to change the traditional administrative system of the Qajars. The supporters of Behbehānī and Tabātabāī, consisting of approximately 2,000 people, held a sit-in protest in Abdol'azīm from December 1905 to January 12, 1906.¹⁷ Organizations were established to meet all the needs of these activists. Muzaferuddīn Shah finally agreed to hold an election for a representative parliament, since he could no longer resist the pressure of the people and the ulama. In 1906, he declared the beginning of a constitutional era, ordered the establishment of parliament and the creation of a constitution. The Persian Constitution was adopted in 1906.¹⁸ It was based on the constitutions of France (1830), Belgium (1831), and the Ottoman Empire (1876).¹⁹

The constitutional movement in the Ottoman Empire emerged in 1876 as a continuation of the Tanzimat Era to change the state's attitude towards non-Muslims and it was initiated by the statesmen themselves. On the other hand, the Persian constitutional movement can be considered as a people's movement consisting of small but

¹⁶ A source noted that the Governor of Kirman bastinadoed a member of ulema in October on the grounds of starting a riot. Also see Karacan, "1906 İran Meşrutiyeti", 169.

¹⁷ Mehmet Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi* (The Emergence and Development of the Contemporary Persian Literature), (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1999), 24; Mazlum Uyar, *İran'da Modernleşme ve Din Adamları Meşrutiyet Örneği* (Modernization in Iran and Clergy as an Example of Constitutional Movement) (İstanbul: Emre Yayınları, 2008), 141.

¹⁸ Some sources noted that the constitution was declared on August 5th, 1906. See also: Soofizadeh, "Osmanlı Ve İran Meşrutiyeti Karşılaştırması" 291; Mehmet Kanar stated that Muzaferuddīn Shah agreed to the Declaration of Constitution on June 5th 1906 and establishment of a parliament with members selected by the people. See: Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, (*The Emergence and Development of the Contemporary Persian Literature*), 27; Another source noted that constitution was declared on October 7th, 1906. See Nuhuğlu, "İkinci Dünya Harbi Sonuna Kadar İran Basını, 2-83.

¹⁹ Birecikli, "Yüzüncü Yılında II. Meşrutiyet'in İlanı Üzerine Bir İnceleme" 214; Karacan, "1906 İran Meşrutiyeti," 116-169-171; Uyar, *İran'da Modernleşme ve Din Adamları Meşrutiyet Örneği*, 143.

influential communities including ulama, merchants, and tradesmen. Nevertheless, both Ottoman and Persian constitutional movements shared similarities in terms of their beginning, development, and outcome. Ottoman and Persian intellectuals and thinkers, who lived in the societies governed by monarchy and who visited the Western countries, acknowledged the importance of concepts like freedom, equality, justice, and the creation of a constitutional government since they were especially influenced by the ideas spread by the French Revolution and wanted to disseminate the same ideas in their own countries. Ottoman intellectuals, writers, and poets, who were supporters of constitutionalism, influenced and inspired the Persian constitutional movement supporters in Istanbul. Ottoman and Persian supporters of constitutionalism also supported each other, acted together when the time came, and sought support from Western human rights defenders.²⁰ However, World War I and the military occupation of both countries hindered the success of constitutional movements both in Iran and the Ottoman Empire.²¹

Ottoman and Persian poetry, which had deep historical roots both in Persian and Turkish literature, had undergone significant changes both in terms of content and form throughout their historical courses. With the declaration of the Constitutional era, increased relations with the West started to affect the Ottoman and Persian cultures. The gradual change of social conditions during the constitutional periods also changed the subjects and themes of the poetry.

The Second Constitutional Era, which followed the repressive rule of Sultan Abdulhamid, marked a process of significant changes in Turkish culture and political history. Intellectuals and writers who complained about the despotism of Abdulhamit's reign began to write their works freely after 1908. The literature of the period successfully reflected all the ideas, positive and negative events experienced during the constitutional era. After the proclamation of the Constitutional Era, the world of literature and public press witnessed a rapid movement and significant increase in the number of publications. Previously suppressed voices began to be heard

²⁰ Soofizadeh, "Osmanlı ve İran Meşrutiyeti Karşılaştırması," 286.

²¹ Umut Başar, "İstanbul'dan Tebriz'e Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve İran'da Modernite ve Meşrutiyet" (Modernity and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Persia from Istanbul to Tabriz), *Muhafazakâr Düşünce*, 15, no.55 (2018): 228-230.

via magazines and newspapers, addressing future generations with literature, which was used as means of communication and education. In Persian Literature, the constitutional period covered the preparation stage from 1848 and the reign of Nāsıruddīn Shah until the signature of the Decree of Constitution in 1906 and it continued until the publication of the new poem by the poet Nimâ Yushîc in 1924.

This study focuses on the general characteristics of poetry that emerged during the constitutional movements in Persian and Turkish literature. Furthermore, it also examines the new concepts and new forms of expression related to social issues including "homeland", "women", "state", "nation", "freedom and liberties", "equality", "justice", "parliament" and "law" reflected in the poems of some famous poets lived in this period. The second part of this study provides information about Ottoman poets and poems written under the influence of the constitutional movement. The third part reveals the impacts of the constitutional movement on Persian poetry. The conclusion of the study compares the influences that emerged in Ottoman and Persian poetry during the constitutional eras.

2. The Second Constitutional Era and Ottoman Poets

In the Ottoman Empire, poets of the second constitutional era did not produce a single and monolithic poetics. Prominent Turkish poets such as Mehmet Âkif, Ahmet Hâşim, and Yahya Kemal emphasized the different characteristics of poetry. However, the poets of the Second Constitutional Era shared common negative attitudes towards the despotism or repression that prevailed before the second constitutional movement.²²

During this period, the Ottoman poets also shared a sense of looking to the future with confidence. These poets displayed a rather emotional approach than a rational approach and thought that freedom alone would be enough to solve all problems. Different than other poets, Faik Ali emphasized that painful traces of the past period would be felt for a longer time. Tevfik Fikret's poem

²² Emine Tuğcu Mendilcioğlu, "Türk Edebiyatında Şiir Eleştirisi (Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyete)", (The Criticism of Poetry from Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey), (PhD Dissertation, Ankara University) 162.

“Doğan Güneş” (To the Rising Sun) and Ahmet Hashim’s poem “Evim” (My Home) had a special place in this period’s poetry. The most distinctive feature of both poems was their individualistic approach in terms of the way they handled their subject matter. In this respect, these poems, which celebrated the proclamation of the Second Constitutional Era showed different characteristics in terms of perspective and narrative attitude.

Although the poets of this period had different worldviews and understandings of art, they adopted a common approach in their works. According to several scholars, yearning and love for freedom united the different poets like Tevfik Fikret, who was the defender of Westernism, the nationalist poet Mehmet Emin and Islamist poet Mehmet Âkif. This was also the reason why individualist poets such as Rezaîzade Mahmut Ekrem, Abdülhak Hâmit, Faik Ali, Celâl Sahir, and Ahmet Hashim produced works with social characteristics. Indeed, Turkish poets of this period were the patriotic members of the intelligentsia, who put first the issues related to their homeland before the artistic aspects of their poems.

Besides the abovementioned poets, many other poets also explored this movement as a theme in their works published in the magazines and newspapers of the period. The effect of the Second Constitutional era on Turkish literature was not limited to this phenomenon. In the years following this movement, poets also tried to change their literary understanding as much as possible by adapting their poems to changing political conditions while they explored social issues and appealed to the public in their works.

Tevfik Fikret wrote his poem “Rücû” (Return) the day after the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era and criticized his previous thoughts from five years ago in the following verses:

Hayır, hayır, sana râci’ değil bu tel’înât,

Bütûn bu levm ü te’ellüm, bu ibtikâ-yı hayât.²³

(No, no, this curse is not for you,

All the condemnation and grief, all of these complaints about life.)

²³ Hakan Sazyek, “II. Meşrutiyet’in İlânı ve Şiirimizdeki Yankısı,” (The Impacts of The Second Constitutional Era on our Poetry) , *Turkoloji Dergisi* 11, no.1, (1993): 264-279-281.

Stambulskiye Novosti, a weekly magazine published in Russian in Istanbul, covered an article entitled "The Famous Author of Contemporary Turkey" on Tevfik Fikret (1867-1915) and described his poetry as follows:

"Tevfik Fikret wrote his poem "Rücû" on the first day of the declaration of the constitutional era and expressed his high hopes for freedom by using beautiful expressions. The poet of "Rücû" rightly deserves a place in the front line of European-style literature and he is undoubtedly the first of the Turkish lyrical poets in terms of emotional poetry."²⁴

After the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era, Tevfik Fikret began to incorporate concepts such as homeland, nation, and religion more frequently in his poems. The Second Constitutional Era dispelled the pessimistic mood of Tevfik Fikret, allowing him to re-enter public life and adopt a more positive outlook for the future. The pessimistic mood of Tevfik Fikret began to dissipate with the Second Constitutional Era. In his poem "Halûk'un Defteri", Tevfik Fikret, who often used the concept of homeland in his subsequent works, discussed the concepts of homeland and flag as follows:

"Ölmek ve yaşatmak seni!"

"To die and make you live!"

Tevfik Fikret wrote his poem entitled "Millet Şarkısı" ("The Song of the Nation") sixteen days before the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era (8 July 1908/25 June 1324). In this poem, he used the metaphor of the sun to describe the emergence of constitutionalism as a rising sun over the pessimistic air. He also wrote his poem "Doğan Güneşe" ("To the Rising Sun") on July 24, 1908 (July (11 1324), when the constitutional era was declared.²⁵ This poem emphasized the negative characteristics of the period of despotism.²⁶

²⁴ Elfine Sibgatullina, "Stambulskiye Novosti Gazetesi'nde Tevfik Fikret ve Osmanlı Milli Marşı" (Tevfik Fikret and the Ottoman National Anthem in the Stambulskiye Novosti Newspaper) *Türkbilgi*, no.23 (2012): 108.

²⁵ Mesut Kaplan, "Bir Gençlik Kurgusu Olarak Halûk'un Defteri" (Halûk's Notebook as Young-Adult fiction), *Akademik Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi* 3, no.11, (2015): 187-202.

²⁶ Sazyek, "II. Meşrutiyet'in İlânı ve Şiirimizdeki Yankısı," 265.

Omer Seyfettin, another prominent writer of the era, also wrote a poem about the declaration of the Second Constitutional Era. He published two poems about the constitutional movement. The first poem called "Mü'ekkele-i Hurriyete" was published in the *Serbest İzmir* newspaper within the article titled "Hedm-i Istibdâd." The second poem, "Temmuz" (July) appeared in one of the short-term newspapers of the period, namely the *11 Temmuz* newspaper. Both poems exemplified Omer Seyfettin's poetics before the start of the New Language movement. In these poems, Omer Seyfettin used a very heavy language filled with Persian literary constructions, which he would strongly oppose in the following years:

*"Aşkın hayât ve his ile doldurdu her yeri,
Efsâne-i serâb-ı kavânîni sil de, yaz
Nurdan hutût-ı vecd ile, "hürriyyet!" ey peri"*

(All hail the Freedom Fairy,
Your love filled everywhere with life and sensations,
Dispell the tale and mirage of laws, and write
"Freedom" with lines made of light and ecstasy)

These verses revealed the strong emotions of the poet, who was suddenly flooded with the euphoria of freedom rather than feeling resentment towards the past. Hence, both poems of Omer Seyfettin evoked feelings of optimism, hope, and trust that emerged with the constitutional movement. In the aftermath of the Second Constitutional era, Omer Seyfettin turned to the short story genre and made his mark on our literature with the New Language movement.

Ahmet Hashim focused on the artistic and poetic qualities of his poems, even when he dealt with social and political issues of his time. He explored social themes without pushing the boundaries of his poetic understanding. In other words, Ahmet Hashim did not go beyond his individualistic understanding of social poetry. The period of despotism was symbolized with the word "death" and this produced a highly negative effect on an introverted poet like Ahmet Hashim. The fact that Ahmet Hashim wrote a poem on this occasion revealed that he had a positive attitude towards the constitutional movement. Ahmet Hashim wrote three poems "Perî-i Hürriyet" (The Freedom Fairy), "Bayrak" (the Flag) and

“Güneşe” (“To the Sun”) in 1908, which reflected the enthusiasm and excitement brought by the Second Constitutional Era. He wrote all three poems by using the same poetics.

For Mehmed Ākif Ersoy, the Second Constitutional Era had even greater meaning. In his poem “Safaat” (Phases), he described the general atmosphere and how people from all over the country welcomed the constitutional era, especially in Istanbul as follows:

*“Bir de İstanbul’a geldim ki: Bütün çarşı, Pazar
Naradan çalkanıyor! Öyle ya... Hürriyyet var!”²⁷*

“And when I came to Istanbul: the whole bazaar, the market
Were filled with loud cheers! Of course... There’s freedom!”

Mehmet Ākif, who started publishing his poems after The Second Constitutional era, wrote two poems called “İstibdâd” (Despotism) and “Hurriyet” (Freedom) to express his views on this subject in the months following the constitutional movement. He used the metaphor of “houri with a white dress” descending from heaven to denote freedom in the first line of his poem “Hürriyet.” According to him, this houri, wearing the belt of liberty, fascinated the people by visiting all corners of the country.

Mehmet Ākif’s poem called “İstibdâd” (Despotism), which was dedicated to his close friend Mithat Cemal (Kuntay) and strongly criticized Abdulhamid, consisted of two parts. In the first part of the poem, Mehmet Ākif directly expressed his thoughts about the period of despotism without focusing on a particular event. The poet directly accused Abdulhamid II and he referred to him as “you” in this poem.²⁸ However, he did not reveal much of his thoughts about the administration while he emphasized the issues that prevailed in the society in the following years.²⁹

Mehmed Ākif placed special importance on the concepts of freedom and homeland in his poems. For him, the concept of the homeland was of a great value that would be fought for and not to be violated

²⁷ Cengiz Karataş, “II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi Fikir Hareketleri ve Türk Edebiyatına Yansımaları” (Intellectual Movements of the Second Constitutional Era and Their Impacts on Turkish Literature) (PhD. diss., Ankara University, 2009): 154-155-160.

²⁸ Ercilasun, “Meşrutiyet ve Edebiyat”, 64.

²⁹ Sazyek, “II. Meşrutiyet’in İlanı ve Şiirimizdeki Yankısı”, 274.

by the enemy or cannot be considered separate from the passion for freedom. Mehmed Akif also reflected his love of homeland in the verses of the "İstiklâl Marşı" ("Anthem of Independence - National Anthem"), which he wrote with great love, accepting no awards.³⁰

3. The Influence of the Constitutional Movement on Persian Poetry

A half-century of struggle and preparation preceded the declaration of the constitutional era in Iran for the Persian people, artists, and intellectuals. After these long struggles, the removal of the despotic regime and the replacement of constitutional administration led to significant changes in Persian Literature (especially in the field of poetry) as well as in other fields. However, since the transformation of the regime of despotism into the form of constitutional monarchy was not strong enough to eradicate the feudal roots and classical poetry in Iran, it did not represent a radical break in the understanding of poetics of the contemporary Persian poetry.³¹

Çiftci described the emergence of the literature of constitutional era as follows:

"It emerged with the introduction of social, economic, and political topics, especially freedom, into the poetry and literature. Until that time, literature had been a product of a certain privileged group for centuries. With the emergence of constitutional literature, it began to describe the social life and problems of society at a level that the public could understand, while enabling the satire to become an actual form of social satire with real humor."³²

The constitutional movement, which emerged as part of the Westernization movement in Iran in the 19th century, played an important role in the process of modernization in Iran. During this period, the politically weakened Iran lost some of its territories to Western powers and became familiar with the Western political

³⁰ Gencay Zavotçu, Mehmed Akif'in Şiirinde Hürriyet ve Vatan Kavramı "(The Concepts of Freedom and Homeland in the Poetry of Mehmed Akif)," *İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no.1, (2012): 7-16-17.

³¹ Meliha Anbarcioğlu, "Çağdaş İran Edebiyatında Nazmın Durumu" (A Study on Poetry in Contemporary Persian Literature). *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Doğu Dilleri Dergisi* 1, no. 1, (1964):1-10.

³² Hasan Çiftci, *Hiciv ve Sosyal Eleştiri* (Satire and Social Criticism), (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2002), 416.

concepts and formations. Modernization was seen as a way for Iran to get out of its weakened position, and a step taken forward with the constitutional movement.

It can be said that Persian literature, which had strong historical roots, maintained its traditional form until the 19th century. The “Bâzgeşt-i Edebî” (Return to the old literature) movement emerged as a response to the poems written in Indian style, which began in the era of the Mongols and Timurids and reached its peak during the Safavid period. During this period, the poets imitated the old poets successfully. No significant change occurred in the poetry from this period until the constitutional era.

The French Revolution of 1789 had also influenced Iran as well as the whole world. The intellectuals, who could not ignore this movement, turned their faces to the West and fought to achieve universal values such as democracy, human rights, and freedom. Persian literature reflected these movements prevailed in the social and political spheres of Iran, which was influenced by the reforms in the Ottoman Empire besides the French Revolution. Especially during the Second Constitutional Era,³³ a new sense of freedom permeated the society along with significant mobility and rapid changes especially in the press, publications, and literary spheres.³⁴

During the constitutional period of Iran (1906), Persian literature and poetry began to explore the world of women, women’s education, difficulties faced by women in daily life, etc. along with the political problems for the first time in the country.³⁵

During the constitutional era, new patterns of expression emerged in the poetry, while the contents of the poems incorporated social and political characteristics. Newspapers and magazines published new type of poems, which were called “ash’âr-i matbūâtî” (works of press). They proved very effective in terms of expressing the spirit of constitutional movement and mobilizing the Persian people. However, they were replaced by classical poetry later on.

³³ Nuhuğlu, “İkinci Dünya Harbi Sonuna Kadar İran Basını,” 2-82.
Ya’kûb Ajend, *Târîh-i Edebiyât-i İrân Ez Âğaz tâ Emrûz*, (Tahran: Neşr-i Gosterde, 2001), 17-29.

³⁴ Yavaş, “Meşrutiyet Devri Türk Edebiyatında Manzûm Tiyatro,” 107-108.

³⁵ Meliha Anbarcıoğlu, “Çağdaş İran Nazmında Surud, Tasnif ve Tarane Türleri”, (The Genres of Surud, Tasnif and Tarane in Contemporary Persian Poetry), (*Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Doğu Dilleri Dergisi*) 2, no. 1, (1971):17.

With the constitutional movement, classical Persian poetry embraced a more realistic and humanistic approach, while moving away from romanticism. The poems started to depict social life more clearly while strengthening the bond between man and society in this process. Previously, the poets had only focused on subjects like love, rinds, religion, and Sufism. With the start of the constitutional era, they began to explore the concepts such as nationalism, independence, social equality, freedom of thought and press, truth among citizens, equality before the law in their works.³⁶

According to Meliha Anbarcioglu, the emerging consensus and process of integration among various layers of Persian society could be seen as the most beneficial result of the constitutional regime. At that time, the daily and weekly newspapers (proliferating up to 90 newspapers) also played a significant role. These newspapers examined the issues and challenges faced by the country with a new sense of freedom and they took every opportunity to warn and enlighten the public.³⁷

During this period, a group of writers and poets gathered under the name of "freedom supporters" and had the opportunity to write their works freely. After the opening of the parliament in Iran, *Meclis Gazetesi* (*the Parliamentary Gazette*) became the first newspaper to appear on 8 Shevval 1324 hs./25 November 1906. In the first newspapers of the constitutional period, the poems reflected the political and social issues mostly using the style of musammat (stanzaic poems). The poets of that period might have chosen that style to capture the public's attention. The newspapers of that period such as *Musavat*, *Nesîm-i Shimâl*, *Nesîm-i Saba* included several examples of musammats on society and homeland. However, the prose in the press alone failed to respond to the needs of the supporters of freedom. The supporters of the revolution had no choice but to explore these issues in their poems. Some of these poems covered various compilations and tunes that people singed in the bazaars or told in the markets. Persian poetry took different forms both in terms of parole and meaning during the constitutional

³⁶ İsmet Zeki Eyuboğlu, *İran Edebiyatı* (Persian Literature) (İstanbul: Pencere Yayınları, 2008), 131.

³⁷ Anbarcioglu, "Çağdaş İran Nazmında Surud, Tasnif ve Tarane Türleri," 16.

era. If we do not take the diversity of contemporary Persian poetry into account, it can be said that Iranian poetry has never had as much diversity in language, style, and ideas as it did during the constitutional era.

The works of the constitutional era explored the themes such as freedom, homeland, women, the West and Western art, social criticism, generalization of the beloved ones in lyrical poems, lack of Sufism, and excessive distancing from religious influence. Furthermore, lyrical poetry, which focused on love, was deemed incompatible with the style and method of constitutional literature.³⁸

Most of the enlightened poets of this period advocated that “art is for society’s sake” and wrote poems longing for prosperity and peace in the country. A minority group adopted the view of “art for art’s sake.” However, poets from both groups explored political, social, moral, and economic issues in their poems.³⁹

We can divide the poets of this period into four or five groups historically from the beginning of the spread of the idea of freedom to 1921 and the subsequent period. Poets in the first group such as Seyyid Ashrafuddin Huseyn-i Gilani, Arif-i Kazvini, and Mirzadeyi Iski explored the central topics of the poetry of the constitutional era. Their poems took the pulse of all events of their time and reflected the spirit of the constitutional era. These poets did not seek to improve their style and verses. They employed a language very close to the colloquial language used in the streets, bazaars, markets, and newspapers.

The second group adopted a double-sided approach. On the one hand, they adhered to the traditions of the old poets as much as they could. Their poems reflected the texture and beauty of that period together with the colors of all the changing elements of poetry. This group of poets (including Irec Mirza, Mohammed Takī-yi Bahār, Ali Akbar-i Dihhudā, and Edibu’l-memalik Ferāhānī) was called as the right-wing poets of the constitutional era.

At the end of the period, the third group examined some of the social issues more deeply while focusing on new poetic techniques.

³⁸ Muhammed Rızā Şeşii Kedkeni, *Fars Şiirinin Dönemleri*, (The Periods of Persian Poetry), Trans. Ali Güzelyüz, (İstanbul: Demavend Yayınları, 2017), 24-25.

³⁹ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 200.

They were fully aware of the changes that took place in European literature. Although the number of poets in this group was quite limited, this group influenced future generations. The group consisted of poets such as Abu'l-Kasim-i Lahûti and Nîmâ Yûşic. These poets, which were called left-wing poets of the constitutional era wrote poems about social issues and used the style of criticism.

As to the poets in the fourth group, their poems reflected that they lived in the constitutional era. However, the influence and traces of the constitutionalism were rarely seen in the works of these poets such as Edîb-i Bakâverî and Edîb-i Nişâbûrî. This group was called the periphery of the constitutional era. They mostly adhered to the traditions and avoided the colloquial language used in the bazaars by people. In addition, they kept the old style by putting the style and form of discourse above what was said.⁴⁰

The literature of the constitutional era took its distinctive form while it struggled with the old forms of literature. Thus, it started a new movement both in terms of form and content of the literature while challenging the old literary traditions. In the first three decades of the constitutional movement, the poets used the traditional Persian genres such as ode, masnavi, stanza, and ruba'î in their literary works which depicted social and revolutionary subjects. The poems of this period also frequently used new and foreign words (like parliament, theatre, staff, faculty, seal, etc.). Furthermore, the poets also continued to use forms such as *musammat* (a type of ode with the same number of verses, in one meter, with different rhymes), *terâne* (a form of chant), or *chârâre* (successive poems consisting of quatrains or couplets).⁴¹

Poets, who wanted to address contemporary issues in their poems, found it difficult to go beyond the boundaries drawn by the strict rules of traditional poetry and literary arts. Conservative poets such as Edîbu'l memâlik Ferâhânî, Furûzanfer, and Vahîd-i Destgîrdî stood before the supporters of innovation. They started the old-new debate and argued that new themes can be expressed by using the

⁴⁰ İsmâil Hakimi, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatı*, (Contemporary Persian Literature), Trans. Şadi Aydın, (Ankara: Anekdot Yayınevi, 2012), 20-22.

Kına, *Fereydûn-i Muşîri ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri*, 19-20.

⁴¹ Hakimi, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatı*, 21-25.

Kına, *Fereydûn-i Muşîri ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri*, 14-15.

old patterns. During this period, Ferahânî (1860-1917), İrc Mirzâ (1874-1926), Mirzâde-yi Iskî (1894-1925), Arif-i Poets such as Kazvîni (1882-1934) and Pervîn-i I'tisamî (1907-1941) moved away from old subjects and wrote poems about the new subjects.⁴²

Edîb-i Pishâverî was considered as the first poet of the constitutional era, who pioneered some novelties in terms of meaning, content, ideas, and logic, but not in terms of forms and patterns.⁴³ Although he imitated the styles of old poetry as a poet of *bâzgeşt* (return), he was different from his contemporaries in terms of the subjects that he chose.⁴⁴ He was also a nationalist who enthusiastically expressed his thoughts about the homeland in his works. While he favored the friendship of Germans, he was anti-British.

Mirzâ 'Abdu'l-cevâd, who wrote philosophical poems, rose to the top level in the art of Edîb-i Nisâbûrî, but he did not bring any innovation to Persian poetry.

Mirzâde-i Iskî's wrote poems using the Khorasan style and he did not seek any innovation in terms of form, expression, and verses. However, for the first time, Iskî stopped using the *masnavi* pattern, which had a light meter.⁴⁵ He wrote his poem "Meryem (Mary)" by using the form of *musammat* and *muctes bahrini*. The stories of Mirzâde-i Iskî focused on types of people from daily life, mostly patriotic Persian peasants. Mirzâde-i Iskî was influenced by Turkish Literature, especially by Tevfik Fikret, and he changed the rhyming system. He emphasized the harmony of sounds and expression instead of the form. One of Iskî's most important poems was his long poem "Ideal". He wrote this poem at a time when rumors about the formation of a new republic spread in Iran. The protagonists of the story in the poem were patriotic Persians including a patriotic father who lost his two children in the struggle for constitutionalism, his dying wife, and his daughter, who was seduced by a high-class young man and eventually committed suicide. Mirzâde-i Iskî noted in his poem called "Restâhîz-i Selâtîn-i Iran" that it would not be beneficial to go back and remember the ancient and glorious

⁴² Eyuboğlu, *İran Edebiyatı*, 131.

⁴³ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 24.

Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, (Tahrân: İntişârât-i Zevvâr, 1993), 139.

⁴⁴ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 221-222-228.

⁴⁵ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 223-225.

periods of Persian history and to boast about the past. He also emphasized in his poem called "Derd-i Vatan" that every Persian should try to be more like a European rather than boasting about the past.⁴⁶

Edību'l-Memālik, one of the famous poets of the period, started his career in journalism as a reformist who wanted freedom. He praised the revolution and establishment of the parliament. In his works, he criticized the old ways, tried to proselytize the idea of patriotism, and talked about the problems of the Persian people. Later on, Edību'l-Memālik started to use the folk language and wrote poems, which were like songs sung in the streets. In one of his poems, he criticized the poets who used classical styles and invited them to increase the people's awareness. The poet Edīb'ul Memālik-i Ferāhānī, who used classical Persian poetry patterns, emphasized that old Persian poetry had no role to play in the process of establishing new Iran. He also noted that old subjects should be abandoned and new themes like homeland should be explored in the poems.⁴⁷

Arif-i Kazvīnī, who was one of the greatest poets of the post-constitutional period, displayed a tendency towards the democratic left-wing with his ideas that would affect all his poetry and "tasnifs" (which can be considered as Persian equivalent of the ballad) during the emergence of constitutional movement. When the constitutional movements began, Arif-i Kazvīnī left the palace, which he opposed to participate in the movement. He went to Istanbul in 1915 after the invasion of Iran by the British Empire and Russian Empire. Although he took a stand with the Turks and defended Islamic unity during World War I, he gave up these ideas after the struggle of Azerbaijan for independence began and he returned to Iran in 1919. He impressed all Persians with his poems and songs filled with the love of homeland during his concerts organized in Tehran. He successfully expressed his feelings of love, love of liberty, love of homeland, feelings of truth, and sacrifice in his ballads. His works successfully evoked feelings of freedom and patriotism among the

⁴⁶ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 200.

Kına, *Fereydūn-i Muşîrî ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri*, 22-23-24.

⁴⁷ Abdolhossein Laleh, *Modern İran Sinemasında İran Edebiyatının İzleri* (The Impacts of Persian Literature on Contemporary Persian Cinema), (PhD. diss., Ankara University, 2014), 171.

Persian people. Since he was an emotional person with a tendency to believe easily, he fell under the influence of Turkish propaganda during his stay in Istanbul and sang poems.⁴⁸ Moreover, at first, he invited the people to unite under the "İttihad-i İslam" (Islamic Union);⁴⁹ but then he also gave up this idea.⁵⁰ The most important work of Arif-i Kazvīnī during the constitutional era was his ode called "Peyâm-i Azâdî".⁵¹

In line with the new literature, Muhammed Takī-yi Bahār discussed the libertarian and revolutionist ideas in his poems that he wrote during this period. The poet addressed the Persian people's issues and problems, hatred, and despair while he opposed colonialist politics with his succinct verses. He also criticized the traitors who sold the country and invited everyone to engage in political and social life. Especially his poems in *mustezad* form (a special type of ode) were praised for their fluency and harmony.⁵²

Other famous poets of the period, such as Meliku's-Shu'arā Bahār, Pervīn-i Ī'tisāmī, Vahīd-i Destgīrdī, Īrec Mīrzā, preferred to focus on more educational and moral issues in their works. The poems on ethics and didactic poems written in this period were similar to the poems of older times. For example; Īrec Mīrzā emphasized the importance of books as the best friend of Persian children and tried to explain the benefits of science and study in his poems. Pervīn-i Ī'tisāmī focused on the moral issues and developed a new style of expression while seeking the truth and meaning.⁵³

Religious poems (religious in terms of subject matter and content) were less common during the constitutional era, compared to the previous centuries. Although some poems praised Zoroastrianism and Zoroastrian religion during this period, they were not written with a national aim or for propaganda purposes. Poems written by poets like Lahūtī, Abdu'l-azīm-i Karīb, Pūr-i Dāvūd, Shebāb-i Kirmānshāhī, and Dānish-i Tebrīzī were not considered as religious

⁴⁸ Anbarcıođlu, "Çađdaş İnan Nazmında Surud, Tasnif ve Tarane Türleri," 3.

⁴⁹ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 346-377.

⁵⁰ Kanar, *Çađdaş İnan Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 230.

⁵¹ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 148.

⁵² Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 121-126.

⁵³ Anbarcıođlu, "Çađdaş Nazımında Sosyal ve Diğer Konular," *Ankara Üniv. Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fak. Doğü Dilleri Dergisi* 1, no.3, (1969): 106.

verses. Although these poems included pleas to God, praises for the greatness of the Prophet, and the holiness of the imams, they were written with a simple language and a clear narrative style.⁵⁴

It is possible to argue that several Persian poets of the constitutional era failed to comprehend their time fully and could not grasp the real meaning of concepts such as constitutionalism and freedom, and they did not develop a specific method or style of work. During this period, some poets also mentioned the old glorious days of Persia in their poems to condemn the rulers of the day and to guide them.⁵⁵ For example; Pūr-i Dāvūd praised the Zoroastrian religion and the glorious reigns of the former rulers.

The poets and writers of the Constitutional Era left the proverbial ivory tower, moved towards the people, and refused to produce works only for the privileged people. Literature of this period used proverbs, idioms, and folk tales while moving away from the classical expressions rooted in the literary language.⁵⁶

The poetry of the constitutional era addressed social issues to a great extent. Especially the poets, who came under the influence of Russian Literature, French Literature, and especially Turkish Literature, frequently used the words like homeland and freedom instead of "the beloved one" in their odes and ghazals. Furthermore, they dealt with the real problems faced by women, who were only praised as beloved ones in classical poetry. Īrec Mīrzā argued that women should throw off their chadors and veils, and oppose arranged marriages in his poem "Hicâbnâme." In his poem called⁵⁷ "Mâder" he expressed love for the mother. Ishkī explored the same subject in his poem entitled "Kefen-i Siyâh." Lahūtī, also advised women to throw off their chadors and go to school in his poems.

Bahār criticized the corrupt aspects of social life and expressed the incompatibilities of social life in his poem called "Demâvendīye." Habīb-i Yagmāi dealt with the issue of unity of the country in his poem "Vatan", which was written by using a plain language and

⁵⁴ Anbarcıođlu, "Çađdaş Nazımda Sosyal ve Diđer Konular," 87-104.

⁵⁵ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 24.

⁵⁶ Muđammed İstılamı, *Buđünkü İıan Edebiyatı Hakkında Bir İnceleme*, çev. Mehmet Kanar, (Ankara: 1981), 67.

⁵⁷ Kanar, *Çađdaş İıan Edebiyatının Dođuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 199-201.

style. In his long poem titled “Çekâme-i İctimâî”, Jalâl-i Humâi described the social imbalances that prevailed in the country in a very realistic way. Emirî’s poems satirized the complex and disorganized structure of the Persian courthouses. General topics such as laziness and weakness of the healthcare services were addressed in some poets’ works including Rûhânî’s “Zâhir-sâzî” and “Hammâmhâ” poems.

During this period, the genres of satire and humor gained a special place in Persian literature. Except for the works of Yagmâ-yi Cendakî, the Persian satire showed no significant changes for centuries. During the Constitutional Era and subsequent periods, satire and humor were put to the service of society.⁵⁸

If we examine the language and style of the poems published in newspapers during the period of Constitutional Monarchy, it can be seen that poets and writers had a lot of things to write at the beginning of the era, but faced several difficulties in expressing their ideas and feelings. Traditional Persian genres such as ode and ghazal were developed under the shadow of classical literature and shared almost the same characteristics. These traditional forms of expression failed to express the new concepts, contemporary ideas, and mental imaginations. During the period of Constitutional Monarchy, the poets felt the necessity to use poetry to express new ideas.⁵⁹ Thus, the poetry assumed new roles as given by the press. Since the poets of the Revolution were not familiar with the old Persian poetry, the forms and patterns they used were not sufficient to express new feelings and notions. With the influence of European Literature, the poets felt a need to express their ideas and feelings by using simple and short meters. The newspapers’ social and political coverage required simpler forms since they appealed to the public. The literati first turned to the existing folk literature to find what they were looking for. With the help of folk literature, they managed to reach the Persian people and wrote satirical poems by using simple expressions, humorous style, and light meters, together with the *tasnif* and *terâne* patterns of folk literature.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Çiftci, *Hiciv ve Sosyal Eleştiri*, 413.

⁵⁹ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 60.

⁶⁰ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 78.

Meliku's-Shu'arā Bahār, who previously wrote folk poems with plain styles, returned to the classical style later on. Bahār, who was a poet of odes, focused on libertarian ideas in his poems that he wrote during the second period of his literary life. We can divide his poetry into two periods. In his youth, he first wrote poems of praise by using the styles of old poets. After the declaration of the constitution, he joined the freedom supporters and wrote poems on freedom and homeland.⁶¹ The concept of homeland gained an important place in his poems. As a poet, Bahār embraced all kinds of poetic innovations, provided that the old methods and measures remained.⁶² The most important feature that distinguished Bahār from other poets was that although he used old forms, his poems reflected the desires of the nation by highlighting contemporary issues, the suffering, and the excitement of the people.⁶³

Lahūtī played an important role during the constitutional period and brought realism to poetry. He was known for his libertarian poems published in the newspaper *Hablu'l-met'n*. In his poems, he dealt with the issues related to women's rights and lack of equality, which were not addressed for centuries, and he fought against backwardness and superstitions. Lahūtī wrote his first poems by using the form of *tasnif* style and published them in the newspapers.⁶⁴ During this period, the effects of Sābir and some Turkish poets on his poetry could be clearly seen. Lahūtī supported women's rights by writing poems focusing on women's rights and equality between women and men.⁶⁵ During this period, the poet also addressed the issues such as the liberation of the peasants, the defense of the east against the west, the formation of revolution, and the academic study of the classical culture of Iran.⁶⁶

Meliku's-Shu'arā Bahār, one of the greatest poets and prose writers of the period, began to write national and social poems after the acceptance of constitutionalism. Muhammed Takī Bahār supported

⁶¹ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 148-336.

⁶² Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 234.

⁶³ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 127.

⁶⁴ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 201-238.

⁶⁵ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 169.

⁶⁶ Ferruh Sadigzadeh, "Çağdaş İran Şairi Ebû'l Kâsım-i Lâhûtî'nin Hayatı, Eserleri ve Edebî Kişiliği", (The Life and Works of a Contemporary Persian Poet : Ebû'l Kâsım-i Lâhûtî') (Ankara University, Master's Thesis, 2018), 47.

the Mashhad constitutionalists in 1906. During the period of despotism, he published his poems in the *Horasan Newspaper*, which also published his first national poems. He imitated the old great ode poets in his odes praising Khorasan elders and clergymen in the years when he received the title of "Malik al-Shu'arâ (The King of Poets). The poems he wrote after he joined the Constitutionalist movement did not deviate from the rules of the old poetry, but he dealt with the issues of freedom, revolution, constitutionalism, and homeland by using old styles.⁶⁷

After World War I, Persian Literature, which was essentially based on poetry and managed to survive for centuries, failed to address the problems of modern life. The seven-year period from the beginning of World War I until the Pahlavi Dynasty was a period of national awakening for the Persian poets. Although Muhammed Takî-yi Bahâr was devoted to the past in poetry, he tolerated the supporters of innovation. On the other hand, poets such as Mîrzâde-i Ishkî and Ebu'l Kâsim-i Lahûtî moved towards simplicity in their poetry. However, these poets could not escape the strict rules of Aruz prosody. Supporters of new poetic forms continued their search for innovation by using forms such as mustezad and *rubai* or by playing with meter and rhyme, and some of them also used syllabic meter. Poets such as Mîrzâde-i Ishkî and Ārif-i Kazvîni addressed the social movements at the level of slogans.⁶⁸

4. Conclusion

Persians' acquaintance with the Western culture and civilization compelled them to move towards the theories and concepts that went beyond the frontiers of the old poetry. During the constitutional period, several words such as "homeland", "state", "nation", "freedom and liberty", "equality", "justice", "parliament", "law", "code" and "members of parliament" also acquired new meanings. In addition to this, new phrases and terms such as "national government", "national state", "personal freedom", "social freedom" and "human rights" gained popularity in literature⁶⁹. Along with

⁶⁷ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 234. Mehmet Kanar, "Mirza Muhammed Takî Melikü'shu'arâ", *T.D.V. İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları, 1991), 469-470.

⁶⁸ Kına, *Fereydûn-i Muşîrî ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri*, 17-18.

⁶⁹ Mâşâllâh Acudani *Meşrûte-i İrân*, (Tahran: Neşr-i Ahterân, 2003), 7.

all these developments, prevalent intellectual movements including Humanism, Liberalism, and Secularism entered the intellectual world of the literati of the constitutional period.⁷⁰

During the constitutional era, the poets first embraced the new concept of freedom. Although the word "freedom" was frequently used in classical Persian poetry, pro-Western poets and scholars started to use this word in a new sense to denote a form of government based on the rule of law and social order based on freedom and liberties. During this period, poets such as Bahār, Ārif, 'Ishk and Ferruhī-yi Yezdī gave a central place to the concept of freedom in their works.⁷¹

Patriotism has also become one of the most important themes of the constitutional period literature. However, the poets used the term of homeland in different meanings during this period. The homeland that Seyyid Esref mentioned had İslamic characteristics. On the other hand, 'Iskī referred to Persia before the Sassanids and Arab invasion when he mentioned the homeland. Thus, his poetry emphasized the struggle against Arabs.⁷²

In this period, poetry and literature turned towards the people in the streets rather than the upper classes. Thus, the poems reflected the general needs of society. The main trends in the Persian awakening literature emerged when the Russian Revolution began and the intellectuals came under the influence of the ideas of Bolshevik literature, with emphasis on the differences between the two strata of the poor and the rich. Some poets (such as Ebu'l-Kāsim-i Lahūtī) also focused on workers in their poems after they visited Russia and contacted the socialist democrats and intellectuals.⁷³

Poetry was used as a cultural tool to reflect the ideals of individuals and society. The poets of this period introduced the culture and new literature of the Ottomans and benefited from two new sources. The first source was revolutionary poetry and the second one was modern

⁷⁰ Muhammed Rızâ Ruzbih, *Edebiyât-i Mu'âsır-ı İrân* (Nazm), (Tahran: Neşr-i Rûzgâr, 2002), 60.

⁷¹ Ajend, *Târîh-i Edebiyât-i İrân Ez Âğaz tâ Emrûz*, 447.

⁷² Anbarcioğlu, "Çağdaş Nazımda Sosyal ve Diğer Konular," 83.

⁷³ Muhammed Ca'fer Yahakki, *Cûybâr-i Lahzehâ Ceryânâ-yi Edebiyât-i Mu'âsır-ı Fârsî Nazm u Nesr*, (Tahran: İntişârât-i Câmî, 1388), 18-19.

French poetry. Both sources helped the poets to reshape Persian poetry. The poets turned towards simple and popular expressions and gave up the complex literary expressions of the palace poetry. They also used words and expressions taken from folk literature, Western literature, and newspaper language. Poets like Ishkī, Lahūtī, and Farruhi produced political ghazals and national *tasnif* forms and showed interest in dialogues in their prose. Irec wrote satires in the form of *masnavi* by using daily language and folk language. Sayyīd Ashref, influenced by Sābir, employed a critical approach in his poems by using *musammat* and *mustezad* patterns. *Mustezad* form, which was used in classical Persian poetry and also included examples in pre-constitutional literature, became very popular in this period. The use of *mustezad* form aimed to describe the events of the period more vividly.^{74 75} This genre of poetry had proven to be a very effective way to awaken the people from their heedless sleep pervading the political and social life of Iran.⁷⁶

The literature of the constitutional period represented a transition period from classical literature to new literature in terms of literary and artistic characteristics. During this period, the main subject of literature was the constitutional revolution itself. Like revolution, the literature also aimed to change the society, not the literature itself. Poets like Bahār, Ishkī and Lahūtī also wanted to change the poetic forms and tried to break the traditional patterns. They also made changes in the rhymes, the number of lines, and verses to create simple *chaharpare* forms while also diversifying the traditional forms like *tarji-i band*, *tarqib-i band*, *musammat*, and *mustezads*. These efforts to change the classical patterns failed to make a fundamental change in the form and structure of the poetry. The constitutionalist poets were conservative in terms of poetic forms due to several reasons. First of all, the historical, social and cultural environment failed to create enabling conditions for a literary revolution to flourish. Furthermore, the poets themselves were in the middle of political-social events and struggles, which made it difficult for them to explore the depths of poetic forms.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ruzbih, *Edebiyât-i Mu'âsir-i Îrân* (Nazm), 59, 60, 61.

⁷⁵ Ajend, *Târîh-i Edebiyât-i Îrân Ez Âğaz tâ Emrûz*, 453.

⁷⁶ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 35.

⁷⁷ Ruzbih, *Edebiyât-i Mu'âsir-i Îrân* (Nazm), 61-62.

In this period, the poetry moved toward cohesiveness both in terms of its scope and function and employed by the press and newspapers, which were considered as the sharp tongue of the constitutionalist movement. The journalistic prose of the newspapers could not meet the needs of libertarian propagandists who wanted to espouse their political and social ideas. Those who fought for the revolution desperately sought new ways to disseminate their new ideas. They sought new forms of poetry, which provided the best means for expressing thoughts and feelings. Hence the poetry assumed some functions of the prose in the press. Until the constitutional movement, poets had lived in their ivory towers far from the public. Traditional poems often featured themes like wine, hunting, ceremonies, and conquests. Poets who lived in such environments were unaware of the real problems and challenges faced by the people. With the Constitutional Era, poetry moved under the control of the people. However, the revolutionary poets were not familiar with the fancy language of classical poetry. These poets expressed the new concepts, phrases, and mental descriptions by using simpler and shorter meters. When the reformist poets of constitutionalism and innovation realized that old patterns such as ghazal and ode were insufficient to convey new ideas and subjects, they felt a need to develop new poetic forms and turned towards the masters of the stage and art and used their patterns of *tasnif* and *terane* known as *nomayish* in Iran for a long time. These forms, which were also used in daily life by people, became the language of freedom for the press after the constitutional revolution. They were used as new forms of literary humor and spread among the people, encouraging the people to fight against the tyrannical regime. Furthermore, wandering *delkeks*, who have traveled in many different cities and villages since ancient times, sang short verses that openly criticized the rulers.⁷⁸

Ārīf-i Kazvīnī became one of the most famous poets, who benefited from the form of *tasnif* and gained success in this genre. He emphasized the importance of national *tasnif* genre, which played an important role in the constitutional literature, as follows: "If I had not served the Persian music and literature in this way and wrote

⁷⁸ Aryenpur, *Ez Sabâ Tâ Nimâ*, 28-29, 121.

national *tasnifs*, even one person out of ten thousand Persians would ever know what the homeland was.”⁷⁹ As we mentioned before, new patterns emerged in the poetry, the poetic themes changed in terms of content, and gained a social and political character with the Persian constitutional movement. During the constitutional era, most of the intellectual poets adopted the notion of “art is for society” and wrote poems expressing their longing for prosperity and peace in the country. They also used poetry as a tool to express these ideas. The other minority group adopted the notion of “art for art’s sake.” However, both poet groups dealt with the social, moral, political, and economic issues in their poems. In Iran, political poems were written during the constitutional period when the pressure of foreign states increased in the country. While the poets of this period could not express their thoughts directly, they expressed them by reminding the powerful Persian shahs of the past and their great empires.

During this period, several poems about specific political events were also written. For example, the poet, journalist and writer Sayyīd Ashrafaddin-i Jilānī, who published the newspaper *Nesīm-i Shomāl*, complained about the state administration, deputies and statesmen, the incompetent vizier, the inapplicability of laws and Ottoman politics in a poem published in this newspaper in 1908. Muhammed Takī-yi Bahār harshly criticized Sir Edward Gray, who was British Foreign Minister at that time, with his poem on the agreement signed between Russia and the British Empire in 1907 to share the territories of Iran. Vahīd-i Destgirdī, one of the greatest intellectual poets of Iran, explained the reasons of the war after World War I and stated that Turkish and German friendships were very important for Iran. He also expressed his thoughts against Russia and the British Empire. At the time when Rıza Shah wanted to establish a republican regime before taking the throne, Ārīf-i Kazvīnī read the poem “Gazel-i Jumhūrī”, which heralded the birth of the Republic and it created great excitement at a nightly festival. The poetry of the constitutional period placed importance on social issues and emphasized women’s problems. For example, İrec Mīrzā argued

⁷⁹ Acudani, *Meşrûte-i İrân*, 7.

that women would not compromise their honor by throwing off their chadors and veils and mentioned the harms of arranged and blind marriages in his poem "Hicâbnâme." Mîrzâde-yi Ishkî also wrote a poem entitled "Kefen-i Siyâh" and compared chador to a black burial shroud. Ebu'l Kâsim-i Lâhutî advised Persian women and girls not only to throw off their chadors and veils but also to go to school and provide educational services to the people. Some poets also emphasized the incompatibilities of social life in their works. Muhammed Takî-yi Bahâr mentioned the corrupt aspects of social life in his poem "Demâvendîye." Pervîn-i İ'tisâmi, (1906-1941) Muhammed Takî-yi Bahâr, Vahîd-i Destgirdî, and Īrec Mîrzâ wrote poems on ethics and decency. Īrec Mîrzâ tried to explain to Persian children that the book was their best friend while highlighting the benefits of science and study. Furthermore, Īrec Mîrzâ described the love for mother in his poem entitled "Mader" (Mother). In this period, only a few poems dealt with religious subjects, and more emphasis was placed on philosophical and economic issues in the poetry. Edîb-i Nishabûrî , Muhammed Takî-yi Bahâr, Muhammed Rıza Mîrzâde-i Ishkî and Furugh-i Ferruhzâd wrote philosophical poems. Ebu'l Kâsim-i Lahûtî and Īrec-i Mîrzâ explored economic issues in their works. During this period, the poetry also addressed basic topics such as agriculture, blacksmithing, weaving, workplace, labor, and trade.⁸⁰

During this period, some poets felt a need to develop new poetic forms, new patterns, and novel expressions and made some attempts. However, their attempts failed due to the deep roots of classical poetry. Poets, under the influence of Russian Literature, French Literature, and especially Turkish literature, frequently used the words of homeland and freedom in their odes and ghazals instead of "the beloved one". The simple poems and those called poems of the press ("Ash'âr-i matbûâtî") focused on daily life but failed to ascend the throne of classical and metered poetry despite the emergence of constitutionalism. Thus, journalistic prose and reliance on old patterns and odes

⁸⁰ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 201. Kına, *Fereydûn-i Muşîrî ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri*, 22-25.

continued as it was before the revolution. Some poets tried to introduce new foreign words and terms used in Turkish Literature and European Literature as a form of novelty and sometimes they used foreign words excessively. As a result, besides some new ways of expression, no significant change went beyond the strict and metered rules of odes and *ghazals* filled with traditional literary techniques within 20 years after the declaration of the constitution.⁸¹

The newspapers published in the Ottoman Empire also influenced and informed the Persian people by disseminating the ideas of freedom and constitutionalism beyond the borders. These ideas inspired the Persian intellectuals who were in contact with the Ottoman Empire and the West. The Persian people in Iran faced similar issues and conditions with the Ottomans and they gave strong support to this movement. Thus, both Ottoman Empire and Qajar Dynasty went through similar historical processes and experienced constitutional movements at the same period. When we examined the effects of the constitutional movement, it can be said that ideas related to constitutionalism influenced the intelligentsia more than they influenced the people in the streets. The intelligentsia, who aimed to raise public awareness, resorted to several tools to amplify the impact of their outreach activities. To enlighten the people, they used many tools including secret organizations, schools with modern curricula, publications, newspapers, and magazines to convey their messages to the public more effectively.

⁸¹ Kanar, *Çağdaş İran Edebiyatının Doğuşu ve Gelişmesi*, 200-201.
Kına, *Fereydûn-i Muşîrî ve Çağdaş İran Şiiri*, 26.

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