

Nationalism in Anis Couchane's Poem “*Fii Baladi*”

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Abstract--This paper aims to raise the right to describe the substantive meaning of nationalism. Nnationalism grows on a person when there is a willingness to build and advance his country, and this can be done in various ways. Tunisian poet Anis Chouchane told his thoughts about nationalism through his poetry. This study aims to reveal some ideas about nationalism that *Fii Baladi* contained. The study was a literature review with a mimetic approach by contrasting and comparing the ideas and spirit of the nationalism contained in the poem with the phenomena that occurred in Tunisia. The study revealed a nationalist crisis in Tunis brought about the ideas of togetherness and respect for humanity. This also led to the emergence of people awareness that the rich realized the right of the poor in their property, that the healthy admitted that being disabled is not their choice, that white man recognized that the black man reserves a right to live in dignity, and the slave is not always insulted.

Keywords: *Anis Chouchane, nationalism, poetry, spirit, awareness,*

I. INTRODUCTION

Living side by side in a country to make ideals to become true is the main point of a nationalism movement. Nationalism for the first time appeared in Europe in the 18th century which meant ‘nation’, that refers to a group of people who inhabited a certain area united by the similarity of the fate, ideals, and goals.

Nationalism is formed on the basis of the willingness to live together in the country or nation. Nationalism, according to Renan, sourced from humanitarian elements and factors including a variety of cultures, races, religions, and others that were possible for people who shared those values to live together in the country. As nationalism is a symbol of a nation's unity, the people should maintain it, otherwise, it will fade away. It was usually done by implementing equality in all life aspects among people in a nation [1].

If a country is not able to actualize the equality among its people, for example, to satisfy their primary needs, tis will trigger a nationalism movement. Nationalism movement is an action for every nation to maintain the awareness of being united. This is not only the individual responsibility, but a joint obligation, so that the life of the nation will continue to be peaceful though there are many disparities or diversities. One

of factors that give a rise to nationalism movement is a country's low economic development. Al-Isawi [2] identified three influencing factors, namely, namely: the first is the change in the status of capitalist countries into a system of social democracy with social market economic system (the First World), the expansion of the socialist block in implementing policies to apply equality at the international level (the Second World), and the birth of new countries after their independence with high enthusiasm to restore income and wealth and increase the national standard of living through non-capitalist socialists (the Third World).

Nationalism movement spread rapidly in the third worlds in Asia and Africa countries, among others was Tunisia. There were many nationalist figures who were struggle against inequalities through various ways, such as education, politics, or literature. One of them was Anis Couchan, the poet who wrote many poems to awaken Tunisian people awareness of nationalism so that they could their best for their country's economic development. His works, such as *Fii Biladi* attracted the writer to do a research to unveil his ideas and spirit of nationalism implicitly the poem conveyed. It was also intended to maintain the people's openness in diversity to avoid the destruction of the nation.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Nationalism is an ideological movement to achieve and sustain the economy, unity, and identity for a population, with its members determined to establish actual or potential nation [3]. Nationalism is a concept that creates and maintains sovereignty of a country, by actualizing a shared identity concept for a group of people with similar goals or ideals, as well as the desire to defend his country, both from internal and external threats. It is also as a concept unity of race, religion, customs, culture and other differences. A nation with nationalism ideology will coexist safely, and the difference is not an obstacle to be one in achieving its purpose. Unity in nationalism starts with solidarity, where all groups must accept other group deficiency. In general, nationalism has three general elements, namely: national autonomy, national unity, and national identity [3]. In his paper, Adisusilo pointed out nationalism has multi meanings, depending on the objective and

subjective conditions of each nation. Therefore nationalism can be: (1) a sense of love for the homeland, race, language or the same culture, which in this case nationalism is the same as patriotism; (2) a desire for political independence, safety and prestige of the nation; (3) a mystical worship of the vague social organism, sometimes even supernatural referred to as a nation or folk; (4) a dogma that individuals only live for the nation and nation live for the sake of the nation itself; (5) a doctrine stating that nation's people must be the most dominant among other nations [4].

The formation of nationalism was inseparable from the experience of being colonized by other countries because colonialism created a national awareness of having the similarity of fate among ethnic groups and religions. This condition raised awareness of being free from colonization through establishing process of unity and oneness [5]. Nationalism grew and became an integral part of every nation, as its identity, therefore the country is the media responsible for sharing this national right to every its people.

Nationalism was not only found in the people real life, but it was also available in the literature. The works of narratives, drama, or even poems emphasized on the nationalism, especially when a country was colonialized, or when the inequality happened to all life aspects. Nationalism is a form of modern literature, where the reality and elements of literature are combined; both become a suitable blend in cradling the ears of the nation when they hear it. Every word that is peppered with diction has awaken the ideals that are floating freely, to give the opportunity to nations to take it, and make it part of themselves [6].

As nationalism became the main focus of analysis, the study makes use of a mimetic approach to the analysis of the data. It is to facilitate the reader in understanding the nationalism values contained in the poem. A mimetic approach is used in appreciating the literature which connects with the universe. literary works are a reflection, imitation, or imagery of the reality, and are considered as a social document[7]. In other words, literature is an imitation of the real situation, which the poet tries to describe and hopes that the picture will be as close as possible to what is happening in the reality. For example, when a political turmoil and social crisis happened in eastern nations, the authors hoped that western nations were able to find out such events from their literatures. However, all information was a reflection that they could only read the works, but did not experience the same thing.

III. METHOD

The study was a literature review that relied on the written data in the form of poem. The primary data was Couchane's poem "*Fii Baladi*" that was written in Arabic. It was a content analysis where the I used a mimetic approach by contrasting and comparing the ideas and spirit of the nationalism contained in the poem with the phenomena that occurred in Tunisia. Other relevant sources about the nationalism and democracy were also utilized to sharpen the analysis. The procedure of the analysis included reading the poem critically, identifying difficult words to understand, grasping the implied meaning and message of the

poem, comparing poem content to the reality happened to Tunisia; and drawing a conclusion based on the analysis.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Democracy in Tunisia*

Chouchane was a Tunisian poet who wrote poetry in Arabic as well as in French. His poems frequently voiced peace, freedom and antidiscrimination of black people living in Tunisia. Black people usually live in a residential area known as *Khan Alabeed*. His poem *Fii Baladi* also described such situation as the impact of liberal secularist system implemented in the country.

According to Voll, Tunisian government applied the Liberal Secularist Authoritarian. He acknowledged that the term was contradictory because liberalism as the basis of democracy was transformed into an authoritarian style [8]. Indeed, on the paper, the development of democracy in Tunisia offered a promising potential base and a supportive political situation. As the most "open" country in the Middle East in pro-Western governmental style is the main capital for strengthening democratization. The Constitution also states that democracy with the principle of division of powers, independence for association and aspiration is guaranteed by the state. Other conditions that are indicative of a democratic country are also almost completely owned by Tunisia. Multiparty seems to work well on the surface. However, for 25 years of its independence, Tunisia only has one official party that was Socialist Destour led by Bourguiba, and in 1981 the government passed two opposition parties. Allotted seats in parliament for the opposition increased from only 5% in 1994 to 25% the last election in 2009. The addition of opposition seats is not due to the increasing number of votes for opposition elections, but rather because of Ben Ali's policy to show democratization in the country he leads [9].

The growth of democracy was also characterized by the mushrooming of a large number of non-governmental organizations, such as Tunisian General Labor Union (TGLU). In addition to being instrumental in the history of independence, this trade union became a force of control that had functioned effectively as an opposition [10]. Besides TGLU, students General Union of Tunisian Students had also shown their strength as social-control against the government, especially during the Bourguiba era. Thousands of other organizations in the form of professional and sports were also recognized. Although the government was indeed very strict in issuing permits for new organizations, many illegal organizations had sprung up. These organizations were generally engaged in advocacy and efforts to strengthen the democracy [9].

Women's empowerment and recognition of human rights also received special attention from the government. Increasing women's social status had indeed become the main platform of development since independence. The number of women working in official state institutions was almost equal to the number of men, while more than 11% of women sat as people's representatives in the parliament. The government also provided wide opportunities for women to form associations so that organizations such as the *Tunisian Association of Democratic Women* (TADW) and *The Association of Tunisian*

Women for Research and Development (ATWRD) were formed. In human rights area, Tunisia ratified international law in 1987. This movement began in the early days of Ben Ali's administration. Although suspected of being a maneuver to shape the image and boost popularity, he formed the first human rights institution in Tunisia, *The Tunisian Human Rights League* (THRL), and made major changes in human rights reform by issuing political prisoners and revising the subversion law regarding the mechanism of arrest and detention [11].

Even so, the commitment of the Tunisian government in strengthening democratization was only contained on the paper and appeared on surface. In reality, the community did not enjoy political freedom. The government strictly limited the freedom of assembly, association and aspiration through surveillance, spying, and out-of-procedure arrests until torture. Through his power, the president dictated other institutions by dismantling individuals he wanted. Civil power was weakened and divided through a series of strict policies in the name of national unity and public order so that the state easily co-opted potentially vocal institutions. The government also strictly controlled press freedom [11].

B. Appreciation of the poem 'Fii Baladi' with Mimetic approach.

The analysis and appreciation of Chouchane's poem using the mimetic approach takes into consideration of the situation and the factors that influenced the creation of the poem itself, so that we can comprehend well [12]. This usually covers natural factors, social conditions and other things certainly playing an important role in encouraging someone to create a beautiful poem.

The mimetic approach is very suitable to describe the sense of nationalism in Chouchane's poem. Through his poems, he often discussed cultural disparities strengthening or awakening the nationalism. He also voiced peace, freedom and antidiscrimination against the black people living in Tunisia. Chouchane described the situation as closely as possible in his words, tried to reflect the picture to every line of his verse and brought the power of a sense so readers could feel as if they were in that situation. This poem can be classified as a rebellion poem, that usually dealt with the situation oscillated between literacy and the will to power, the rational and the irrational, desperate dreams and unjust actions [13]. In terms of its shape, *Fii Baladi* tends to be *mursal* and free that was no longer tied to *wazan* and *qafiyah* or *diwan*.

Using a mimetic approach to the analysis of Chouchane's poem, I understood how he tried to represent what happened to the society in his poem *Fii baladi*. Chouchane argued that the state has lost its sense of nationalism.

نحب البلاد ولكن فينا من يعاديه
فينا من بكل القبح يؤذيها
فينا من ينهش لحمها
ينخر عظمها

كأنما يريد تلاشيها

We love this country but some of us hate it
Among us there are people who harm her
Among us there are people who bite her
gnawing at his bones as if to destroy it

This fragment shows the sense of nationalism that is on the verge of disappearance caused by a group of people who no longer loved it. Some maintained it, but the other wanted to destroy it.

في بلدي هناك ذلك السارق
خارج عن القانون مارق يفعل ما بدا له
يحيا وكأنه الخارق
في بلدي هناك شيء جدا خطير
ففي بلدي لا احترام للفقير
أن تكون إنسان بسيطا معناه أنك أخص من بعير

In my country there is a thief
Who violating the law without trial
And acting as he wish
Feeling he is the best
In my country there is a very dangerous thing
In my country there is no respect for the poor
Being a generous person is more despicable than a camel.

This fragment describes the sense of imbalanced nationalism, because there is no justice. The sign of nationalism stands side by side with mutual help, so if the philanthropy or charity is deemed insulting, the national life will be weaker and finally extinct.

في بلدي عيبا أن يحترم الراعي
وجريمة كبرى أن تساويه بالوزير
في بلدي لا تساوي في الحقوق
ما تربينا على العدل فهذا عقوق
بل تربينا على تركيع الشريف
وإعلاء قدر من كان للحكام بوق

In my country to respects the shepherd is a blemish
And equating him with a ruler is a real crime
In my country inequality happens
We are not educated with justice, because justice is a
dissident
Instead, we were told to bend on our knees to the nobles
And glorify the judges who have power

This fragment is the core of his criticism against his country which was torn apart; there was no more respect to other people. This verse tells the life of a nation that lost its order. If it continues to occur, nationalism will disappear and the country

will be destroyed, because nationalism is the beginning of a country.

سلام لكن نساء الجبل
واحدة منكن بألف رجل
سلام لكل من يحب البلاد
سلام سلام لك يا بلد

Greetings of peace for you, women from the mountain
A thousand men comparable to one of you
Greetings of peace for each that love the country
Greetings of peace, greetings of peace to you, O country.

In the last verse of his poem, the Chouchane neutralized all the emotions with his typical greeting. Praying for the peacefulness of the women, and a thousand men comparable to one woman are a hymn to flatter women, a description about how strong a woman is and recognition of her hard work. Woman is a symbol of gentleness, but the mention of the mountains in the end of the verse made the word woman sound more resilient. Women actually saved more power compared to men. Their lives as a mother and a wife were an extraordinary challenge that was not easily done. In the concluding verse, he wished a peaceful greeting to everyone who loved the country and peaceful greeting for the country. This verse closed the poem *Fii Baladi* by leaving a good impression. Praying for the welfare of the country, and requesting that the nature and attitude of nationalism can continue to grow and be firmly planted in every nation so that living together becomes easier and more directed.

IV. CONCLUSION

In his poem *Fii Baladi*, Chouchane illustrated some problems faced by Tunisian related to injustice and inequality of the state. The poem also implied that some Tunisians did not want to accept differences, did not respect their neighbors, and let alone the poor. Therefore, Chouchane initiated a poem to expose attitude that was far from a sense of nationalism and that was the writer's concept of pure nationalism.

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