

Social Stratification and Negation of Ethnocentrism in Saadi's Gulistan and Bustan

Parviz Mohammadi

Department of Persian Language and Literature, Islamic Azad University Naghadeh Branch

Kamal Ghalandari¹

Assistant Professor, Department of Business Management, Payam-e Noor University

Received 21 February 2015

Revised 17 April 2015

Accepted 14 June 2015

Abstract: *Social stratification, formation of various classes and appearance of various layers in the society is a fact resulting from social conditions of public life and a wide variety of material, economic and subsistence factors as well as political situation, religious beliefs and public customs and thoughts; also ethnic divisions play an essential and undeniable role in this field. Greed and covetousness of the worldly-minded people increasingly widens the distance between the rich and the poor and causes deep gaps between social classes and exacerbates the differences between poor and rich classes. Saadi Shirazi drew the picture of inequality between upper classes of the society and middle and lower ones, increasing gap between various layers of the society and inequality between human groups as a tangible and visible fact through stories of Bustan and Gulistan and criticized the social conditions as a skilful critique and expressed his dissatisfaction with increased injustice and inequality. In his works, Sheikh of Shiraz, Saadi, explained and illustrated intrinsic characteristics and social behaviour of humankind and various classes of the society in a way that if he has addressed people of all ages and because of the same reason, he is considered as the most insightful poet and the most social Persian literature scholar and his words always feel fresh and effective and the impact of his exalted thoughts and high goals and deep influence of his words on national cultures and people's hearts all over the world are known to all.*

Keywords: *Human, society, stratification, Saadi Shirazi, Gulistan, Bustan.*

Introduction

Many thinkers consider human as a social being by nature and emphasize that theory but they have not referred to the cultural aspect of human beings. However during recent years some thinkers have considered human as a cultural being and said that the "society" is a cultural product and phenomenon and this mutual interaction between human and culture occurs within the context of society and on the social surface. Thus such words as human, culture, society, nation, religion, government, layer, class, etc. are associated with human as a cultural and social being in some way and as a result of this, these words obtain certain importance and significance and are analysed individually or collectively. In the field of literature, every time the above-said words are mentioned, quickly name of Saadi and his two valuable works Gulistan and Bustan come in mind because representations of the Iranian culture and society and reflections of human status and dignity and a call for collaboration, correlation and respect for individual and social rights of humans and introduction of various classes are all reflected in the panorama of the highly valuable works of Sheikh of Shiraz more than any other ones either in verse or prose and his deep and influencing look and his exalted thought are the essence of the Iranian culture and this high status and famous Iranian poet and speaker has shown his surprising and extraordinary capability in various fields; he has never enclosed himself in a limited and narrow domain and as a thoughtful critique, an insightful sociologist and a skilful psychologist has explained and illustrated the political and social conditions and analyzed ethical values and people morale; responsibility and commitment to human values is apparent in his words and as the speaker for the public, he has expressed various pains, problems and social, cultural and political dilemmas of the society and suggested solutions to resolve them. He has intertwined with people in such a way that he acts as a representative for various classes, groups and layers of the society. When he opens his mouth and starts to talk, it seems that he wants to express the problems of the whole society and various demands of the people with a loud voice.

¹ Email: kamal.ghalandari@gmail.com

Stratification and Appearance of Social Layers

Social stratification is of a high status in formation and survival of human communities and various opinions have been proposed for explanation of social stratification and appearance of different classes in the society. In total, they express “inequality among human groups”. Usually in social systems stratification is based on wealth, familial relationships, and other criteria. Some experts emphasize the point that over time inequality appeared gradually in social life of humans and show edit self as an inevitable necessity. This inequality led to appearance of various layers in the society who were not at the same level with respect to exploiting advantages and the same inequality resulted in unequal ownership of properties and assets and appearance of multiple social classes in the same way that unequal division of power leads to formation of various political parties and various degrees of dignity and respect and honour leads to social stratification and in each layer, there are people with same social status and dignity.

During two recent centuries, this issue has been addressed from both sociological and economic viewpoints and such thinkers as Karl Marx, Max Weber and others have provided various ideas and opinions in this respect. Undoubtedly, the main concern of humanists throughout the history has been equal exploitation of advantages and privileges by humans in every period and realization of justice so that social classes do not separate them and human equality is not violated by greed and covetousness of some humans. In early societies where the human life was based on hunting and gathering food in equal conditions, this humanistic equalitarian demand was realized more or less. But over time, greediness and covetousness of humans violated this equality and over time the gap between the rich and the poor increased in the society and presence of the poor and the rich became an undeniable fact and formation of classes resulted in social and political activities and appearance of equalitarian movements and greed and covetousness of the upper class increased to a great extent and increasingly weakened the poor and disadvantaged people and gap between social classes became deeper over time. Up to know humankind has not managed to find a solution for increasing inequality or at least alleviate this gap and because of not finding an essential and effective solution, inflation of power and accumulation of wealth and various social, political and economic advantages were realized for a certain social class and this led to appearance of big differences and multiple discrepancies and heterogeneities in various aspects of human life.

Throughout history and during multiple centuries, some people have tried to demonstrate that appearance of social classes and class gaps are undeniable necessities; in contrast, some egalitarians and equity seekers have called for equality and justice and have sincerely tried to remove discriminations and inequality from human society and erected the flag of fighting against violence, hypocrisy and dominance of the rich and it goes without say that in every society the combination of power, wealth and hypocrisy provides a comfortable and pleasure-seeking lifestyle full of feasting and dissipation for a minority and a life full of pain, sadness, suffering, distress, failure, disruption, hunger and inability for a majority. In such conditions and with respect to such distressing events, many sympathetic thinkers, poets and writers throughout history have called for and felt responsibility for showing their empathy towards the disadvantaged and the poor and have expressed their concern for and dissatisfaction with inequity, discrimination and inequality. Baba Taher Oryan Hamadani has drawn the picture of this bitter and heartrending reality in his pleasant couplets. In the following couplet, the deep class gap and unfortunate situation of the society in fifth AH century is seen clearly:

*“If I meet the heaven,
I would ask it to explain me,
Why it has given a lot of luxuries to someone,
And only a piece of bread soaked with blood to another one”*

Saadi also has referred to social classes in his works and he has deeply felt and criticized inequality and inequity. In seventh chapter of Gulistan, in “Dispute between Saadi and the Claimant”, he has discussed and debated with a dervish as a rich man. But finally it is seen that he has never aimed to support and defend the rich and people of power and wealth. Sheikh of Shiraz is a brave and objective person in critique and in expression of his opinions. Throughout history, most governments have supported the rich and powerful people explicitly or implicitly and this irrational and discriminatory movement has intensified and exacerbated the poverty and disadvantage among the lower class of the society given the fact that most kings and governors have been from upper classes of the society and the same biased movements and unfair attitudes have resulted in formation of freedom seeking movements with the aim of fighting against injustice and discrimination and realization of justice and restoring rights of the poor and disadvantaged. Given the above-said, formation of the group of Ayyars (Ayyar literally means a sportsmanlike and generous person) was also with the aim of restoring violated rights of the lower class of the society. Ayyars took risk, robbed from the wealthy and gave to the poor. They assumed that this movement

was the ultimate sportsmanship and manhood and a kind of equity seeking and fighting against oppression. In Bustan, Saadi has referred to one of those Ayyars who was a friend of him and considered him as unique in manhood and humanity.

In his book "Saadi's Sweet Words", Abdol Hossein Zarrin Koube referred to Saadi's Ayyar friend from Isfahan: "Saadi had enthusiastically come to Baghdad with Sham kafila to see the pure Persian people and revisit his homeland who left it thirty years ago in a disturbed and distressed situation (623 AH). He had joined a kafila heading towards Fars and after 30 years of residence in a foreign country, now (635AH) he had decided to return Shiraz passionately looking forward visiting his loved ones. He no longer wanted to stay in the land where he had lived there when he was a young man. In contrast to him, his Ayyar friend from Isfahan was very joyful and vivacious. The passing of time had not made him old. He had experienced hunger, disorder, hardship and nostalgia but though he was 50, he was passionate and vivacious as a 25 years old man. He travelled with kafilas while walking or riding; interacted with people and dealt with all companions in a friendly manner with a sense of humour. He talked to Arab in Arabic and in Persian to Persians; also he used Shirazi or Kazerouni dialects in talking to his fellow citizens. He made various remarks, mentioned different points and talked about his experiences and heard stories. He talked to Kazeroun young about his romantic experiences and love stories and mentioned his long distance travels for the older people. He attracted all people who listen his words and sometimes allowed himself to refer to the heard stories as his first-hand experience" (Zarrin Koube, 2000:31). In fifth chapter of Bustan, Sheikh of Shiraz has described his Ayyar friend as the following:

*"I had a friend in Isfahan,
Who was a gentleman and warrior?
Always his hands and dagger were bloody,
And his enemies were all afraid of him,
I never saw his horse not ready to travel
And his steel arrows not sharpened,
He was powerful as a bull
And lions were afraid of him,
He threw small narrows in races in such a way that,
No one was able to resist against him,
I never saw a thistle within a flower,
Like his arrows into the shields coupled together,
Every time he threw sun-dried bricks towards a warrior's head,
The warrior's helmet and head inevitably mixed together,
As a sparrow attacking grasshoppers,
In fight day he never minded whether facing a sparrow or a man
Even if he fought Fereidoun,
Did not let him to draw his sword,
He had defeated panthers by his strength
And thrust his hands into lions' brains,
He grasped the warriors' belts
And lifted them up even if they were like a mountain,
When he hit an armour-clad with his battle-axe,
It passed through him and reached his horse saddle.
No one had seen or heard of a man superior to him,
Either in manhood or sportsmanship,
He always was in my companion,
And he was a pure and honest man"*
(Bustan, proofread by Foroughi, 1963, p.154).

With a glance at the above literature, it is found that this Ayyar of Isfahan had prominent qualities with respect to physical strength, fighting power, success in battlefield, manhood and chivalry spirit, humanity and altruism and compensation for violation of the poor and disadvantage requires having such qualities. Most thinkers and scholars in sociology, history, international relations and other fields have made remarks on social stratification and various social classes. The late Mahmoud Rouhol Amini has said the following in this regard:

"since time the human society removed from the agricultural-animal husbandry period and reached sedentism and finally urbanization period, inevitably division of work emerged and specialized jobs were appeared; also diversity of religious, governmental and military policies was reflected in appearance of various groups and layers in the society and each layer and group secured his survival and social and cultural development by protection of these

borders and divisions". This evolutionary trend has been described by the scholar of 5th century AH, Imam Mohammad Ghazzali:

"World is established based on three elements: food, clothes and house. Also the basis of industry which is a necessity for all human beings comprised three elements: agriculture, weaving and building and each element has its own branches (...). Then cotton beaters, spinners, tailors, blacksmiths, carpenters and haberdashers appeared and they needed to collaborate with each other. Thus transactions were conducted between them and as a result of it, hostilities appeared. Then three other industries were created: politics and monarchy, governance and judgement and finally jurisprudence for mediation between people..."

Social stratification can be considered as social separation and classification in which roles and positions and protection of hierarchies are important. Thus social layer refers to a group of individuals having the same role, position and status in the social hierarchy. No society is known which has been able to survive without this social hierarchy and classification. Scholars have studied social groupings based on political, economic, religious, status and other aspects and have explained them from various perspectives.

According to Aristotle, social stratification before Solon reforms comprised of two classes i.e. the nobles and common people. Also he mentioned Hectemer class (which means slaves). This word was derived from Hecte which means the sixth because traditionally the nobles gave the sixth part of their crops to the slaves. Craftsmen and farmers were among this group. According to Aristotle, this situation continued until Solon appeared as the champion of people" (Rouhol Amini, 1998: 111-112).

Undoubtedly, formation of various social classes and layers in the society is a result of conditions of social life of people and material factors; also it is influenced by economic situation and even political one, religious beliefs and ethnic division contributing to appearance of various social classes and social stratification. In essential, people themselves know to what social class they belong with respect to their economic situation and social status and most analysts, scholars and experts in political and social fields emphasize on this tangible fact. Thus in every period including Saadi's one, it was easy to understand social status of each citizen. Today with respect to increased population and multiplication of jobs and diversity in social life of people, some difficulties are observed in social stratification and formation of various classes in the society. Despite of this fact, upper, lower and middle classes still can be recognized in the society. Indeed classification of people into various classes is an objective fact which is based upon economic, political and cultural characteristics and it is conducted by the people themselves before any form of analysis and divisions by political, economic,... schools of thoughts. In fact people in every class know their status in the society very well without being aware of various political school of thoughts and opinions of scholars and relevant experts" (Akbari, 1977:28).

Various Social Classes in the Works of Sheikh of Shiraz

Saadi also has referred to social classes in the society with respect to social, political, cultural and economic conditions of Mongol era and temporal contingencies and context of it. He has considered minor and major issues of the society as an insightful sociologist and not enclosed himself within the literature and poetry territories such as some writers and poets; he has mentioned social, political, cultural and economic situation of people life with a deep and extensive vision. He has referred to multiple kings and governors and also instability of governments; also he has pointed to ministers and governmental agents and also to Sufis and judges. Also he has referred to professional and occupational, scientific and governmental qualities and various sciences and techniques. He has mentioned life conditions, status and social dignity of various social classes and jobs including kings, ministers, municipals, watchmen, preachers, businessmen, teachers, policemen, cloth-dealers, grocers, physicians, craftsmen, cobblers, surgeons, pedlars, wheat sellers, barely sellers, shepherds, door keepers, sages, orators, druggists, tailors, goldsmiths, coppersmiths, colonels, court officials, water-carriers, oil-pressers, money-changers, perfumers, bleeders, philosophers, jurisprudents, judges, educators, engineers, muezzins, veterinary surgeons, warriors, harpists, camel-drivers, field watchmen, portraitists, potters, pickpockets, bride-dressers, washers of the dead, hired musicians, slave-dealers, sailors, painters and some other professions and jobs.

In full version of Saadi's poetical works, prepared by Mazaher-Mosaffa, 120 issues and subjects has been listed as an appendix describing some jobs, professions, techniques and sciences mentioned by Saadi.

Among various poets and speakers, Saadi is outstanding with respect to explaining and describing various aspects of society and different issues including markets, jobs and professions of the contemporaneous people and manufacturers and sellers of goods and products of all kinds and addressing their professional status. In his

valuable works, particularly Gulistan and Bustan, Saadi has referred to such various professions as oil-pressers, perfumers, money-changers, date-palm growers, dealers of imitation jewellers, pedlars, glass-blowers, jewellers, copper-smiths, shoe smiths, veterinary surgeons, black-smiths, etc.

*“What is the function of tongue within the mouth?
It is the key for the wealth box of the ingenious man,
If door of the wealth box is locked, who knows
If he is a jeweller or a pedlar?”*
(Gulistan, proofread by Yousefi, Preface, p.53).

“Imitation Jewells are neglected by jewellers and lights are outshined by the sun and a high lighthouse is short compared to Alvand Mountain”.

*“Everyone who claim he is superior,
Would become overthrown, head downward
Saadi is a humble freeman,
No one would like to fight with a humble person,
First think and then talk
First foundation is built, then the wall”*

“I am skilful in date-palm growing, but not in the garden; I would like to show my beauty but not in Kan’aan. Loqman was asked: From whom did you learn your wisdom? He said:” from blind people who do not place their foot on the ground until they check it.
First try your virility and then take a woman”
(Gulistan, proofread by Yousefi, Preface, p.56).

These various jobs and professions belong to different social classes and it goes without saying that from social classification perspective, ministers, governmental officials, businessmen, colonels, money-changers, goldsmiths, judges and physicians are not in the same class as policemen, shoe smiths, shepherds, and water-carriers. Muezzins, etc. and in every society, whether simple or sophisticated, different social classes can be seen and every class comprises of people with similar characteristics and qualities. With respect to social classes, sociologists, philosophers and other scholars have made remarks. For example in his Republic, Plato addressed social classes to enhance the quality of the whole society and as a result of this valuable work the Utopia was shaped (Sarou Khani, 1989:7). The so called “social stratification” has not been appeared simultaneously with the term “social class”; but Marx and other previous thinkers employed the latter to explain social issues and economic, social and political subjects and much later, the term “social layers or strata” drew the attention of scholars in social issues and sociological texts.

According to Allen Biro in Social Sciences Dictionary, social layer consists of a set of individuals or groups placed at the same level in the process of social stratification. In sociology, various layers of the society are placed on top of one another. Social layers are placed in different levels and judged by people based on their situation and qualities. Farmers, industrial employers, workers and employees form various social layers. Typically, people from a social layer have similar life opportunities and routines; also they have some kind of awareness of their position and status” (Malek 1995:18). Study of outstanding scholars and philosophers’ opinions on social stratification shows that some of them including Farabi were influenced by Plato’s thoughts and some others were influenced by Aristotle’s views. Also another group including Ibne Khaldoun had almost independent views. Mohammad Ghazzalli, one of the outstanding thinkers of Iran and Islamic World, provided his opinions on the origin of social classes and layers. Also Saadi Shirazi addressed social and individual characteristics and behaviours of humans in his works particularly in Gulistan and Bustan and referred to attitudes and intellectual qualities of people in various social classes in the society through his stories. In his works, Saadi has criticized social issues and explained individual characteristics and qualities of people with ultimate insight and awareness and it seems as if this outstanding poet and speaker of 7th century AH has talked about the problems in today modern society. He has addressed social problems of today society with a deep insight and sociological perspective. Saadi has described social problems in such a skilful and tangible manner which it seems that he has spoken for all ages and periods. Because of the same fact Saadi can be considered as the most aware and most social poet and his words always has been influential and fresh because he has addressed various aspects of human social life with a deep insight and accurate methodology and communicated them to people in a favourable manner; thus effectiveness of his valuable and precious works is known to all. His thoughts and words are outcomes of a long-distance travel and they are resulted from familiarity with culture of various people and more than half-century of effort, movement

and accumulations of knowledge and experience in various fields and a look towards his social environment and a glance at the most prominent social issues in his works reveal the reason for permanency of the influence of his thoughts and the extensiveness and depth of his spiritual penetration into thought and culture of the society (Torabi, 1997:133).

What has been less addressed in studies on Gulistan is “the inherent, surprising and strange connection of it with environment, people and their routine daily life. Shoemakers, sailors, school managers, thieves, wrestlers, pious people, dervishes, the bare-headed pedestrian, camels and Caravans all are among the heroes of Saadi in Gulistan and his personal experience associated with a rich and surprising background of his talent, capability and insight all have been employed and reflected in this book. The same elements form the essence of the book and communicate with every individual across the world. Saadi engages in telling stories and appears as a sweet spoken man who not only carries the heavy and valuable load of Persian literature but also he assimilates and digests the ideological and exciting culture of his own time and offers it in a charming and beautiful way” (Homayouni, 1990:142- cited by Saadiology, third book). Undoubtedly, Gulistan is as how case of the society of Saadi’ sera. Various characters and personalities forming the human society appear in this showcase and show different social roles and various actions. Saadi draws these characters with their various activities and attitudes and various life manners. In particular “329 characters and professions are mentioned in Gulistan and among them kings are mentioned 47 times, scholars, the pious and ascetic people, scientists and worshipers are mentioned 39 times and governments and common people are mentioned 86times” (Milani, 1990:117, cited by Saadiology, third book). Saadi criticizes performance of various layers of the society as a sharp-sighted critic. Also as an informed and insightful sociologist and skilful psychologist, he engages in explanation and analysis of deeds and behaviour of various personalities and mentions some ethical and behavioural faults with a stinging critique including hypocrisy, telling lies, flattery, opportunism, greed and stinginess, etc. and rejects these qualities. In 36th story of chapter 2 of Gulistan, Saadi refers to behaviours and manners of dervishes with a humorous language:

“A disciple said to his spiritual guide: I am embarrassed of the large number of people continuously coming to see me and I get disturbed because of their frequent visits. What should I do with this problem? He replied: give loans to dervishes and ask the rich for something so that no one of them goes back to you.

*If a beggar is the forerunner of the Islam army
Pagans would flee towards the China gate,
Because of their fear of the beggar demands”*
(Gulistan, proofread by Yousefi, second chapter, 36th story, P.103).

In the above-mentioned story two categories i.e. dervishes and the rich are compared with respect to psychological features and behavioural qualities; dervishes are very ignorant in repaying their loans and the rich run away from solving the problems of needy people”. On the other hand, the poor dervish always expect others’ help and assistance and never tries to meet his needs and solve his own problems. In 37th story of Gulistan the comparison is between scholars and the pious people and the significant role of scientists and scholars is emphasized to inform people and the society.

“A jurisprudent said to his father:’ none of these charming words of preachers influences me because I see their actions are not in harmony with their words’.

*“They advise people to avoid worldliness
But accumulate grain and silver themselves,
When a scholar does not follow what he says
His words would have no influence on others,
A scholar is one who do not engage in bad deeds,
Not one who provide advices to the people
And do not follow the advices himself”*
Do you command people to do good deeds but ignore yourself?
*“A scholar who is self-indulgent and pleasure seeking,
Indeed has lost himself, then how can he guide others?”*

His father said: “my son, merely because of this futile thought, do not avoid words and learning s of the preachers [and accuse the scholars of digression] and do not make yourself deprived of useful knowledge as a blind person who had fallen in a well in one night and cried: you Muslims! Please provide me with a light. A humorous woman heard his words and said: “you do not see the light itself, then what do you expect to see with the light?”Also a

preaching circle is such a cloth-dealer store where you would not acquire an item until you pay cash and in the preaching circle you would not achieve prosperity and happiness until you do show your devotion.

*“Listen to the words of the scholar carefully
Even if he do not follow his own advices,
And it is not true that
A sleeping person is not able to wake up the other one,
Human should pay attention to the advice
Even if it is written on a wall”,
“A wise person came to the school from monastery,
By this act, he ended his companion with people of the way,
I asked him: what was the difference between the pious people and scholars
That you left the former and joined to the latter?
He replied: a pious person tries to save himself from waves
But a scholar tries to save the drowning ones”,
(Gulistan, proofread by Yousefi, second chapter, 37th story, pp.103-104)*

In the above story, incompatibility between words and deeds of the hypocritical scholars who cannot influence others by their advices is mentioned.

In the above story, the jurisprudent tries to disclose hypocritical deeds and words of such scholars and pious people who lead people towards abandonment of world pleasures and engagement in spirituality and themselves are drowned deeply in mundane pleasures and self-indulgence and in this way Saadi compares real world with hypocritical one and draw a picture of reality based on which hypocritical scholars embark upon self-indulgence and exploiting mundane pleasures and it should not be expected that they lead people towards the real prosperity; Saadi argues that ignorant and deviant scholars are not capable to guide people. However besides disclosing the real nature of worldly-minded and pleasure seeking scholars, he minds protection of the status and dignity of real scholars and emphasizes on continuous education and learning and argues that pleasure-seeking, ignorance and deviation of a few number of hypocritical and pleasure-loving scholars should not lead to any damage to the high-status of true scholars; thus in above-mentioned story, the father of the jurisprudent objects him and say that he should not avoid valuable teachings of the benevolent scholars and accuse all of them of being deviant and pleasure seeking only because of an biased thought. Later in the story Saadi uses the effective language of humour and emphasizes that “those who wait for appearance of pure scholars indeed make themselves deprived of knowledge and learning; they are like a blind person who fell into a well in a dark night and sough for a light. A woman with sense of hum our heard his saying and said: when you are not able to see the light itself, thus you would not able to see anything by it. Saadi proposes a viewpoint different with that of Sanaei Ghaznavi with respect to education and acquisition of knowledge.

In an elegy, Sanaei says:

*“You, the good natured lovers,
You, the gracious and good people, be joyful,
Your coach is sleeping and you are too,
Then is a sleeping person able to wake up the other sleeping one?”
(Cited by Gulistan proofread by Yousefi, P365)*

Saadi criticises Sanaei implicitly and believes that a valuable word is useful even if it is said by a hypocritical scholar and according to a famous hadith; we should focus on the words not on the people who say them. Finally in the above-mentioned story, Saadi prefers schools and scientific circles over monasteries and circles of people of the way and by mentioning a wise man who left the Sufis and joined the scholars he emphasizes that a Sufi only seeks to save himself from carnal temptations but a real scholar seeks to escape the whole society from deviation and ignorance. According to this viewpoint, Saadi’s preference for scholars over the pious people and Sufis resembles multiple hadiths including one saying the priority of the scholar over the pious man is like the priority of the 14th day moon over all other stars” (Cited by Gulistan proofread by Yousefi, P.369).

Negation of Ethnocentrism and Call for Correlation

Human as the most valuable creature of the god and his proxy on the earth has passed through various stages with respect to social life and since he was a social being by nature, human life gradually shifted from individual life towards social and collective one resulting from need for fighting against natural disasters and meeting various

economic-social needs and in this way humans were led towards civilization and social life and “from organizational viewpoint, human life started as small and correlated groups based on kinship. Later, these groups were extended to ever bigger units ranging from tribes to nations. Government or in other words groups organized around a governmental system appeared at a later time (Pouladi, 1979:1). Throughout their social life, humans have made effort to establish their ethnical and national superiority in addition to proving their individual superiorities and advantages and since humans are mainly perfectionist and seek superiority, thus they are interested in superiority of their own groups, ethnicity, nation, culture and system. In this way, radical ethnocentrism and extreme nationalism have always been causes for hostility, violation and long term wars and struggles.

Indeed Ethnocentrism is a type of “self-centrism” and self-orientation” at an extended level and in other words it is considered as solipsism beyond the level of proving individualism. With respect to sense of belonging of every person to a certain group or culture and system, dominance-seeking and comparison between groups, cultures and nations appear and because of the same fact biased attitudes and radical positions increasingly result in national and group conflicts. In this way humankind ignores realities consciously or unconsciously and is captured by self-centrism, prejudice and fanaticism. Therefore, it can be claimed that ethnocentrism is based upon self-centrism with respect to self-culture and radical and inordinate respect for and interest in ethnic customs and traditions and ethnic-cultural symbols and naturally one reason for conflict, hostility and violation in societies is the same radicalism related to ethnic and cultural values. With a deep reflection on viewpoints of Sheikh of Shiraz, it reveals that he viewed the Iranian citizens as one “society” and nation and “nationalism” of Saadi should not be confounded with “nationalism” or the worse, with “ethnocentrism”. Absolutely human society is an entity with historical totality which should continuously take steps towards movement and activity and this social dynamism and natural rule of social change and evolution are reflected in the words of Saadi and his call for peaceful symbiosis and correlation of humans, With respect to the above-said, in chapter8 of Gulistan named as “On the Rules of Conversation”, Saadi shows his dissatisfaction with “ethnocentrism” and extreme feelings related to it:

“Everyone thinks that he is of perfect wisdom and his children are all beautiful”,

“There was a struggle between a Jew and a Muslim

In a way that it made me laugh,

The annoyed Muslim said the Jew,

O God, if my title-deed is not true,

Then make me to die Jew,

The Jew said: I swear on the Bible,

If I do wrong, then I am a Muslim like you,

If wisdom is no longer exist on the world,

No one would be suspicious of his own wisdom”

(Gulistan, Proofread by Yousefi, Chapter 7:175).

Though in the mentioned literature problems of religious radicalism and prejudice are raised in some way, they may be extended to extremism, radical sense of belonging, prejudice and fanaticism in other fields including ethnocentrism and in Saadi’s view, human communities have been afflicted with dominance-seeking, and self-centrism in intellectual, religious, ethnical and cultural dimensions and this irrational prejudice make Saadi Shirazi laugh at fanatics and self-centred people who are captured by intellectual rigidity. It is obvious that throughout history the most significant factors causing battles and bleeding, destruction and helplessness, division and disruption and lack of correlation among groups and nations, have been cultural, religious, racial, linguistic and ethnic self-centrism and superiority-seeking and even now blind fanaticism and radicalism and dominance-seeking attitudes prepare the ground for struggles and wars and exacerbation of conflicts and divisions. These conditions mainly result from intellectual rigidity, lack of dynamism and flexibility, etc. However God’s purpose for creation of humans include revolution and transformation, and finally dynamism, convergence, continuity and empathy of nations and ethnicities and social groups should be in movement like sun, moon, earth and other planets and are not submitted to and afflicted with disuniting fanaticism and bias. The almighty God says in the Verse 33 of the Surah Anbiae’ “And he is the god who created night and day and sun and moon (and other stars) with perfect power and each one revolved in a specific orbit” and according to an interpretation by the wise man Hakim Naser Khosrow Qobadiani Balkhi:

“These soil and heavens and the stars

Revolving around them in day and night

All are your throne“,

Or according to Hakim Eqbal Lahouri:

*“The humbled coast said that though I have lived for a long time,
Finally it is not clear that who am I?
An abnegated wave roared fast and said”
I exist because I go, if I do not move, I do not exist”*,

Thus persistence of the “real existence” of human depends upon his dynamism and movement and stasis and stagnancy are the same as disappearance and non-existence; also dynamism and flexibility of human thought prevent him from self-centrism and myopia and escape groups and nations from ethnocentrism and the latter means that:

“when comparing and judging, individuals usually consider their own group, culture and ethnicity as the criterion and benchmark for high quality, perfection and right measures and differences between their own and those of others is interpreted as lowness, irrationality and incorrectness of the latter. This feature which appears in all societies in direct or indirect ways, whether consciously or unconsciously is called ethnocentrism.

Montesquieu believed that non-European cultures are equal with savagery. European missionaries, some of them wrote valuable notes and books on demography, have reported religious beliefs and traditions of colonies as irreligious, magic and strange acts and customs. Examples for ethnocentrism also can be found in stories and histories of nations and ethnicities. Such concepts and themes as “the Iranians are full of art” in the Persian literature is an example in this field. Ethnocentrism is one of the factors which make it difficult to measure phenomena in a cultural and particularly non-material ones because evaluation of such entities as kinship, beliefs, language and art in a society is in such a way that the evaluator makes comparisons by considering his/her own ethnicity as a benchmark and favours his own society” (Rouhol Amini, 1986). “In current social science, an ethnic group is defined with different characteristics with respect to religions, tribes, castes, regions, languages, nationalities, races, skin colors, families and cultures. These characteristics solely or in combination with various other ones are used to define ethnicity or ethnic group but it is hard to know the most important one among them. Anthony Smith numerated six main attributes for an ethnic group including a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific homeland and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population. An ethnic group is a distinctive part of people in a large community which is different with it respecting to one or more above-mentioned attributes. Presence of ethnic and cultural groups in the society is a common and prevalent phenomenon and almost is observable in any culture ranging from that of natives of the Kalahari Desert to modern Europa and America. Though the term “ethnicity” is a new word, sense of kinship, group correlation and common culture implied by this term is as old as the human being exists. Ethnic groups and ethnic gatherings have been existed in all periods and continents and have played a significant role in all communities” (Morshedi Rad 2005:10-11). In study of the strategies related to the ethnicity category, presence of ethnic diversity with paradoxical characteristics is undeniable. Some old ethnic groups have more deep roots with a multi-thousand history and other ones are emerging ethnic groups without long-term background; in total all ethnic groups contribute to formation of a nation specially the old ones. It is obvious that primordality of ethnic groups is a prominent and significant aspect of them. For example if we speak of the Iranian “nation” instead of Iran country or the Iranian “community” and link it with “Aryan race”, “Persian language” and “ancient history” and also add the Islamic history of Iran to this collection, still millions of the Iranian people who are long standing citizens of the country would be excluded from the Iranian nation, would not be taken into account and it is not a rational and realistic definition. These excluded ethnic groups include Turks, Balouch, Kurds and Arabs (and other ethnic and religious groups). In conclusion, each of these excluded candidates is forced to create a nation and even a country for itself within Iran or even outside of it and in this way gives meaning to its identity and defines it. This would not be in the best interests of the Iranian society and also it is impossible. On the other hand, abandoning one’s own ethnic identity and being considered as a small particle potentially prepares the ground for appearance of crisis, Exiling these groups based on this irrational assumption that they are not of an Aryan race and their mother tongue is not Persian is detrimental to the territorial integrity of Iran and correlation between various groups forming the Iranian society” (Altaei, 2001:29).

Conclusions

Throughout the history, main concern of humanists and their continuous efforts have been towards realization a world where all humans are able to exploit equal advantages and rights and live together without any form of discrimination and inequity so that formation of classes and various social layers do not act as an impediment to realization of human rights and human dignity and high status is not violated by greed and pleasure-seeking people; they have tried to prevent upper class of the society from violating the rights of the lower class consisting of the

poor and disadvantaged and exacerbating their already miserable life conditions. Saadi Shirazi with a full insight of this obvious fact has tried to make the lower class aware of their basic human and social rights and warn the upper class, powerful and wealthy people and make them committed to altruism and justice; Saadi has invited all people to consider human correlation and solidarity as a significant mission of all humans and there was no interruption in his effort towards these aims. Obviously finding an effective solution to fill class gaps, preventing power inflation and wealth accumulation, warning the upper class against exploiting unfair advantages and fighting against discrimination and inequity are the main missions of all poets and writers. Presence of various classes and layers in the society is a natural phenomenon but combination of power, wealth and hypocrisy provides a comfortable and pleasure-seeking lifestyle full of feasting and dissipation for a minority and a life full of pain, sadness, suffering, distress, failure, disruption, hunger and inability for a majority. Saadi, with his accurate understanding of the social conditions shows unreliability of world life, transient nature of power and governance, temporariness of human life and perish ability of wealth and mundane power and glory and invite oppressive and cruel governors towards realization of justice and humanity, altruism, respect for human dignity, being kind to their subjects, honouring people and commitment to high human values.

References

1. Akbari, Ali (1977), "Study of some social problems", third edition, Tehran: Sepehr Publishing
2. Altaei, Ali (2001), "Group identity in sociology", Monthly Book of Social Sciences, fourth edition, No 7-8, Tehran: Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance Publishing
3. Foroughi, Mohammad Ali (1963), "Saadi Shirazi's Kollyyat", first edition, Tehran: Eqbal Publishing
4. Holy Quran, translated by Mahdi Elahi Qomshei, (1975), Tehran: Salehi Publishing
5. Kamali Sarvestani, Kourosh, (2000), "Saadiology", third book, first edition, Bonyad-e-Fars Publishing, Paper of "Saadi and king manners" by Abbas Milani
6. Kamali Sarvestani, Kourosh, (2000), "Saadiology", third book, first edition, Shiraz, Bonyad-E-Fars Publishing, Paper of "Folklore and Saadi's Gulistan" by Sadeq Homayouni
7. Malek, Hassan (1995), "Sociology of Layers and social inequalities", first edition, Tehran: Payame-Noor Publishing
8. Morshedi Zad, Ali, (2005) "Azari intellectuals and national and ethnic identity", second edition, Tehran: Central Publishing
9. Pouladi, Kamal (2006), "History of political thought in Iran and Islam", first edition, Tehran: Central Printing House
10. Rouhol Amini, Mahmoud, (1986), "Cultural studies", first edition, Tehran: Attar Publishing
11. Rouhol Amini, Mahmoud, (1998), "Cultural and social representations in the Persian literature", second edition, Tehran: Agah Publishing
12. Sarou Khani, Baqer, (1989), "Research methodologies in social sciences", second edition, Tehran: Research Centre for Humanities and Cultural Studies
13. Torabi, Ali Akbar, (1997), "Sociology of Persian literature", first edition, Tabriz, Forouqe Azadi Publishing
14. Yousefi-Gholam Hossein, (1995), "Proof reading and explanation of Saadi's Gulistan" fourth edition, Tehran: Kharazmi Publishing
15. Zarrin Koub, Hossein, (2000), "Saadi's sweet words", first edition, Tehran: Sokhan Publishing