



## Extended Abstract

**DOI:10.22099/JBA.2025.50757.4547**

### **Akhavan-Sales and Romantic Regression; Considerations on the Theoretical Foundations of Mahdi Akhavan- Sales' Archaism**

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#### **Introduction**

Many scholars consider Mehdi Akhavan-Sales to be one of the most devout adherents to tradition in contemporary Persian poetry. Research indicates that this theory, generally based on textual evidence derived from the surface structure of Akhavan-Sales' poetry, has evolved into a dominant narrative in contemporary scholarship. The key question now is whether this inclination towards tradition, often described as archaism or Iranism, in its original and conventional sense –a dynamic discourse aimed at recreating a new order in various societal spheres– is also present and active in Akhavan-Sales' intellectual framework and, consequently, in the deep structure of his poetry. In other words, does Mehdi Akhavan-Sales' Iranism align with the specific goals and ideals of Iranism in the Constitutional Revolution and in the discursive context and political atmosphere of post-Constitutional Iran? To answer this question, Akhavan-Sales' poetry has been subjected to a content analysis that goes beyond the horizontal axis of the poem. The results obtained from the interpretation and explanation of these works show that although Akhavan-Sales extensively refers to the discourse of ancient Iran, particularly its myths and symbols –at the level of the surface structure of the poem– he has not translated and conveyed the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of this discourse in his intellectual system. Akhavan-Sales' poetry is at a significant distance

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**Article Info: Received:** 2024-07-22, **Accepted:** 2025-02-01



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from the fundamental components embedded in the discourse of ancient Iran, such as hope, light, the concept of the sacred, eschatology, and the triumph of good. For this very reason, Akhavan-Sales' traditionalism, as a purely romantic regression, has rebelled against its own origin and purpose –namely, the creation of practice and agency.

### Methodology and historical research

This research, in terms of its objective, is a fundamental study conducted by the use of a qualitative approach. The aim of this research is to go beyond the surface structure of the poetry and reach deeper layers of the text. The works examined include parts of Akhavan-Sales' first book of poetry, *Arghanun*, up to the book *To You, O Ancient Land and Homeland, I Am Devoted*, with a greater emphasis on Akhavan's more recent poems. In terms of data collection, this research is theoretical, and data was collected through library research and note-taking. The data was analyzed using qualitative content analysis.

Numerous dissertations, books, and articles have been written about Akhavan-Sales. Regarding Akhavan's inclination towards ancient Iran, the following can be mentioned: Moradi and Abdroyani (2011), in an article titled "Heritage in the Poetry of Mehdi Akhavan-Sales and Amal Dunqal," have examined and compared heritage and mythology in the poetry of the two poets (Moradi & Abdroyani, 2011: 32-33). Esmaeili (2016), in an article titled "Temporal Norm Violation in Akhavan-Sales' Poetry," argues that archaism is one of Akhavan's linguistic and stylistic features, stemming from his familiarity with classical Persian literature, his frustration and despair, and consequently his refuge in antiquity and mythology (see Esmaeili, 2016: 33). Modarresi and Ahmadvand (2004), in an article titled "The Reflection of Archaism in Akhavan-Sales' Free Verse," have concluded that Akhavan has a strongly archaistic approach in his free verse, and this approach is not limited to his use of archaic words, but he also demonstrates his interest and mastery of the literature of ancient Iran, especially Khorasan, by using archaic syntactic structures in his poems (see Modarresi & Ahmadvand, 2004: 69). Ahmadpour (2007), in an article titled "Language and Archaistic Uses in the Poetry of Mehdi Akhavan-Sales," has enumerated the main reasons for Akhavan's approach to archaism.

A review of these and some of the other points that will be presented in the analysis shows that Akhavan is an archaist inclined towards the discourse of pre-Islamic Iran. The book *Suddenly, Which Star Is Setting?* also presents the theories of prominent scholars regarding Akhavan and his archaism, all of which point to Akhavan's archaism.

This article will show that although Akhavan-Sales extensively refers to the discourse of ancient Iran, particularly its myths and symbols at the surface level of the poems, he has not translated and conveyed the philosophical and theoretical dimensions of this discourse in his intellectual system.

### Results and Discussion

Archaism, as defined so far, is oriented towards a specific goal. Archaism, and more specifically Iranism, in its specific and conventional definitions, means paying attention to and respecting past traditions in order

to recreate a new order. This issue was particularly raised during the Constitutional Revolution and its function, in addition to raising awareness, was to develop a program to escape from backwardness and create a new order in various aspects of society. From such a perspective, many researchers, without paying attention to the vertical axis of poetry and based only on the surface structure of the poem and the signs present in this section, have concluded that Akhavan-Sales is a completely Iranist poet. In this article, we will show that what is presented as Iranism in Akhavan-Sales' poetry among researchers is in conflict with the internal logic of archaism and Iranism, and Akhavan's return to ancient traditions is merely a romantic regression lacking a foundation.

### Conclusion

According to the findings of this article, Akhavan-Sales has transferred the elements and symbols of ancient Iran to the level of language and into the realm of his poetry. However, by neglecting the philosophical and theoretical aspects of the discourse of ancient Iran, he has diverted archaism into a different path that can be seen as a rebellion against Iran and tradition. From this perspective, Akhavan's poetry is at a significant distance from the fundamental components embedded in the discourse of ancient Iran, such as hope, light, the concept of the sacred, eschatology, and the triumph of good over evil. If in ancient Iran, especially in Zoroastrian traditions, the final victory belongs to the camp of Ahura Mazda in the conflict between good and evil, in Akhavan's poetry, this issue takes on a different aspect. In Mehdi Akhavan-Sales' poetry, the complete victory belongs to Ahriman, and only stagnation and inevitable deadlock are evident in the landscapes of society. Akhavan is not unaware of history. Our argument is not about his ignorance of history. The discussion is about the transfer of theoretical foundations, and in this article, we have shown that Akhavan has not transferred these very important and decisive foundations into his poetry.

**Keywords:** Akhavan-Sales, ancient Iran, archaism, agency, dualism, Ahura Mazda, Ahriman

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