

**Refusing Slavery and Appreciating Liberty  
in *Death of the Wolf* by Alfred de Vigny and *Dogs and Wolves* by  
Mehdi Akhavan-Sales**

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Human concepts have always had similar and absolute values in all times, places and languages. Liberty, which is an instance of such concepts, is the ultimate aim of any individual who aspires to freedom. Although this quality is inborn, it needs nurturance to lead the individual to his ultimate aim. The concept of freedom can be defined as the individual's liberation from whatever binds and saves him from entrapment in futilities and trivialities of life. However, the opposite quality of dependence is sometimes deployed against this spiritual quality and can degrade the individual to the level of slavery. This negative quality, which has been defined as a sort of connection and continuity, binds the individual to something or someone and can prove detrimental to his freedom through setting up unpremeditated and excessive interest in that person or thing. A curious and interested reading of the poetry of Alfred de Vigny and Mehdi Akhavan-Sales encouraged the examination of the two opposing concepts of slavery and freedom in Alfred de Vigny's *Death of the Wolf* and Mehdi Akhavan-Sales's *Dogs and Wolves* from a spiritual-ethical perspective to further delineate the viewpoints of these two pioneers of Romantic school in France and blank verse in Iran concerning life and philosophy of being. It

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should be noted that whenever major concepts in the poetry of these two poets have been subjected to study, the concepts intended to be discussed here have been mentioned as indispensable features of their style of poetry. Studies conducted on the abovementioned poems indicate that de Vigny – whose Romanticism is endowed with philosophy – expresses human suffering through a palpable and symbolic language and celebrates individual's elevated status and liberty. In fact, de Vigny's magical flute plays the music of humanity to mankind. Through his poetic genius and his comprehensive understanding of his surrounding world, de Vigny seeks values forgotten in the hustle and bustle of materialistic pleasures. In his *Death of the Wolf*, de Vigny offers his patient outlook which arises from stoicism. Indeed, the basis of this philosophical approach is "bearing pain and hardship" in order to achieve liberation. Following his stoic philosophy, de Vigny makes his reader "think". Similarly, in his *Dogs and Wolves*, Mehdi Akhavan-Sales attempts to transfer to his reader his ethical outlook regarding the need for liberation which is attained by rejecting slavery. Akhavan's poetry represents various individuals' thoughts and ideas in the social arena. He, too, masterfully recites pains and anxieties of the contemporary individual. His allegorical poem appreciates homeless people in pain, people who undergo pain and suffering but do not agree to harm their pride, liberty, and dignity. From their point of view, tolerating pain is much more pleasurable than agreeing to comfortable slavery – which would harm their dignity. Through meticulous analysis of the two poems, one can understand that both poets have displayed their ideal form of ethical and human form through making allegorical and symbolic use of animals. From their point of view, then, "wolf" becomes the representative of a liberated but suffering human being who, though enmeshed in the entrapping setup of the society, never gives up and remains eternally unsubmitive. In addition to referring, in general, to a liberated individual, the wolf in the poems of both these poets can also represent the poets themselves. Both poets have not only displayed their own pride and freedom through their allegorical language but also expressed their desire to attract others' attention to this outstanding quality as well. In this study, it was found that de Vigny tries to promote his intended idea of rejecting slavery and accepting a stoic, self-restraining death through praising wild life. Akhavan, too, rejects dependence and slavery and seeks independence and freedom through describing dogs and wolves' temperaments. Through his philosophical Romanticism and his subtle language, de Vigny finds

perfection in patient pride and liberty. Akhavan attempts to guard his liberty by making use of an allegorical style and an epic tone. Akhavan's poem makes the addressee think and look inward. Accordingly, his *Dogs and Wolves* is a dynamic and subtle description of a human event which is tied to pain and sorrow; a sort of pain that not only harms the body, but also inflicts an even greater damage on the soul and leaves a deep, everlasting scar behind. Akhavan's poem clearly displays more commitment to human society. Each line of his poem takes a toll on the contemporary individual to discover the truth of himself. In Akhavan's words, one can see images of the truth of being in human and society alike. Likewise, in his poem, de Vigny displays sufferings that have to do with human. What he obsesses over is human problems and hardships. He talks to human beings; those creatures that think. De Vigny's suggestion – arising from his philosophic attitude – in the face of difficulties and hardships of life is to suffer and die silently. From his viewpoint, human beings need to be elevated. Furthermore, on the way toward this elevated status, every individual needs to have patient pride and maintain it. He should not belittle himself through doing degrading things like moaning, groaning, or crying. In other words, he should suffer and die without complaining. It is as if pain were the gateway to comfort and happiness. This way, de Vigny and Akhavan agree in *Death of the Wolf* and *Dogs and Wolves* that a free individual should possess such spiritual greatness that they can let go of many of their interests and step on the difficult path of spiritual perfection, which would then result in eternal comfort and honor.

**Keywords:** Liberty, Slavery, Vigny, Akhavan Sales, Allegorical Expression, Romanticism, Blank Verse.