

The Theme of Educated Women in the Works by Afghan-American Writers

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Abstract – The study aims to identify the role of educated women in Muslim society. Family value is considered as an integral part of national value, and its types and forms are among the motives widely described in modern literature. In the Afghan-American literature that we analyzed, the concept of values is covered widely. Among the Afghan-American writers who are the object of our research are Saima Wahab (“In My Father’s Country. An Afghan Woman Defies Her Fate”), Nelofer Pazira (“A Bed of Red Flowers: in Search of My Afghanistan”), analyzed literary-artistically based on national and universal values. In the works of these writers, the values are interpreted from human, national, and family perspectives, and they show the unique qualities, virtues, and wisdom of the Afghan nation, which is reflected in national pride. In other words, the nation’s culture, faith, traditions, and aspects of national education manifest in their unique values. Throughout the article, there are themes related to traditional culture and identity, such as gender roles, family dynamics, and the impact of political events on the Muslim community. The article emphasizes the importance of educational understanding and empathy within the Muslim community and between different cultural groups.

Key words – Family dynamics, national value, educated women, unique qualities

I. INTRODUCTION

Afghan-american literature is contemporary literature by Americans of Afghan descent. Afghans came as refugees to the United States after the 1979 Soviet invasion. This was the first incident of mass migration for Afghans. The first Afghan-american woman writer is Farooka Gauhari, her memoir “Searching for Saleem: An Afghan Woman’s Odyssey”, did not feature her American life. Afghan American literature is surprisingly unlike the majority of Asian American literature, even Iranian American literature (Iran and Afghanistan share a language, Persian), which is spearheaded by bestselling female authors; its literary renaissance has featured mainly male authors. However, there is a growing movement of women authors who left Afghanistan as children whose narrative styles are fragmented and intermingled with Afghan folktales. Fitting within the rubric of American multicultural literature, these narratives are about growing up in America. These women writers are Wajma Ahmady, Sahar Muradi, Khaleda Maqsudi, and Zohra Saed. Many are also filmmakers and video artists such as Lida Abdul and Sedika Mojadidi. This generation of writers has developed a new kind of narrative structure, poetic nonfiction at the cusp of memoir, fiction, and folktales. Their works can be found in recent anthologies about Muslim American or Asian American women writers.[1]. The serious historical turn that happened in Afghanistan and its losses and impact on the life of society are described in the works of Afghan-American women writers of literature Farooka Gauhari, Maryam Quadrat Aseel, Nelofer Pazira and Saima Wahab. The possibility of reaching bright days through ‘lim’ is reflected in the form of axioms that do not require proof. Education is instead divided into religious and secular aspects, with religious education showing a connection with Afghanistan, and secular education showing a connection with America. If they seek their identity, values and historical origin through religion, from a modern point of view, the fate of today and tomorrow in American society is guaranteed only by acquiring a secular education. The need to identify it as a distinct form of writing is felt because of the “marginalization” or “hyphenated”

existence of those immigrants and expatriates who have narrated their traumatic experiences of multiple racial discrimination, ethnicity, nostalgia, alienation and like in their writings [2]The Taliban's oppressive female modesty laws severely precluded the full scope of womanhood in Afghanistan, because it became illegal for women to express themselves in opposition to the Taliban's regulations. Published writing from female authors in the country became essentially nonexistent. In the article of Jeremy Slater writer mentioned about the falling of the Taliban, though, women in Afghanistan once again had more access to human rights, education, healthcare, and importantly, were able to find success in various publishing ventures.[3]

II. METHOD

During the study of different works, it is often necessary to find out the events externally according to the direction of the plot, to make a plan, to describe the events based on this plan, to describe the events based on the plan, to describe the characteristics of the heroes of the work, those who paid attention to the artistic conflict, plot and composition tools, and managed to illuminate the essence of the artistic idea put forward by the writer. The leading place in these novels are the artistic representation of the thoughts and real-life experiences of two great scholars, which is aimed at expressing the subtle, impressive, and, at the same time, deep content.

It is significant that our educated writers are children of intelligent families, and as a result of equal attention to both secular and religious education, they were able to acquire the ties and values of the West and the East in the same balance. For example, Saima Wahab's "In My Father's Country. An Afghan Woman Defies Her Fate" ("In my motherland. Struggles of an Afghan woman against fate") [4]. In her work, the author's father and grandfather are described as a people who devoted their life to education. Her father studied in European countries, so he wanted her mother to get an education as well, but it all ended when he was taken away by the KGB. Her grandfather, the village's mullah, taught the boys to read and write. He teaches his daughters at home. *"He had traveled to Saudi Arabia to memorize the Koran. He would make us read it every evening and would translate into Pashtu the words that he wanted to point out to us, since we could only read the Arabic."* [4:15]. When she graduated from high school and enrolled in a college in America where her Professor uncle worked, the demands placed on him by her family were very strict. She was first asked to behave like Pashtun girls. Although she made friends with several Muslim girls but she was forbidden to visit their house. But these rules did not apply to boys and men. Saima Wahab could not accept such inequalities and found it difficult to find reasons for the inequality between men and women in society. When the family gathering in America, the main topic brought up by her uncles was Saima and her behavior. But Saima would oppose them and express her displeasure in the American style. Because America taught her not only knowledge, but also to fight for herself and women's rights. The goal of her uncles was to make her an intellectual, get American citizenship, return her to country, get her engaged to one of her relatives, bring her to America with her husband, and put him to work. In this way, the writer artistically expressed the fact that regardless of whether women receive secular or religious education, Afghan women still have no voice, no choice and no right in the family. Saima opposes such relations, leaves her uncles and starts an independent life.

The knowledge acquired by her grandfather and uncles will definitely help her overcome all difficulties. Now Saima starts looking for an answer to the question: "Can an Afghan woman live alone in society?" But despite financial, social and ideological difficulties, she brings her brother, sister and mother into her home and takes on all their responsibilities.

The artistic reality of the author shows that Saima, as an American, will benefit Afghanistan more with the help of the knowledge she received in America. Unfortunately, although she does not achieve any positive results in her personal life, she works as a translator in military bases as the only expert in Pashto and English. However, she was completely satisfied with her life. While her thoughts about the origin remain open, the knowledge and skills she acquired as a translator help the representatives of the two nations to understand correctly, without logical errors. Since Saima Vahabi fulfilled the task assigned to her responsibly, the employment contract concluded with her will be renewed three times. *"I had thought that I kept coming back to Afghanistan to better understand the Afghan people, when all along the goal was even more personal. I now knew why my father had chosen death over life as my father, and i forgive him his choice because I finally understood"* [1: 460]. In order to show the importance of education in the life of girls, the characters of Saima and Sharifa are revealed comparatively. As Saima received a higher education in America, while Sharifa grew up in Afghanistan and never went to school, the achievements and shortcomings of the educational system in the two countries are described using historical and artistic details: *"She had never gone to school, but once I saw her pick up one of Bashir's books when she didn't think her brother was around. She flipped through it, glancing at the pages. It was in Pashto. I asked her if she could read it. She smiled and said, "Why would I need to read? It is not like I am going to need to read a sign to find the cow to milk!" She laughed, but I didn't have to be a psychologist*

to know that she was hurting inside and resented her brother for what she could never have. Did she resent me, too?" [4: 212]. This passage itself, in the case of Sharifa, tells the story of the fate of all Afghan girls without a future under the Taliban government.

"A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan" [5] by Nelofer Pazira, another talented writer of Afghan-American literature. In her work, the necessity of religious and secular education is highlighted on the basis of unity. Pazira's parents are educated and pay attention to their children's education. The desire for education was so strong that even when bombs were placed on the buses going to school, children were killed, and unstable politics prevailed, despite all obstacles, Afghan children wanted to go to school and study. In the work, the desire to show the importance of school education for the future can be seen from the beginning of the events with the plots related to Nilufar and his schoolmates: *"March 22 marks the beginning of the school year in the city. Streets, buses and sidewalks are crowded with students, teachers and professors. It rained last night, but the sun is out now, spreading a warm glow over the trees and grass. It's a beautiful day"* [5: 18]. Even from this passage, comparing the beginning of the school year with the arrival of spring, means that education is actually very sacred for Afghans, but the circumstances do not allow it. It is explained by attacks on schoolchildren and school transports.

Nelofer Pazira also criticizes school system, its unhealthy structure, including the fact that they have two male servants who both work for the same salary. The reason why Ashur, who has beautiful handwriting, and Huseindad, who can't even read, get used to the same situation, that is state exams were held only once at school, and each student was given only one chance. Students who failed to pass the exam lost their dream of higher education for life. *"Aushur has beautiful handwriting. 'Like pearls on paper' is how my parents describe it. He studied up to grade eight, he says, but after failing to pass the entry-to-high school exam, he couldn't continue. All students are required to pass a national exam before they can graduate to grade nine. Those who fail become dropouts without the chance of return. 'It is totally stupid,' my father says in fury. 'It's part of President Daoud Khan's new plan for a country that needs more schools, not more entry exams.' The president claims that the entry exam will raise students' level of intelligence. 'But in effect, he's depriving thousands of teenagers of education altogether,' says my mother, who teaches Dari literature at the local school. She says she's seen very intelligent students fail the exam. 'And they have no choice but to work at low-paid jobs, without any future or hope for further education.'"* [5:18]

Pazira writes about the early marriage of Afghan girls in the case of Sabira, her grandmother. Fortunately for Sabira, Habibullah's father was a pious and loving husband. In the novel, an eighteen-year-old girl named Nasima bravely follows Habibullo's family to the border when they move to Pakistan despite her young age. No matter what village she stays in, no matter what borders she crosses, she treats everyone equally, delivers the family to their safe destination and completes his mission. Nilufar admires Nasima's brave, but the same time, Nasima feels doubly jealous of their intellectual family. Not only in Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan, the fate of girls was the same. Boys studied there, and girls stay at home and learn houseworks. When she stayed with her family for a short time in Jalalabad, seeing that the girls were not allowed to study and go out, her father Habibullah decided to go to Islamabad. In Islamabad, Nilufar enrolls in a tailoring course and learns to recite the Qur'an from a girl named Farida every day. Nelofer Pazira teaches Persian literature to students of grades 5-12 in Islamabad, just like her mother. The fate of girls at school does not leave her indifferent. All the teachers had a great contribution in the education of thirteen and fourteen-year-old widowed sisters in particular. These sisters, their mother, sisters-in-law were all widows, and they were happy with this fate. "We are women, says Soraya's mother, breaking heavily silence, Allah has created us for to suffer. We accept Allah's will" [5:207].

III. RESULTS

Nilufar Pazira, who lived in Canada with her family for several years, returns to Afghanistan to make a film. He wonders what has changed after all this time, but finds that the situation has worsened. In the country, due to various diseases, food shortages, and misinterpretation of religious education, the situation seemed even more cruel to women. When local families ask for permission from the governors to lighten their lives, no one agrees to let them into their homes. Their only truth is that they don't want strangers to see their women on TV. Finally, a man named Mullah Zaheer allows only the mosque and neighborhood to be photographed. Nelofer, who is living without a male mahram, is also told that she should find a husband as soon as possible. Many girls are interviewed on the first day of filming, but none of them come the next day because they were beaten by their father or brother for doing this.

Despite being invaded several times, the fact that Afghans in Afghanistan do not lose their identity as brave and generous people should be recognized as a literary achievement based on reality in Saima Wahab's work "In My Father's Country. A Afghan Woman Defies Her Fate". The heroism in Saima reached such a high level that if the military had to communicate with the local population, she would fearlessly try to be a reliable representative for the Afghan people by going through the mined fields together with the military. American soldiers were surprised to see that when local elders were addressed as "baba" based on Afghan values, they would respond as "daughter". *"I approached him from the street, calling out, "Asalaam alaikum, Baba"... "You have trusted me," I said gratefully. "I have more respect for Pashtun culture than you might imagine. Now I am going to ask you a favor. If you grant me this favor, I promise I will not violate any laws of Pashtunwali", "Anything , looray," he said, using the Pashtu endearment that means "daughter."* [4:416]. Saima Wahab acting as a translator even because she knew the way of life of Afghans, their values, not only translated the text, but also acted as a cultural bridge between the two nations.

IV. DISCUSSION

In the works of all our writers studied in our research, it is illustrated by the help of artistic realism that there is no logic in dividing education into religious and secular, if used correctly, both serve for human intelligence and perfection. In the work, it is observed that political processes are related to the life of women, they are always interested in politics and are embodied as active members in the life of society. Saima and Nelofer are the learners at the beginning of the novels, but based on the development of events, they begin to perform the role of a learner. In their life, education is depicted as a central and inseparable tool. At some stages of their life, they come face to face with the society. The image of writers, who did not lose their status as a teacher and translator even during the Taliban rule, is presented to the reader based on historical and artistic truth.

While working at the school or military base, they often have to go abroad on business, and Nelofer's father and Saima's family always help them. In a society like Afghanistan, it was incomprehensible and at the same time difficult to accept that the woman would work among the men or work as teacher. Although it is very difficult for both men and women to live against Afghan stereotypes, Nelofer and Saima manage to do it.

IV. CONCLUSION

The proliferation of intellectual women in society and the more important their role in social life, the more stable provision of their future lives were analyzed through the personal life prism of the protagonists in the novels. Nelofer and Saima, who were brought up in a male dominant family, were first promoted from the side of their father that knowledge should be given to the monand given conditions. Making women intellectual has been made a prime goal.

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