



SOCIAL REALISM: REPRESENTATION OF TRIBAL CULTURE AND TREATMENT OF WOMEN IN JAMIL AHMAD'S *THE WANDERING FALCON*

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ABSTRACT

The present research article cultivates the idea of social realism in literature by contemplating over Jamil Ahmad's projection of tribal culture and the images of women in The Wandering Falcon. Jamil Ahmad was posted as a civil servant at the frontier that was known as Federated Tribal Area (FTA). As a part of his duty, he encountered with various issues and problems of the tribal communities such as Siahpads, Wazirs, Mahsuds, Kharots and other Baluchi tribes. He had observed these communities minutely and recorded their lives, culture and troubles in the form of short stories which later on published as a novel in 2008. The novel The Wandering Falcon aptly fits into social realism as it depicts the social, political, economical and gender issues arose during the seventies and that caused unrest and trouble among the tribes at the borderline of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The people belonging to the various tribal communities were not ready accept the laws and regulations made and imposed by the foreign governments as they felt that these laws would destroy their lives. They didn't want the foreign governmental intrusion in their culture and ways of living such as free movement and the laws of their own tribes. It is on this background Jamil Ahmad, the author of this novel has depicted the struggle of these tribes against the government. The novel has also depicted the beliefs, the ideas of honour, rivalry, the concept of manhood, images of women and treatment to the women, the ways of earning and livelihood of these communities in a very realistic manner.

Key Words: Social Realism, tribal culture, treatment of women, etc.

INTRODUCTION

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It is widely deliberated and accepted that literature is a social discourse. Literature is a creative art and by using the muse, the author represents the whole mankind or the society of his or her time. However, it is debated that the very essence of literature is the creativity or the imagination that leads the work towards non-factuality. The present researcher has encountered with two different trends in literature. The first group of the authors that propagates the manner of writing is important. To them, literature should give only aesthetic pleasure irrespective to the social matter. The second group of the authors thinks that the literature should serve the society. They strongly believe that the piece of literary work should not exist in vacuum. Literature is the truthful presentation of the society. It is on this background the term social realism has entered the field of literature. Jamil Ahmad, the famous Pakistani novelist who belong to this second group of authors and observed all the life styles, culture, code of ethics and laws of the tribal communities during the decade of seventies at the region where the borders of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran met and recorded his observation in nine chapters of his novel *The Wandering Falcon*.

Objectives:

The prime aim of this research article is to understand the concept of social realism in literature. It is also aimed to highlight the tribal culture and the treatment of women in tribal community with reference to Jamil Ahmad's novel *The Wandering Falcon*. The researcher assumes that the text and context are inseparable in the field of literature and the present study is an endeavor to examine the validity of this assumption by analyzing the selected novel.

Methodology:

As it is a theoretical study, the present researcher has used descriptive method for the analysis of the topic. It is a study of the concept of social realism in literature with reference to the representation of tribal culture and treatment of women in Jamil Ahmad's *The Wandering Falcon*. For the convenience of the study, the researcher has developed his ideas of social realism by considering the thoughts and models of realism of George Eliot and Mulk Raj Anand, the views of William Dean Howells, and definitions of social realism in the encyclopedia and dictionaries. Social realism is not a new concept or contemporary phenomenon. The writings of Balzac, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Henrik Ibsen and G. B. Shaw are the good and very famous examples of Social Realism in literature. The term 'Social Realism' consists of two important words- Social and Realism. "Social" is an umbrella term that covers the social, political, religious, economical and cultural life of the human beings and "Realism" refers to the manner of presenting the life as it is. Howell describes realism is neither more nor less than the truthful presentation of the

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material (*Editor's Study, 1989*). *The Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines realism as a technique of portraying life as it really is, untouched by idealism or romanticism. Since, the social realism is the offspring of realism portrays the life with social insights. It is the technique of describing the lives of common people in realistic manner. It depicts the ugly and taboo aspects of human life in the same way it depicts the beautiful aspects. Social realism is chiefly concerned with the social, religious, and political and gender problems of the particular society. George Eliot confessed that "I am content to tell my simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were.." and insisted that the novelist should offer the reflection of society through their work of arts. Mulk Raj Anand, the Indian English novelist strongly believes that literature must serve society, solve their problems and guide them" (Behara, 11). Considering all these views of social realism, the present researcher has made an honest attempt to interpret the novel *The Wandering Falcon* in the lights of the tribal culture and the images of women in the tribal communities.

Outline of the novel- *The Wandering Falcon*

The Wandering Falcon comprises of nine stories about different tribes belonging to the federally governed areas near to the borders of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. The novel begins with the elopement of the woman with her paramour from Siahpad tribe. The couple took shelter at military outpost but finally got killed as victims of honor killing from their own tribe. The second story narrates the full account of how the people from Brahui tribe are sentenced to death by the government officials on account of their rejection of the government laws. The third story tells about the imposed restrictions on the free movement of the Pawindah people. These people were asked to keep travel documents along with them if they want to move to the other land and observing the record of the life was not possible to them. The next story details the act of kidnapping of the school teachers by tribal people for the ransom. In another story, Jamil Ahmad has projected a man named Sher Beg who sold his daughter Sherakai for the sake of the pond of opium. In the final story, the readers come across to the sales of the women in the Mian Mandi market that shows the women are objects through which man can earn his livelihood. Thus, the whole book is a truthful account of the lives of the tribesmen.

Projection of Tribal Culture

The novel is a kind of document that records the ways of living, the ethical codes and the cultural beliefs and disbeliefs of the tribes particularly Siahpads, Brahui, Kharot, Pawindahs, Waziris, Mahsuds, Afridis and other Baluchi tribes. Jamil Ahmad has described a number of events associated with the people of these tribes in a very realistic manner that creates a realistic picture of tribal communities. The author has touched upon the social, political,

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gender and cultural issues that cause a trouble in the above mentioned tribal communities. The events of stoning to death, the idea of manhood, the offering of bride price, the postponement of revenge and the strong belief in Koran advocate the culture of various tribal people. The very beginning chapter entitled “The Sin of the Mother” narrates the story of a man and woman-Gul Bibi who cohabited for five years at the fort. However, they were not free from the danger as they had done a sin of adultery. In Siahpad tribe, it is a culture of stoning the adulterous couple to death. The Siahpads came to the fort in search of this couple and started to follow them for five days. Finally, they caught the couple at the water hole and as there was no chance of escape, the lover killed the woman and became ready to get punishment from the tribe. The tribesmen asked few questions and then started to stone the man until his death as an act of revenge of the insult done by the man through adultery.

Jamil Ahmad has inserted the incident of postponing revenge by Dawa Khan for his cousin’s death. The murderer who killed Dawa Khan’s cousin met with natural death leaving behind his wife and children. It is the traditional cultural code of the tribes that the women and children should not be victimized for the sake of revenge by the man. Therefore, Dawa Khan was postponing his act of revenge year by year waiting for those children’s grown up manhood. The third story in the novel entitled “The Death of Camels” details the account of the death of animals and the people belonging to the Pawindah tribe. As they were rejected their free movement from one land to another land, the woman Gul Jana and other people started to cross the border with their animal keeping a copy of Koran on their heads. They thought that it will save their lives from bullets. This act shows how the tribesmen have developed their culture of strong belief in Koran. In the story of Kidnapping, the author has projected a man Sarmast Khan from Mahsud tribe who was in need of money for offering the bride price to the father of the betrothed girl. This incident shows that it is the culture of the tribal community to pay the bride price for showing respect and value to the woman.

Treatment of Women

In *The Wandering Falcon*, Jamil Ahmad has portrayed the various images of women from the tribal communities. In the very beginning as the title itself suggests that how the woman is being treated as only sinner in the adultery. A man can marry twice or thrice under the reason of sexual dissatisfaction but woman cannot. Therefore, the first chapter projects the image of sinner woman. The story “The Death of Camels” depicts the different image of the woman that is the daring and bold image of woman who strongly believes in Koran and meets with death for the sake of honour and livelihood. The story entitled “Pond of Opium” shows another image of woman- the woman as an object. In this story we read that Sher Beg sold his daughter Sherakai for the pond of opium. In the final story, we learn that women are brought to Mian Mandi-the place known for women market. It is here the women are sold by

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the brokers. Thus, the women are treated here as an object or goods or animals whom man can easily sell for his livelihood.

CONCLUSION

Jamil Ahmad, the famous Pakistani novelist who has used the technique of social realism in his single novel *The Wandering Falcon* for depicting the lives of the tribal communities in a matter of fact way. He hasn't idealized or beautified the society. In fact, he has presented the ugly side of the tribes as well as the government officials in the same way. He has offered the truthful records of the tribal people and government.

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