

# **The Image of Woman in the Novel Shohar Aho Khanum by Ali-Mohammed Afghani in Comparison with the Position of Women in the Paintings of the Illustrated Version of the One Thousand and One Nights**

## **Abstract**

The culture and civilization of any country can be acknowledged through the literature and art of that country; in other words, literature and art reflect the culture and civilization of each country. Iran is one of the countries in which many novelists are widely active and compose literary works under the influence of political, social and cultural changes. Ali Mohammad Afghani, a contemporary writer, in which the position of women in Iranian society can be perceived by studying his works. Likewise, regarding art in particular painting, a clear understanding of the image of women in society can be achieved. The illustrated version of One Thousand and One Nights is a literary work that mainly deals with the position of women. Therefore, in the present research, the image of the woman in the novel of Shohar Aho Khanum by Ali Mohammad Afghani and the paintings of the illustrated version of One Thousand and One Nights are compared and evaluated. The research method in this exploration follows a descriptive, analytical and comparative approach. The findings of the research indicate that women lack an appropriate social position during the mentioned period and seek to modernize and assert their rights.

## **Research aims:**

١. Recognizing the appearance of a woman in the novel Shohar Aho Khanum by Ali Mohammad Afghani
٢. A comparative study of the woman's appearance in the novel Shohar Aho Khanum and the paintings of the illustrated version of the One Thousand and One Nights.

## **Research questions:**

١. According to the novel of Ali Mohammad Afghani entitled Shohar Aho Khanum, what was the social status of women?

٢. What are the similarities and differences between the woman's appearance in the novel Shohar Aho Khanum and the woman's appearance in the paintings of the illustrated version of One Thousand and One Nights?

**Keywords:** Shohar Aho Khanum, Ali Mohammed Afghani, women, One Thousand and One Nights?

## Introduction

Ali Mohammad Afghani, the author of the novel " Shohar Aho Khanum " was able to portray the social situation of the people in his period with complete mastery and fullness and by using literary features such as simile and metaphor. This novel, which is the best and most effective book of Ali Mohammad Afghani, describes the life of the middle class people and clarifies their complications. This work is written in the style of realistic novels of the ١٩th century and won the award for the best book of the year. In this book, the main character of the story has been blamed for polygamy; thus, the book clearly depicts the life of women from the lower classes of society in year ١٩٣٤ in Kermanshah. The writer published this realistic novel with his personal expense in two thousand pages. In the mentioned book, the author debates the repression of the society towards women. The patriarchal thoughts during the course of the story represent oppression towards women who did not have much presence in the society since their lives were merely summarized within their household and members of their family.

In the introduction of the book " Shohar Aho Khanum ", the opinion of Dr. Mohammad Ali Islami Doshan about this book is stated as follows. If we exclude Sadeq Hedayat, no other person who is a master in the use of proverbs and anecdotes with all mastery and grace. The story of Shohar Aho Khanum is a treasury of similes, anecdotes, religious, mythological and historical allusions, what is admirable and amazing is not the scope of the mentioned points, but the way they are included and used. Without doubt, the novel is a masterpiece in Persian language (Afghani, ١٩٩٣: ٨).

Syros Parham also considers the novel to be a great encyclopedia in which hundreds of real incidents have been depicted. The events that covered a particular era and reflected the characteristics of the society. The novel is a complete mirror of our society and presents the effect of the life that is passing quickly. The original art of the writer is not in the way of writing the story and not even in his countless use of brilliant expressions and descriptions; but his great art is the creation of real human beings and setting hundreds of real incidents in motion, thus, he has covered a special social era and its true course has appeared with all its ups and downs. Another important point that can be seen in this novel is the expression of the thoughts of two women, each of whom has a different point of view. Aho is an example of a housewife who is confined within the four walls of the house and does not leave the house without her husband's permission. Homa is also an example of a reformed and freedom-loving woman who, especially "with the issue of discovering hijab, wants more freedom and this lack of restrictions pulls her towards lust and disorder. The experience of Iranian women points to the issue of polygamy. With regard to the role of women in strengthening the family and the view of different societies towards women, this research is based on the realist view of Ali Mohammad Afghani and the paintings of the illustrated version of *One Thousand and One Nights*, seeks to present the appearance of women during the Qajar and Pahlavi period. Thus, the current study seeks to answer the following questions: does the political and social conditions ruling the society have an effect on the personality of women? And what is the disharmony of women in the family?

With the conducted research, it can be determined that no research has been published regarding the appearance of women in the literary work of "Shohar-e Aho Khanum". Nevertheless, similar research has been done as described below: Ghasemi and Jalali Pandar in the article "Examining the personality type of the characters of the "Shohar-e Aho Khanum" describes the personality of both Aho and Seyed Miran in detail. However, he did not specifically mention the female appearance in detail. Therefore, the present research attempts to investigate this issue by descriptive and analytical method and relying on the data of library sources.

## **Conclusion**

The main characters of the book of *Shohar-e Aho Khanum* are under the oppression of a male-dominated society; societies that consider the freedom of women and their interests and desires as degrading and overlook their rights. The main female characters of this novel are Homa and Aho,

in which the story revolves around their life and its happenings. Despite the loyalty and kindness of Aho, she is treated with despise. Aho is a representative of a real Iranian hardworking woman who faithfully and chastely endures the problems of her husband's life and keeps the wife's family home warm with affection and love, but is cheated by her husband. Aho, is a loving wife and loyalty is one of her prominent traits, because of her love for her husband, she tolerates her husband's mistress and tries to upkeep with raising her children and maintaining the household so that the absence of their father is less felt. On the other hand, the character of Homa Zandi is a symbol of a modern woman who has broken the tradition and is constantly trying to expose herself to others by discarding the old customs and mistreating her husband Seyed Miran. Studies show that in the paintings of the illustrated version of One Thousand and One Nights, women have gradually opened their place in the painting, although still active in the household environment with lesser opportunities to be in the public. In the paintings of the illustrated version of the Thousand and One Nights, which is historically related to the Qajar period, the woman fails to have an appropriate prominence in the society.

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