

## Characterization in the Novel of Suvushun: from Reality to Idealism

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to identify character traits in Suvushun: from reality to idealism using descriptive- analytical method. First we examine conceptual aspects in the career of Simin Danshwar as the writer of Suvushun. Then, we explore her works and attitudes. Finally, development of main characters in Savushun is critically studied. The findings show that all elements of the story are interrelated including plot, action, character, dialogue, crisis, time and space. Action and character are more important elements. In one hand, the writer has tried to analyze the various aspects of characters in the novel of Suvushun. In the other hand, the relationships of other elements of the story are highlighted such as dialogue, time, space and scene and etc and realism and idealism are discussed because it is evident that the writer believes in characters "Yusof" and "Zari" and etc. Savushun is a combination of idealism and realism, yesterday and tomorrow so this helps its mystery, non-limited and mythology nature. Hence, some critics hold that it is sociologic. Some claims that it is historical and others say it is political. It is seen from different angles so it appears in different colors. However, its internal integrity and general order and coordination denote its unique result. According to Iranian mythology, Yusuf might be killed by an unknown killer or due to a lie in order that his loving son "Khosro" could establish justice in Iran and could abolish Turanian as the contemporary evils (Englishmen).

**Keywords:** Idealism, Reality, Savushun, Simin Daneshvar, Character development.

### Introduction

The most ancient and the most favorite literature for different nations seem to be fable or legend and in its vast sense "Story". Man illustrates all his or her ideals, wishes, love, happiness and misfortunes within a story. Therefore, story can be regarded as a set of human issues. When in a period of time any story is analyzed in details, a lot of contemporary human sociological and psychological issues are revealed. Stories are developed along with

other contemporary human ideological developments. The stories in Iranian literature are not exceptional in this sense and they are affected by such changes. The intuitive nature of Iranian literature both in poem and in verse changed after basic evolutions happened in terms of printing industry introduction and subsequent publishing newspapers and sending young students to study higher modern education in abroad, all due to Great

Revolution of Constitutionalism. By issuing newspaper, it seemed that a simple language is required to illustrate social problems in Iranian literature with no traditional elaboration. The traditional literary and ornamental elaborations substituted with more simple poems and verses similar to European story writing and play righting styles. Many values and criteria of Iranian ancient literature changed and lost their importance (Daneshvar, 2001, 92-96). Meanwhile, *Savushun* by Simin Daneshvar is a novel which can be generalized and representative as the south of Iran represents all regions of Iran and the character of Zari illustrates typical Iranian modern woman and Yusuf represents a typical challenging and intellectual man whose characters could not be so beautifully designated by any other writer. Writers such as Daneshvar, Taraghi, Parsipour, Ravanipour and etc, address Iranian woman identity and her status within a social transient period of dominant man who tries to encircle woman within many Do's and Don'ts (Kimsarov 1965, p 82). The interesting part of stories by woman writers is that their world is more indistinct. In many stories, woman characters and issues are frequently seen from man's viewpoint and an independent woman is often exceptional. Even the main character "Zari" in *Savushun* shows no determination. She expects Yusuf to determine in her behalf. She and other women in the novel do not challenge severely with conventional beliefs. Instead, they try to maintain status quo and Ms. Fotohi who becomes eventually mad is an exception among them. Even Zari eventual destiny is to follow Yusuf's way of life. Daneshvar has tried to see process of life and history in view of a women but the woman lacks any independent subjectivity

and attitude. This has roots in many historical issues. Women conventionally have had to accept what society expects them to do and they have internalized these expectancies, believing that there is no way to challenge with this seemingly inevitable destiny. But this issue does not decrease valuable properties of this novel. Daneshvar describes realistic and poetic features of life in *Savushun* (Daneshvar 2001, p.75). The novel *Of Savushun* is regarded as a new season in Iranian history of story writing. Daneshvar in this highly dynamic and adventurous story illustrates internal developments of Fars region artistically during the World War II using elaborate and poetic verse style (Shekarchi 19980).

### **Method**

We used library method in this final project. At the beginning, I identified and collected resources after getting consult and guidance from the consulting and guiding professors to meet the main requirements of the study. First of all, I looked up for Simin Daneshvar's autobiography, works and career, the writer of *Savushun* in the library of Azadslami University, Shirvan Branch as well as in Shirvan Public Library and also by internet searching. All data was categorized and then I began to write the main text.

### **Character Formation in *Savushun*: from Reality to Idealism**

Many characters in this novel are inspired from real persons but they were converted to ideal ones through imagination. This actually happens in process of writing a novel and it is often called "using imagination and reality and mixing both". The foreign forces attempt to supply their needs in the south so scarcity happens

there due to cooperation of the authorities in the south with the foreigners. Some disturbances and riots occur in many parts of the south including Yusuf and his followers and also Malek Rostam and Malek Sohrab tried to inform the people about dangerous events in country and they united and promised to sell their supply only to people. The other parts of the book illustrate the opposing forces very elaborately. The contemporary situation in Shiraz is elucidated in detail: some people such as Khan Kaka and Ezzateddoleh are evil thinker. Some others such as Malek Rostam and Malek Sohrab make political mistakes. Meanwhile, others such as Yusuf resist and show patience and stability. English forces pretend having goodwill at the beginning but eventually they are forced to show up their real intention to enforce their will and to eliminate any barriers by their hostile activities and pressure. In the last chapter of this historical novel, Yusuf is killed and his followers intend to turn the funeral to a political-religious rally. But the local government disciplinary agents attack the rally and the funeral is interrupted. The Yusuf's wife and brother have to take the corpse from between full of snow bags near a well and put it into a car trunk at night. Fatemeh, Zari, Khosro, Hormoz and Khan Kaka get in the car. They drive around Seyyed Haji Gharib Shrine. The corpse is buried under a weak light with no traditional funerals such as praying nearby the dead body. They wrote nothing over the tomb (Sepanlu 1980, 969). Savushun is considered a significant turning point of history of Iranian social novel. This is the first work in novel genre regardless its popularity among the readers. The writer acuity allows her to discover inner motivation by watching outer behaviors in social and historical levels. She interlocks discrete busy scenes

by very small recessive naggings and murmurings using both descriptive and sensible utterance (Dehbashi, 2003). As it is mentioned before, this novel represents successfully the social situation in Iran at the beginning of the World War II including disorder, scarce, the statesmen ignorance of social disturbances, wasting of resources by the courtiers without considering the scarce and people starvation. The text is simple and robust using many various literary elaborations such as simile, metaphor, recognition and humor. She uses simple similes: "he always tried to show his both scalloped and hemmed smile when talking with his wife." Or "Everyone who ate the bread of that bakery, he or she vomited due to stomach ache as a tapped and twisting snake." However, it is rich in terms of excellent descriptions not only for outer world of the characters but also to probe their inner world, fore example: "He put aside the silver carved artifact. Two parts of the door have been made connected". (ibid 227)

### **Main Characters Development**

The development of the main female character is evident. Zari is developed gradually while she is being separated continuously through the events (Armin 1992:46). When Yusuf hits Zari on the ear, she resonates between two states: either being courage or tolerate the situation. She is prepared for the final development through such events as resistance against Ezzateddoleh and avoiding delivering his message to Naneh Ferdows in the prison while preferring her children health to pretending being courage in frankly speaking with Mr. Fotohi to confirm her cooperation with Yusuf.

### **Thought and Practice of the Characters**

In the novel of Savushun, the thoughts and practices of the characters are parallel. It means that the character practices what he thinks to do. Zari does not want to lose the man she loves so she tolerates; she gives up her ear rings, sends her son's horse for the governor and serves Ezzateddoleh as a guest. Ammeh Khanom is enemy to British soldiers so resists against Abolghasemkhan, her brother, who serves them. Ezateddolleh feels revengeful towards Zari so he seeks how to disturb her.

### **Mental Picture of Female Character**

Savushun more often addresses what happens in life span of Iranian woman. In one hand, Zari is a housewife who loves her husband and children to conserve the comfort of all family members. On the other hand, her husband rejects her and hits on her ears insisting that "You are but a scare crow" (Daneshvar 1962:120). Zari thinks profoundly, "Am I really scared? Is Yusuf guilty? Even once she concluded that family life is basically a mistake and she shouldn't be so dependent to a man and children. But she perceived that all enjoyments in her life depends on these attachments" (Daneshvar 1962:133).

Daneshvar asserts, "I think woman must designate woman's figure. My task is to highlight mental pictures of all Iranian women including intellectual and educated as well as very low class women" (Dehbashi 2003: 9-10).

### **Dialogue**

The characters are identified through their dialogues (Mirsadeghi, 2001:463). Each character's dialogue differs and the dialogue illustrates the character's traits and his or her social status. In Savushun, each character talks according to his or her status and knowledge. Ammeh Khanom as

an uneducated woman says, "I immigrate so what is the use of "dashport" (passport)? I would go abroad by trafficking illegally" (Daneshvar, 1962:63).

### **Female Characterization in Savushun**

There have been always female characters in story but male writers illustrated the figure of woman in their literary works as they perceived themselves. Before Savushun, one can rarely see a comprehensive figure of woman character. This issue is eliminated partly by woman writer because women can give a true and inclusive expression of themselves. Characterization is one of main elements of story by which writer can give reality to the characters of the story. The practice and behavior of each character must comply with the role he or she takes. The extent to which characters of story are shown realistically depends closely on how much the writer is acquainted with the characters he she creates. It is normally expected that the writer is acquainted with behavior and modes of the same gender. So the female writer is expected to show female character more skillfully. However, it is not so long that woman writers have begun their careers as writers. It was men who created woman character in their stories until recently (Wolf 2004:26). Men can hardly illustrate inclusive picture of women in their works. "Male writer could get inspiration from the behaviors of his male friends and male relatives for creation of male characters but for creation of female characters he has faced a main problem. It means that he needed a mediator in order to speak in behalf of women. This mediation undermines the originality of realistic stories." (Jalalibandari, 2008:13). In Savushun, Zari is a woman who seeks to calm her home climate. All women in Savushun even negative figures such as

Ezzattolah illustrate a kind of Iranian woman suffer from oppression, from having no shelter, from feeling failure but offering loyalty and tolerance (Mirabidini, 1988:476).

### **Character Variation**

Character variation is more evident in the novel of Savushun. One of properties of Savushun is "richness and variation of female characters" (Dastgheyb, 1993:43). Zari is an educated and decent woman who also has political opinion. Ammehkhanom speaks explicitly and courageously. Ezzateddoleh behaves maliciously while being oppressed. Ferdows and Naneh Ferdows are defenseless and oppressed. Sudabeh behaves against social norms and she is reckless. Yusuf: Zrie's husband and also a land owner. He is kind-hearted, patriot, courageous, frank and supporter of the miserable who promised freedom-loving men not to sell supplies to foreign forces (Daneshvar, 1962:1). Zari: an educated woman, not living in Tehran, very passionate, compassionate, peace-seeking who tries to keep safe her family against the storm which has started. She is inspects everything with scrutiny and we see almost every significant thing from her view. In final scene of the novel, we see her try to revenge blood for blood for her dead husband (ibid. 5). Mr. Singer: English ex-spy who has been recently recognized as a spy. "Sergeant Singer is but the same "Mr. Singer, the selling agent of Singer sewing machine. He has been in Shiraz at least 17 years and yet he does not speak Farsi. This tall and fat man trained every girl who bought the machine how to sew various stitches and embroidery by the machine for 10 sessions for free. Interestingly, even he didn't laugh while training, however the girls learned very well. Zari learned, too. When the war began, Zari heard that Mr.

Singer has put on military officer suit and she thought the suit becomes him well. She wondered how he has been pretending so long to be another person, to tell lie, to pretend to have a false job skillfully (ibid. 7). McMahon: an Irish poet who pretended being knowledgeable and having loving figure. He loved the independence of his country the same as Yusuf (ibid. 7). Abolghasemkhan: Yusuf's brother who played politics and cooperated with the dominant forces with no empathy for the oppressed people. (ibid. 22). Mrs. Fatemeh: Yusuf's older sister and a wise and a lay woman who speaks explicitly but she is more passionate and wishes to visit the holy shrines in Iraq and to live nearby her mother tomb. Zari's Children: including her older son, Khosro, who is under influence of his father's opinions and also Fotohi's. When we scrutinize the characters in this novel, we find that they can be representatives of their society. Fatemeh and Khosro are partly audiences partly participants in the events but the consequences do not relate them. However, Yusuf participates and influences in the events. His destiny is also affected by the events. Yusuf and Zari can represent parts of the writer's opinion. Therefore, the characters represent typical Iranian women and men (Giford 1987:152).

### **To examine the Characters in terms of Factors of Story**

Factor of Experience: the writer has tried to design the story based on facts with no extensions using historical issues and the events happened during the World War II. She has combined inner factors with outer events to influence inclusively in the reader in the writer's viewpoint. The writer attempts to give detailed and scrutinized expressions for the characters including political issues, conspiracy to

possess power, passionate dialogues, description of modes and psychology and highlighting trickery in dialogues and practices of the characters and in fact, she has been successful in this sense in practice.

Factor of Conflict: two opposing characters have conflicts.

Conflict between Yusuf and the Governor and bakers who steal from the supply from the very beginning of the story : "those calves kiss the hand of their executioner, you see they spoil what is blessed and in this critical time!" (Sasushun:1)

Conflict between Zari and Yusuf: it is because Zari loves him. She tries to take her children away from the bad events and to protect her family: "Zari cried "Let them do whatever they want except bringing war into my home, I am not concerned about the city. It has been to a large burial ground.....my city is my home but you see they bring the war inside my home, too." (ibid:19)

Conflict between Zari and Ezzateddoleh: it is an emotional conflict originated from Ezzateddoleh's wickedness: "it seems that this is the fault of Ezzateddoleh. He inspects all citizens' accounts with those twisted eyes" (ibid. 8) Practical conflict between Zari and Ezzateddoleh in chapter 15 is illustrated when Naneh Ferdows is arrested: "the voice of Ezzateddoleh interrupted her thought: "Dear Zari! How much do you doubt about that? It is not so important!" Zari put the ink box before Ezzateddoleh and said: "No, I do not do that! Excuse me" (ibid 175)

Conflict between Yusuf and Sergeant Singer is a typical political conflict between two contradictory thoughts: Yusuf thinks about national sovereignty and independence but Singer concerns about exploitation and colonialism for

British supremacy over weak countries. This conflict goes on with negative resistance of Yusuf. After many events happening throughout the story, Yusuf is killed as a martyr at last. It seems their conflict is about dealing the Yusuf's grain supplies. Yusuf disagrees about British conspiracy and so he is killed.

Factor of Event: The major and minor events that are resulted from the conflicts between the characters and are revealed from very beginning of the story. Some examples are as follows:

"The guests who were near the couple and heard what Yusuf said, went out of the marriage ceremony room. Zari restrained and avoided saying encouraging word and she took Yusuf's hand and cried out. "For God! Let me relax just tonight and please avoid saying anything to suffer me" and Yusuf smiled at her (ibid 5)

Zari noticed that Singer murmured something and Yusuf stood up and they both passed through the road with tall cypress and orange trees while illuminated light bulbs hanging down the trees. They soon returned from the end part of the garden and even they didn't refracted to a bar corner. Sergeant Singer nodded and the colonel eye twisted more and frowned at him. Yusuf sat near Zari with red face and while vibrating his moustache told her, "Let's go without making any sound". Zari gathered her hair near the ear she was listening his words and she said, "If you will" (ibid 12)

Minor events which help the story extend more and to link major events fore example are taking Zari's ear rings, attaining Khosro's horse, illness of Klu and taking Nanehferdows into custody. These minor events are important parts of the action in the story in terms of expressing characters and the environment of the story, that is, behavior of Ezzateddoleh and

Abolghasemkhan and the status of Yusuf in community of the village. All these show up the prominent and major events of the story, that is, foreign forces dominance, hired governors and ideological diversity between Yusuf and them and finally, his innocently assassination.

**Factor of Story:** Clearly a series of stories in this novel is presented and the narrators (sometimes Zari, Yusuf's wife and other time the writer) are omniscience in terms of expressing inner and outer worlds of all characters. The first person in this novel (the narrator) is never disinclined when describing the events and she reveals her commitment to them. However, when there is a monologue and confession, she manifests her inner state. Sometimes, there is no intervention in the events and actions and they are reported only.

The writer acts as omniscience and each character is narrated as the third person. Ethical characteristics of Zari says her how to behave in discordant with the governor. Sometimes the story in Savushun Novel is in monologue and confession forms. (ibid 91)

**Factor of Setting:** The story happens when British Forces have already entered Iran. The events happen in Yusuf's home and the governor's in a village, outskirts of Shiraz. Reader is reminded it is when the World War II has begun, Marxism ideology is promoted and Iran is threatened by Bolchevique Forces.

However, the technique which is used for expressing places and opinions is affected by time factor. Fore example, Zari's opinion and her reactions are consistent to the proper time and the proper place. At the beginning, she is a very conservative and peaceful woman

and she wants to protect her family anyway. But at the end, she is romantic and affected by the dreams she often has. After assassination of her husband she becomes a revolutionary woman with a great courage. The descriptions of places and psychological states and ideologies and thoughts are scrutinized and the social and historical situation is illustrated very well.

### **From Realism to Idealism in Savushun**

This is a realistic work inspired by the domestic mythology such as Siavash and his death. Reader is enchanted by the dialogue due to the details are given by the writer to express the personal environment of the characters. Sometimes the story is such painful that reader cannot believe it absolutely and his or her tears are dried out by source and blood is frozen in the vessel. Now white bread is available on your table but imagine what was it when there was so scarcity that people killed each other for a loaf of bread and finding a loaf of white bread seemed impossible. The scarcity was because of interruption of Iran-Germany trade of wheat after the World War II. However, Iranian farmers grew wheat but the yield was lower and it was required to import wheat. Politicians were incompetent even their subordinates such the governor of Fars served British forces. This indicates that people were culturally poor. The novel of Simin Danshwar is politically encoded so in her view society is classified into six groups: ordinary people, women and children, mullahs and clergies, nobles and foreigners such as Sergeant Singer, McMahan, the Irishman, soldiers and the Indian teacher and the pastor and etc. Ordinary people involve in the primary things such as bread, poorness, typhoid disease and prostitution as the main

group who bears the symptoms of heavy misery. The nobles are so enchanted by foreigners who voluntarily do everything to enjoy their masters. This illustrates the lack of identity and independence of people who are slave and subordinate of others and having no self-esteem. The women in Savushun, even negative figures such as Ezzateddoleh suffer oppression and failure and they are unsheltered, loyal and tolerant as typical traits for Iranian women. Children such as Khosro and Hormoz seek to attain their rights and independence. They obey a leader such as Mr. Fotohi who invites them to "utopia" a promising better future as we see in McMahon's message of regret to Zari pointing out to independence and freedom: "My sister, don't cry. A tree would grow in your home, and many trees in your city, also many in your country and each tree would send a message to another one and the trees would ask the wind" haven't you seen the morning on your way here?" (Savushun: 304). Why such a great cultural poorness? Who were reckoned as Iranian clergies and cultural leaders then? Ammehkhanom as representative of religious sectarians narrates with ordinary words. The clergy of the city falls in love with a dancer called Sudabeh and accepts any social disgrace due to it. Danshwar scrutinizes the reasons and asserts that it is because of fundamentalism. When religion is addressed, one expects to hear about the religious rules such as the untouchable things and cleanness condition all severely practiced while it is required to promote enlightening culture of challenging with foreigners dominance and it must be substituted with subordination and abasement. British forces were present in the south in every city such as Fars and Boushehr indicating

their dominance over Iranian oil resources in addition to promotion of English culture. But Indian soldiers were significantly everywhere. The old British Empire was so dominant all over the world even Africa and India that historians claimed sun never sets in British Empire. Historical and mythological dimension of Yusuf character in this novel relates to Siavash and Imam Hossein (A), all three have sacred personalities and being killed innocently for rightness. Although Savushun seems impassionate in views of the young, the purpose of the novelist is not to demonstrate passion because pain is dominant all over the society. This novel is full of symbols, sarcasm and simile being compatible to culture and idealism of any time and any place since the writer as a scholar has attempted to hide independence and freedom axioms deeply within the story. As a realistic work, the characters in the novel are believable and positive with distinct identity. They are not cruel and do not practice illegally. Yusuf and Zari intend to retaliate but based on God's rules with no violation of established conventions and ethics (Miles 2001:53).

### **Conclusion**

Simin Danshwar uses literary techniques such as monologue, expressing double conflicts, sequence of time in the story and characterization to show the social status of the target groups in the novel. She also exploits the available mediators to bridge between political and social realities. It is evident that social class of Danshwar is the same traditional middle class with the same religious-national ideology which is dominant in the novel. The major and minor characters in the novel are often created inspired from real ones with help of imagination. In



story writing convention, it is called "using imagination and reality and then mixing both". Daneshvar narrates common experience of women; it means that she expresses her own feeling or potential feeling and gives more realistic pictures of woman in the novel. Characterization techniques by using effective elements including view angle, dialogue, realistic characters and etc, all make the novel more believable and inclusive. The believable combination of love, mythology, mysticism and ideal in characters of this novel similar to the story of Siavash in Shahnameh and Yusuf (A) can be considered as the evidence of Daneshwar's competence. There are vivid and lively expressions in the story. All characters love life reasonably though they feel mystic inside since they believe it is a God's gift although some secret hands make their lives painful. However, all these characters die for their ideals courageously and with self assurance. This very dear aspiration is honorable for all humans specifically for Moslems and Iranians. In spite of idealistic nature of the story, both men and women are very active. But nothing is absolute. Some women are good and some others are bad and even men are not absolutely bad or good. Yusuf often challenges with his brother. This illustrates dynamic life and it makes the story believable. Mystery and symbolism are requirements in such stories. They are covert within the story using overt sarcasm and this encourages Islamic aspects since Quran as center of Islam is full of mysteries and symbolism in spite of its simplicity and the decoding is specifically the task of messengers and Imams. Savushun has also some covert or overt symbolism and sarcasms such as the story of key set and scarecrow of Hitler. The dialogues are designed to give a natural impression and to allow reader

to analyze the characters freely using no useless descriptions in order not to interrupt the process of the story. Finally, one can say that Savushun is a mysterious novel having two layers: narrative layer and mysterious or metaphorical layer. The purpose of the writer is to give an artistic and mysterious picture of August 19,1953 coup d'etat. Danshwar has selected the characters from her own setting and she has collected the traits of many real characters to create the characters of the story.

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