



The Representation of Gender in “Kalidar”

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Extended Abstract

This article is to represent the linguistic indicators of gender in, Kalidar, the longest Persian novel. In this work of art, which is not so far from an anthropological report, women have an important and complicated place. Despite of a fundamental role they play in different aspects of daily life, Kalidar women are humiliated under literary gender clichés. The novel is full of proverbs and ironies which have been commonplace in vulgar Persian language for ridiculing and despising femininity. Our main question is: what is the place of women in Kalider from the point of view of a moderate feminism? And our hypothesis is that there is a paradoxical position for women in this novel. On one hand, they are represented as a source of life for men and for all of the family and thereby for the whole community, in some extent, because of the very particular life style of nomadic people, and on the other hand, they have a sense of insult and contempt, due to the general treatment whit women in almost every pre modern community. It means that those clichés have not been deducted from a low role of women in real life, but are constructed by a sexist culture.

Keywords: literature, gender, language, nomads, feminist litrary criticism

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INTRODUCTION

Representing the linguistic indicators of gender discrimination in literature especially novels is a way to look at the subject through an important mirror. *Kalidar* is the longest and a famous Persian novel, and so it seems to be a good case for this examination. In this work of art, which is not so far from an anthropological report, women have an important and complicated place. Despite of a fundamental role they play in different aspects of daily life, *Kalidar* women are humiliated under literary gender clichés. The novel is full of proverbs and ironies which have been commonplace in vulgar Persian language for ridiculing and despising femininity. Our main question is: what is the place of women in *Kalidar* from the point of view of a moderate feminism? And our hypotheses is that there is a paradoxical position for women in this novel. On one hand, they are represented as a source of life for men and for all of the family and thereby for the whole community, in some extent, because of the very particular life style of nomadic people, and on the other hand, they have a sense of insult and contempt, due to the general treatment which women in almost every pre modern community. It means that those clichés have not been deducted from a low role of women in real life, but are constructed by a sexist culture.

PURPOSE

One of the key way to approach a culture is to study its literature, and to understand a culture from the point of view of sexism or gender study is not an exception. Literary critique would be more complete and comprehensive if it includes a consideration from the standpoint of women studies (Emami, 1385: 5), has been common enough during last decades to study the literary heritage particularly the great novels for the purpose of considering how deeply a culture is discriminative about women (Mails, 1380: 13). *Kalidar* is the longest Persian novel and one of the greatest and most frequently read Iranian stories seemed to be a good choice for this target.

METHODOLOGY

The method of this work is near to the feminist literary critique. This is a review of novels, and poems as well, to find the probable sorts of referring to feminine characters in a form not correspond to the feminist concerns (Goel, 2010). There are an incising number of reviews evaluating in what extend the great classics of western literatures have been the potentiality to induce some sort of inferiority of women (Gray, 1382). Although we are witnessing some kind of exaggeration and extremism and even radicalism in this respect, which risks to deform the good will of the prominent pioneers of sexual egalitarianism (, however the principle in itself seems to be necessary and useful.

RESULT

Concerning the subject of sexist footprints in literature, our research shows a contradiction or a paradox in *Kalidar*. Since there are so many insult, contempt, and

despises toward feminine personages and even femininity itself in the story's dialogues (dowlatabady, 1364: 670, 1141), we are informed how big is the contribution of women to provide the necessities of life (dowlatabady, 1364: 1015) and even to advise the men how to do for achieving better result (dowlatabady, 1364: 11) Certain feminine personages play a role of management in internal family affairs as well as external socio-political ones. What the novel shows, during the extension of events of the story, is that mothers, wives, daughters, sisters work diligently and mostly do the best and the wisest, and what the novel says, during the dialogues, especially when some masculine are showing off, is that woman is everything but wise or righteous.

DISCUSSION

This contradiction cannot be simply overlooked or minimized. It might be artistically constructed by the writer to bring to the light the contradiction between the reality of life and the mind of community, especially the men. It might also be due to the contradictions in the mind of writer himself. The first probability is promising, for the power of arte is engaged in a process to fortify the foundations of realistic encounter with the social function of women. The second might not be seen as a good sign, however it is, at least comparing it with a case in which the insult and contempt in dialogues would be together with a scenario according to which the feminine personages would be lazy and stupid.

CONCLUSION

A realistic report of tribal communities in which women plays an important role can contribute to correct better the misconceptions of femininity and women function in traditional societies. That kind of report can be also reproduced in artistic creations and communicates the same message implicitly. Only an empirical research among the readers can demonstrate if the negative attributions through dialogues are more effective or the positive representations through narrating the story events, but if we accept the effect of art is deeper and more durable than simple transmission of direct message through the talks by slangs and word of mouth, we can conclude that the positive effect of Kalidar and the same is more powerful and influential than the negative one.

NOVELTY

The innovative aspect of this work comes from its empiric research in Kalidar. Since it is one of the most famous realistic Persian novel, frequently read and praised, it would be interesting to show what it involves from the point of view of women study and feminist concerns. We found out that in the context of Kalidar and the reality it is supposed to represent, the nomadic life of southern Khorasan region about a century ago, things were going in two apparently incompatible ways: the reality as it is observed through the story events confirms implicitly a high position for women, and what the writer or characters created by him say explicitly about women is mostly negative. It means that the discriminative position against women is more discursive than factfull.



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