

Fear of predicament of the Afghans- A Transformation of life in Nadia Hashimi's *When The Moon is Low*

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Abstract: Nadia Hashimi is a pediatrician and an outstanding novelist. Her clear and lucid style achieved the clear manipulation of ideas and words gives a comprehensive picture of Afghan reality to a larger audience outside the country. In her novel *When The Moon is Low* she deals with the problems face by the Afghans in Taliban's regimes and their migrating experience. This study focus on the crisis faces by the Afghans in the name of violence, suffering due to the incredible power of the Taliban regime. Due to their hazardous violence, many Afghans wish to flew from their country. It also exposes the realistic pictures of the Taliban regime in Kabul, which affects the Afghans.

Key Words: Fear of predicament, Migration, Taliban, War

Fear is an intensely unpleasant emotion in response to perceive or recognizing a danger or threat. Fear causes physiological changes that may produce behavioural reactions such as mounting an aggressive response or fleeing the threat. Fear in human beings threatens the health, safety, security or wellbeing of the people. It may occur in response to a certain stimulus occurring in the present or in anticipation or expectation of a future threat perceived as a risk to oneself. Due to fear, the people could not ready to take their basic need such as food, water and shelter.

Every human being faces certain threat in some unfortunate cases of life. The sociological and organizational research suggests that fears are not solely dependent upon one's nature, but are also shaped by their social relations and culture, which guide them to understand when and how much fear to feel. The impact of fear leads to lose the social status of women crisis in socio-economic conditions, environmental, ecological impacts and mental health impacts. Fear leads the people to move from one place to another and makes the children, women to work and gain income for food. Afghans faces lot of fear in the case of violence and death in the emergence of power.

After the independence of Afghanistan, the Soviet Union invades Afghanistan in 1979 and the United States provides active support to the Mujahideen fighter to destroy the Soviet troops. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1989. After several years, the power of Taliban raised and they become the rivals of Afghanistan. The Power of Taliban made the people to fear a lot for their daily lives. Particularly, the women in Afghanistan face many problems. Nadia Hashimi in the novel, *When the Moon is Low* revolves around the hardships of an Afghan woman named Fereiba Waziri, who is happy in her life with her husband and children, while she was a school teacher. But their happy middle class world, her education, work and comfort implodes when their country is engulfed in war and the Taliban rises to power.

Hashimi explores the rise of Taliban and its effect on the Afghans. Many people left Afghanistan when the Taliban took their regime. Fereiba too decided to leave Afghan along with her three children. Taliban forced everyone to follow the Islamic region and Afghans were under the control of the Taliban. Girls are not permitted to go to school. Fereiba's husband said that "If I were a European I never would restricted what to do and what should not do in Kabul" (94). Fereiba worried about her daughter Samiru, that she couldn't able to send her to school. Hashimi portrays the sufferings and death of Afghans as, "More mothers buried their sons, more implied to school, their limbs amputated by explosives disguised as dolls or toy cars" (90).

The Cruelty of Taliban frightens the Afghans and it leads them fleeing to neighbouring countries. In the novel, after Mahmood and Fereiba's marriage arrangement, the Soviet Union soldiers landed in Afghanistan. Fereiba's marriage coincides with the Russian invasion. She recalls:

Mahmood and I were married in 1979, a year after our engagement and just as Soviet Union's first baby faced soldiers landed their heavy boots on afghan soil...Just two months after our wedding, Mahmood received word that his Uncle's family, including four children, had been killed by Soviet rockets in the Panjshir valley... When Saleem turned four years old, the last of the soviet troops retreated. It was 1989. We prayed for tranquillity. (89- 91)

Kabul's inner peace was poisoned with the fundamentalist regime. The country was suffering a lot, because of the push and pull between the Soviet Union and Mujahideen, Afghanistan's freedom fighters. Afghans fears rocket storms as night mares in Afghanistan. As Fereiba says, "Rocket showered our city as rival factions tried to lay claim to the Capital" (92). Saleem's friend Qasim and his family face the cruelty of rocket attack. She describes that silence will not protect them from war. In Fereiba's words:

His Friend Qasim had survived the rocket attack, but his three-year-old sister had been killed, suffocated under a pile of debris as her family tried to claw her free...I should not have believed silence could protect us from the horrible truth. (92)

Hashimi express another incident of rocket attack. Ali is the friend of Saleem and his entire family died in the rocket attack. Hakeem says about the incident to Saleem as "I think he wishes he had gone back into the house and been crushed by those rockets instead of living with the memory of watching them die" (308). Life became hard at Kabul for the Afghans. When Fereiba was pregnant with her third child, she gets scared to give birth to the baby in Kabul. As she was talking to her husband, Fereiba's constant fear was visible. She says:

And now we are to bring another child into this Kabul? A Kabul that neither you nor I can recognize? For What? If he is a boy, he will grow up and know nothing but beards and fear. And God forbid this child has the sorry fortune to be born a girl. (95)

The sense of cruelty by Taliban makes the Afghans poor. Fereiba told her neighbors, "I have no choice but to get my Children out of Kabul. Their stomachs are empty, their lips parched. There's nothing for us here" (115). In the article, "The Soviet War in Afghanistan 1979-1989" by Alan Taylor reports about the war between Soviet Union and the Afghan fighters as:

Afghan fire fighters carry the body of a young girl killed in a powerful bomb blasts that shattered rows of homes and shops. In downtown Kabul on May 14, 1988. At least eight people were killed and more than 20 injured by the explosion, believed to be planted in a truck on the eve of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. (1)

As Fereiba's mother died after giving birth to her, all the neighbours considered her as a cursed one, but her mother was proud to give a son too and simultaneously, her mother feared for the evil eyes. Fereiba's express her mother's superstitious belief as, "Fearful that the neighbours or family members would be jealous...She sewed a small blue stone, an amulet, to the baby clothing her sister-in-law had given her to ward off the evil eye, or nazar (9). Taliban set rules and forced everyone to follow the Islamic religion. Mahmood,

Fereiba's husband would shake his head in sadness as, "Afghans fled the bloodied

Country side and sought refugee in the capital" (90). Every day they set new decrees to follow and the penalty for those who unfollow them. They even banned taking photos, television and video players. As an Afghan woman, Fereiba experienced the domination of Taliban in front of her son in her way to the hospital. Taliban questioned and insulted her as:

Where is your mahram? This is my son. He is escorting me to the Hospital. I am in severe pain in a... condition...Only loose women speak of such matters so openly! Have you no shame in front of your son? Where is his father or maybe he does not have one...Go home with your boy and try to carry yourself as a respectful Muslim Woman (109)

The arrogance of Taliban, forces her to leave the job and later her motherland. Women could not be able to walk outside the house without getting killed and injured. Khaled Hosseini presents the insult undergone by women due to the Taliban as:

You will stay inside your homes at all times, it is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must accompanied by a mahram, a male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home. (297)

The sudden assassination of her husband and lack of social, moral and economic support incite Fereiba to escape her motherland, accompanied by her three children, in a night bus that takes them to the extreme west of Afghanistan, from where they start their journey towards England, passing by and occasionally halting in small towns of Iran, Turkey, Greece, Italy and France, till they reach London. The passage of their journey is loaded with fear, since the family has no official documents.

Hashimi presents a slightly different picture in terms of the representation of women and their position in the society. She has given a comparatively respectable and prominent position through the depiction of women like Fereiba, who has received education, poor training and has earned the job as a teacher. "I am Malala: The Story of the girl who stood up for Education and was shot by the Taliban" is the incredible true autobiography of a young Pakistani girl, Malala Yousafzai, who won the Noble Peace Prize for fearlessly standing up for education in the face of the Taliban. She was shot in the head after refusing to back down from demanding for her right to an education. As Malala Yousafzai says in her memoir: "There are two powers in the World, One is the sword and the other is Pen. There is a third power stronger than both, that of Women" (31).

Hashimi presents the insecurity of women in the name of abuse, violence and slavery. Mimi, who came from a poor family, is forced by her parents to marry a man of twice her age. She protested against this, but later, she got married with him and she lived with her husband for few days. After few months, she returns to her parents, but they didn't accept her. So she lived with her aunt and then she fall in love with a local boy and eloped to Italy to start a new life. When they are in an apartment, he told his fiancée that her beauty could earn money. Mimi says:

One day. He took her to an apartment and unceremoniously traded her to another man. She'd pleaded with him, reminding him of the promises had made all that she'd done for him, but he turned his back and never returned. The new man wanted her to work. When she refused, he beat her and locked her in the room with two other girls. (330)

In this novel, the portrait of fear was successfully brought out by the author. She was even successful in her attempt to bring about the women in the dimension of time being against the general current of patriarchal society and in exploring her true potential along with the struggle to fulfill her urges and needs. She struggles a way out for the cultural unity in the subsection, which she implies as a cure against the religious fundamentalism and cultural hybridity. She shows an illustration of multicultural aspect of the Muslim rulers to the world. The modernist movement paves way for the study of cultures, especially cross culture confrontation due to movement from one part of the world to the other. From, twentieth century, post-colonial discourse has addressed itself to analyse, its intend ramification. Every culture has its own predilections which evoke mixed traditions. In the post-colonial era, there is no much of cultural mixing. It has given birth to hybrid-culture.

The novel pictures a realistic view to the readers that make them to recognize that the fear of human beings only make them suppress in the name of violence and arrogance, especially in Afghanistan. The promise made by the Taliban is to restore peace, security and enforce their own austere version of Sharia or Islamic law in power. Instead of fearing and dying, Afghans preferred to save their lives by surrendering to the Taliban under its amnesty offers. To free from Taliban, Afghans can consult and listen to women-led organisations in Afghanistan. The only way to deal fear is to face it.

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