

# The Criticism of Politics, Culture and Society in the stories by Mahmood Dolatabadi

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**ABSTRACT :** Novel writers in their works usually speak about different classes of the society, their codes of behavior as well as different and similar reactions of social, political and cultural structures of the society. Mahmood Dolatabadi is one the most famous and admired Iranian novel writers who illustrated social themes such as poverty and hunger, violence and treason, migration to cities, conflict between tradition and modernity, marriage in social chaos, land reforms and endless sufferings of rural people. The current article demonstrated that Dolatabadi was impressed by his environment and depicted real people and places as well as real political and social atmosphere of his current society in his novels. In other words, he criticized the government's policies, predicament of rural areas and irregular migration to big cities through his novels. The goal of the authors of the current article was to investigate Dolatabadi's works from sociological point of view in order to analyze the relationship between literary creation and the artist's social and historical contexts and background. This kind of analysis may be help to create a new perspective on scientific and artistic reviews of literary works.

**Key words:** literarycriticism,society criticism,politics criticism,Culture criticism , Mahmood Dolatabadi.

## INTRODUCTION

Mahmood Dolatabadi is recognized by critics as one of the most innovative contemporary writers. He published two novels entitled " Klidar " and " Jaye khaliye Soloch " and consolidated his position among Iranian magnificent writers. From the stand point of sociology of literature, works by the author are valuable and magnificent. Sociology of literature is field of literary studies that investigates the relationship between social conditions and literature. The field examines the level of education and social awareness, different types of audience, different information transfer methods, different social classes and social status of writers and audiences (Mirsadeggi, 1998). The main principle of social criticism is that the literature is the production of social conditions. Thus, many recent critics have tried to explain changes in writing styles and techniques via the changes in social circumstances (Zarrinkob, 1990). The view is so important that one the 19<sup>th</sup> century sociologists claimed that he understood the 19<sup>th</sup> Europe society and its governing relations by reading Balzac's novels rather than reading hundreds of books on economy and sociology (Daghighiyan , 1992) . Consequently, for someone who aims to understand the novel, the combination of history and fiction is vital mainly because the understanding of novel is dependent on the understanding of the relation of each specific literary work with phenomenon of life .

According to John Peck in order to have precise recognition of the target society of the author and its work, three questions should be asked:

What is the world that the writer presents in his work? Is he powerful enough to offer vivid imaginations of specific feelings and values of the society?

Is the writer skillful enough to conduct an analogy between two societies regarding their internal levels and factions?

What is the quality level of the interaction between the society and story characters? (Peck, 1987).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

As stated earlier, current study criticized the Dolatabadi's novels from social, cultural and political viewpoints. The methodology of the study included library search methods and the data was documented by taking notes from the novels of the writer. Firstly, the novels were studied by the authors of the study. Secondly, the data was collected and divided in to three domains; namely, politics, culture and society. Thirdly, related articles,

books and theses were analyzed and finally, the analytical perspectives of the authors as well as The critics' reviews for the Dolatabai's novels were presented in the study.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Most of the works by Dolatabadi are stories that depict everyman's struggle to live along with the expression of bitter historical and social transformations in rural communities. The works are the stories of people who were deprived of minimum living standards. He reflected the culture and customs of the villagers of Khorasan. In the same vein, he clarifies economical, social, cultural and historical relations among these people. Explaining the sociological and psychological aspects of a specific geographical area, he had represented the most conspicuous and dramatic events of the 40s and 50s (1963-1973). Basically, the stories of that was written in the period are full of themes such as the conflict between traditional values and those of new materialistic schools as well as migration to cities. To summarize, the writers of that age mainly concentrated on the conflict between tradition and modernity and described the consequences of modernity. These themes can be seen most readily in many of Dolatabadi's works such as "Mard", "Babashiro", "Hejrate Soliman", "Klidar", and "Jaye Khaliye soloch". It seems that his ideas, and his concerns regarding political, social, economical, and cultural crisis have affected every page and

influenced every chapter of his works. Consequently, these issues would be addressed subsequently in the current article.

### ***The critique of social and political issues in works by Dolatabadi***

Dolatabadi's criticism has mainly focused on wrong policies of the current government that negatively affected rural life. In his stories, farmers abandoned farms and leaved their village. In other words, they leaved their useless jobs that mainly were conducted through traditional methods and without modern agricultural equipments to migrate to cities. According to Dolatabadi, even the government's reforms could not stop migration flows to cities. In one hand, these reforms were not successful to change agricultural land use patterns due to defects have caused by water shortage, inability to make mortgage payments and lack of access to improved farming methods and in the other hand there have been continuous drought, rural poverty, lack of technology, unemployment, and new life standards that were advertised by medias (radio, television and telephone). The mentioned factors have accelerated the trends of rural-urban migration. In that time most of villagers were not included in developmental plans and were deprived of basic social services such as education and health. Dolatabadi criticized Pahlavi land reform program and stated "having a practical and comprehensive plan as well as an efficient replacing system are necessary conditions for changing the dominant system dating back thousands of years. But the history proved that the theorists of the White Revolution were its executive agents rather than its sophisticated policy makers. They did not consider the low rate of production and the absence of basic and infrastructure industries in their theory. Consequently, they were not able to address historically the large-scale migration to cities. I personally think that in Europe, the nature of industrial revolution regulated the population displacements by addressing the needs for economic development. Contrariwise, in that time the industrial revolution was not occurred in our country and there were no industries to absorb the immigrants. The people were forced out of their farms and the trend continues. Based on my own observations, during the one-year period (1993-1994), twenty five young families from a village with less than one hundred families migrated to Tehran altogether. Consequently, during a seventy years period Tehran has been changed from a traditional feudal city to a huge village full of asphalt and smoke" (Dolatabadi, 2004). Thus, during subsequent years and decades the infrastructures of economic productions and agricultural activities have been destroyed and Iranian society became more dependent on its neighbors and non-neighbors countries.

### ***The critique of economical issues in works by Dolatabadi***

Most of his works as an adroit author encompasses themes such as poverty and human's daily struggles for survival. Hunger and trying to make money are the main themes of his stories. Rural families have not enough money to afford their spending on one day and not being able to make money in a day, they should sleep hungry. The poverty is the greatest push factor subjected rural women to violence and sexual abuse. Similarly, most of rural men are unemployed accompanied feelings of emptiness, loneliness and confusion. They go to big cities and usually work in inferior, hard and low-wage jobs. In rural societies, the migration of men indicates the lack of labor and loss of social values. Hungry youth and adolescents beat and curse each other. He strongly reflected all these themes in his works. In one his novels titled "Jaye Khaliye Soloch" one of the characters named "Abbas" eat coins mixed with dried dung to gain money and to avoid being a gambling loser. He suffered abdominal pain and diarrhea all the night. "... Abbas ate a hand of coins that were mixed with dust and dung and his lips were swollen like two dried walnuts" (Dolatabadi, 1995).

Regarding economic issues, the most prominent theme in his stories are: class conflict in society and division of rural society into rich and poor groups, economic crisis, social inequality and unemployment, poverty, inhabitants of the periphery of cities, and irregular migration.

### ***The critique of cultural issues in works by Dolatabadi***

In the realm of culture, Dolatabadi has noticed women considerably. Historical Sociology of women during the recent hundred and fifty years that exclusively reflected in concurrent novels and travelogues has revealed that women, as half of the population of the society, were victims of social abuse and economic transactions. Many of poor families were forced to marry their young girls with old and rich men. The social role of women changed from active and efficient member of a family to a passive personality and an object. The realism governing the Dolatabadi's stories kills the romantic roles of women and intensifies violence, poverty and chore. In such a situation, depicting the behavior of a man seeking sex with rural woman who has lost her husband is of a great importance. In other words, economic incentives lead to instinctive dominance and represents limited space and geographical borders. In this atmosphere, there is no justification to mitigate the pain of the conflict between romantic elements and social violence. As a consequence, qualitative and quantitative values such as religion and scientific literacy were weakened and vices such as lying and flattery were empowered. In one of his novels named "Jaye Khaliye Soloch" the actions of the main female character (Margan) are non-traditional and anti-patriarchal. One of the actions is her self-defense against one of the men of the village called "Salar". She wrestled with him and pulled his testicles.

"Margan wrestled with Salar. Salar was confused and did not know what to do. She was sitting on his legs and was grabbing his testicles. Salar was trying to save himself but Margan did not stop pulling and grabbing". (Dolatabadi, 1995, p 31-32).

Generally speaking, the status of Iranian woman viewed from three different perspectives in Dolatabadi's stories:

A woman whose husband left her and went to an unknown destination.

A woman whose husband married another woman.

A woman who was forced to marry in early age.

### **CONCLUSION**

The works by Dolatabadi could be referred as encyclopedias full of information on water, soil, plants, customs and culture of Khorasan's villages. Differently stated, the author collected a valuable collection of sociological data in his works. The works are narratives of daily life that covers truth and facts of the people living styles. Among contemporary writers, he is undoubtedly one of the most skillful authors who described rural and desert life from the historical and sociological viewpoints. The nature of villages, the hierarchy of a village, agriculture, irrigation canals, migration, social class deviation, dressing styles, food habits, customs and traditions of villagers are reflected perfectly in Dolatabadi's works.

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