

REFLECTION OF IRANIAN IDENTITY AND PERSIAN PROSE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

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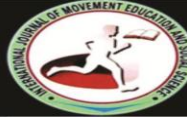
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ABSTRACT

In Persian, the term *mellat* found currency as the equivalent of the term “nation” in the 19th century. . The modern concept of “nation” originated from the concept of religious community (*mellat*) in two phases: first was constructed the notion of “Iranian Muslim nation” by addition of “Iran” to the traditional notion of Muslim religious community (*mellat-e Mosalmān*) to signify the Iranian component of the religious community (*mellat-e Mosalmān-e Irān*). The recent history of Iran was divided into two dictatorial regimes which was a monarchy (the Pahlavi dynasty) and the theocracy (the Islamic Republic), which presents different values and different identities. 20th century historiography on nation-state correlation to a large extent has been shaped by politically contentious projects. Persia’s reform movement which was primarily a response of the reforming Persian literati to the challenges of Western powers was instrumental in promoting new ideas of nation and national homeland, which were aspiring to modernize the archaic government offices and adopt modern technology and political structure in order to develop Persia’s capability to resist Western encroachment. The fundamental class structure of Iranian society has its roots in pre-Islamic times, when Zoroastrian clergy tried, not very successfully, to enforce a caste system something like that of Hinduism. Although class lines have never been rigid in Islamic Iran, there are distinct class patterns characteristic of medieval and even modern Iranian society. We can conclude that the importance of the turning point, which is the Islamic revolution, triggered the development of the Iranian literature and draw a clear line between the literature before and after 1979.

KEYWORDS: *Persia, Persian literature, National Identity, Islamic Revolution, Nationalism, Iranian society, Reza Shah, Pahlavi dynasty, constitutionalism, Sharia law.*

The emerging national vocabulary of Iran, the term “nation,” in its modern usage—this is derived from Latin ‘*natio*’ (a group related by birth or place of origin)—emerged in various European languages predominantly in the 18th and 19th centuries. In Persian, the term *mellat* found currency as the equivalent of the term “nation” in the 19th century. The term *mellat* was used to denote any religious community, and more specifically, followers of a faith in possession of a holy book. The recent history of Iran was divided into two dictatorial regimes which was a monarchy (the Pahlavi dynasty) and the theocracy (the Islamic Republic), which presents different values and different identities. The Pahlavi regime depicted the Persian identity glamorising the ancient kings and rulers of Old Persia which changed the calendar to a secular one and forced a single



language for all the different ethnic groups and tribes and it festered an anti-Arab sentiment. The Islamic Republic focussed on the rule of *Fiqh* and *Sharia* along with the major Islamic figures, and tried to erase the existence of the Persian rulers.

The duality between these two identities is unclear, but most Iranians are nationalistic and Islamist at the same time. The official law of the land was the Sharia law even for the people of the Pahlavi regime; the Islamic Republic also had several racist ethnic groups, especially the people of the Kurdish clan. Generally it is said that the Islamist identity relies on the events of Shiism heavily, especially Mehdi and the death of Hussain in a war which is known and celebrated as a period of mourning of Muharram. They base their ideology whether moderate or radical, on Islamic scriptures and thinkers like Ali Shariati who mixed Islam with Marxism and Sartre's existentialism and provided fuel for the Islamic Revolution. The people of the Islamic Republic might be theocratic and secular but Islam and Shiism played an important role in their thinking.

The Nationalist movement emphasized the culture of Iran previous to the Arab colonialism and while most of them did not know anything about the religion of Zoroastrianism, they used their symbols, their hero Cyrus, who was the ancient emperor of Persia. They emphasized national holidays like Nowrouz and Fireworks Wednesday. In Iran, there is a great tendency among the chauvinists to be proud of the nation's cultural heritage. They mention about the country's culture and civilization with great pride. Iranian nationalists' belief mainly in democracy and human rights but they supported many policies that are outright fascists.

20th century historiography on nation-state correlation to a large extent has been shaped by politically contentious projects. Writing the national history of the people who have matured from a passive existence to a people bound through a modern state with consistent and internationally recognized borders relied decisively on remembered, invented and recorded past which is sturdily and increasingly refashioned by present politics. In modern state building, it is not only the present politics that reconstruct the past, but to provide recognition to a regime and legitimize the authority by refashioning the political culture through construction of the selected recollection of a certain past. In the course of the history of Iran, Iran has experienced many eventful epochs. The 20th century was far from exceptional in this due respect: the ravages of the three major wars (1914-18, 1941-45, 1980-88) resulting in the death of thousands of people; three coups (1908, 1921 and 1953) transforming power relations within the political and military elite and the two revolutions (1905-09 and 1978-82) which led to radical changes in socio-political arrangements. In the 1960s and the 1970s, a significant trend the Iranian historiography, focussing mainly on the events of the 19th and 20th centuries, developed among the Iranian and Non-Iranian historians. Following the Islamic Revolution of 1978-82 which caused a momentous rupture with the political past, there has been a growing interest in reading the country's past, both the immediate and distant.

The crafting of the modern Iranian identity was linked to the configuration of history and restyling of language. The nationalist emplotment of Iran's ancient history as a tragedy was based on the comprehension of the Muslim conquest as a force endangering the revenue progress (*taraqqi-i-makus-i-Iran*).

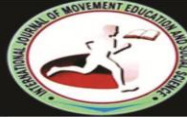


During Iran's constitutional reforms of 1905-09, the autonomous Iranian identities prefigured into the line up of political forces to antagonist "Constitutionalist" (Mashrutahkhwah) and "Shariatist" (Mashuankhwah) camps. The shift in the 1970s from a regime glorifying Iran's ancient civilization to a revolutionary regime extolling Islamic heritage is the most recent example of the creative possibilities and insoluble dilemmas endangered by the contested memories of Pre-Islamic Iran. Informed by "dastiri" texts and inspired by the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, modern historical writings harnessed the Iranian homeland (vatan) to an immemorial past beginning with Mahabad and Kayumars and pointing towards a future unison with Europe. Iran's pre-Islamic past was celebrated as a glorious and industrious age, and its integration into the Arab-Islamic world was shunned as a cause of its "reverse progress" (tarraqi-i-makus).

NATIONAL IDENTITY IN REFORM MOVEMENTS AND REVOLUTION: Persia's reform movement which was primarily a response of the reforming Persian literati to the challenges of Western powers was instrumental in promoting new ideas of nation and national homeland, which were aspiring to modernize the archaic government offices and adopt modern technology and political structure in order to develop Persia's capability to resist Western encroachment. The ideas of nationalism, constitutionalism and progress further elaborated by western educated literati and statesmen as Hosayn Khan Sepahsalar who served as the representative of Persia in Bombay, Tbilisi and Istanbul and he also served as the head of certain ministries as well as in the grand vizierate (1871). Sepahsalar and his close aides Malkan Khan Nazem-al-Dawla (1833-1908), Yusuf Khan Mostasar al-Dawla (1895), and Majd-al-Molk Sinaki (1809-81) among others advocated the formation of modern political institutions as well as the new prerequisite for progress. Sepahsalar was the first to use the term "melliyyat" to refer to the concept of nationality and nationalism, when he mentioned, The foundation of nationality (asas-e-melliyyat) that was offered by the French emperor saying that each nation (mellat) should be governed by its own people; his idea was sovereignty of the nation and the changing of the status of the inhabitants from subjects to citizens.

ROMANTIC NATIONALISM- Gathering of the romantic nationalism of the intellectual figures such as Mirza Aga Khan Kermani, Jalal al-Din Mirza, Mirza Fath-ali Akundzada, etc and the nationalistic ideas of the reforming ministers contributed significantly to the intellectual fragment and ideological orientation of the constitutional revolution.

CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY- The intellectual ideas by the constitutional movement was primarily oriented towards creating a modern nation state in order to develop the resources of the country and protect its autonomy from foreign powers, and forming a nation by transforming the people from subjects (raaya) to citizen with a greater participation in the political life of the country. The national idea of mellat-e-Iran regardless of their religious beliefs, origin of ethnicity, language they spoke, or their socio-economic status. It was in terms of these principles that the constitutional revolution became a patriotic, nationalist movement. Therefore, from its inception the idea of national sovereignty of Iranian people became the slogan of those who advocated constitutionalism, secularism, progress and equality.



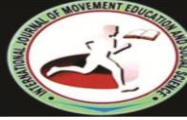
In this period, a new generation of Persian literati emerged, they were influenced by the forerunners of nationalism in Iran which included Forsat Sirazi (1855-1921), the author of *Atar-e-Ajam* (the first Persian work that introduced the ancient monuments and archaeological sites of Fars. He attributes the deplorable conditions of Persia to the ignorance of its people and the tyranny of its rulers in his political papers and called for drastic reforms. Other important figures in the field of literati included Malek-al-Motakallemin (1860-1907) who was impressed by the Japanese model of progress and advocated a rational use of the natural resources for industrialization of the country. There were two more writers from Azerbaijan, Abd-al Rahim Talebof (1835-1910) and Zayn-al-Abedin Maragai (1839-1910). The former advocated a scientific and political awakening of Persia while the latter deplored the miserable life of the nation and its salvation.

The poets of the constitutional revolution are divided into three distinct types (1) those who considered the national homeland in its Islamic or even in its Shiite form such as Adib Pisavari and Sayyed Ashraf al Din Geelani. (2) Those poets who were influenced by modern Western conception of homeland such as Abul Qaseem Arif (1883-1933) and Mir-zadeh Esqi (1893-1924) and wrote on the themes of patriotism, freedom, anti colonialism. Mohammad Ebrahim Farroki Yazdi (1888-1939) also belonged to this group and his style of writing reflected patriotism, socialism and called for love, devotion and sacrifice for Iran and its working people. (3) Those poets who followed a hybrid religio-national response such as Malek-al Soara Bahar (1866-1951) who wrote many powerful poems which glorified pre-Islamic Iran while at the same time gave importance to the Islamic heritage of Iran.

Ahmad Kasrawi (1888-1945), another prolific author published scores of political pamphlets which had a combination of nationalistic and anti religious sentiments and it advocated a radical approach towards purification of Persia from Arabic words. History and language were the two most important bases for the formation of a new state nationalism under the Pahlavis. The historical agenda included an emphasis on the Achaemenid era and the encouragement of archaeological excavations by American and European archaeologists.

THE POLITICS OF IRANIAN IDENTITY- Class structure of Iranian society: The fundamental class structure of Iranian society has its roots in pre-Islamic times, when Zoroastrian clergy tried, not very successfully, to enforce a caste system something like that of Hinduism. Although class lines have never been rigid in Islamic Iran, there are distinct class patterns characteristic of medieval and even modern Iranian society.

Peasants: The largest portion of the Iranian population until very recent times consisted of peasants living in small agricultural villages. Their situations could vary considerably, depending mainly on whether or not they owned their own land. Typically villages and their agricultural land were the property of absentee landlords, usually civil or military officials. Villages sometimes belonged to charitable foundations—in effect to the clergy—or to wealthier merchants. The rent was paid in kind, and the crop was divided according to traditional formulae among the landlord, the cultivator, and the individuals who supplied irrigation water, animals for



cultivation, and seed. As in other pre-modern agrarian societies, the whole of Iranian government and urban culture was dependent on the surplus extracted from the peasants.

Nomads: Most of the area of Iran is mountainous, arid, or both, and agriculture is usually only possible in oases at the feet of mountain ranges. Turkish tribes were important in the north, Kurds in the west, and Baloch in the southeast. Under the Pahlavis the power of the tribes was broken, and most were forced to accept a sedentary life. Since the Islamic Revolution, some of the tribes have been able to resume a nomadic life.

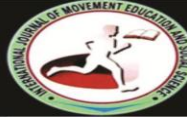
The Bazaar: Traditional urban economic life in Iran is based on the bazaar, an amorphous physical, social, and economic entity that is at the heart of Iranian cities. The bazaar as a social class included shopkeepers, apprentices, craftsmen, wealthy wholesale merchants, moneychangers, peddlers, porters, and other participants in the market, great and small. The bazaar tended to be allied to the clergy against the government, whose taxes, exactions, and interference was usually the bazaar's chief problem.

The "Men of the Sword": Ruling was normally the prerogative of soldiers, who were often non-Persian invaders or tribesmen. The highest posts in government were normally occupied by members of this military ruling class.

The "Men of the Pen": The continuing administration of government was the prerogative of an educated bureaucratic class, mainly Persian in origin. The bureaucratic families maintained specialized skills in such areas as accounting, tax collection, official correspondence, and record-keeping. Thus, while a provincial governor in Qajar times would most likely be a Qajar prince whose place was owed to his family connections and his tribe's Turkish military traditions, his secretary and his chief accountant would most likely be Persians whose families had monopolized these skills for generations. The cultural and administrative traditions of the bureaucratic families went back far into Sasanian times, and this class was the most loyal supporter of pre-Islamic Persian traditions of nationalism and culture. Paradoxically, as an educated class they also tended in recent times to become westernized, so they also played critical roles in the emergence of modern Iran.

The Clergy: The Shi'ite clergy constituted a small but important social class. To some extent, the profession of cleric was hereditary like most other occupations and crafts in pre-modern times. The clergy had very close links with the bazaar, and clerical families were and are often linked by marriage to bazaar families of comparable social station. Few religious positions were directly controlled by the government, so the clergy frequently played roles as intermediaries between the government and other classes. The allegiances of the clergy varied considerably depending on their positions. Some—for example, the Friday Prayer leaders, who were appointed by the government—were closely linked to the authorities. Clerics supported by endowments and contributions were more likely to be aligned with the merchants, the main source of such revenues, whereas village mullas would be likely to occupy a position between the landlord and the peasants.

The New Middle Class: The rise of Western-style education in the early twentieth century created a new middle class without strong links to traditional Iranian culture. The possessors of the new education rose rapidly in influence and wealth as the Pahlavi reforms created a demand for officials, technicians, and businessmen. The



new class represented a discontinuity in Iranian society since their experiences and outlook were in many ways fundamentally different from those of the traditional classes. Their rise was bitterly resented by more traditional groups like the clergy and the bazaar. Most urban Baha'i families belonged to this new class, which is one of the factors explaining the hatred directed at them by more traditional groups in Iranian society.

Monarchy: In traditional Iranian political thought the monarch did not belong to any class. Ideally, the king's social independence and his absolute power allowed him to identify himself with the state and thus administer justice equally to all groups. Conversely, if the king was unjust, society would suffer and even the fertility of the land would decline. The worst offense for a king was to rule arbitrarily. The Iranian and the Islamic strains in Iranian political thought approached the question of the legitimacy of the king slightly differently. In Islamic thought kingship is a "collective" rather than a "personal obligation," which is to say, someone has to be king, and a person who happens to be king, however he may have gained power, has certain responsibilities by virtue of his de facto power—to rule justly, above all. On the other hand, in the Iranian tradition a certain light of God comes to a man and brings him kingship. If he rules well, that light will stay with him, but if he rules unjustly, the light will desert him and he will lose power. The Iranian tradition has some conception of hereditary monarchy, but not so strictly as in European ideas of succession. In general, the Iranian king is much more of a supernatural figure, surrounded by extraordinary pomp, than was the case for Arab rulers.

Revolutions: Counterbalancing its tradition of monarchy, Iran has a strong tradition of revolution. Alone in the Islamic world Iran has had at least two major revolutions in modern times. (The Babi movement may perhaps be seen as an abortive third revolution.) The archetype of Iranian revolution is the story of the overthrow of the tyrant Dakhak by Kava the blacksmith, as told in Firdausi's Book of Kings. The Persian intelligentsia has been divided among various numbers of contesting groups for reconstructing Iran in the middle of the 20th century. The main controversy derived from the two fundamental objectives of the constitutional revolution: The foundation of a nation-state and the development of a civil society that helped transform people from subjects to citizens with the right to participate in national affairs. A group of Western educated technocrats who were also dedicated to the cause of the progress and prosperity of Iran became a rapid force towards economic growth and modernisation of the country. A second group of intelligentsia envisioned the development of a civil society as a prerequisite to nation formation; the liberal nationalist ideas were understood but they were identified as popular nationalism. The main proponents of this group of national identity included the National Front (Jebha-ye-melli), a loose coalition of various organisations under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddeq. The third group challenged the state sponsored notion of national identity which included the supporters of leftist ideologies who championed the cause of the Iranian people. The leftist view was influenced by the establishment of the union of Soviet Republics and was shaped by the collective identities of the people of the southern republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia in the period from the early 1920s to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. The fourth notion of Iranian national identity was the religious one where the main contributors were Ayatollah Mortaza Motahhari, Ali Shariati and Mehdi Bazargan.

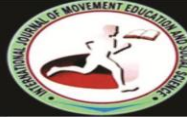


In the late 20th century of Iran, ethno- linguistic affiliation and provincial and tribal ties were seen similar to many other societies. But in spite of multiple identities, a deeply rooted cultural awareness and a historical consciousness of continuity in a long and distinctive history of the country have served as a strong cohesive force to help overcome various divisive currents. A conscious belief in Iran's cultural distinctiveness served as the foundation and acted as a common denominator of Iranian identity and was also the building force among the Iranians for centuries especially with Persian literature specifically poetry as its core element.

Persian was the first language in the Muslim civilization to break through Arabic's monopoly on writing. From the centre of the empire, Persia had spread to the provinces and had even marginalised other Iranian languages with a tradition of writing such as Sogdian in Central Asia. The New Persian did not differ much from the Middle Persian of the Sasanian period except in its expansion of vocabulary. The emergence of written Persian was facilitated by the political fragmentation of the caliphate.

Epic literature occupies a key role in formulating and maintaining cohesive national and cultural identities—elucidating the spirit and values of a society as well as exploring mythic and historical origins. Works of epic literature are often retroactively embedded with political meaning, particularly after the rise of ethnic nationalisms in the 19th and 20th centuries. For modernizing nationalists, epics served a key role as tools to both create and strengthen ethnic and linguistic unity by highlighting (and almost always, distorting) a shared national history. There was also prose literature in Persian. As a scholarly medium, Persian was until recently subordinate to Arabic, so Persian works on scholarly and scientific topics tended to be popular adaptations of more serious Arabic works. Notable genres in Persian include literary letter-writing, history, and manuals of statecraft. In Bahai literature these genres are represented by such works as Bahaullah's and 'Abd al-Baha's tablets, Dawn-Breakers, and Secret of Divine Civilization respectively.

Modern prose owes much to the small volume or short stories *Yaki Bud Yaki Nabud* (once upon a time) published in 1921 by Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, these stories became a landmark in the development of realistic prose narrative which had no precedent in the Persian tradition. Sadeq Hedayat followed the footsteps of Jamalzadeh by using the short stories to portray the conventional lines of common people as well as the confusions of modern intellectuals. Bozorg Alavi wrote stories and novels dealing with the deeper causes of psychological problems and the experiences of leftist intellectuals in their struggle. His novel '*Chashm-hayash*' (1952), *Her Eyes*, recounts a personal tragedy within a group of political activists. After Reza Shah's fall in 1941, another generation of prose writers emerged amongst which the most prominent ones were Sadeq Chubak whose short stories show the influence of the American novelist Ernest Hemingway, and Jalal Al-e Ahmad whose long essay '*Gharbzadegi*' (1961) became widely influential as an indictment of the slavish imitation of the West in Iranian society under the Pahlavi regime. Among prose writers of the later 20th century, the influence of modern narrative techniques inspired the Western writers such as James Joyce and William Faulkner and they were very strong particularly in the works of Hushang Golshiri, whose depiction of the decay



of the ancient Iranian aristocracy in Shazdeh Eh Tejab (1968), short novel in which one of the many instances of the symbiosis of literature and the visual and performing arts in modern Persian Literature. A symbiosis of the arts also marks the work of Ghulam Husaya Saidi who wrote short stories as well as plays for the theatre and scripts for the Iranian films. The participation of women writers in modern literature increased considerably during the second half of the 20th century. Shahrnoush Parsipour's novella "Zanam-bidun-i-Mardan" (1978- Women without men) recounts the attempts of five women who overcame the limitations put upon their lives by male dominance in a traditional society. Parsipour uses the narrative technique of magic realism in imitation of such Latin American authors such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Short story writing takes its roots primarily from the folklore tales, ancient and classical forms of prose and story-telling and later due to its contact with the Arabic and European literature of the 20th century. The beginning of the 20th century is remarkable as a new period of radical change and modernization of the literature on a big scale that opened the way for prose to explore new avenues of expression through writing personal thoughts that took a more social overtone. Various genres adopted during that period are still prominent in the modern Iranian prose, especially short stories. Khamid Abdullalhiyon Muhammad Huquqi, Jamal Mirsadiqi, Mohammad Kasimzade are the most notable literature scholars who dedicated their works on the history and analysis of the establishment and development of the short story genre in the modern Iranian literature. The development of the modern short story genre is divided into three periods: an establishment, the formative period and the period of consolidation and growth and a period of diversity. The formative period started in 1922 after the publication of Ali Jamalzadeh's *Yaki bud Yaki Nabud*, a collection of short stories, this collection pioneered the genre in the Iranian prose and it gained him the title of "the father of modern Iranian literature". Russian Orientalist K. Chaykin considers "once upon a time" as the first work of its kind to employing the technique of realistic writings and..... the Iranian literature shook of the shoulder the centuries old stories of mystic literature, lofty and adorned expression and framed flowers, birds and butterfly, and at last dared to face with the reality of time.

The collection narrative is pleasant and entertaining and it overflows with witty satire and humour, which mainly focussed on the political issues. It has also made fun of the customs of the Persian society of that period and exposed its backwardness and superstitious beliefs. Jamalzadeh's prose is filled with colloquialism and proverbial expressions as he was one of the first writers to abandon the ornate artificial style of the traditional writing making simple colloquial language the norm in modern Persian literature. As a result, a new form of story-telling changed in the Iranian literature which went through consolidation and development in the framework of folklore, ancient and classical Persian literary heritage and keeping up the literary trends and achievements of Europe especially France and other literary centres. The reform minded Iranian writers of the early 20th century addressed the works of the established writers of prose in Europe, America and Russia and they looked for new models in their famous short stories. Inspired by foreign classics of the genre, Iranian writers started observing the current order of things with critical thinking and social issues such as poverty,



bribery, fornication, oppressed women, immorality and hypocrisy of the religion were the main topics of their prose.

The Constitutional Revolution of Iran (1905-1907), which resulted in the creation of parliament and the publication of numerous newspapers and journals, made suitable ground for the development of Iran's first generation of modern writers. Around the same time, the return of Iran's first graduates of European universities (made possible through government funding) brought in a new wave of modernisation, along with translations of Western literature and philosophy. Hedayat and Yushij both studied in French-speaking St. Louis school in Tehran, and were familiar with contemporary Western literature. Hedayat was the first to translate the works of Kafka and Chekhov, and wrote an extensive introduction for the Persian edition of Kafka's stories. *The Blind Owl* (1937), Hedayat's surrealist-melancholic masterpiece, was the first modern novel in Persian language – a response to an oppressed society and the ideals of the Constitutional Revolution. The novel's narrator, as a symbol of the overwhelmed and scorned Iranian intellectual, has been aware for some time of the 'dreadful abyss' between him and the rest of society, and now only writes for his shadow on the wall, to better know his self. During the 1980s, with the eight-year Iran–Iraq war, the curbing of short-lived freedoms of the years immediately after the revolution, and the blacklisting of most of the famous writers, Iranian literature lost much of its vitality and strength. War and economic problems distracted people from literature to some extent, and the emigration and exile of many prominent writers left a gaping void behind. This depressed atmosphere somehow lingered on up to 1997. Khatami's presidency, which brought in an energetic reform movement, created another wave of newspaper and magazine publications, creating a fertile ground for the emergence of new literary voices.

Characteristics of Short Stories in Pre-revolution - Period From the start of the formative period until the period of diversity the short story genre comprise almost one hundred years. The path it passed began from didactic and educational stories, and later replaced by the realities of the contemporary social life. This kind of realistic stories became social and critical of tone. In the first period (1920s and 1930s) the thematic range was relatively small and this period focused on the predicaments of the little man, his or her daily concerns, issues, injustice by his or her senior, life in suburbs, dire state of peasants, women's emancipation, and so on. From 1930s and on the attention of the writers was drawn by new social and political issues, such as false elections, the tyranny and injustice of the ruling class. This period in the Iranian literature stands out as the most fruitful of changes and full of big names that were established. Among them were Bozorg Alavi, Jalal Ole-Ahmad, Muhammad Mas'ud Dehoti, Muhammad Hijazi, Sadeq Chubak, Behozin, Al'e Ahmad, and Sadeq Hedayat.

Since short story prefers compact form, precise and clear language with economizing on every aspect of expression of the writer made it perfect medium for narrative, so it continued its dominant position in the Iranian prose of the 1940s and 1950s. The thematic range of the period was enriched with topics like patriotism, humanism, the hardships of an Iranian woman, fate of Iran's intellectual elite, suffering of the blue collar worker. During the 1960s and 1970s growing national consciousness, formation of the new political and



philosophical outlook among the learned was documented through the works of the writers of the time. Social discontent had been immediately transferred into the short stories in more detail, rather than in other form of the prose. The works of progressive writers of the 1970s is mostly about the confrontation of the traditional values and culture mostly exported from the Western Europe and American, and as an outcome, big divide in the Iranian society. In this period backwardness and tragic lives of the poor, the Western influence to the social and cultural institutions, losses of national cultural identity were of a great concern of that generation of writers. Popular culture spread further during the 1970s and its perceived pressure on the Iranian society to fall under the influence of the West was felt by every social strata. That is the reason behind the so-called monolithic colour that dominates in the palette of topics in prose over the whole 1970s. Another characteristic of the pre-revolution period is its more liberal exchange of views in society, focus on the common values, moral and intellectual heritage of the human civilization, introduction to the classics of the world literature through extensive translation, as well as the call for the revival of the pre-Islamic cultural heritage of Persia. Also new cohort of writers employed a variety of approaches, from realism and naturalism to (myth and legend-like) surrealistic fantasy, breaking new ground and introducing a whole range of literary models and presenting new possibilities for the further development of the genre. All these factors contributed to the development of modern Persian fiction.

Iranian Short Story in Post-revolution Period- The third period in the development of modern prose, such as short-story coincides with the Revolution of 1979, with its political purges and dramatic social upheavals. World history taught us that a political revolution immediately impacts the social order and that in turn leaves its mark on the thoughts of the writers and their works. The period presented authors with new themes and topics. At first the most established Persian writers continued pursuing earlier social concerns, like drive for freedom of thought and speech, and of the press. And in the first few years after the revolution the modern Persian short story made considerable progress. And the revolution of the 1979 was no exception in transforming the contemporary literature completely. It is seen from the classification of the modern Iranian literature—dividing it into pre-revolution and post-revolution period, due the dramatic changes occurred thanks to the political change that it resulted. After the revolution, due to the political changes and censorship, some of the famous writers decided to leave the country and Iranian literature to some extent lost its initial vitality and strength. Although some literary talent left Iran, they managed to become inseparable part of the modern Iranian literature, and create a literature island of their own. That's literature of the Iranian Diaspora that had or chose to continue their work in the Western Europe and the US. The immigrant writers of that sort wrote in Persian, mostly about Iranian life and culture like before, with only an exception they lived and created their work outside of Iran. The rest of the talented writers who chose to stay and adapt to the new political and social environment, focused on the changes the revolution brought, and the adversaries of the eight-year war with Iraq and its victims. However, what was common for the authors both inside the country and abroad, their main theme and concerns were around the Iranian society and its culture. Most striking differences between the works of the two groups of the Iranian writer are—immigrant literature was free from any restraints that strict



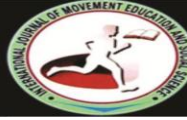
moral code and censorship inside the country put on the publications. They were more of an analytical and critical nature. On the contrary, the literature inside Iran had to serve as “a torch of moral and nationalism” in the hand of the state that could lead the nation out of the pre-revolution darkness towards the bright future ahead. The new approach and interpretation of the ancient theme of the struggle between the Good and Evil was adopted by the short story writers of the 1980s. Most of the stories were staged during the times of the Shah’s regime and highlighted the cruelty, political and social injustice among the society. Although in the classical Persian literature the same technique is found mainly in the riddles and fables, but the generation of the writers of the 1980s and 1990s started to employ it actively in their modern short stories. For example, a pine tree in A.Halili’s “Beyond the pinewood” (آن سوی صنوبر ما) symbolizes existence and life, while the spring in the short story “Trip of the spring water” (سفر چشمه کوچک) stands for the purity and freshness of mind. Another classical genre that has found its way into the modern Iranian prose is “Pandname”—didactic stories with moral in the end told from the elderly to the youth. And we can find many pandnameh-like short stories in the works by A. Halili, B. Somoni, M. Bayrami.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the importance of the turning point, which is the Islamic revolution, triggered the development of the Iranian literature and draw a clear line between the literature before and after 1979. The difference of the two periods is seen in the quality and quantity of the literary works, especially in the prose. Post-revolution literature prose becomes multidimensional both in style and in thematic range, with more positive approach to the social life and women starting showing active participation. Literature gained from the process by the global exchange of the ideas between the nations and local achievements learned internationally. And thanks to its strength and distinct voice, the Iranian literature managed to gain its due place in the world literature arena. This was possible because of the hard word of the talented writers who kept experimenting, challenging the established traditions, learning from the Persian classics. Nowadays we can observe that in the short stories of the contemporary authors a person is depicted not as a mere demographic unity, a vehicle of social exchange and uniform workforce but as an individual with spiritual, traditional values, who has got a psychological world of conflicting needs and priorities. And it is the dominant way of looking at each their character among the contemporary Iranian writers.

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