



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE HYBRID SELF IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN LALEH KHADIVI'S *THE AGE OF ORPHANS*

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 28 May 2020

Final Accepted: 30 June 2020

Published: July 2020

Key words:-

Othering, Postcolonial Self, Deculturalization, Hybridity, Plight Of Belonging Etc

Abstract

This study presents Laleh Khadivi's *The Age of Orphans* based on the theories of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. It answers the questions: can this novel be read through the lens of Bhabha's theory of hybridity, and, if so, what does such a reading reveal about culture and identity in *The Age of Orphans*? The hybrid self is an experience where in the postcolonial self holds the shades of two identities and cultures, namely the colonizer and the colonized. The protagonist Reza lives in a space that represents the shadows of both traditional and modern cultures. Reza's inner tension comes from mixed cultural identity that is represented in his conflicting conceptions, feelings, thoughts, and behaviours towards the Kurds and his wife, Meena. This paper validates that Reza has a hybrid identity. The modern Kurdish postcolonial self is a mixed one whereby it cannot return to a purely traditional cultural perception.

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Introduction:-

Postcolonial theory proposes diverse definitions for the postcolonial self, as selfhood is seen as a product of cultural discourse. Some postcolonial theorists consider the human self to be the product of a constant discourse, but the others think of it as the flexible product. These two visions provide us with two ways to perceive the idea of culture. First, those who believe that culture is static, see the capacity of any culture as limited to a specific geography and historical narrative. This limitation preserves the customs and rituals of the culture, and it also resists as unwanted the change that the second group considers to result from the dialogue between different cultures as they both acquire inter-cultural growth. This second believes that culture is a flexible model that can be updated. Accordingly, the dynamism of culture creates an environment for cultural openness.

Said is a postcolonial theorist who describes the colonial discourse with a distinction between the self and the "other" in his *Orientalism*. He employs Foucault's term of "discourse" to draw a binary opposition between the colonized and the colonizer in the nineteenth century. According to Said, "the relationship between the Occident and the Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony". Cultural hegemony proves the hierarchy of political power that ends with an ideology of differentiation between the dominant colonizer and the "other." Othering is a form of discourse manipulation, an explicit political mechanism that justifies the invasion of one group by the other because the constructed and exaggerated dichotomy authorizes the power imbalance between them.

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The ideology of othering limits the actions and thoughts of the group deemed to be the “other” because they are shaped by the political, cultural, and religious backgrounds of the dominating group. And the “other” is necessarily inferior – a differentiation which superficially justifies the “superior” group’s subjugation and control of the “inferior” group. The emotional and intellectual tensions literally distort the psychological and cultural structures of the colonized, making it more difficult for them to fight against the pressures of the colonizers. The othering of minorities leads them into practicing a cultural phenomenon that the Anglo-Indian postcolonial scholar, critic, and theorist Homi Bhabha calls “mimicry.” When the colonized submit to the control mechanisms of “othering,” they are pressured into practicing the foreign culture of the colonizer. Bhabha calls mimicry “one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (122). Deculturation completes the otherness of the “other” by the formation of a mixed cultural identity within the colonized world.

The Socio-Political History Of The Kurds In Iran:

The socio-political history of the Kurds in post-World War I is one of struggle and tragic history. The period is marked by a radical change and an enduring violence that have influenced the current political and cultural state of affairs of the Kurdish people in Iran ever since the 1920s. The politics of Persian nationalism were behind the state policing that drastically transformed the shape of the country and the destiny of the minority racial and ethnic group of Kurds. They were subject to different forms of deculturation. As a result, they found themselves in an impossible situation, and would not be able to find a way to ease the inward and outward tensions due to the presence of multiple conflicting cultural identities. From the denial of their language and culture, the Kurds of Iran have witnessed ethnic strife, the dehumanizing effects of racism, and the psychological scars of one superior ethnic group policing.

On a global scale, the Kurds had integration with their own self-administration before World War I, especially in the state of Kurdistan. But the Western colonizers divided Kurdistan during World War I when the Kurds were relocated into four different places, namely, Northern Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. and the relocated Kurds were forced into accepting the values and norms of these various states. All these states enforced cultural assimilation to integrate the Kurds into their own states. They used different methods of deculturing, especially education. In the Middle East, nationalism initially proved to be a failure because those who surrounded the Kurds were multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious, and multi-cultural. But this new political method of unifying all the different groups into one, eliminated each minority racial and ethnic group’s authority over their language and culture.

In the Kurdish areas, one may argue that colonialism is still an ongoing procedure in one form or another. Scholar, editor, and critic Nicholas Birns explains that, “many argued that colonialism was not yet over. According to this cultural hegemony, the Persians defined Kurds as primitive, outdated, and violent, and introduced them as an obstacle in the progress of the unified nation. Kurds are re-presented as a serious threat in the formation of the new modern Iran.

The current cultural world that Khadivi is writing about is a mixed culture and identity for the Kurds in Iran. There are still clashes and conflicts in certain areas, but the long-term politics of cultural assimilation, inter-cultural marriages, and the demographic change have been reshaping the Kurdish traditional worldview into adopting the modern post-national identity. The Kurds are taking the shades of the Persian culture because of the mass media, new curriculum, and enduring assimilation, and also their detachment from the Kurds of the other parts. The modern culture of the Kurdish people in Iran is open, flexible, and dynamic.

The World of Kurdish Postcolonial Literature:

Modern Kurdish literature explores identity reconstruction after the psychological and cultural divisions of Kurdish traditional identity experienced by Kurds encountering the neighbouring nation states during and after the early 1920s. The Kurdish novel is an active medium in narrating these traumatic experiences and cultural changes that have reshaped the Kurdish cultural self. The first attempt to explore Kurdish postcolonial identity through literature was made by Kamuran Bedir Khan in 1937 in his *Der Adler* (Eagle). This is the first literary attempt to talk about the Kurdish traditional values. Ali’s novel presents a vivid image of Kurdish nationalism from the early 1960s to the 1990s as the Kurds were in a continuous war against the neighboring colonizers for domination and submission. Fazil Qaradaghi’s *The BIGS and The LITTLES* is a representative picture of the Iraqi Kurds in the post-1990s. Qaradaghi is a Kurdish scholar, essayist, novelist, and political analyst, and his novel depicts a Kurdish colonizing experience under the rule of the semi-independent administration in Iraq.

The Kurdish scholar and essayist Hashem Ahmadzadeh writes about the Kurdish novel after the 1990s to pursue his primary aim of understanding the thematic development of the Kurdish novel. The themes of these novels are about the national struggle of the Kurds as in Ali's *My Uncle Jamshid Khan: Whom the Wind Was Always Taking*, about Kurdish nationalism. And Khadivi's *The Age of Orphans*' events also take place before the 1990s.

The rupture from the colonizer's discourse was a vital point for Kurdish women. After 1991, a new reality has emerged for Kurdish women due to the emergence of new political and cultural ideologies that strengthen the role and place of women in the Kurdish society. The preceding order of the Kurdish society was patriarchal. In such a brutal discourse, Kurdish women were "othered" by the dominant male discourse. In the globalized world, the Kurdish worldview is not static and confined anymore. In this regard, the female novelists who live in diaspora have a better access to educational institutions and have more opportunities than those who live in a confined place like Kurdistan.

As a Kurdish female novelist, Laleh Khadivi is a vivid example of a Kurdish woman who lives in the United States of America, and thus has more privilege to write about Kurdish experience. Her narrative world tries to restructure the socio-political conditions of the Kurds from a Kurdish perspective. As a postcolonial Kurdish novelist, Khadivi writes to alleviate the Kurdish agonies, and re-present their new cultural identity in the imbalances of power and authority while tracing the origins of their ethnic self.

Who am I? Laleh Khadivi's Quest for the Kurdish Self:

Laleh Khadivi is a short story writer, novelist, and filmmaker who was born in Esfahan Iran in 1977. She is Kurdish as well as Iranian-American. In the pre-1979 Islamic revolution, her family witnessed the incessant suppression and oppression of the Kurds as the Kurds were treated as the "other" by the dominating factions in Iran. In her novels, Khadivi presents Persian nationalism as a vile form of "othering" against the native Kurds in western Iran. Her quest to delve into the roots of the Kurdish traditional self takes her to the realization that the Kurdish static self is no longer a valid cultural mode for the Kurds in the postcolonial era. Khadivi acknowledges this when she asks, "who am I?" question to investigate the Kurdish postcolonial situation.

According to cultural psychologist Hazel Markus, identities are dual reflections, meaning that a person is not just a psychological but a cultural construction:

A person cannot really answer the "who am I?" question without thinking about what other people think of her. Her identity is not just her project alone; what her identity ends up being depends also on how other people identify her. Identities are, in fact, group projects, and as such, "you can't be a self by yourself." A person's identity depends on who she is in relation to others.... (363)

Khadivi wants to examine how others think about Kurdish people. She writes to understand how the borders on the map of Iranian culture sketch limitations on Kurdish identity.

Khadivi attained her education at different institutions in the United States. She completed an MFA writing program at Mills College at Oakland, a fellowship at the University of Wisconsin, and another at the Emory University at Atlanta ("A Kurdish Odyssey"). Her fiction is located within the Iranian American diasporic fiction. She realized the power of fiction compared with film after reading Anna Karenina and Crime and Punishment. Initially, questions about the roots and origins of her identity stimulated a curiosity and enthusiasm in her mind to start writing fiction, which she did in 2004. In 2008 speaking with interviewer Alpana Shore, Khadivi says that it is through her mother that she experiences the anxieties of being homeless, and the absence of home ("Newslaundry"). She feels the presence of homelessness and the absence of home which is why she seeks belonging. Khadivi confirms this when she declares that "For all my life, I've wanted to belong to something, and now I am creating that connection. I am easing out of that discontent: Even among the dead, I have company" ("A Kurdish Odyssey").

Khadivi's writings center on the theme of belongingness and the postcolonial dilemma in the psychology of Kurdish people. She rejects the ideology of nationalism because it is a form of "othering". Khadivi believes that "there is always going to be that desire for the tribe. This sensation is part of our humanity" ("Into the Hornet's Nest"). To Khadivi, nationalism kills that sense of "desire" and "sensation" when the Kurds, or the minor ethnic groups who have been othered, attempt to "inherit" a sense of belonging. *The Age of Orphans* is about the idea of nationalism, which Khadivi portrays in a negative light because it draws no border on the map for the Kurdish culture and so relocates an imposed homeland for them.

Theorizing the Kurdish Postcolonial Plight:

The Kurdish postcolonial plight is in their struggle for cultural and national attachment. The conflict comes from the problem of belonging where two opposing cultures have removed the sense of a stable location of culture. The relocation of the self implies a shift in the political discourse that destabilized the Kurdish socio-political world through unpredicted cultural mobility. Cultural representation and the production of the other are the core political issues in the colonized world. The colonized people are unable to represent themselves in the unprecedented disparity of self-regarding. Anthropologically, there are residual, active, and emerging cultures. Cultural hybridity suggests the interplay between the Kurdish and Persian discourses for the construction of a new cultural self. Unlike Said, Bhabha presents a different view about the postcolonial identity. His interpretation of the postcolonial self is not based on the binary relations of the two cultures. But he believes in the dynamism and interconnection of cultures. Said believes in the binary opposition between the “self” and the “other,” then Bhabha leaves that interpretation behind in order to view them as the mixed mode of regarding the cultural self while understanding the other aspect of the self.

Frantz Fanon, an anti-colonial thinker, describes the significance of land to the indigenous people. According to Fanon, “for colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (44). The land refers to the motherland for the Kurds, symbolically, because it provides a strong emotional attachment and communication among the native Kurds. Diasporic writers have attempted to reinvent a new present from the shards of the broken mirror of the past. Salman Rushdie is a British Indian novelist and essayist who tries reinventing a new home for the Indians. He applies the idea of the Christian fall from the garden of Eden to understand the psychology of the exiled people.

Khadiji undergoes the same reinvention of the Kurdish homeland, especially, when she feels this “sense of loss,” and this “urge to reclaim.” She is deeply aware about the profound spiritual and intellectual “uncertainties” in the Kurdish world. These doubts concerning perceiving oneself and understanding the other have created numerous political confusions among the Kurds in the postcolonial era. Thus, to reclaim the pre-colonized cultural self is an impossibility for the Kurds. Psychologists Baumeister and Leary confirm the strong need to be attached to a cultural group because it provides the spiritual needs for emotional satisfaction and cognitive well-being.

The “need to belong” is embedded in human nature. All people belong to certain borders within the map of human culture. Unbelonging to the desired group may cause signs of maladjustment and stress to surface, which will be explained below. Feminist literary critic Lois Tyson explains the formation of the unconscious mind in connection with the psycho-cultural events on personal and interpersonal level. She states that the unconscious is the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them. The unconscious comes into being when we are very young through the repression, the expunging from consciousness, of these unhappy psychological events. (Tyson 12)

Outcasts and Strangers In Their Own Motherland: *The Age Of Orphans*:

In *The Age of Orphans*, the conflict between tradition and modernity in the novel turns the Kurdish protagonist to view himself as an outcast and stranger in his own motherland. The intra-psychic clash lies within the mind of Reza Khouirdi as he holds the characteristics of two different cultural discourses. The traditional culture of the Kurds, and the modern culture of the Persians divide Reza’s self into the traditional identity and the modern one and orient him towards a new cultural perception. The fragmentation of his Kurdish identity into the traditional Kurdish self and the modern Persian self in the novel transforms his inner vision into a “hybrid” self. Reza holds the shades of the two opposing cultures when they direct him into conflicting attitudes and behaviours towards the Kurds and Persians. The novel reflects the experience of this opposing selves in Reza’s mind where their binary oppositions display different forms of violence and terrorization.

The novel’s images of circularity show that the Kurds once had a united community among themselves that tied yesterday to today and today to tomorrow. This self-image of the Kurdish people proves that they secured a distinct culture, not a mixed one. It is where the boy belonged to the land and dissolved into it, the time when Reza as a young boy had a strong attachment with the motherland. It was where the cycle of the self is “the living self,” as the father tells his son (58). In the post-nationalism era, this belonging to the traditional group fails for him. This “othering” of the Kurds brings about a political clash in the modern Iran. The farmer in *The Age of Orphans* comments on the Kurds fate under the new regime that has centralized everything with the state. The farmer’s concern is that “the shah determines everything about my life, including my name, my occupation and the language my own children

speak” (255). Thus, the political ideology of the Persians forces the Kurds not to belong to their tradition as it forcibly works to attach them to the new Iran where they will have rights as Iranian citizens and obligations as Kurds.

In *The Age of Orphans*, othering is done through physical violence. The hostile and violent attitude of the Persians against the Kurds is expressed in declaring a war against the clans, khans, and tribes. The state sees the Kurdish areas as a field of resource and as an object of inquiry to be discovered. The Kurds resist the politics of the imposed national identity and defend their areas. The young Reza’s duty is to watch for the invader and signal their appearance to the tribe. The Persians come with tanks and men to deculturalize the Kurdish area with Iran. Reza faces shattering mirror of the cultural identity when he sees violence and terror erupt. Reza’s traditional discourse breaks when he witnesses a disruption from the past, and an existential change merges with his new mode of perception. The Kurdish boy is traumatized by the violent conflict of the political discourses for domination and subjugation. In the battlefield, one witnesses the disorientation of the self from the central vision when he cannot differentiate the two opposing forces. The narrator informs that, “the boy has been in a dusty dark like this before; in his disorientation he cannot help but confuse the memories of the cave with the memories of the massacre” (73).

Reza’s clash starts when he witnesses the death of his father in the war between Persians and Kurdish clans. The demise of his father ends his desire to belong to Kurdish people. As they clash, he sees crushing his father’s head. The Persians introduce a “crack” to the psychology of the Kurd boy. This tragedy befalling his nation splits the character’s cultural self into opposing self-realizations. As a boy, “fear” and “sorrow” disturb his mind, and as a soldier he will be divided. All these come from the destruction of the center, symbolically his father’s head. Khadivi describes the Persian soldiers as “part man, part machine” (64). The use of this metaphor is to show the modernization of the country by modern weapons and tanks. The Kurdish and Persian troops clash in a violent war where their hearts beat for life and death. This is when the narrator mentions the psychological reactions of the as-yet unnamed Kurdish boy, Reza. She states that in those short instances and insufferable spans the boy lived through a night forgotten by history, where the men of the land and soldiers of the shah take to each other with bullet, knife, curse and bludgeon to craft a single composition; the precise choreography of flesh puppets, strung to a thousand stars and pulled as sparring lovers, to and from the flame, to and from the gouge, to and from the stab and shot, their beating hearts like magnets charged to the opposite pulls of victory and death.

This is an indication that the traditional self of the protagonist will be a “ghost.” The Persian colonizers take the boy as a slave and conscript him to be a soldier for the success of the new nation of Iran. His psychological division is painful; the boy “wear the boots now” to alleviate the pain. The Persian soldiers mistreat the mysterious and unknown Kurd boy as if he presents a threat to them. Reza is regarded as wild, untamed, uncultured, uncivilized, amoral, filthy, and outdated. The nightmare and dreams of the ghost self is a “shadow” that disturbs the boy’s conscience. These dreams torture the boy and leave painful memories behind. During his conscription, the Persians give him a new name, “Reza Khouirdi,” as a new citizen in the new nation, and the attaché gives him the third name “Pejman” that means “heartbroken” (86-87).

Reza’s psychology becomes a two-way actualization of both colonizer and the colonized. As a colonizer, he views the Kurds like the Persians do. He is aggressive and violent against the Kurds. He learns to be a “soldier self” while training to be a soldier. But before that he has learnt the art of differentiation between “the self” and “the other.” The dichotomy between the city cadets and the tribal cadets creates a distance between them. As a Kurdish cadet in the barracks, Reza is othered by the city boys “dirty Kurd, Khouirdi is a dirty Kurd” (101). He learns earlier the art of “segregation” between the desired people and the undesired ones. Reza forgets about the traditional Kurds as he is drawn into the world of boots and guns. It’s worth re-stating that the othering of the Kurds, and the hostility against them is due to the political differences between them, not the cultural ones. The Kurds seek political autonomy and self-rule that is refused by Persian nationalism.

In Saqqez, Reza is afraid of cultural confrontation and emotional communication with the Kurds because they are the reflection of his shadow self. As a would-be-colonizer, Reza is othering the Kurds in Saqqez. This is where he treats them like wild and uncivilized creatures. He does not feel remorse to take what he lacks from these filthy people. But both of his selves need food. The imagery of the food demonstrates the core of Reza’s conflict. When the three city cadets and Reza search for food in Saqqez to fill their empty stomachs, “and terror and alarm to fill their hearts” (131). They entered a house to take rice, tea leaves, and fresh butter. In the house, a Kurdish woman was feeding her child. The Kurdish woman sees these soldiers as “apparitions” and “waking nightmares.” Reza is a torn man in front of the woman because she can feed both of his unsated children metaphorically, the shadow self and the soldier self.

Reza is aggressive and violent against the Kurdish woman who feeds her children. He approaches the woman and slaps her because he assumes that she has not shown proper respect for the soldier self in him. The gesture suggests that he is projecting what he hates in his other side. The psychological projection shows his inward violence and hostility towards the shadow self. In fact, this is his emotional ambivalence in the dichotomy of the two cultural selves. He suffers from the disparity of meaning that is love for one side, but hatred for the other. These two emotional needs clash in his mind and externalize their outputs in his behaviors and actions towards the others. Later, this can be realized better in his cultural contact and spiritual communication with his soul-mate Meena. The two voices in his mind dance in pain and pleasure.

In Reza the shadow self and the soldier self dance in delight as the desire to love oneself and hate oneself is now well fed and Reza is allowed to punish and caress all at once. He sucks and slaps and thinks with certainty that he is Reza Pejman Khouirdi, and he is the son of a yet undefined nation of Iran, and the babe's scream is music and he does today and will tomorrow seek out its sound. (132)

Reza is violent against his shadow self. Reza, as a would-be colonizer, tries to rape a Kurdish woman. The Kurdish woman knows that he has a familiar face. He cannot invade the body of the young woman because she resembles his mother and belongs to his baba (137). The scream of the girl finally awakens his dead conscience while he tries to rape her. The narrator comments on that as if: "it is a noise free of despair, anger or pain; a clean sound, sharp as a blade that cuts the air of the orange canyon into shards" (138). Reza is frustrated after the noise because he is filled with shame and guilt. His unescapable shadow self is touched by the noisy sound. It awakens the old self and opens his eyes to shock him inwardly: "nothing suffocates his heart like the blanket of her scream" (138). The bitter scream reopens his historical wounds and traumas associated with the crush of his father's head. The rise of his wounds redirects his vision toward the fate of the bleeding orphan.

Reza cannot fight against the shadows of his former self. Indeed, the event shows the return of the traditional voices. He cannot repress them any longer. Previously, he preferred to disown them but when they return "his ears bleed and his heart hurts," because they are the secret voices that he desperately joins to belong. Up to this point of his dilemma, the discourse of the modern culture has dominated the psychology of Reza. He keeps an emotional distance from the shadow self where it is reflected on his hostile attitudes and violent behaviors against the Kurds. The character of Reza imbues us with the idea that people find peace only in the place where they find a collective attachment. The ambivalent feelings of the Kurdish character reveal the split of their identity in the borders of cultural attachment. What the modern self pushes, the traditional self pulls. If the soldier self pushes hatred towards the Kurds, then the shadow self pulls love back.

Reza and Meena are the dual reflection of tradition and modernity on the personal and interpersonal level. Their marriage demonstrates another version of his internal clash of the shadow self and the soldier one. In Tehran unlike Saqqez, Reza finds the women to suit the spirit of his modern self. He completely reinvents himself where he has "no history" and "no family," as a backdrop against the Kurds of Saqqez. The Agha tells Reza that the women in Tehran are "among the most sophisticated. French educated, uncovered, lovely..." (160). These modern women are compatible with his soldier self. In fact, "Reza recognizes them as replicas of his new self: the modern woman to match his modern man, with similar uniforms of pressed wool and sharp lines, clean necks and faces held up to the sun" (161). Meena is an educated, sophisticated, and lovely Tehrani woman who adores what the French and the English do. She is the complete model of the half self of Reza, the soldier self. She dreams about the modernization of the whole country, and she is proud that through her marriage she is planting the seed. The cultural differences between the shadow self and the soldier self presents an emotional gap for Reza. Their marriage, togetherness cannot satisfy their emotional needs. The presence of Meena will not guarantee any psychological comfort because Reza lacks love. In the presence of Meena, Reza cannot express the shadow self since she increasingly suffocates his traditional self.

In her presence, Reza is unable to confess his sentiments about the Kurdish traditional self. Meena is racist and hates the Kurds. Her cultural prejudice is strong enough to regard him as a dirty man. In the bath, she washes her husband where the new self comes out. This "washing" is to clean his former self but it cannot wash his sins. She knows that he is a Kurd; therefore, Khadivi depicts the washing scene as the Persian baptism of him, implicitly. When he is cleaned, he will no longer be the dirty and sinner Kurd for her. Meena "takes the empty basin and the wet cloth with today's skin and soap and leaves behind the new man, her husband, in the damp and smoke, to suffer the infliction of desire's clean ache" (189-190). Reza perceives this "infliction" as transmittable to his children. In the fifth month of

their marriage when she is pregnant, he thinks about the baby that includes half of his shadow self. In such a moment, Reza is “preoccupied instead with thoughts of the budding half of himself that grows inside her, unborn and already ill at ease” (191). His children will be ill because they will go through the same fears and sorrows of exile that he has experienced as a Kurd in Iran.

The Age of Orphans vividly depicts the psychological and social effects of parental conflict into their children. When the father and mother have conflicting views regarding the education of their children, this confuses the mind of their children. It is the same old dilemma whether to belong to the tradition or modernity. Reza wants his children to be whole Kurds, not half Kurds like him suffering from holding the sins and secrets. On the contrary, Meena disregards the Kurds because they are “dirty” creatures; she avoids any contact with them. Her behaviors can turn the children to disregard their father.

Their children are also torn in the clash between tradition and modernity. Meena wants her children to dress like the French and the English. The child narrates that, “our maman said, Now this is how the little boys and girls in England dress, you should be proud, they are very smart” (231). Her attitudes show her hatred towards the Kurds. Such conflicting views in the family lead to domestic violence. The violence within the family says more about the conflict between the traditional discourse and the modern one. How do the shadow self and the soldier self clash inside and outside of Reza? The domestic violence is a form of cultural hostility that destroys the sense of family as a cultural unit. The child says during the parade’s mornings, our baba used to shout to maman to wash the kids. Our maman yelled back: “I can’t wash the Kurd out of them! They’ll never be clean!” (233). The child explains that the father was not silent in those occasions, and someone got beaten in the fight. This crisis within the family destroys the children’s sense of belonging. It is where they experience ambivalent feelings regarding their parents.

This ambivalence is explained from the point of view of Reza’s children. It is where a child of Reza says that, “I realized that was a big difference between being a whole Kurd and a half Kurd like us; the whole Kurds didn’t know about anyone or anything outside of the mountains” (235). The binary oppositions turn the Kurds in Iran to hold partly the Kurdish discourse and partly the Persian. One half is realized as the “self” while the other is regarded as the “other” being. When Reza thinks about his children, he predicts the same destiny as his own. Their mother will not allow them to belong to the Kurdish land, “And so they are damned to remain as homeless as he” (251). Being homeless in his motherland, Reza tastes the bitterness of his detachment. The failure displays itself in their children when they eat the fruits of that hatred and enmity. Their marriage fails where “they are a marriage separated by six children, nation and king, and he watches her grow against the land while he dissolves into it...” (248). Allegorically, it is the marriage between the shadow self and the soldier self in one mind. Reza gives his children what his soldier self has offered him, but he cannot give them “the freedom to travel the borderless land or the stable sensation of home” (250). The “stable sensation of home” is the attachment with the motherland that provides love and belonging. The soldier self has locked Reza in chains where he cannot express his Kurdish self to his children.

Reza finally thinks about resisting the pressures of the soldier self. He poisons his wife, Meena. Symbolically, the image of the poison represents his decolonization from the soldier self and rejection of the modern self as the dominant cultural identity. It ends the veil of the imposed borders upon his tradition. He is happy “not to belong to a people locked in by the invisible boundaries of nation or state or law” (262). Reza refuses the soldier self as it is an enforced way of being. He cannot avoid the contact and attachment with either tradition or modernity; therefore, his new cultural perception in the midst of tradition and modernity is not only a mixed one, but always mixed with prejudice, hostility, violence and tragedy.

Conclusion:-

Laleh Khadivi’s narrative shows its readers the dehumanizing effects of being torn between two different discourses. Khadivi represents the othering of the native Kurds and their homelessness in the homeland. In such a crisis, the characters go through an inner clash between their own cultural discourse, and the discourse of the colonizers. *The Age of Orphans* demonstrates that the conflict between tradition and modernity is the practice of power for domination as the dominating discourse practices their knowledge on the other. The control and subjugation of the “other” by the self is present in the mind of the Kurdish protagonist.

The clash in the psychology of Reza, between the shadow self and the soldier self, suggests that the intra-psychic dilemma is an insoluble crisis. It is a terrible and terrifying psychological and cultural experience where the Kurdish character realizes his presence as an outcast and stranger in his own motherland. This is where the attachment of the

Kurdish self with the homeland disappears, and he experiences ruptures within. The experience in the aftermath of such a conflict reveals that the created destiny of the Kurds are shrouded in a hidden veil of mystery when the invisible forces of internal colonialism, and the visible forms of postcolonialism transform them into unknown locations. The clash between one way of knowing and being and the other has formed mixed paradigms for the Kurdish in modern Iran. Khadivi's novel works to construct a literary tradition for the Kurdish character where it contemplates this painful journey of Reza Khouirdi

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