

Representation of Religious Identity in "Zero Degree Orbit" Novel¹

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to present an interpretation of the representation of religious Identity in "Zero Degree Orbit" novel by Ahmad Mahmoud. Since it needs precise study of the novel for providing an answer to the question, it has to consider four aspects of fiction, i.e. narration, characterization, setting and dialogue. Therefore, studying reality theories in art and applying the two theories of reality production and theory of representation, attempts have been made to represent post-revolution religious identity in viewpoint of renowned novelist Ahmad Mahmoud. Discourse analysis and text analysis methods have been employed. The findings of the paper show that in "Zero Degree Orbit" religious identity has been introduced as a tool for fight against tyranny as well as using the revolutionary aspects of religion in reorganization of the popular fronts and their mobilization against the tyrant regime in addition to promotion of public awareness.

Keywords: representation of religious identity, discourse analysis, Zero Degree Orbit, Islamic Revolution

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Introduction

Art and literature, along with other human discourses such as science, religious wisdom, daily discourse, etc., are undoubtedly important sources for human knowledge of his outside world (both nature and human community) and the relationships among the human beings. It is so important that many philosophers and artists such as Aristotle, Horace, Sidney, Pope, Dylan Thomas, Henry James, etc. maintain that art shall contribute to knowledge. It can be an important source of knowledge about ourselves and our relation to each other and to the world (Young, 2009: 5).

The belief in the fact that art is a source of knowledge, leads man through the belief in a few other matters. First, art being a source of knowledge means that it is always depending upon its social aspect, thus it keeps on talking about subjects and realities that are available in the atmosphere or the setting for artwork production.

Various concepts such as freedom, justice, death, religion and the like can be expressed through the media of art. Art gives the artist an opportunity to represent these concepts in various historical epochs and through diversified points of view. As it is clear, literature is a kind of art in itself that can be used as a media for representation of the above-said concepts. It is not an exaggeration to say a certain genre of literature has been created at certain epoch of time depending upon the social requirements. The history of literature is a solid evidence for this claim. Although in sociology of literature the concentration is chiefly on the interactions between community and literature, a great number of theorists of the sociology of literature are of the opinion that representation of community is high in literature and that is why they usually analyze literary texts from this point of view. As examples we can refer to the opinions of Gyorgy Lukacs and Mikhail Bakhtin. Lukacs considers epic and novel as two parallels with open and closed civilizations, and as a literary genres in contradiction with these communities and Bakhtin considers novel depending upon centripetal forces or – better say - linguistic diversity. It is clear that the pattern of thought is chiefly shifted towards literature the origin of which is community at any rate (Azad Armaki, Parastesh: 2004).

There are several goals behind reading a novel, and amusement is the first one. Due to limited literary criticisms in the past, this goal was predominant. Today, however, novels are not read for mere amusement and it has a broader use and characteristics, so that it can possess and represent higher goals.

In post-1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, in addition to the establishment of religious state, other areas were also affected by religion. The number of religious signs and symbols grew high and this affected culture as well.

Religion was indeed expressing a new identity although existing earlier in social backbone of the community, this time however, it was paid more explicit attention. Religion creates a certain type of identity in social units thus affects various aspects of the society.

The main question of this research work is this that with respect to the dominant religious ideology in post-revolution Iran, how religious identity is represented in novel as a real narrative. This paper hypothesizes that components of religiousness within the three decades after revolution have been variable and each period had

its emphasis on a certain component. Since novel creates an appropriate ground for in-depth study of post-revolution Iran, we intend to review "Zero Degree Orbit" by Ahmad Mahmoud for interpretation and explanation of the quality of religious identity representation (beliefs, religious relations, ...) in Iranian society. This is, in particular, to study how religious atmosphere has influenced Iranian post-revolution community and how a novelist has been impressed by this ideology in creation of his works.

Religion is in principle a social phenomenon that takes place in a social environment. When humans celebrate sacred things, they celebrate the communal power indeed unconsciously. Durkheim believes that since religion shapes an important aspect of collective integrity, its integral form undergoes changes gradually according to each change in the function and structure of the society. He was quite certain in expressing that simplest form of religion must be found in simplest form of social organization. In this simplest form of society, "the most elementary forms of the religious life" can be observed (Mehrayeen, 2007: 75). According to Durkheim, culture (religion) changes according to the changes in the society and such a change takes place not only in content but also in its depth. He believed that culture, as a symbolic system does not resist surviving, rather, it changes; culture is not merely transferred, but is on a constant move to reform its content.

In his second phase of intellectual life, Durkheim become doubly interested in cognitive content of religious beliefs, when he tried to generalize his views on the relationship between religion and social structures into the relationship between intellectual concepts and essentials and the social structure. In other words, Durkheim's cognitive sociology is closely associated with his religious sociology. Durkheim's cognitive sociology is an attempt to find essentials of knowledge in a social experience. He believed that facts related to human thought – for instance, imagination of time and place – take roots from his social life (Ibid, 200-201). Concepts and facts are produced and thought by the society. They are results or products of social mind or collective awareness. The society creates them, constructs them, expands them, and builds them. It is the society that makes and provides them. They are the results of the society and the results of collective mind of the society. The concepts are impersonal and nameless results. The concept is the impression of the society (Lehman, 2006: 165).

Durkheim believed that we take our ideas from the society and moreover, learn from the society how to think on our ideas. The logical archetypes we use – our understanding of the structure of a rational logic, the self-contemplated process – is a metaphor for the type of society we live in. Therefore, a society that has been built, for instance, based on agriculture and the repeated turn of the seasons, may grasp time in the form of repeated movements and conclude that human life is a repetition through rebirth and the like. This may lead to independent philosophical-religious imagination by which man may make periodical thoughts, i.e. deduct everything from the existence of God in such a way that whatever happening in the world proves the existence of God. On the other hand, modern society constituted based on the linear procedures of production and technological progress, interprets time as a linear movement from the past toward future and applies a linear logic in thought:

we begin from certain hypotheses and certain understandings from where we make out conclusions; or we start from our understandings of the outside world and we can obtain general rules from our understandings on the world through inductive reasoning (Mehrayeen, 2007:202).

The important point in sociology of religion or Durkheim's culture is this that Durkheim generalizes his idea on conformity between the degree of social complexity and type of religion to other symbolic areas of social life such as knowledge and art. Durkheim argues that when the societies move from simple to complex states, their symbolic systems such as art change accordingly from simple state to complex and we can expect that upon – for instance – complexity of the society the simple and ordinary art of storytelling in simple societies might change into modern literature prevalent in urban communities. In other words, Durkheim's sociology of art is closely associated with sociology of religion. Durkheim's cognitive sociology is an attempt for finding essentials of knowledge in a social experience. He believed that facts related to human thought – for instance, imagination of time and place – take roots from his social life. Durkheim's views on cultural change and the nature of art-culture relationship with social reality can be traced in the works of the majority of the later social theorists directly and indirectly. In Parson's theory, meaning production is pictured like a procedure in which self-organized change in one or all of the social subsystems will cause social distinction. Social distinction, in turn, leads to the emergence of a new set of problems the former cultural model is unable to address and solve. Therefore, the society needs a rational, systematic and more comprehensive system of value to fill the rising gaps to lay the foundations of social stability.

Based on Tonnies' theory on passing from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* as well as Durkheim's theory of passing from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, Parsons believed that communities can be categorized based on their abundance by a set of key values (Smith, 2003: 57).

In other words, communities can be classified based on pattern variables which are actions of a particular individual based on logically opposite facts: particularism versus universalism, affectivity versus affective neutrality, ascription versus achievement, expressiveness versus instrumentalism, and finally collectivity versus self (seeking personal interests). Parsons argued that selecting these value patterns are not accidental at all. He was of the opinion that societies in their social change (modernization) move from the first half of the above pair to the second. He considers the movements as compromising response of culture to social change, believing that upon increasing distinction in social structures and functions, the value system of the society must also go under drastic change. However, since modern social system is more complex and diversified, it is relatively more difficult for the value system to cover it entirely (Mehrayeen, 2007:58).

Therefore, the more complex and diversified the societies, the more abstract, more flexible, and more comprehensive the cultural systems should be in order to realize the social integration and combination and in order to give the social organization maximum efficiency. He writes: "When the network of socially structured situations becomes more complex, the value pattern itself must be couched at a higher level of

generality in order to ensure social stability.” (Mehrayeen, 2007: 203)

For instance, Parsons refers to the changes made in religious thoughts and perceptions, development of theoretical and empirical knowledge and the change in legal norms. According to Parsons, the examples and situations form the critical and sensitive situation of the cultural change: “The generalization of value systems, so that they can effectively regulate social action without relying upon particularistic prohibitions, has been a central factor in the modernization process.” Parsons’ views on cultural change draw upon the dominant theoretical perspectives in the 1950s and 1960s on the relationship between modernization and cultural change (So, 1999: 248).

Some other social theorists have made similar reasoning in their theses on cultural change. For instance, Nicholas Lehmann, the German theoretician, in a brief sentence argues that “The reason for the emergence and development of ideologies is because of the rise in the domain of possible actions that a selection might be made from among them. Thus the issue has its roots in the increased complexity in the society – the sort of increased social complexity that becomes realizable and untouchable itself only when efficient mechanisms are institutionalized in the society to reduce the degree of complexity.” (Holub, 1998)

A Summary of the Novel

The first edition of “Zero Degree Orbit” novel by Ahmad Mahmoud hit the bookstores in 1993 in 1782 pages, and in three volumes. The work reviews and gives an in-depth account of the 1953-1979 events in such a way that the reader finds himself in touch with live personalities in between the pages of the book. These people are touchable around us everywhere we take a closer look at our surroundings.

This is one of those novels for which the novelist has made immense characterization, where the ordinary life of people is under the massive influence of political developments. It tells the story of individuals belonging to the grassroots and to the labor class of the society. They are neither public servants nor people of good welfare or wealth. The incidents and interactions take place among ordinary individuals, mostly on the streets. The fights among individuals take place in the shops belonging to the characters of the novel namely Yarvali, Usa (master workman) Mobarak, Haj Attar, ... Less is written on what happening internally and personally, but even the minimum depicts the simple lifestyle among ordinary people.

This novel is a sociopolitical account of Iranian community in between the years 1953 and 1979, when the religious uprising began and culminated in Iran and when religion rose to maximum attention and demand. Religious bases are considered among the most effective and most important political bases. The maximum functionality of the novel devoted to religious scenes and atmospheres is highly political. The attachment of religious beliefs to political movements is the turning point of the novel.

Analysis

Robert Wuthnow believes that ideology producers can only use the sort of genres provided by the social environment. Different discourse genres such as preaching, articles, books, academic research works, discussion and dialog, meetings, school subjects, philosophical theses, novels, poetry, ... are all based on narrative method, reasoning and various methods of representation.

He is also of the opinion that the palpable and touchable world is registered inside the text but the point that must not be forgotten is this that the registration process or contextualization is a selective and metamorphic process.

In "Zero Degree Orbit" a highly protesting social atmosphere has created networks among various walks of life as affected by their social and class status. The selection of labor and grassroots networks in pre-revolution combative conditions has been a major attitude of the writer.

The thoughts encouraging protestors for a change in their social system has its roots in various schools of thought. In the meantime, religious thought had managed to gain a stronger foothold, thanks to the traditional system of the society. The facilities granted through such establishments as mosques and religious ceremonies are put at the disposal of the protesters. This gives them a chance to organize their protests in a more serious way. At such an atmosphere, the people connecting to this network were from among different social classes and archetypes, although we must take into consideration that these networks were not merely religious.

The core of narration in this novel is combat and protest and religion has managed to play an effective role and create a stronger network with clerics taking the helm. There are, however, sub-narratives in this novel expressed in relation with religion, i.e. the understandings of the masses of this phenomenon without having a certain network of protest. In everyday life of these people religion is an already admitted entity. A notable point in this work is the constant presence of religious establishments in formation and continuation of movements and demonstrations.

In this novel, there are three religious archetypes: A first type is the one created by the ruling government. These people misuse religious beliefs of the people to create individuals to get personal information of the people through their agents to gain power. These are indeed the government agents and are very sensitive to control the situation. They usually monitor public affairs insensibly. When Kondro a political figure disappears with no one knowing where he is, his friends gather together in Yarvali's barbershop who is himself a government spy. Yarvali encourages them to meet Mir Abod Shah to find Kondro, but the reality is this that Mir Abod Shah is a SAVAK (Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar = Organization of Intelligence and National Security) agent himself and the organization gathers data on public activities and information through him in secret. The dialog taking place in the barbershop is the following:

Baratali said: Tell me who you are?

Yarvali looked at Baratali, seeing the spot in his eye shivering.

He said: Mir Abod Shah

Wrinkles appeared on his face: Mir Abod Shah! Who is this after all?

Yarvali said: That's it! You are unaware of everything!

Baratali replied: Is he a policeman or something?

Yarvali's voice gained strength and he said: What the heck with police, necromancer! He gives the news of the seven orbs of the heavens and seven layers beneath the earth!

Barat said: Just call him fortuneteller or soothsayer!

Yarvali turned back his head and vowed in disagreement. He looked at Baran, "fortuneteller", turned back to Baratali and said: Nothing in particular, leave him alone!

Baratali said: You have secret deal with him for new customers? (906)

There is a question before the people present in the barbershop that who Mir Abod Shah is, and how and why the charlatan and disbelieving Yarvali supports and introduces him. But when a greater number of people keep abreast of the incident the ambiguity is gradually unknotted. When a factory worker named Shahab disappears after leaving the factory, his mother, a relative of Baran, joins them to meet him.

Gol-bekheyr said: They say Mir Abod Shah is the one who can find him!

Baran looked up at Gol-bekheyr.

Nozar said: What does he do?

Shadieh said: What can I say Mash [a title for pilgrims of the Shrine City of Mashad] Nozar. They say he is the soothsayer of seven orbs of the heavens and seven layers beneath the earth!

Having knowledge on the seven orbs of the heavens and seven layers of the earth implicitly alludes to those with ability to set up a link with the world of the unseen, according to the religious culture, Islamic culture in particular. There is such an attitude in the substructure texture of the society and in the public belief. They believe that those with such ability have the capacity to communicate with the supernatural and gain knowledge on things that other people are unable to get. Since it was not contrary to the public belief, it was quite useful to misuse such an understanding, although one must not forget the fact that skepticism on these issues has always been there:

Nozar turned back to Baran and said: So, tell me he is like the Prophet Daniel.

Belqeys said: Then, what's the problem with it? Let him go, perhaps God may show him the way!

Gol-Bekheyr said: I do agree with it.

Khavar said: I'm not easy with these sorts of things!

Baran said: Aunt Shadieh! Who has asked you to meet Mir Abod Shah?

Shadieh said: I don't know for sure, someone in Klometri ... (924)

Upon finding Mir Abod Shah's residence, Nozar and Shadieh decide to meet him to find Shahab (Shadieh's son who has disappeared twenty days ago after leaving the factory). They see Mir Abod Shah has a secretary and a few aids. The secretary collects required information and charges a huge amount of money for the service:

The man (secretary), coded and signed the card: Nine days later, on Sunday at 10 AM sharp.

He passed the card to Shadieh and said: Bring back whatever photos of him available.

Shadieh said: Photos? Shahab has no photos, brother!

The man wearing a goat's beard said: Any photo, I mean any photo with family, friends, whatever he has!

Nozar said: What is the photo for, my dear man?

The young man said: My lord communicates with photos!

Baran said: With photos!

The lad replied: He asks from the photos of the friends and relatives where the lost one is!

Baran said in coarse words: Does he talk to the photos?

The goatee beard said: Tell you don't know whatever you do not know, do not tell it is impossible!

There came the voice of a rough man: "The man who talks to the sky and with the earth."

Baran said: Did you see it for yourself?

The big man said: He found my sister this way, out of his talks with her friends' photos. What is better proof than this? (951)

There is another religious type known as religious marketeers or the Bazaar traders who have been influential in Iran's social movements. They were among the groups who supported Islamic movements. Haj Attar can be taken an example of this religious archetype. As Fred Holliday argues, the role of clerics and their close associates, i.e. Bazaar traders, gained special significance in 1978 and greater role in the post-Revolution years since they did not have much great role before 1978. These are financially influential people with good social standing. They are trustees of the localities and due to their influence on the public opinion, they could be very influential in social and political developments between the years 1953 and 1979.

Haj Attar, who is active in distributing statements and in promoting public awareness, becomes the prime suspect and security forces rush into his perfumery and medicinal herbs shop just opposite Yarvali's barbershop in search of documents. In response to those opening an investigation before him, Haj Attar appears to be serious and speaking loud and in a commanding way he intends to call the attention of other shopkeepers around him. There came the voices from the shop:

"So you have a treatise!"

Yarvali shifted his eyes from Seifpour to the shop. He saw a blackish man jerking a book. The grand Haj Agha spoke in a way to let everyone hear him well: Any Muslim must have a treatise. Is it strange in your opinion?

Baran say the men looking at one another. She saw the white man taking back the book for a short review.

Attar continued in the same loud manner: Is it wrong for a Muslim to have the photo of his source of religious imitation? ... (913)

The third religious archetype the writer presents in his novel, the one with much elaboration, is the religion with ordinary people, the ordinary attitude toward religion, ordinary, everyday and daily role of religion in the life of people. It is neither political or a resemblance of certain social establishment. Such religious archetype is available among all walks of life. In other words, it is the type of relationship between man and religion that finds social functionality and gains attention more than any other religious teachings, which has special rites and rituals in certain occasions. Such

rites and rituals are practiced by all characters in the novel for burial, ceremonial washing, or for observing religiously mandatory practices such as prayer and fasting. These have been expressed on Bibi Saltanat, Baran's grandmother, more than any other character. She is an old woman who insists on choosing religious names for the children of Nozar and as we read in the novel, there is a conflict on the choice between Sohrab, that is an Iranian and national name, and Abbasali, that is a religious name.

Nozar looked at Belqeys' womb and said: It is clear that our seventh offspring Sohrab understands as well!

Bibi said: Abbasali!

Nozar turned to Bibi and said: Sohrab!

Bibi erected her neck: Abbasali!

Nozar raised his voice: I said Sohrab!

Pounding her knee Bibi replied: Abbasali!

Belqeys squeezed Nozar's hand and said: What's the fizzling, Nozar? Just call him Abbasali for the time being.

Nozar lowered his voice and said: His certificate of live birth will be Sohrab! ... (1571)

Bibi Saltanat's supplications are heard now and then in the novel. She is always repeating prayers when standing up, walking, sitting down. Her words are all full of supplications.

Khavar burst all of sudden in commotion: O God, do not leave anyone helpless or shelterless.

Bibi's words of pray could be heard: Ya Mojib, Ya Mojib and Ya Mojib [O God, the Greatest of prayers] (38) Bibi Saltanat was busy praying (80).

Religion, praying and supplication offer a path for salvation and people take energy from thee practices that make them pleased. This peasant feeling gives them concentration and ease of mind. It is through this, only and only, that they seek their religious claims and even everyday demands, something that Belqeys does time and again:

Erecting his neck, Nozar said: Let me see what that is.

Belqeys turned back and asked: Which one?

"The one you have attached to your side with a safety pin?"

Belqeys said: I don't know for sure!

"You don't know? Then why have you attached it to yourself with a safety pin?"

When Nozar asks about the thing attached with safety pin, Belqeys replies with fear. She tries to escape direct answer in any way possible, because she knows that Nozar is not easy with these things.

Belqeys covered her hair with her chador and said: It is a prayer. Molla Mirza has given it to me.

"Well!, for the kid?"

Belqeys said nothing.

"... Yes, I met Molla Mirza, along with mom. He gave it for the sake of praying and fasting for dad. Anything else?"

Nozar looked at Belqeys and murmured: Did he charge anything for that?

Belqeys replied: Yes. Do you think they pray and fast for the dead free of charge?

Nozar said: For the prayer I mean.

Belqeys said nothing. (86)

Nozar began writing, crossing out and writing. He turned off the radio and lit a cigarette, "I have paid more than 10000 tumans for drugs." Shaking his spring pen, he continued: "Now the illiterate Mirza prescribes a prayer." (88)

As it is understood from the dialogs, there is a sort of superstition and wrong belief in prayer prescription in the society. Although people have no information on the content and implied meaning of the texts, there is public acceptability because of their innate belief in prayers and from them they get positive energy and seek remedy for their problems. Such an attitude can be traced in magic realism where structures of reality are overturned and a real world is created with its exclusive cause and effect relations.

Mosques in pre-revolution uprisings was an important place serving as a media. Such function of a religious space in political activities of pre-1979 Islamic Revolution was more important than the religious function, i.e. holding prayer ceremonies, funerals, festivals and religious ceremonies were all in line with the dominant political ends and in line with religious movement of the people.

When Baran communicates with Maedeh and is thus involved in political issues, she remembers the days she used to go to the mosque with her brother and father to listen to the political speeches.

"Babu looks at it hastily. It is different from yesterday's statements. It has nothing about state sponsored associations. It tells about the nationwide movement, about the general strike of the oil workers in Masjid Soleyman, about the consortiums, plundering, state supplication, ... He folded the statement and put it in his pocket. There came a loud "Allahouma sali ala Muhammad wa aali Muhammad" (O Allah, do bless Muhammad and the Household of Muhammad)" Baran grips Babu's waist tight. They are carried with the people and pressed against the concrete wall of Abbasieh. "Babu I'm suffocated." The call of Allahouma ... is heard once again. The loudspeaker mounted on the top of the Abbasieh gate clatters, and then a fatigued voice is heard saying: "May you find salvation with the Prophet. Salute the Prophet". The voice is echoed. The call of Salute is mixed with the rattling of the loudspeaker "... va Nasta'een va Nataavakkol ...". Public commotion soothes. Baran takes a deep breath. The loudspeaker is now without any disturbing noise. Everyone could hear well now: "This ratification is against the Islamic Sharia law and against the Constitutional Law. They intend to consider equal rights for men and women in order to recruit women for military service. The Muslim ulema warn against this ratification." Commotion rises among the people. Someone calls for saluting the Prophet. The speaker changes his words and says: "Those disrupting me with calls for saluting the Prophet are requested to let me say that what the Muslim nation seeks is not reactionary movement, ... we all seek parliamentary regime and the rule of law and legitimate freedom. ... Our emphasis is on safeguarding the Sharia law." (97-98)

Among the statements distributed among the mosques we come across with such components as freedom, law, Sharia law, and the warnings issued by the ulema. According to Barrette, these codes he calls symbolic codes are regularly repeated in the text. The text is indeed seeking to depict freedom denied and law ignored. These

components have been intermingled with the story of the novel. Freedom used to be ignored by mass arrests of the protesters in an unlawful way.

In writing the "Zero Degree Orbit", Ahmad Mahmoud makes an artistic creation without confining himself to narration in the context of certain time and place. Although the setting of the story can be clearly inferred in this novel, he fails to present a clear image of the place where the story is taking place. Whatever expressible about him is speaking about a certain class of society on which characterization has been made. Such characters as Kal Sha'ban, Mubarak, Shahrouz, Amu Firouz, ... all belong to the lower class of the society.

This is also expressible in terms of depicting the religious identity. The Holy Quran, resorting to it and swearing by it among the people at a time there is no instrument for pleading for justice and claiming one's rights, is the only way for a Muslim to use as a strong weaponry. For an interactive mind it is something that brings mental security and hope to claiming one's right. The practice of "carrying Quran on one's head" appears when the existing social environment is turbulent, fearful and dipped in injustice. It encourages individuals to seek their rights this way, something that was common in the years before the victory of Islamic Revolution.

Except for a few pages where Bibi Saltanat performs prayers and she is central to the scene, we do not much come across with elaborated description on religious rituals. In description of the scenes we come across a scene where the SAVAK forces attack residences of the political figures and the reactions the characters and their families and neighbors show to the attack. When they attack the house of Faruq and call him a member of the Tudeh Party, we read:

"Bibi Saltanat has held the Holy Quran over her head. Erecting her neck, she says with a shivering voice that: "I swear you to the heart of Muhammad." Her voice shivers again: "Our Holy Quran will judge between us and the one who wants ..."

This is the importance people attach for the Holy Quran. The Book was used as a judge, whose spiritual influence gave people hope and courage. When Baran is arrested by the SAVAK agents, her mother Khavar does the same thing.

"Khavar came in and standing at the doorstep said: I will hold Quran upon my head tomorrow and will go to Klometri."

Holding the Holy Quran above one's head refers to ideological domain that tries to depict the beliefs deeply rooted in the community according to the common law. This is a symbol of previous social knowledge that appears in the beliefs of the human beings and in their daily life. This social knowledge has its roots in the religion and gives people so much power that they use it as a strong supporter in the times of crisis. The move is an instance of adherence to ethics, good manners and collective approach that were all meaningful and valuable in the society.

The fact that Mahmoud has paid much attention to such components as poverty, partisanship and political suffocation in the society has made the voice of his novel unbalanced in some way. The religious voice of people has been lost in these movements but supporting religious leadership and trying to enforce Sharia law bring together various approaches in the fight against the ruling conditions in the community.

- Baran woke up at the mourning of Amu Firouz who was praying; "...

va Favvazto Amri ...” She looked at the sky. There were a few stars still winking. She sat down. She heard the mourning voice of Amu Firouz again, “... Ahfezi be-Hefz al-Imam ...” She looked over the edge of the roof and saw Amu Firouz’s cloth in the light of the dawn. He was there in the terrace, before the prayer carpet, holding his hands high toward the sky, “... Va An Yamini, va An Shomali ...”. Nozar groaned from the other side of the roof: “Now, can’t he read his ‘prayer of four directions’ a bit slowly?” (118)

Amu Firouz’s introduction into the novel, that coincides with losing his job, his land, leaving the village, living in the city and experiencing a new urban lifestyle, taking distance from the rural atmosphere and involvement of his sons in such jobs as selling lottery tickets, and drinking wine, is a symbol of Iranian traditional community passing into the modernity and its entanglement in this situation. The pictures the novelist presents from this situation depict the story of poverty and homelessness in pre-1979 revolution Iran. But he himself, lives in the implicit religious discourse existing in the text (that is a sign of society).

Conclusion

The author has considered a few issues to develop his dialogs. Belongingness to the religious beliefs in the political fights helps the political orientation of people and Imam Khomeini’s religious leadership is built in the course of the dialogs of the characters. Even in this work the religious identity discourse is not the dominant discourse, since the supporting power is not the government but the people and religious source of imitation.

The characters, who have no claim of being religious, use some themes out of their religious memory in their interactions with the surrounding world. Here, the fight is organized by creating a protesting network out of such sources as mosque, religious gatherings, ... In characterization of people in his novel, the author talks around three points. He first presents the image of a religious person for whom religious beliefs are very important and his deed and creed depict that of a source of religious imitation, fight against the ruling power, ... In this story the supporters of the Islamic values are personified in Haj Attar as a representative of traders in Bazaar.

The second image, that is indeed a representation of reality existing in the society, belongs to Mir Abod Shah, that has been used for infiltration into the masses. Since people attach great importance for the fortunetellers such a personality is misused and security forces get closer to the public mind through a person who claims to have communications with the supernatural world.

The third type of characterization belongs to the people such as Bibi Saltaneh, Khavar, and Belqeys who try to perform their religious duties and the combative role of religion is not important for them.

The “Zero Degree Orbit” tells the story of people in different jobs with different conflicts on political and economic issues. It presents religion as a revolutionary ideology; clerics appear as ideological leaders; and the most important narrative about religion is political that is expressed in a symbolic way in relation with the historical developments of Islam.

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