CHAPTER TWO

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF NAGUIB MAHFOUZ AND QURRATULAIN HAIDER

- NAGUIB MAHFOUZ: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
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NAGUIB MAHFOUZ: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

"Through works rich in nuance - now clear-sightedly realistic, now evocatively ambiguous - (Mahfouz) has formed an Arabic narrative art that applies to all mankind."

[The Swedish Academy of Letters]
Literature is embedded, in the basic process of communication and serves pervasive social needs. It is a written or oral expression that uses as its medium language, a social creation, to represent fact or fantasy. But, furthermore, literature represents life; and 'Life' is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of individual have also been objects of literary 'initiation'. It reflects the values and experiences of society and implicitly functions to control and generate social action. As Rene Wellek says:

"Literature is really not a reflection of the social process, but the essence, the abridgement and summary of all history."1

In precise and succinct terms, literature is a 'criticism of life', be it in the form of examples, fictions or poems which criticize life.2 Thus, the criterion of a writer, being the spokesman of life, is the extent to which he can bring about in us, while expressing himself honestly, concretely and realistically, a clearer and more comprehensive understanding or reality as a whole, though the mode of expression may differ according to the distinctive qualities of the individual authors.

Literature, therefore, is by its very nature, messianic. It is due to this conviction that most writers and poets come across through their literary creations, as people with a mission and vision of a better society, a better world. And so, a brief sketch of Naguib Mahfouz and Qurratulain Haider is worthwhile, as it is being described at length in the present chapter.

Naguib Mahfouz has also been called the Balzac of the Arab world, perhaps too simply, because he has focused on everyday reality in generations of merchant families.
NAGUIB MAHFOUZ

Naguib Mahfouz is considered one of the foremost writers in modern Arabic literature. He is regarded as the most distinguished modern Arabic novelist and one of the few of world stature, with a formidable body of works behind him. He was awarded the 1988 Nobel Prize for Literature. On the occasion of the Nobel Prize ceremonies in Stockholm, Professor Sture Allen addressed Mahfouz, who was watching the Nobel Prize ceremonies via satellite in Cairo saying:

Mr. Mahfouz, your rich and complex work invites us to reconsider the fundamental things in life. Themes like the nature of time and love, society and norms, knowledge and faith recur in a variety of situations and are presented in thought-provoking, evocative and clearly daring ways. And the poetic quality of your prose can be felt across the language barrier. In the prize citation you are credited with the forming of an Arabian narrative art that applies to all mankind. On behalf of the Swedish Academy I congratulate you on your eminent literary accomplishments.3

Commenting on the influence of the Prize on his personality Mahfouz says:

The Nobel Prize made no difference to who I am as a person. There was, of course, the pride in being so honoured, but a laureate remains a writer first and foremost. A Nobel never created a writer out of a void. All one has to fall back on is one’s own capacities and talents, whatever these may be. The Prize simply constitutes recognition of one’s work and its value.4
Mahfouz, indeed, treats his subject in a manner that rises to the level of universality. With dozens of novels to his name, collections of short stories, full-fledged studies of his work in book form, an increasing number of doctoral thesis, and an enormous number of articles in literary and academic periodicals (in English and other languages), he can rightfully claim the title of the best-known and most studied Arab novelist in the Anglophone world.

Mahfouz's writing clearly reflect the deep concern of the Egyptian petty bourgeoisie with its material security, its worry about the narrow, its conformity to the system, and its disinclination to challenge the authorities or the power that be. The sole preoccupation of this class was security. He attracts the immediate attention of the readers, as they tend to reflect minutely the social, economic and political happenings at hands.

GENERAL BACKGROUND
Naguib Mahfouz was born on December 11, 1911 in the crowded district of Al-Jamaliyya, the thickly populated heart of Cairo, which forms the setting of his major stories. He was the youngest sibling of a lower middle class family in Cairo, which means that he was effectively brought up as an only child. In his childhood, his mother often took him to museums and Egyptian history later became a major theme of many of his books.

Mahfouz only lived in Al-Jamaliyya up to the age of six or twelve (depending on biographer). Later on, the family moved to the then new Cairo suburb al-Abbasiyya where posh villas and modest dwellings stand side by side in glaring contrast. Though the move marked Naguib Mahfouz's transition to modernity, Jamaliyya continues to haunt his work in various mantles of disguise and lends to it many of its typical characters and physical assets. He himself stresses the importance of Jamaliyya, or the ha'ra world as he refers to it sometimes, as a source of inspiration for his work throughout his creative life he says:
“It seems to me that [a man-of-letters] must have a tie with a certain place or a certain object to form a point of departure for his emotion.”

Naguib Mahfouz grew up in the midst of stirring national events. In 1919, the country was engulfed in a popular uprising against the British. It was in those days that the author probably first came to experience the meaning of nationalist feeling. He describes about the events of that period in the following terms:

“From a small room on the roof [of our house] I used to see the demonstrations of the 1919 revolution. I saw women taking part in the demonstrations on donkey-drawn carts. ... I often saw English soldiers firing at the demonstrators. ... My mother used to pull me back from the window, but I wanted to see everything.”

From his elementary school opposite al Husayn Mosque, he was able to see the bodies of the dead and the wounded laid on the ground. He proclaims:

“You could say that the one thing which most shook the security of my childhood was the 1919 revolution.”

The events of 1919 are widely recreated and affectionately celebrated in a great many of Mahfouz’s novels especially in The Trilogy. Thus, the interlinking of politics with the lives of ordinary people was to become the main pillar of his writings.

EDUCATION AND INTELECTUAL INFLUENCES

Mahfouz’s education, in common with his generation, began at the Kuttab where he learnt religion and the principles of literacy before he joined the primary school. During the primary stage and
the early years of secondary education, he moved on from detective stories to historical and adventure novels, all read in translation. He says:

I started reading detective stories by Sinclair, Johnson Top, and other stories that were adapted into Arabic by Hafez Naguib and which were very popular in my childhood. Needless to say, there weren't any "children's books" in those days, which was why my early reading experience – from the end to my elementary school years to the beginning of primary school – was spent with the pages of detective stories.⁹

After this stage, he turned his attention to Manfaluti who had a great influence on his sensibility. He also mentions the names of Sir Walter Scott and Sir Henry Rider Haggard in this connection.¹⁰ He showed early promise in his own language, as also in history and the science. At eighteen, he encountered Darwin, and this led to a severe crisis of faith. He entered the King Fuad I (now Cairo University) in 1930 as a student of philosophy. The lectures were then given in English and French and Mahfouz had difficulty in following them. To remedy this, he translated James Baikie's work on Ancient Egypt. Later on, his literary interests broadened very considerably over the years. In French, he admires Balzac, Proust, Sartre and Camus, Joyce, Huxley, Orwell, Faulkner and Hemingway are among his preferred writers in English.

As he advanced through his teens, he discovered Mustafa al-Manfaluti, the Egyptian sentimentalist whose prose style influence whole generations of educated Egyptians during the decades of the century. After Manfaluti comes what he terms the 'revival' movement. He also describes this stage as the "liberation stage", a
liberation from the ancient way of thinking, the ancient approach
to literary appreciation.

During this period, Mahfouz came to read ‘the innovators’. Among
them, he enumerates the names of Taha Hussein, Abbas Al-Aqqad, Salama Musa, Muhammad Hussein Haykal, Ibrahim Al-Mazini, Mahmud Taymur, Tawfiq Al-Hakim and Yahya Haqqi. To these writers, he admits his indebtedness for his emancipation from the traditional way of thinking — the attraction of his attention to the world literature, providing a new outlook on classical Arabic literature, as well as offering him models of the short story, the novel and drama.\(^{11}\)

Although Mahfouz has rarely travelled abroad — ones to Yemen and once to Yugoslavia — and even sent his two daughters to receive his Nobel honours in Stockholm, he learned the craft of the novel from the European and American masters, including Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Honoré de Balzac, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner.

In his works, Mahfouz has offered critical views of British colonialism and contemporary Egypt, social issues, and political prisoners. The major Egyptian influence on Mahfouz’s thoughts of science and socialism in the 1930s was Salama, the great intellectual who propagated interest in the Pharaonic legacy of Egypt. Slama Musa’s ideas on socialism shaped the political ideology of Mahfouz who wrote on socialism long before it was accepted in Egyptian circles.\(^{12}\)

During his secondary school years, he started also reading classical Arabic literature. The effects of these classical readings have, in fact, survived his school days and can be observed in the propensity in his early short stories and novels towards cliché and flowery outdated style. As he matured, he turned more towards classical poetry and mentions in particular the names of al-Ma’arri, al-Mutanabbi and Ibn al-Rumi.\(^{13}\)
Mahfouz graduated from Cairo University in philosophy. Between 1939 and 1944 he wrote three historical novels, afterwards he turned to novels of contemporary life.

**PERSONAL SKETCH**

Mahfouz remained a bachelor until the age of 43 — for many years he laboured under the conviction that marriage with its restrictions and commitments would hamper his literary future. His prolonged bachelorhood gave him the opportunity to know many women, all of whom were later to appear in his fiction. In 1954, however, his defences against marriage collapsed and he has since enjoyed a happy and stable marriage, which has produced two girls. Mahfouz has always jealously defended his privacy against the curiosity of the media. The onslaught in the wake of the Nobel Prize was, however, too fierce to resist and it was only then that journalists and cameras were admitted to his house and the public were allowed a glimpse of his family life.

When he got married he moved from the family house in *Abbasiyya* to an apartment overlooking the Nile in Jiza where he still lives. It is worth noting that the Nile did not play a major role in his fiction until some time after his move to the neighbourhood of the old river. Full recognition of the effect of this change of habitat on the creative imagination of Mahfouz appeared in his 1966 novel, *Chatter on the Nile*.

In all his life, Mahfouz has been out of Egypt only twice: once to Yemen and once to Yugoslavia — both visits being on short, official missions. He had very much wished to travel to Europe and study in France in his youth in the manner of Tawfiq al-Hakim and other Egyptian writers, but there was no opportunity. As he grew older and more established and opportunities became available, he had become too set in his ways, too enslaved by a routine of work and life to care to disrupt it. This was so much the case that when
he was awarded the Nobel Prize he refused to travel to receive it in person.

No account of Mahfouz is complete without mention of the maqha (café) and the important role it played both in his life and in his fiction. In his youth, in common with men of his generation, the café acted as a social club – much like a public house in Britain. There personal and literary friendships were forged and many intellectual, heart-searching discussions took place. In mature years, Mahfouz used the café of Cairo (and Alexandria in the summer) as literary salons where he met his literary peers and where scores of young aspiring writers came to listen to him and debate intellectual issues with him.

MAHFOUZ AS A CIVIL SERVANT

On graduation in 1934, Mahfouz considered an academic career, but two years later and having spent a year working on M.A. degree, he decided to become a professional writer in spite of the poor financial rewards. His first three books received no payment at all, and gained him a nickname — al Sabir, or 'the patient one'. He also worked as a journalist at Al-Risala, and contributed to Al-Hilal and Al-Ahram. But, like all Egyptian writers, he had to look elsewhere for a living.

He began to work as a university secretary, and in 1939 he entered government bureaucracy, where he was employed for the next 35 years. From 1939 until 1954 he was employed in the Ministry of Religious Affairs. His subsequent work in the civil service was to do with the arts and worked as Director of the Foundation for Support of the Cinema, the State Cinema Organization. In 1969-71, he was a consultant for cinema affairs to the Ministry of Culture. He retired from this post in 1972. The nation bestowed on him its highest honours: The State Prize for Literature and The Collar of the Republic.
MAHFOUZ AS A NOVELIST

The Egyptian writer, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988, was the first Arabic writer to be so honoured. Many in the Arab world saw the prize as somewhat ironic, not least because the work for which Mahfouz received the prize had been published at least three decades earlier. In spite of millions readers in the Arab world, the author's books are still unavailable in many Middle Eastern countries on account of his support for President Sadat's Camp David peace treaty with Israel in 1978. Fundamentalist Muslims have threatened Mahfouz, especially due to his moderate position on Rushdie's The Satanic Verses. Mahfouz has written some 40 novels and short story collections, 30 screenplays, and many plays.

The years since his retirement from the Egyptian bureaucracy have seen an outburst of further creativity, much of it experimental. He is now the author of some 40 novels, more than a hundred short stories, more than two hundred articles, 30 screenplays and many plays. Half of his novels have been made into films, which have circulated throughout the Arabic-speaking world. In Egypt, each new publication is regarded as a major cultural event and his name is inevitably among the first mentioned in any literary discussion from Gibraltar to the Gulf.

It must be noted that, he began writing when he was only seventeen. His first novel was published in 1939 and ten more were written before the Egyptian Revolution of July 1952, when he stopped writing for several years. One novel was republished in 1953, however, and the appearance of the Cairo Trilogy, Bayn al Qasrayn, Qasr al Shawq, Sukkariya (Between-the-Palaces, Palace of Longing, Sugarhouse) in 1957 made him famous throughout the Arab world as a depicter of traditional urban life.

With The Children of Gebelawi (1959), he began writing again, in a new vein that frequently concealed political judgements under allegory and symbolism. Works of this second period include
the novels, *The Thief and the Dogs* (1961), *Autumn and Quail* (1962), *Small Talk on the Nile* (1966), and *Miramar* (1967), as well as several collections of short stories. Mahfouz saw his stories as a means to bring enlightenment and reform to his society. The same sense of high morality and interest in the thoughts and motivations of others apparent in these early stories marked all his later works as well, and contributed greatly to the broad range of respect he enjoys.

Naguib Mahfouz's novels deal with various aspects of life such as love, faith and death and above all the meaning of life. The tussle between man and woman also form an important aspect of his novels. Naguib Mahfouz is preoccupied mainly with liberty, and deals with the relationship of the child to the father and of the woman to man. He has not written novels based on women's problems but somehow these are seen as dominant and explosive issues.

Naguib Mahfouz's experience with practical life in government service provided him an insight into corruption at different levels and he decided to deal more directly with the problems of his times. Thus, he abandoned his original plan to write one historical novel a year and turned to writing realistic novels, starting with *Al-Qahira al-Jadida*.

Naguib Mahfouz shows how traditional Muslim views of, for example, the marriage relationship developed from one of absolute subservience of the wife to one of near equality. Western concepts like 'social equality' and 'freedom of the individual' have little meaning in Egypt, where the legal system is exiguous and the judiciary have no power over the executive.

In any case, the country allows exceptional social mobility. It has to, when almost everyone is engaged in a no-holds-barred struggle for personal economic survival. Mahfouz's view is, therefore, more akin to the stoical, pessimistic side of humanism,
both European and Islamic. History and geography are the fundamental villains; or the nature of things.

However, Mahfouz is most certainly not some Egyptian equivalent of an English Tory. His disillusionment was far less with specific policies and theories of the Egyptian left than with the moral failure of the Revolution in practice. What haunts his novel, indeed, is something deeper than disillusion: despair at the eternal and cruel dilemma of his country.

**PHASES OF ACTION**

A study of Mahfouz's output shows his fiction to have passed through various distinguishable stages. Critics have tended to classify Mahfouz's work into four chronological phases (historical or romantic, realistic or naturalistic, modernist or experimental and indigenous or traditional).

The first phase (1939-44) comprises three novels based on the history of ancient Egypt. They provide a useful insight into the germination of the then budding young talent. Admittedly written under the influence of Sir Walter Scott's historical romances, the last of the three, "Kifah Tiba" (The Struggle of Thebes), is particularly interesting for the way in which the novelist brought history to bear on the political scene at the time. The novel draws on the heroic struggle of the Egyptians and their patriotic Pharaohs to expel the Hyksos, as foreign ruling invaders, from their country.

The novel bore a relevance to Egyptian socio-political reality at the time (British occupation and a ruling aristocracy of foreign stock) that was all too obvious to be missed. Mahfouz had meant to write a whole series of novels encompassing the full history of Pharaonic Egypt; he even did the research required for such a monumental task.

In the event, and perhaps luckily for the development of the Arabic novel, he was voluntarily deflected from his intended course and the scene of his next novel, "Al-Qahira al-Jadida" (New Cairo -
1945), "Khan al-Khalili" - 1946, "Zuqaq al-Midaq" (Midaq Alley - 1947), "Bidaya wa Nihaya" (The Beginning and the End - 1949) were placed in the raw reality of its day. This marks the beginning of the second stage in the novelist's career, which culminated in the publication in 1956-57 of his magnum opus, 'The Cairo Trilogy': Bay al-Qasrayn, Qasr al-Shawq, and al-Sukriyya (names of the streets of Cairo).

The novels of this phase include six titles, of which three are English translation, i.e. "Midaq Alley", "The Beginning", and "The End", and Volume 1 of the Cairo Trilogy ("Palace Walk"). In this period of his writing, the novelist studied the socio-political ills of his society with the full analytical power afforded him by the best techniques of realism and naturalism.

What emerges from the sum total of these novels is a very bleak picture of a cross section of Egyptian urban society in the twenty or so years between the two World Wars. A work which stands by itself in this phase is "The Mirage" (1948), in which Mahfouz experimented for the first and last time with writing a novel closely based on Freud's theory of psycho-analysis.

No longer viewing the world through realist or naturalist eyes, he was now to write a series of short powerful novels at once social and existential in their concern. Rather than presenting a full colourful picture of the society, he now concentrated on the inner working of the individual's mind in its interaction with the social environment.

Just as his realistic novels were an indictment of the social conditions prevailing in Egypt before 1952, the novels of the sixties contained much that was overtly critical of that period. In the years following 1967, his writing ranged from surrealist, almost absurd short stories and dry, abstract, un-actable play-lets, to novels of direct social and political commentary.

Mahfouz himself was aware of the new turn of his work he had taken. In the mid-seventies, we find Mahfouz again searching
for a new style. It would appear that, having been diverted by national traumatic events from the course he had embarked on in the early sixties, he was no longer able to return to it. Or it may be that in his old age, with a life's experience behind him, he felt at last that he could Arabicize the art of the novel. For it is since then that we observe the sporadic emergence of a number of novels, which justify the proposition of a fourth stage in his literary development.

What is remarkable about the novels of this stage, of which we can count five, is their departure from the norms of novel writing as they evolved in Europe over the last two centuries; these are the norms which conceive of the novel as a work of indivisible unity which proceeds logically from a beginning to a middle to an end. But Mahfouz no longer wants any of that.

He now harks back to the indigenous narrative arts of Arabic literature, particularly as found in the Arabian Nights and other folk narratives in which Arabic literature abounds. While any talk of an organic unity in these works is precluded, the presence of what may be called, for the lack of a better term, a cumulative unity producing a total effect of sorts, is undeniable.

It is this form that Mahfouz has been experimenting with for the last ten years or so in novels like The Epic of the Riff-Raff, "The Nights of the Thousand and One Nights" and others. In his evocation of both the form and the content of these classical Arabic narrative types, and his utilization of them to pass judgment of the human condition past and present, Mahfouz appears to open endless vistas for the young Arab novelist to find a distinct voice of his own.

MAHFOUZ'S VIEW OF LIFE

Although Mahfouz's novelistic technique has passed through recognizable stages, one cannot say the same about his world-view, the main features of which can be traced back to his earliest works. Mahfouz appears indeed to have sorted out the main
questions about life at an early juncture of his youth and to have held on to the answers he arrived at ever since, age and experience serving only to deepen and broaden but hardly to modify them. A socio-political view of man's existence is at the very root of almost everything that Mahfouz has written. Even in a novel with a strong metaphysical purport like "Al-Ṭariq" (The Way), the social message is aptly woven into the texture of the work: man is not meant to spend his life on Earth in a futile search and his only true hope of salvation is the exertion of a positive and responsible effort to better his lot and that of others.

Mahfouz has always been a socially committed writer with a deep concern for the problem of social injustice, which is an incontestable fact. To him individual morality is inseparable from social morality. In other words, according to Mahfouz's moral code, those who only seek their own individual salvation are damned; to him nirvana is, as it were, a distinctly collective state. On the other hand, characters that are saved in Mahfouz's work are only those with altruistic motives, those who show concern for others and demonstrate a kind of awareness of their particular predicament being part of a more general one.

MAHFOUZ'S WORLD VIEW

The picture of the world as it emerges from the bulk of Mahfouz's work is very gloomy indeed, though not completely despondent. It shows that the author's social utopia is far from being realized. Mahfouz seems to conceive of time as a metaphysical force of oppression. His novels have consistently shown time as the bringer of change, and change as a very painful process, and very often time is not content until it has dealt his heroes the final blow of death. To sum up, in Mahfouz's dark tapestry of the world, there are only two bright spots. These consist of man's continuing struggle for equality on the one hand and the
promise of scientific progress on the other; meanwhile, life is a tragedy.

Mahfouz creates an intricate pattern of verbal irony, which he weaves into the very texture of the novel and maintains throughout. This pattern of verbal irony engenders in the reader an awareness of the incongruity between the object and mode of expression, i.e. the realistic situation and the hyperbolic terms in which it is rendered. This awareness creates and sustains, all the way through, a sense of dramatic irony where the reader is, as it were, cognizant of a basic fact of which the protagonist is ignorant, namely that his obsession has misguided him. It is in the creation and sustainment of this pattern of verbal irony, and in the complete subjugation of the novelistic experience to a language order originally alien to it, that Mahfouz has achieved a feat unprecedented not only in his own work but probably in Arabic fiction altogether.

His reputation is based on his trilogy (Bain al-Qasrain — 1956; Qasr al-Shauq — 1957; and al-Sukkariyya — 1957). In this trilogy he traces the history of an Egyptian middle-class Muslim family between 1917 and 1944. In these novels the family history is given against a background of politics and politicians, with much discussion of political as well as family matters in the coffee houses which loom so large in city social life in the Arab world. Among the most delightful sections in the account of the love-affair between Ahmad and Suzi in Part III, during the Second World War.

Without being too far-fetched, one might compare Mahfouz with Galsworthy, with whom he shares ideas of socialism and sympathy for the under-dog. Indeed, this trilogy is a sort of Egyptian 'Forsyte Saga'. Mahfouz was the Director of the official Cinema Association; and if this work were filmed as a television series, its success in Egypt and perhaps the whole Arab world would surely approach that of the television version of The Forsyte Saga in Britain and Europe.
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7. Ibid, p. 52
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13. Fu’ād Dawwara, op. cit., p. 212
QURRATULAIN HAIDER: A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

"Qurratulain Haider keeps vigilnt eye on internal conflict, mental tempest and solitude of human existence and often reveals romantic life of her characters through contemplation".

[Dr. Qamar Rais]
Quratulain Haider is known as the leading Urdu novelist and is instrumental in providing Urdu literature with a new vitality and direction not only for the fabulous contents of her writings but also for the sharp political and social remarks. In 1990, the Indian nation bestowed on Quratulain Haider the country's most prestigious literary award, Jnanpith, for her contribution in Urdu Literature. She attracts the immediate attention of the readers, as they tend to reflect minutely the social, economic and political happenings at hands.

Born in UP in 1927, Haider came from a family of intellectuals and was educated at Lucknow's Isabella Thoburn University, going on to a stint in London as a young sari-clad reporter for Fleet Street, before emigrating to Pakistan to join her family. She returned to India in 1962 and now lives and works in Noida, Delhi. Her novels and short stories are arresting for their complex examination of the cultural inextricability of the Hindu and Muslim cultures in terms of literature, poetry and music, and the forces of history like Colonisation, Independence and Partition as well as and sociological movements like abolition of Zamindari [serfdom], and their conflicts with the flow of individual lives.

GENERAL BACKGROUND:

Qurratulain Haider's illustrious parents: Sajjad Haider Yaldram and Nazar Sajjad Haider Yaladram of District Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh were well-known literary figures. Her father was one of the founders of the modern Urdu short story and her mother was an eminent popular novelist of her time.

Though 'she was born in Aligarh on 20th January 1927’1, she spent her early age in different ambiences. For, her father Sajjad Haider was in a transferable government job. After every three
years, he was bound to move from one place to another. When Qurratulain Haider was merely three years old her father was transferred from Aligarh to Port Blear in Andaman. After that, the family moved to Uttara Pradesh’s western parts where Qurratulain Haider enjoyed a lot. She describes this experience:

“Till the age of ten-twelve, I witnessed many cities, made a number of voyages and also visited to foreign countries.”

During this period, she came across numerous adventures and contemplated various ideas and notions. She also experienced the culture of different countries and became aware of meaning of life and human attitude towards it. All these adventures, ideas and experiences reflected later on in her writings.

She was brought up in a well-off feudal family as an overprotected girl. She was paid extra-care and attention because her four siblings passed away in their early age. However, she breathed in an ambience, which was full of contradiction and confusion. If the western ideas were alluring, the feudal traditions were followed zestfully. On the one hand, the family members were hell bent to embrace new values. On the other, they did not want to give up old ones. Hence, the old and the new values went on hand in hand zestfully and finally were resulted in the emergence of ‘feudal westernised class’.

As Qurratulain Haider became mature, she witnessed radical changes in Indian horizon. Social system was changing fast. The palace of feudalism was being demolished and western culture was taking place in turn. The whole incident had a vigorous impact on her. Expressing her anguish, she describes:
"At that time, the system was shattering. I witnessed it in my own family. We were directly affected with it. I must say that I was fond of this system. Though I was of the opinion that this system was wide of the mark, it had some good quality that was to build good personality. Its most significant contribution was to make the culture flourishing."³

As she advanced through her teens, she discovered contradiction and confusion prevailing everywhere in the society, which created inconsistency, impatience and various irregularities of life in her personality. Even today, not only such elements are ardent in her but sometimes they also reflect awesomely in her personality. However, she is more anxious to explore the lost glory than creating new world. She says:

"Personally, my creativity is mostly based on the search for the lost world."⁴

Qurratulain Haider has been honoured with several prestigious literary awards. In 1967, she received the Sahitya Akademi award for her third collection of short stories “Putjhar ki Awaz” and Soviet Land Nehru Award in 1969 for her contribution in the field of translation. In 1982, Uttar Pradesh Urdu Akadmi honoured her for her overall contribution to Urdu literature. In 1984, she was chosen for the Ghalib Award. She was also the recipient of Padma Shri from the Government of India, for her contribution to literature. In 1990, the Indian nation bestowed on her the Jnanpith Award, the most prestigious literary award for her novel Aag ka Darya.

She has held various important positions under Government of Indian and Government of Pakistan and had been on the editorial staff of a number of well-known magazines. In 1950, she was appointed as information officer in Information and
Broadcasting Ministry of Pakistan. She also served as Press Attaché of Pakistan High Commission in London. Beside being a producer of numerous documentary films, she worked as Acting Editor of Pakistani Quarterly. She was also associated with Pakistan Airlines. During this period, her masterpiece “Aag ka Dary” (River of fire) was published.5

From 1964 to 1968, she edited the English magazine, imprint as Career Editor and was later from 1968 to 1975 she was associated with the editorial staff of the Illustrated weekly of India. “She has worked in England as a journalist and has travelled widely all over the world. She has also been a fellow of the Sahitya Akademi6 and was associated with the Central Board of Films.7 ‘She was also the visiting Professor of Urdu at the Jamia Millia, Delhi and the Aligarh Muslim University’.8 She served as a guest lecturer at the universities of California, Chicago, Wisconsin, and Arizona.

EDUCATION AND INTELECTUAL INFLUENCES

Qurratulain Haider acquired her early education in Aligarh and then at the Isabella Thoburn College and Lucknow University from where she got her Master’s degree in English literature in 1947. She also studied art at Government School of Arts, Lucknow and later in London. She migrated to Pakistan for a few years after partition but finally was obliged to return to India in 1960 and settled here.

Qurratulain Haider inherited the love of fiction from her parents, Sajjad Hyder Yaldaram and Nazre Sajjad Haider. She has published five collections of short stories, six novelettes and seven novels. Many of her books have been translated into Indian and foreign languages.
Though she is an innovator in modern Urdu fiction, some of her stories have been written in the traditional narrative style. Her early stories (*Sitaron Se Aage*) and her first novel (*Mere Bhi Sanamkhane*) and to an extant her first novel (*Safina-e-Gham-e-Dil*) tend to be experimental in a way, steadily, under the so-called western influence, Virginia Woolf's 'stream of consciousness' and all that'.

Qurraṭulain Haider, like Tolstoy, accepts the supremacy of history. Individuals try to stand against the tide, but they either give in or try to swim with the tide or perish. Her novel, *Gardish-e-Rang-e-Chaman* continues with the exploration of the contingency of human predicament in Qurraṭulain Haider's best tradition.

Qurraṭulain Haider is a romantic — at once incisive, vibrant and full of creative verve. History, archaeology, legend and for that matter of past, all past hold special fascination for her. She was gradually able to shed her adolescent mannerism and grow into a novelist and short story writer of great distinction. Most of her stories and novels originate round about the period of partition of India. *Aag ka Darya* [River of Fire], her chief-d'oeuvre too begins with partition but in its sweep transcends all barriers of time.

The characters of the novel, both men and women, pass through vicissitudes of history and recurring catastrophic upheavals. During the course of this odyssey all time eventually turns into a timeliness happening and becomes contemporary. Gautam Neelamber, the protagonist of the novel himself grows into a symbol of timelessness.

*Kare Jahan Daraz Hai* mixes autobiography and history; it is a family saga, a story of human beings and historical events, all flowing in a backdrop of the terrorist and revolutionary upsurge of 1942, the demand for creation of Pakistan, the partition of India, establishment of Bangladesh and its aftermath. As we move with
the story we tend to become pensive and overwhelmed by a sense of waste.

Initially, her stories revolved around the feudal ambience of Awadh which was full of glamour and glitter of life. Her first collection "SitaronSe Aage" and the first two novels "Mere Bhi Sanamkhane" and "Safina-e-Gham-e-Dil" trace joys and sorrows, facts and fantasies of the same culturescape and time period and provide a fascinating insight into the panorama of life of the period with sympathy and well-balanced pathos, the material, moral, and spiritual problems of petty bourgeois society.

However, Qurratulain Haider tries to maintain some distance in these early writings, but could not remain unaffected by the emotional attachment with the feudal vim and vigour. After 1950, when she came out of her prime of life, dream and delusion, her attention focussed on the human sufferings and social realities. For, she had witnessed the pangs of partition of the country, tragic exodus and communal bloodshed. On the other hand, harsh and bitter realities of life haunted her and the reverie of the beautiful mixed culture was shattered. As a result she made a serious move towards human instinct and social realism. The departure can be seen in her novel "Aag Ka Darya" and her later writings, for instance, her short story "Housing Society" but the glimpses of that society still exist.

The theme of "Housing Society" is the contradictions of a new exploited society that came into existence by the feudatories of Pakistan. The radical youth like Salman and Surayya make scathing attacks on the apathy and the hollow values of this society. Similarly, in her novelette "chae Ke Bagh", she lashes out against the exploitation of labourer class and the 'so-called' Islamic Society of Pakistan. In her short story "Agle Janam Mohe Betya Na Kijo", she sketched petty characters of oppressed class and the
story of women's exploitation. The characters in Qurratulain's fiction neither revolt against the men oppression, nor mourn the tyrannical behaviour of these kinds of characters reveal to readers more effectively now the women feel and which conditions they live.

The attempt to show the varied roles of women since the older times to the modern period in some of Qurratulain's novels is a basic ingredient for the feminist movement. It is difficult to understand the historical context of gender discrimination and subjugation without realising these different shades of women characterization in her novels. In "Aag Ka Darya" the character of Champa is an attempt to present this very sequence of enactment of different roles by essentially the same feminine character. Champa is a metaphor for the Indian woman who was the daughter of the Royal Priest of Ayodhya and in spite of her sense of self-awareness and sensibilities she was compelled to marry an aged Brahmin against her will. In the middle age, the same Champa became Champawati who loves Abu al-Mansour. But Abu al-Mansour was preoccupied with his victory and forgets Champawati who devotes her whole life to loneliness and continues waiting for him. In a different time sphere, the same Champa in "Aag Ka Darya" searches for her identity in brothels of Lucknow as Champa Bai. Further moving ahead, Champa of the modern era is living lavishly and has all kinds of luxurious amenities, but she cannot express her feelings to her ideal Amir Raza. As a result, she is destined to eternal solitude.

Qurratulain's other novels also depict women's helplessness, solitude, and servitude to man-made rules and regulations and portray their perpetual suffering in a very poignant manner. For instance, in "Aakhir Shab Ke Humsafar", Deepali Sarkar strongly represents this image of being subdued by men. The story of the novel revolves around the male protagonist Raihanuddin Ahmed.
However, Deepali's role assumes more importance due to the effective and lively presentation of her character by the author. In this novel, there is portrayal of comparative milieu of women's personalities.

Deepali Sarkar of "Aakhir Shab Ke Humsafar" represents the woman who is the lesson of scourge for the reconciliatory routings. She is also the symbol of struggle against the adverse forces till her last breath for her ideals and principles. If Deepali Sarkar disdains Raihanuddin for living a superficial luxurious life, Yasmin Majeed prefers suicide to compromise with her principles.

Likewise, Nasira Najm-us-Sehar is symbolised as a fresh revolt and ambitious expression of revolution. In this novel, women neither fall into ecstasy nor become victims of men's exploitation. Contrary to other novels of Qurratulain Haider, women's characters of "Aakhir Shab Ke Humsafar" are not only vibrant and dynamic but on account of their forward looking and positive approach they also emerge as leading characters.

The notion of woman emancipation in the Western world is not linked with the gender discrimination but with the exploitation of women at all levels, thus, making them an object of commodification. As a result, the voices of woman freedom did not make an impact it should have made, and the outcry for equality remained ineffective.

It is worth-mentioning that the elements of women movement in Urdu fiction generally represent the current trend of liberal feminism. However, Qurratulain has always abided by her own perception of equality in her creative representation of the issue. This is how she has been successfully able to highlight the severity and urgency of women issues by portraying the female characters in a more realistic fashion, rather than treating them simply as subject matters.
The titles of some stories of Qurratulain Haider reflect her attachment to the humanitarian issues. Notable among them are the titles such as "Agle Janam Mohe Bitya Na Kijo" and "Sita Haran". The title of the first novelette shockingly betrays the stigma attached with being a woman. It indicates that for a woman, even the thought of becoming a woman in the next life invokes admonition. The second title dares to suggest that the sacredness attached to Sita becomes questionable. This title can also be seen in the perspective of emotional exile and solitude of Sita.

However, in both stories, the nature of solitude, vulnerability and emotional exile is very different. After becoming the victim of men's exploitation, Amirti in "Agle Janam Mohe Bitya Na Kijo" virtually became Rashk-e-Qamar and from Rashk-e-Qamar to a poetess, a danseuse and a singer. She is enamoured by the love of different men at different times. She has a longing for Ferhad's love some times, for Verma's at times, and at times for Aaga Hamadani's love. This Aagha Hamdani disappeared and left her to taste helplessness and eternal twinge. Rashk-e-Qamar was destined to bear his illegal child. But the child too, became a victim of men's ferocity and brutality.

Contrary to this story, Sita Mir Chandani in Sita Haran became helpless because of her own nature and extremely emotional attitude. She is not exploited by men who consider her a prostitute but she herself is responsible for her plight. In the presentation of women's characters, Qurratulain Haider tries to portray the gravity of women's issues. In the same tune, Jamilan in "Agle Janam Mohe Bitya Na Kijo" came to the fore and left a profound impact through her personality and philosophical thought. Jamilan is Rashk-e-Qamar's sister but she is extremely contemplative of the consequences of men's exploitative and selfish attitude. She prefers to spend a life which is not based on
compromises. She would rather spend her life in penury than doing anything her conscience does not allow.

Thus, there are two kinds of women characters in Qurratulain Haider's fiction. First kinds are the ones that are imaginative and idealist, but fail in life due to some coincidences or hostility of men towards them or to their ideals. They are innocent, shy and of serene character and they have dreams and goals but do not venture in the battlefield of life for the accomplishment of their aims and ambitions. Either they lack courage and adventurous attitude or they have excessively philosophical mood.

The second type of women in Qurratulain's fiction are rebellious and revolutionary like Deepali and Uma Roy who have some of their own secrets related to both sexual and organisational matters. But they act forcefully to achieve their personal or social objectives and lead a dangerous and mysterious life. They have fire in their belly that makes them restless and vibrant through their entire life. Their attempts of enjoying marital bliss and spending a settled life even when they are reconciliatory with the unfavourable circumstances are not always successful. Sometimes they succeed to some extent, but are not completely satisfied and remain restless throughout their lives.

Jahan Ara Begum of Aakhir Shab ke Humsafer gets annihilated by her internal anguish, but she overpowers the life and fate of Raihanuddin. When Deepali comes to know about the secrets of Jahan Ara and Raihan she becomes infuriated. Furthermore, Raihan's relationship with Uma Roy forces Deepali to maintain distance from him. This happens despite the fact that Jahan Ara is a simple, serene and less-educated girl from a well-off family.

So, the women in Qurratulain's universe have to face a lot of antagonism and hostility which makes them a symbol of protest.
The misery of women portrayed in her works creates an environment of chaos and turmoil. This situation provides the women characters the opportunity to enact their roles skilfully and with thoughtfulness. It also compels them to undergo excessive travails, which is more than they can withstand. This leads, finally, to their complete collapse.

Undoubtedly, the characters of Uma Roy in *Aakhir Shab ke Humsafar* and Surayya Hussain in *Housing Society* seem to be at par with the male characters. A kind of harshness emerges in their behaviour as they want to get into confrontation with men. The analysis of this situation reveals that the self-confidence of these characters have crossed the limit and turned into a kind of complacency and egoism. As a result, they get engaged, brushing aside their aspiration, for the sake of their full enjoyment. In fact, it is a reaction of their hopelessness and despair, which can be termed as “psychological deviance”.

Obviously, these women characters deserve more sympathy and their conditions are more pitiable. Their femininity never perishes, only a veil covers it. Whenever it unmask's, it emerges as the beautiful manifestation of femininity. For instance, in *Housing Society*, Surayya slapped Jamshed Sayyed on his face amidst a house warming party, in support of Salma Mirza. Though this slap is also an indication of the character's attitude, but undoubtedly the actual reason is a strong feeling of femininity and empathy.

However, unlike Bernard Shaw's female characters, in Qurratulain’s universe, the women are neither the principal factor for the evolution of life nor they outwit men. In contrast, the male characters in *Aag ka Darya* assume dominating character both at the level of thought and action, and the women just move ahead under their shadow. But in *Aakhir Shab ke Humsafar* only a few prominent men characters define the course and level of action.
despite the presence of a large number of powerful women characters.

Nawab Qamar-uz-Zaman is also a powerful personality and almost all women across religion and community have one or another kind of relation with him and consider him a respectable old man. In the novelette *Chae ke Bagh* women look like playthings in the hands of men, though they appear to be autonomous, self-reliant, and independent to a great extent. The novelette *Dil Ruba* is a story from the women's world, but all their activities are the reaction to the men's world. More than anything else, the heroine of *Sita Haran*, in spite of being a dominant character of the story, becomes dominated by men.

The title of her novelette *Agle Janam Mohe Bitya Na Kijyo* is a declaration of helplessness on the part of women in front of men. The character of Rashk-e-Qamar in the story is an obvious and frank confession of defeat of the female resistance.

Do the characters in Qurratulain's fiction lament the oppression of women and her subjugation the way the characters of Rashid-ul-Khairi do? Does she also have an objective like Rashid's? One could answer this by saying that Qurratulain is a Rashid-ul-Khairi of the modern time. However, it would be too simplistic to assume that. The reason is that the characters in Qurratulain's novels and stories do not enjoy the kind of virtuous and harmless femininity that Rashid-ul-Khairi's characters do. They have begged for sympathy and yet face the situation daringly and confidently. When they confront defeat, they accept it with grace and dignity. They can voice their concerns, yet they prefer to remain silent and maintain their dignity. Moreover, Qurratulain does not make a hue and cry in their defence.

Thus, we do not find any objective of reform in her novels, at least not any sermons of goodness and virtue. Of course, a feeling
of sympathy for women's failure and helplessness emerges and gives an impetus to do something for the well being of women. Qurratulain's fiction depicts excessive feelings of joy and sorrow in the women characters, but does not present a lamenting picture of women.

However, one thing is common between Qurratulain's and Rashid's characters and that is their 'Eastern root'. So, we can argue that the characters of modern educated, enlightened and far-sighted women, barring some of the deviant, rebellious characters created by Western culture and civilisation, have very deep roots into the Eastern mindset. Champa of Aag ka Darya after wandering in the valleys of West returned to her roots and took refuge in the Eastern environment. Deepali Sarkar confines herself to be in the meadows of Bengal spiritually despite her physical exile away from India. Sita Mir Chandani after leaving the desert of Sindh continuously wishes to settle there.

In fact, all these women are deeply connected with the East, and cannot find solace anywhere. They continue to be restless after leaving their country. Their desires and wishes reflect Eastern taste and the odour of Westernisation in their attitude and behaviour caused by the influence of time prospers in a global environment. They are the daughters of Orient, though they seem to have lost a part of their elegance in the Western environment. This appears to be the reason behind their sorrow, discontent, and failures. They had been transplanted from their soils into an alien terrain and had been forced to become modern women.

This feeling of rootlessness attracts them towards their centre of origin, whether they realise it or not, for besides being deficient in the intellectual power they are not much strong mentally. A kind of emotional mood dominates their personality all the time and they are carried away easily and get influenced with
old or new rites and traditions. This is the reason they make mistakes through the arduous and difficult path of life. The dream of the society in the colonial era, which Qurratulain longs for, has made the female characters in her writings dubious if not completely crooked. These characters are braving the stormy winds standing in an open space.

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Whatever might have become of her and whatever others might have thought of her, did she not have the right to know that she had been worshipped like a goddess in a temple? [Mirrors p. 214]
Of all, human being is sole element and cardinal component of Nature. It is, at the same time, divided into men and women as two different compartments. While the former is the symbol of dominance, the latter is symbol of subservience. Not only this, even it was viewed and perpetuated in course of time, in theory and also in practice, that women were created for the sake of man, the sole purpose of their creation was to provide comfort for their male counterpart to meet their sexual need to breed children for family. It was completely ignored that men and women were made for each other, part and parcel of each other. Thus, through ages, men and women appeared standing at two opposite poles. The women are more often quoted as not having a steady mind. They have only constant physical qualities. Hence their physical purity is a great importance. On the other hand, the men are described as having constant qualities of the mind and so occasional physical lapses are permissible. It is as if the society is divided into two categories – mind and body – with man representing the mind and woman the body. This negative attitude towards women heaped a number of hardships and responsibilities upon them. In each form of a social relation mother, sister, wife and daughter they are only destined to live within four walls. Only responsibility and no rights were granted to them.

Therefore, most writers and poets, as ‘initiators’, ‘agents’ or ‘facilitators’ and ‘audiences’ or ‘responders’ of the society having certain vision for the society, express their anguish and agony through their creative works and highlight facts and fantasies about women and invoke them to don a different image, walking with unbent head and unfaltering gaze. In this process, Naguib Mahfouz and Qurratulain Haider also emerged on the literary horizon with a vision to communicate what they saw in the society. About the writer’s vision, Mahfouz says:
"A vision is more general than either philosophy or ideology. Political opinion, for example, forms part of the writer's vision, so do male-female relations and many other aspects of life. A vision encompasses and transcends all this."2

Naguib Mahfouz viewed his literary works as a mean to bring enlightenment and reform to his society. The same sense of high morality and interest in the thoughts and motivations of others apparent in his early works marked all his later works as well, and contributed greatly to the broad range of respect he enjoys. He has stood alone, unafraid of criticism and covetous for praise, and has spread his gaze from extreme left to extreme right, from kind to cruel, from idealists to the corrupt. In Literature of the Middle East, Tony Barnstone & Willis Barnstone write:

Mahfouz brings into his fiction an almost journalistic and sometimes surreal view of life, love, death, and despair, in his depictions of picaresque Cairo types and political prisoners and men and women with broken dreams. He is obsessed with time, with glamorous dancing girls and their shattered ambitions, with life in the coffee houses and tyranny in the home as fathers enslave, with those around him, and, especially, with women.3

In October 1988, the world learned that an Egyptian writer, Naguib Mahfouz who had merited a place of high prominence in the history of modern Arabic letters and highly venerated not only in his country, but also beyond the borders of Arabic letters, had been declared as the winner of the 1988 Nobel Prize for his contribution in Literature.4 Yet, it was not the Nobel Prize that
determined his stature but the universality and comprehensiveness of the ideas and the depth and vision of his works as he says:

   "Literary excellence is a standard that applies across national boundaries. The fact that a writer may not be known outside his home country does not affect the stature of that writer. Stature is, after all, determined by work, not by the extent of its dissemination. Stature is not determined by the acquisition of awards."

WOMEN'S PORTRAYAL IN MAHFOUZ'S SHORT STORIES

Naguib Mahfouz began writing at the age of seventeen, and since then, he has written 'more than forty novels, more than 350 short stories and five short plays'. According to Rasheed El-Enany:

   "If Mahfouz had not written any of his novels, he would still have merited a place of high prominence in the history of modern Arabic letters on account of his short stories alone, of which he has written some 200 spread across fourteen collections and a lifetime."

Naguib Mahfouz started his literary career around 1930 while he was still undergraduate. After the graduation from the university, he began to publish short stories for magazines and the newspapers. It is not surprising that the young writer made his first efforts in writing short stories for magazines and periodicals to earn a living because during this period it was almost difficult to publish one's writings in print and the only way of seeing them was to persuade a periodical to publish them in serial form if necessary.
At this time, the Egyptian short story as a genre was at its height and had accomplished a deep exploration of the consciousness of the Egyptian personality in order to create a mature embodiment of its fluctuating feelings. Similarly it sought to proceed along two main lines, the first was to authenticate this literary form through creating several ties between this genre and the social and cultural life of the Egyptian, whose anxieties and dreams it tries to express. The second was to try out this literary genre in the field of social and individual reality, in order to achieve a certain distinction for the original form, which came from the west.

Naguib Mahfouz was fascinated by Egyptian stories, written on the lines of western literature, in which the influence of the environment and society on the creation of individual was portrayed but he restricted himself from portraying the influence of the environment on the people's life and its impact depicting moral degradation, offence and shattered human life which paved the way to death. Thus, the effect of the environment appears in describing the morality of characters as vivid, comparative and complex but sensible and perceptible. This conscious feeling emerged for the prevalent environment leading to trace the people of his stories first and then its artistic horizon derived from life. All his characters are moving to destiny from its previous environment. As a result, the story comes into existence and moves further.

By 1944, Mahfouz had published more than seventy short stories on a variant of subjects. His first collection of short stories, "Hams al-Junun", (whisper of madness) was published in 1938, and contains 28 stories, about half of what had already been published in periodicals. The writer's purpose, which was given impetus by the national revolt of 1919 against the occupying British, was to give expression to the Egyptian personality in a
specifically Egyptian, and more realistic, type of literature. Therefore, the themes were frequently common family problems, such as polygamy, the marriage of young girls to old men, adultery, drunkenness, and the compelling, by law, of a wife to remain in the home of a husband she hates.

Mahfouz does not take man-woman relationship in deep sense but sees the whole social relations connecting each other with one string that can not be separated. In his view, a relation is defined as natural secretion for the society by the need and necessity of other human relations among individuals.

In *al-Sharida* (The vagrant), a woman entrusted her destiny to a man who was obsessed with the night club. Soon after the wedding night, he continued spending his night and quarrelling outside the house. One night he came with his girlfriend while both of them were in most inebriated condition. As a result, the separation became inevitable. The wife, falling in chasm of vagrancy and ruin, started searching for another man who can bring back her hope and optimism and become substitute of her husband whom she lost at the time of honeymoon.

"*Al-Zaif*" (The Counterfeit) deals with the story of a woman from an aristocrat family who competes others of her class in every insignificant aspect and goes out of her way to have an affair with a man, simply because she thinks, mistakenly, that he is the most celebrated poet of the time, and she wants to boast of her connection with him. When her mistake is revealed, she becomes an object of ridicule.

In Mahfouz’s works, characters, with a few exceptions, are usually complex being neither wholly good nor wholly evil and their portrayal generally reflects the intricacy of human nature. In their depiction, Mahfouz is usually objective, giving his readers a full picture of their inner and outer lives, and leaving them to draw his
own conclusions and pass judgement. The following stories can be viewed as an example of his objectivity.

Mahfouz's "Kayduhunna" (Their Deception)\textsuperscript{10} is about a man married to a woman 25 years younger, who uses trick to get rid of her elderly husband and meet her young lover in anonymity. Although her husband suspects, and attempts to surprise her with her lover, she is too clever for him. When the husband insists that she should accompany him everywhere, she does not beg to be excused. Once, she goes accompanying him to a shopping complex where she overburdens him with walking and stopping. Even he is convinced to wait for her in the vehicle at the gate of the complex. Then, she enters the complex so that she can slip out of the back gate. She meets her lover in one of the buildings inside and returns in the manner as if she did not leave for the complex.

Such image of the woman closely resembles that of Mahmud Tahir Lashin's \textit{Qarar al-Hawiya}, in which a poorly-educated petty official marries a rich upper-class woman, who is involved in an affair with her cousin, and successfully foils her husband's attempt to catch her. 'Again there is Lashin's story \textit{Walakinnaha lil-Hayat}, in which a desolate widow, dedicated to her husband's memory, is consoled by the lawyer employed to clear up her husband's estate, and in the end, one understands that they will marry; this story is closely echoed by Mahfouz's \textit{Islah al-Qubur}, which describes a widow who goes regularly to visit her recently deceased husband's grave; she is seen by a man whose house she passes on her way to the cemetery, and finally he asks for her hand in marriage. Although she is shocked at first, she soon yields, and the money which she is going to spend on improvements to her husband's grave is spent instead on her trousseau'.\textsuperscript{11}

In another story \textit{Thaman al-Sa'ada} (The Price of Happiness)\textsuperscript{12}, an elderly man not only shut his eyes to his young
aristocrat wife's illicit relation but also contributed in accommodating this relationship, hoping to keep her with him. The story reveals that there is a young teacher who visits the elderly man's house frequently to teach his son from his ex-wife. Meanwhile, the young wife starts alluring the teacher and trapped him in her net at last. The teacher accomplishes his desire with her and continues doing so assuming that her husband does not know anything but one day he is frightened while returning after the meeting with the lady of the house. He saw – at the door – the husband was sitting in the balcony with great ease and comfort. From that day, the teacher stopped coming to the house. One day, he was taken aback by the visit of the husband to his house insisting him to continue teaching his son and even he did not cut off his fees.

Naguib Mahfouz while thinking of a woman who needs accomplishment of physical desire including psychological and emotional contentment presents the heroine as one who cannot be free by mere attainment of her needs since other social responsibilities rest with her. The following two stories contain the same notion juxtaposing needs and responsibilities.

"Naks al Umooma" (Breach of Motherhood) presents the story of a middle-aged woman who desperately tries to maintain the illusion that she is still young. She is the wife of a big merchant but develops intimate relations with one of his young friends exploiting her husband and his trust. When the proposal for her daughter's engagement with a suitable young man surfaces, she rejects it vehemently scaring that she will be called a mother of a bride since today. When she falls short to persuade the father and the daughter for renouncing the proposal, she hatches a plot and arranges a meeting between her daughter and the family friend – or her friend. At the same time, she informs her daughter's suitor.
about the relation between the girl and the friend. Accordingly, she succeeds to bring the proposal to an end but the daughter becomes the fiancée of the family friend. Thus, the mother loses her friend, her youth, her daughter and her husband altogether.

Most of the stories Mahfouz wrote around 1930, indicate that he picked up themes on women like marital problems, polygamy, and the marriage of young girls to old men, adultery, drunkenness and so on as models for his own. His stories revolve around man-woman relationships and while thinking of a woman, he thinks sympathetically of her need for a companion and not in terms of her being an individual with growing ideas and conflicts. Sometimes, the conflicts arise out of a growing urban society where woman herself has to deal with changes and the conflicts are resolved by getting into a man-woman relationship.

The second group of short stories in *Hams al-Junun* gives indications of Mahfouz's growing belief in socialism, although he had not yet discovered how best to express his views in literary form and indeed his ideas of socialism do not yet seem to have crystallised. In one story of this collection, 'which stands out above the rest called *Badhlat al-Asir*, it describes how Jahsha, who goes daily to Zagazig station to sell cigarettes, loves a servant girl, but she prefers a chauffeur who wears a suit and shoes. One day a train carrying Italian prisoners of war stops at the station. Jahsha barters his cigarettes first for a prisoner's uniform jacket, and then for a pair of trousers, which he puts on. At the last moment, he remembers that he needs a pair of shoes, but the train has already begun to move off. The British military guard orders him to board the train, thinking, in the dusk, that he is one of the Italian prisoners. Jahsah does not understand what the guard is saying, and, upset about not getting any shoes, turns to go. The guard thinks his prisoner is escaping, and shoots him dead. This story
contains the qualities that the others lack, and certainly it was
written much later, especially as its setting seems to be the Second
World War, when many Italian prisoners were being transported to
Cairo'.

In this story, he appears to suggest how an unequal
distribution of wealth in the society affects man-woman
relationship. He also suggests that any help rendered by the upper
classes to the poor is destructive culminating in shattered dreams.
So, reform could be achieved by the capitalist upper classes, if they
were prepared to make the effort.

In *Hams al-Junun* [Whisper of Madness], the gender issue
has prevailed intending to reveal moral defect and expose
indisposition of man-woman relations, for instance, *Ruad al-faraj*\(^{15}\)
revolves around a student who was studying in Cairo. Once, after
the examination was over, he went to an amusement centre in
Ruad al-faraj on the invitation of his relative. He fell in love with a
beautiful woman, girlfriend of this relative. Within no time, she also
reciprocated him. When the relative summoned the boy’s father to
take him back and to leave the pretty woman, the father revealed
that the woman was none but the boy’s mother and father’s ex-
wife.

In another story "*Khiyanatun fi Rasā’il* [Treason in letters]\(^{16}\),
a young girl fell in love with a young man of Cairo. During the
winter vacation, the girl travelled with her parents to Qina where
she met a friend of her lover. An extreme love affair developed
between the two who were not aware of each other’s relation with
the first lover. A number of letters of the new lover came to his
friend in Cairo describing joy and merriment occurred in Qina and
explaining each and every thing of meetings, enjoyments and the
pledge of marriage then her escape and refusal from tying the knot.
When she returned from her sojourn and met her old friend, he
rendered her a sealed box with the hope that it was not opened but after reaching the home to make her surprise. In fact, the box was filled with his friend’s letters describing the whole affair of ugly winter.

Mahfouz’s another story “Al-Marad al-Motaba’dal” [the Alternate Disease]\textsuperscript{17} tells about a wife who commits a folly in absence of her husband and suffers from a secret disease. For the treatment, she goes to the doctor who advises her to stay away from her husband so that the disease can’t be transmitted. After that the husband also comes for the treatment fearing of the disease to be passed on to his wife and seeks the help of the same doctor to find an excuse for the revelation of the fact to his wife who is scared that his disease might be infectious to her. The doctor advises him to persuade her for the revelation of the infections which has no relation with the secret disease. However, the wife was frightened when he tells her about his meeting with the doctor. She fears to be exposed before her husband and becomes terrified and susceptible which compels her to confess her sin and mistake. But she is not aware of the fact that her husband, too, commits the same crime and mistake. At the end, the husband pretends to be dignified and ends the relation by divorce.

The marvellous example of gender description in this collection is the story “Abas Aristiqarat” (Aristocratic Game)\textsuperscript{18} which tells about two husbands and two wives from aristocrat class. They met each other at a function at one palace. Then, a husband thrills to flirt with his friend’s wife and makes her covetous. Then he takes her in an empty room at the top floor. Meanwhile, when he was with her in the dark, both of them sensed footfall nearing the room. Within no time, both of them found out the voice of the second husband with the wife of the first one. In the same room, these two enjoyed as the first two did with full
knowledge of each other, though the visibility was not clear and the hearing was much inaudible. Then, the last two went away and the first two followed them without uttering a word in view of apprehension of exposure. After the function, when the first husband went back home and ran his hand over his dress, he found that his jacket was not fitting for him then he put his hand in the pocket of the jacket to take out his wallet but there was nothing in it but a card written on it his friend’s name!! Now it became difficult “How is possible to exchange two jackets”!!

Although Mahfouz’s attitude varies in these stories, it is clear that the writer is attempting to do complete justice in describing aristocratic ambience to reveal the shortcomings and persistence gender degradation.

Naguib Mahfouz mainly uses women characters to uncover certain facets of man’s personality. The women are truly loved at different times but cruelly sacrificed or abandoned at others by their male counterparts, because to them love counted for nothing if it was of no practical value to their interest or ambition. What they craved for was a wife to help them climb up the social ladder and the wife who was ruined without mercy, show how exploitative of weakness and morally irresponsible men can be. On the other hand, the prostitutes in Mahfouz’s writing are themselves the victims of a corrupt social system but display a social awareness.

In 1965, another collection of short stories “Bait Saiyyi al-Summ’a” [A House of Ill Repute] was published. In this collection, the story Qubail al-Rahil {Shortly before Departure) displays a strong affinity with the author’s contemporaneous novels and tells about a government official being transferred after four years of service from the beautiful city of Alexandria. Feeling flat on his final day in Alexandria, the protagonist Barakät picks up a rather attractive prostitute, significantly called Dunya (life), and pays her
£2 in advance for a night's services. After making love, they are both bored, then he notices her slipping the £2 into the dressing table drawer; he is surprised and she explains that when she is especially gratified, she makes no charge. He immediately becomes filled with virile pride. And in his elation, he decides to be extravagant and have a proper night’s enjoyment. First they go to a night club to dance, then, on the way to home demonstrating his virility, he engages in one fight after another with men, he believes truly or falsely are making advances to the woman. They have a good meal in his room, and he is planning as to how he can return to see her frequently. They spend a wonderful night together. The following morning, he finds her preparing to leave, and is shattered as she demands her fee back:

It was all a trick to make him happy before his departure, she explains.
‘What an idiot you are!’ he exclaims.
‘Don’t you see it is a trick you can’t play twice?’ Who said we would meet again?’ says she.19

This story is an excellent example of Naguib Mahfouz’s understanding of human life and psyche. The change in the life of the protagonist portrayed by him is heart-rending. The author chooses the prostitute as a prop to symbolise change in the fortunes of Barakāt. At one point of time the prostitute, who stands for the fickleness of time, the change of fortune, becomes good for Barakāt but at the other, proves bad. The author wants to show how life or Dunya oscillates with time from happiness to sorrow.

Nevertheless, man is lured by life so much that he does not want to abandon it at any cost. Likewise, Barakāt is mesmerised by Dunya. Getting Dunya’s company is only a small achievement for Barakāt but he is so caring and protective for her that he indulges
into endless conflicts to safeguard her. However, at the end like all other men in this world, he realises the ephemeral nature of his achievement and learns that life like the prostitute of the story can only be enjoyed once, and only for a short while before the departure.

Mahfouz ridicules hypocrisy, flattery, and the use of high-sounding slogans merely for personal gain. In his stories, he shows that some prostitutes are more honest, more patriotic and closer to God, than the Imam of the mosque in the street where they work.

In one of his more recent short stories, "Harrat-al-Ushshaq" (Lover's Lane) Mahfouz situates his search for love and communication within the confines of the city and a prison cell. In the collection, a long short story entitled "Hikaya bila Bidaya wa la Nihaya" (Story without beginning or end) deals with a study of a fundamental aspect of love, namely doubt. The story opens on a scene of conjugal felicity. Husband and wife are congratulating themselves on the bliss they have lived in for the past five years. They can still remember distinctly their courting days before marriage, then the first years of their happy union:

He sighed, then, a glimmer appeared in his dreamy look and said:

"Those days, I was just a clerk in the archives... poor, hardworking, a husband passionately in love, even children we have decided to relegate to later times, no time for thinking, no time to look, work, work, work... no thoughts, no worries, a limitless faith in everything, in you, in myself, in God; everything was constant, solidly built.20

This seemingly pleasant scene is soon interrupted with the husband's growing squabble. He hints that he has been noticing certain going-on in their alley. He then tells his wife of his growing
sense of indignation with the rumours he has been hearing. This first part ends with a heated discussion between the two in which he announces his decision to divorce her.

Further more, the husband doubts the Imam, then a respected school teacher and accuses his wife outrightly of having some kind of illicit encounter with Shaikh Marwan and Antar in their stairway. The outraged wife denies his allegations and once more he leaves a divorced woman for the second time.

The ensuing part comes up with some disturbing revelations about the once trusted friends of 'Abd Allah. Shaikh Al-Hara shunned by all, accused of being the official informer to authorities, interrogates 'Abd Allah on the nature of his relationship with the teacher and the Imam. Shaikh Al-Hara proceeds in his investigation trying to corroborate some information he had collected concerning the two men, then just before leaving, announces that the two have been arrested. The incident brings back a horde of suppressed doubts and emotions that had once troubled him so. Sensing his mood, Haniya turns to her husband pleadingly:

H: Here we are gradually returning to hell...
A: The important thing is that my life be built on a clear truth.
H: What's more important than all this is to appeal to wisdom during crises, and to always remember that you are a father.

He answered with bitter irony:

A: indeed, I am the father of Marwan, and 'Antar...
H: And it is a truth more important than anything else...And he said perturbed:
A: No, there exists a higher truth, which should not be undermined and I want to face it as it really is, even if it throws me in a circle of fire.
H: I fear that our quest will lead us at the end to burning fire.\textsuperscript{21}

Beneath all this commotion, Mahfouz's clear voice speaks. 'Abd Allah' is a man, like many, confronted with the eternal quest for truth. As a final resort, 'Abd Allah turns to Shaikh Al-Hara seeking elucidation on the question of the arrest and its implications but he refuses ruthlessly to release any information supplying and collecting merely pertinent data.

Undaunted, 'Abd Allah persists in wanting to know whether the two men are completely guilty and hence the possible guilt of his wife. Insisting on not committing himself, Shaikh Al-Hara informs him that chances are fifty-fifty that they are guilty, upon which 'Abd Allah finally resolves on a different course:

A: If my wife be guilty in the percentage of fifty percent, she is at the same time innocent in the percentage of fifty percent.
S: And so?
A: And because I love her more than life itself, and because I can not do without her unless I go mad, or commit suicide, I will therefore admit the possibility of innocence ...\textsuperscript{22}

Mahfouz's another story "al-Hazayan" (The Delirium)\textsuperscript{23} tells about a young wife who suffered from puerperal fever after giving birth to a baby girl of her young, gentle and devoted husband. During the fever, the sick wife once became delirious mentioning the name of a young man who had asked for her hand before the marriage, similarly she started mentioning the perpetration of
crime and mistake. The husband was filled with doubt and tried to listen more from the sick wife but after a while she stopped being delirious. The husband saw the best way to prevent her from giving medicines so that she once again became rampant but she lost no time in dying. Then, he changed his sense of doubt into a blend of doubt coupled with realisation of crime and sense of loss and misfortune. This spoiled his entire life and he became irritated and distressed. Finally, he ended his life after putting himself in so much grief and sorrow. The people assumed that he committed suicide due to the affliction after the death of his devoted wife.

The above mentioned two stories are concerned with the examination of the relationships between a man and his wife, and the central theme of this story is that of doubt. In the story "al-Hazayan" (The Delirium), the wife who is at the centre of the conflict and without her life is intolerable; madness and death are the only possible alternatives. The wife is inscrutable, evanescent; like happiness she appears and disappears almost at will. Once he starts doubting her, life is never again the same. "Where ignorance is bliss, this folly to be wise," Mahfouz reiterates.

To sum up, above discussed stories compel the reader to take time seriously and to ponder on their messages. In addition to this, Mahfouz's message is clearly thought out, so that the readers easily grasp his attitude to women at all this stage. His preference for this type of image is also seen in his novels which always remain the main source for composing the jigsaw of the author's world picture.

WOMEN'S PORTRAYAL IN MAHFOUZ'S NOVELS

The novel as a genre can be traced back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, has no prototypes in classical Arabic literature. Although this abounded in all kinds of narratives,
none of them could be described, as we understand the term "novel" today. In Arabic literature, the first serious attempt at writing a novel can be said to have started with Haikal's 'Zaynab' in 1914. Soon after, writers like Taha Hussein, Al-Aqqad, Taymur, Al-Mazini and Tawfiq Al-Hakim were to venture into the unknown realm of fiction. The Arabic novel, however, was to wait for another generation for the advent of the man who was to make it his sole mission as Salma Khadra Jayyusi puts:

He engineered the novel's inception in Arabic as major are form and established it as an ever-thriving continuity. Without him, the history of contemporary Arabic literature would have to be written in a completely different way.24

In the short history of the Arabic novel, Naguib Mahfouz played an outstanding role in its development and transformation into a highly developed art form. He received this new genre from his predecessors in a crude form that only vaguely foretold the changes it would undergo. In order to develop their talents, he and the other novelists of his generation felt they needed to become acquainted with the fictional heritage and techniques of the West.

With his awakening to literature, Mahfouz turned to Arabic as well as Western literary masterpieces. Thus, the writings of European and American masters, including Leo Tolstoy, Anton Chekhov, Balzac, Thomas Mann, Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner led to Mahfouz's assimilation of various influences helping him to catch up with the latest development of the novel as an artistic form. But instead of going directly to the masters, he learned at the hands of their disciples as he ruefully points out:

"...I became familiar with realism in the novels of contemporary writers who had mastered and developed the genre, such as Galsworthy, Aldus Huxley and D.H. Lawrence. Therefore, I could no
longer read Dickens. Similarly, having read Flaubert and Stendhal, I could not read Balzac, despite the fact that I was aware that he was a genius and the founder of Realism.”25

On the other hand, some indigenous writings had greatly influenced him in the formation of his vision and techniques. As he says:

“After Hadith Isa ibn Hishaam, I read Muhammad Husayn Haykal, known as the father of the Egyptian novel, then Taha Husayn and al-Mazini. Then I reached Tawfiq al-Hakim, whose works were truly landmarks in the evolution of Arabic novel writing. In the truest sense, they represented and helped shape a new age.”26

He further says:

“Al-Hakim’s writing ushered in a modern phase in the art of narration. In all truth, after the early sources of inspiration that shaped my concept of narration, such as the Qur’an, the Thousand and One Nights, and the epic tales that so fascinated me as a child, my direct mentor was al-Hakim.”27

After the assimilation of modern thought in contemporary society, Mahfouz gave it a new momentum in such a way that his characters and environment acquired significant place. In addition, when the environment proceeded to the social sphere, it became longer as age and stronger as effect than his works; it also turned towards either good or evil while he became a weak captive between good and evil.

Mahfouz, who developed a dedication to literature that would later give him international prominence as his country’s leading author, started his literary journey as a novelist with three historical novels. In these novels, he had his own vision and technique which were, later on, articulated skillfully and artistically
in Al-Qahira al-Jadida, Khan al-Khalili and Zuqaq al-Midaq delivering him from darkness to light. 'Al-Qahira al-Jadida was the first novel to have a resounding impact on the Arab world. Khan al-Khalili was even more successful. Zuqaq al-Midaq established his reputation as a writer'.

After writing three historical novels between 1939 and 1944, he turned to novels of contemporary life in which he is obsessed with time, with glamorous dancing girls and their shattered ambitions, with life in the coffee houses and tyranny in the home as fathers enslave, with those around him, and, especially, with women.

Mahfouz is influenced with the romantic notion which has been concerned with and compassionate for the fallen woman since Alexander Thomas in "Lady of Camellia". Women, forced by the ruthless social conditions, are always portrayed as a symbol in Mahfouz's literary work. Though their names are different, they are one as a symbol undergoing all kinds of sufferings and bitter experiences, for example Ihsan in "Al-Qahira al-Jadida", Hamida in "Zuqaq al-Midaqq", Nafisa in "Bidaya wa Nihaya" and Nur in "Al-Liss wa al-Kila'b".

Mahfouz's experience with practical life in government services provided him an insight into corruption at different levels and he decided to deal more directly with the problems of his times. Thus, he turned to writing realistic novels, starting with al-Qahira al-Jadida. The novel 'Al-Qahira al-Jadida determines the beginning of the distinct pattern drawn by Naguib Mahfouz for the modern Egyptian story. This is the first novel echoing contemporary Egyptian society and marking the end of his historical phase.

Mahfouz provides vivid descriptions of characters in this novel. Mahjub Abd al-Da'im, the central character of the novel is
presented as a devastated protagonist whose frustration has no escape out of it, though he is a university graduate and then gets shocked with the disintegration of society. He stands carelessly towards the movement and course of society with all its ethos and philosophy but ends up as a pimp. Mahjub is a parvenu and is unable to force his natural way into practical life. He goes over his life with an upstart, sacrificing his dignity as a husband and overlooking the relationship of his boss with his wife who becomes mistress of the minister. The minister takes him as his secretary as a price for his service.

On the other hand, Ihsan an educated girl is portrayed as the psychological and sexual victim by selfish and greedy men. She loved Ali Taha deeply and Ali Taha, too, used to love her. But she mysteriously had disappeared from his life. Her misfortune was brought about by her father, a drunkard, who had gambled her honour away. Her parents never showed moral decency towards her. Their communion was ardour of love before she got married, and her father remained making a living in the market of women with his beauty and impudence till he married with her mother who gives him whatever she amassed so that he could do business with it but he wasted it on drugs and gambles. Only the small cigarette shop remained for him. He said boasting himself:

"Indeed, my life is worn out but there is a blessing in Ihsan."31

The young girl found her father along with her mother as succour for devil and downfall but she refused to accept her downfall. When she saw a young man, her friend sitting with her father in the shop, she realised that the young man was bargaining with her father over her dignity, she became furious and ripped the young man apart so vehemently that she did not leave any hope for him. However, she was convinced that she was living around
extreme corruption and the external indications show that the end would be inevitable. After her father urged her saying:

"You are accountable for all of us especially for your seven brothers."³²

She remained in this emotional conflict till Ali Taha appeared. She found him as true, sincere and generous. He saved her from hardships of fear and vulnerability. As a result, she fell in love with him and entrusted him with her hope. Her father looked the new youth with dissatisfaction. He says sarcastically:

"Congratulations, on finding a handsome young man who is sent by God to cause us starvation."³³

Nonetheless, she has a high regard for the youthfulness of Ali Taha, his handsomeness, his generosity and his future. Yet, from the first moment, two significant factors perpetually haunt her mind that's her own life and her family life, in other words Ali Taha and her seven younger brothers.

To make Ihsan's character as perfect, the writer portrayed her with a remarkable beauty. This terrible cognizance comprises two facts; her beauty and her poverty and she is often afraid of her beauty for reverting poverty and malnutrition. Before Ali Taha, she got acquainted with a wealthy young man of the law faculty and saw him expecting from her delight for his heart and pleasure for his youthfulness. Her parents came to know about this young man. Thereafter, nothing makes a point except her mother's temptation and her father's expectation for the youth's wealth.

The life of her family keeps importuning her conscience until she thwarts the last remnant of her dignity and agrees to end her noble relation with Ali Taha and to marry with formal husband Mahjub maintaining her disgraceful relation with the minister Qasim Bey Fahmi who made her his mistress and gave generously to her and her family. Thus, the poverty overcomes irrevocably over
Ihsan and compels her to go along the tortuous way. No one did share with her in it but her formal husband Mahjub who was another victim of conflict between ambition and poverty. The coincidence put him in her way and this coincidence was created by none but the poverty itself. This awful element played the role of destiny in most of the novels written by Naguib Mahfouz.

Ihsan deludes herself that she has sacrificed her happiness for the sake of others. So, her love was for the glory and the wealth was greater than the love of Ali Taha. She groaned under the hardship of family burden. To Ihsan, the minister Bey was a god of power and prosperity and of course her father's solicitation was not abated. Finally, she committed suicide while Mahjub had already intended to do the same. Ihsan tried it after she confronts the new life to drop a thick curtain on the past. From here the coincidence helped at confirming tragic feeling which was inseparable with Ihsan. She never forgets the days of her misery when she saw putting inquisitive eyes on it. Immediately after she meets Ali Taha, she remembers her frock which was almost worn out and fades away her happiness:

Does my old frock irritate you whenever you see it?
Negation gleams on young man's face. He rebukes her saying:
How can you pay attention on this small thing? This frock is a treasure which brings fortune for me.
She did not agree saying it as "small thing" rather she says repeatedly to herself with regret: The happy life lies in youthfulness and clothes and she looked at his fine woollen uniform and coveted his rebuke:
What a virile you are! You consider the dress as small thing while you haughtily become a fastidious. 34
To Mahfouz, woman is a model of the ruined one in a debilitating society. As legitimate girl for secret annihilation in the womb of society, Ihsan in al-Qahira al-Jadida (New Cairo) tries to resist and fight the wrongness and wickedness of family in order to save herself from destruction, but found the father as a curse inflicted on her engulfing with his words:

“You are accountable for all of us and specifically for your seven brothers.”

Thus, her soul is crushed and replaced with ruin and becomes a mistress selling her body. From the beginning, the writer is eager to depict her and her hostility towards the social stratum that led to her unfulfilled needs. He drew a line of struggle between individual indignant to the society and the provocation of the society visible in difficult matters. Consequently, the human dignity of an individual who was unable to fulfil his high-aspiration was thwarted. In this novel, Mahfouz repeatedly endorsed Samuel Butler’s phrase “poverty is the root of every crime.”

Thus, Ihsan substantiates herself with the notion that she is a formal wife of Mahjub Abd al-Da‘im but in full sense, a mistress of the minister Qasim Bey Fahmi who is capable to raise her and her family from the depression of poverty at the cost of her dignity. At the same time, her formal husband is satisfied with the role of the pimp hoping to spend life footing with the affluent not thinking about his childhood spent in hunger, abject poverty and indignation.

Yet, it was not al-Qahira al-Jadida [New Cairo] which brought Naguib Mahfouz recognition but Zuqaq al-Midaqq [Midaq Alley], his most popular novel. This is a rich account of a back street in a poor quarter of Cairo which revolves around the life of a young girl who becomes a prostitute. Mahfouz gives us vivid images of all the pathos and joy that surround her life. She enters the service of the
army in a somewhat different and unofficial capacity; she joins the whore industry catering for the needs of British and allied soldiers.

In tune with general chain of events in Mahfouz’s stories, life ends sadly for most of the Alley dwellers. Abbas, the barber joins the army to make enough money to marry Hamida, but finds on his return that she has become a prostitute. He attacks her in rage and is, in turn, overpowered and killed by the soldiers she has been entertaining. On the other hand, Salim Alwan the nouveau-riche is not satisfied with his wife, starts thinking of marriage with Hamida until his plans are abandoned as he confronts with angina pectoris. When he asks Hamida’s hand in marriage to satisfy a nagging lust, she drops her fiancée the barber without a moment’s thought. But the proposal fails as fate strikes the merchant with a heart attack that leaves him nearly dead. Quite the reverse, Faraj Ibrahim the suave pimp and the emissary of that world finds her body as a gift and aptitude which can help to exploit her in the flesh market.

With many protagonists, the novel gives the impression that it is not merely one of the finest depictions about conflict and tragedy. It is as much a novel about a nation at the crossroads, torn between a cultural past. It also examines the universal problems of behaviour and morality of characters, for example, Kirsha the café owner is afflicted by drug addiction and homosexuality and his wife is constantly furious and rancorous at him. His son Hussain Kirsha, a rebel to the humble spirit of the Alley, indulges in the black market trade and lives in luxury with a fashionable girl.

Hamida, the central character of the novel is presented as an ambitious girl who makes her decision as an individual with complex interests and goals. Hamida, the beautiful orphan adopted by the alley matchmaker, is the evil product of socialization by
vicious women. She is so strong and determined that Mahfouz describes her as “most unfeminine”:

Hamida was in her twenties of medium stature and with a slim figure... When, however, she set her delicate lips and narrowed her eyes, she could take on an appearance of strength and determination which was most unfeminine. Her temper had always, even in Midaq Alley itself, been something no one could ignore.37

Here, Mahfouz sets up the norm of femininity; weakness, passivity, and vacillation. Hamida knows this norm, and she eschews the feminine condition. She has to break out of a world that expects her to be other than she wants to be, a world that condones older women’s oppression of young women. She will break that particular cycle only if she can escape the constrictions of her space.

In this novel, Mahfouz delineates other characters who exhibit the traits that emanate from the secret mysterious depths of characters and the life of the people like the baker Ja’ada and his wife Husniya who beats him daily more than once till the Alley dwellers heard his cry. Another character Sheikh Darwish, a teacher of English language craves mysticism coming closer to madness and insanity. Similarly, the widow Saniya Afify thinks nothing but of her marriage and how to get a husband. By these characters, the writer wants to portray different aspects of life in the Alley where aspirations and tragedies are witnessed with total indifference by the Alley within which the circle of life and death is forever run again.

Mahfouz illustrates the lives of characters and places in more realistic way. He articulates Hamida’s experience as though seen through her eyes bringing him closer to the dramatic style and making him to keep himself out of the view through his character
and these characters which he is trying to create effect him more as a theme. He says about Hamida:

"Hello, street of bliss! Long life to you and all your fine inhabitants! What a pretty view and see how handsome the people are! I can see Husniya, the bakeress, sitting like a big sack before the oven with one eye on the loaves and one on Jaada, her husband. He works only because he is afraid of her beating and blows. Over there sits Kirsha, the café owner, his head bowed as if in a deep sleep, but he is really awake. Uncle Kamil is fast asleep, of course, while the flies swarm over his tray of unprotected sweets. Look there! That's Abbas Hilu peeping up at my window, preening himself. I'm sure he thinks that the power of his look will throw me down at his feet. You're not for me, Abbas! Well now, Mr. Salim Alwan, the company owner, has just lifted up his eyes, lowered them, and raised them once again. We'll say the first time was an accident, but the second, Mr. Alwan? Sir? Watch now, he's just started a third time! What do you want, you senile and shameless old man? You want a rendezvous with me every day at this time? If only you weren't a married man and a father, I'd give you look for look and say welcome and welcome again! Well, there they all are. That is the alley and why shouldn't Hamida neglect her hair until it gets lice? Oh yes, and there's Sheikh Darwish plodding along with his wooden clogs striking the pavement like a gong."

Hamida gives free rein to her fantasy about the wealth and riches which stirs her greedy and ambitious mind bewitching dreams of power and influence. She knows only one thing that is
the dream of money which could bring clothes and whatever she desires for. The writer proceeds saying:

“In spite of her fantasies of wealth, she was not unaware of her situation. Indeed, she remembered a girl in Sanadiqiya Street who was even poorer than she. Then fortune sent a rich contractor who transported her from her miserable hovel to a fairy-tale life. What was to prevent good fortune from smiling twice in their quarter? This ambition of hers, however, was limited to her familiar world, which ended at Queen Farida Square. She knew nothing of life beyond it.”

With inordinate ambitions, Hamida who thinks of nothing but the best opportunity for her marriage and luxurious life, continuously makes comparison and exploration. Whenever she meets Abbas, she inquires how would be her life if she married him. He is a poor fellow and becomes empty hand at the end of the day. If she knots the tie, he will take her from the second floor of Afify’s house to the ground floor of Ridwan Hussainy. After that she will have nothing to do but to broom, to cook, to bath and to feed milk.

She constantly asked herself what was the happiness she dreamed of? Was it not exceeding the proper bounds in her dreams? The young man says he will return with wealth and open a saloon in Mousky but will it ensure her a life of plenty and opulence rather than her present life? Is it correct what her ambition strives for? Such thoughtful notion doubles with her apprehension, then, her feeling becomes stronger that the barber is not the man she dreamed of. Mahfouz defends her ambitions and displeasure from her social status to her internal conflict. The writer says:
"But what was she to do? Had she not bound herself to him forever? Oh God, why had she not learned a profession, as her friends had? If she knew how to do something, she could have waited and married when and whoever she wished, or perhaps she might never have married at all.

This, then, was her state of mind when Salim Alwan asked her hand in marriage. And so it was that she could discard her first fiancé with no regrets because he had really been banished from her heart a long time before."40

Mahfouz wants to say that ambition is a human instinct from the very beginning and remains the same till the end. As for the poverty, it is human devastation and the basis of social stratification, hence, fighting against it is one of the numerous human needs. Thus, the division in the society on the basis of class is not the only purpose but it helps him to make a common ground to fight. If Salim Alwan was not the company owner and war profiteer he would be treated well among the alley dwellers and he would marry Hamida before suffering from angina pectoris. However, his wealth and social status become main reason for his hesitation on the issue of marriage with Hamida. The writer says:

"As for Hamida ...! Good heavens!

If she had been from a noble family, he would not have hesitated a moment to ask her hand. But how could Hamida become a fellow wife of his present wife, Mrs. Alwan? And how could Umm Hamida become his mother-in-law just as the late Mrs. Alifat had been? How on earth could Hamida become the wife of the father of Mohammad Salim Alwan, the judge, Arif Salim Alwan, the attorney, and Dr. Hassan Salim Alwan?"41
Hamida understands herself better and knows that her fulfilment lies in a different world, well outside the scope of the alley. She escapes its stranglehold, even though the agent of her release is a pimp. When Faraj Ibarhim makes his appearance and utters his seductive words, his voice stirred in her heart:

"Are those your friends? No, you are not a bit like them, nor are they like you. It amazes me that they enjoy their freedom while you stay cooped up at home. How is it they can swagger about in nice clothes while you have to wear this shabby black cloak? How can this be, my dear? Is it just fate? What a patient, tolerant girl you are!"42

This is not a mere account of narrative but it touches the sensitive part of Hamida’s soul after she was swept away with a stream of consciousness, particularly, when Faraj Ibrahim says her after taking her out of the alley:

"Why you should go back to the alley? To wait, like all those other poor girls until one of the wretched alley men is kind enough to marry you, to enjoy your beauty in its bloom and your glorious youth and then cast you out in the garbage can? I know I’m not talking to one of those empty-headed girls. I know for sure that you are a very rare girl indeed. Your beauty is exquisite, but it is only one of your many gifts. You are daring personified. When someone like you wants something, you just have to say, ‘So be it,’ and so it is."43

Hamida, a rebel to her social condition in the Alley as a destitute woman, has been portrayed and ended her indignity as she departed the alley with the help of Faraj Ibrahim who found her body as a gift and aptitudes which can help to exploit her in the flesh market. After the meeting with Hamida, Faraj Ibrahim told himself:
"Delicious", no doubt about it, I'm quite sure I'm not wrong about her. She has got a natural gift for it... she's a whore by instinct. She's going to be a really priceless pearl."

The sentence "one movement marked the dividing point between her two lives" and like this many more sentences suggest that Hamida and her escape cross in the reader's mind the demarcation line between realism and symbolism. In the novel, Hamida is the only character who succeeds in ripping herself irrevocably apart from the alley. The author allows her to live unscathed and continue to thrive on it without regrets. After Hamida's departure from the alley, Mahfouz depicts her condition:

"It was not surprising that she had become so successful. She was a favourite of the soldiers and her savings were proof of her popularity. Hamida had never known the life of a simple respectable girl. She had no happy memories of the past and was now quite engrossed in the enjoyable present. Her case was different from that of the majority of the other girls, who had been forced by necessity or circumstances into their present life and were often tormented by remorse. Hamida's dreams of clothes, jewellery, money, and men were now fulfilled and she enjoyed all other power and authority they gave her.

One day she recalled how miserable she had been the first time when Ibrahim Faraj said he did not want to marry her. She had asked herself if she really wanted to marry him. The answer, in negative, had come immediately. Marriage would have confined her to the home, exhausting her with the duties of a wife, housekeeper, and mother, all
those tasks she knew she was not created for. She now says how farsighted he had been.

Despite this, Hamida still felt strangely restless and dissatisfied. Not entirely ruled by her sexual instincts, she longed for emotional power. It was perhaps because she knew she had not achieved control over her lover that her attachment to him increased, along with her feeling of resentment and disillusion.45

With all her shocking qualities, Hamida appears indeed to be Mahfouz’s answer, malgré lui, to a twentieth century Egyptian women’s dilemma: rejection of socially sanctioned norms of behaviour had become for some women an imperative for which the cost could not be counted.

The calamities and misfortune, which sap the woman’s nerve, provide a picture of woman suffering from abject poverty and deprivation. Hamida in “Midaq Alley is also nothing but a picture of deprivation and ruin, a picture of painful upbringing and loss of feeling for belonging to anything except destruction and ruin. The fall was waiting to trap her at the end of her way as it also trapped Nafisa in “The Beginning and the End.”

The Beginning and the End [Bidaya wa Nihaya] presents the stagnation of society, its apathy, indifference, tyranny and negativity. The beginning of the action starts with snatching away the life of the head of the lower-middle-class family whose fortunes (or misfortunes) constitute the subject-matter of the book. The father dies, and the society never tries to embrace a family which is one of its own paths. As a result, the family becomes the victim of destruction, poverty and disgrace. The individuals of the society shoulder the burden of preserving social patterns and customs and traditions. The break up and disintegration blasts off the stormy
feeling in those who are under social oppression which leads ultimately to the ruin and devastation.

The novel revolves around a family which includes a mother, a daughter and three brothers. The writer depicts the family, its traits and conditions as if the real hero is the family itself and the reader cannot find any character or occurrence or scene to be overlooked or unnoticed. Everyone in the family was baffled by the anguish of death. The father was the only source of their livelihood. Now the question haunts everyone how the family will survive after his death. The elder brother Hassan was the first to realize that nobody would give shelter to him whenever he was at a loss. He was the one who realizes the catastrophe which affects the two school-going children. He was absorbed in his thoughts how the causes of grief and sorrow would be reduced?

The same indignation reverberates in the character of Hasnain Kamil the eldest son of the fate-stricken family living in abject poverty. When the family thought that it would gain victory over the poverty and would defeat it after the sons of the family got jobs, the dregs of the past pushed Nafisa, the unfortunate daughter, to the claws of mistakes with a jump to the end for the whole family as Nafisa and Hasnain throwing themselves in the Nile commit suicide.

‘Nafisa’ is an inevitable result of the tragedy of her family which lost all means of escape and safety in the stream of poverty and the curse of destruction. Crushing her soul in the tortuous feeling of material and psychological poverty makes her try to assert her right as a woman who gave herself to make others happy which the happiness is away from her. She earns from (prostitution) her flesh and gives it to her brother whose happiness grows and ambitions increase.
After the funeral took place, Samira, the deceased's wife was sitting in the hall with her sister, her daughter and sons. They all never tired to talk about the departed loved one. Samira's grief was deeper than others. Of her old vitality nothing now remained except a firm look which bespoke patience and determination. The sudden change in her life had overtaken her with the years that it was hard to imagine how she might have looked in her youth. Nafisa, her daughter, however, was an adequate replica of what she once had been but she differed from her mother in her height. She was as tall as her brother Hassanein and far from being beautiful, she was plagued by her ugliness. It was her misfortune to resemble her mother, whereas the boys resembled their father.

The novel opens with tragedy and continues with it till the end. The writer is anxious to portray its marks in all its characters until it reaches at the logical end. Hassanein's indignation comes to the surface as the mother makes overture to Nafisa to contribute in the dictates of the necessity as a dressmaker:

"Nafisa is good at sewing," she said. "Out of friendship and courtesy, she often makes dresses for our neighbours. I see no harm in her asking for some compensation."

"That's a good idea," cried Hassan enthusiastically. But Hassanein, his face white with anger, cried, "A dressmaker?"

"Why not? There's nothing to be ashamed of," answered Hassan.

Hassanein retorted sharply, "No, my sister will never be a dressmaker. I refuse to be a brother to a dressmaker."

Samira frowned and shouted angrily, "You're just a bull that eats and sleeps, and you know nothing
about life! Your foolish mind will never understand how bad our situation is."

He opened his mouth to object.

"Shut up!" she shouted. Nafisa remained helplessly silent. It was not the first time that she heard such proposal but with some alteration it reverberates time and again. Thus the action of the novel spans some four years, during which the proud daughter of a professional family is reduced first to seamstress and then whore; the eldest son to a night-club bouncer and drug-trafficker; and the second son to giving up his hopes of higher education to become a petty clerk.

The writer is absorbed in Nafisa’s stream of consciousness as the households were being sold to meet the family need. Nafisa saw the merchant with his men carrying the long mirror outside. The man carrying one end of the mirror was shorter than the other; thus the mirror was being carried in a slanting position. On the surface of it, she could see a reflection of a corner of the hall ceiling, swinging, as the legs of the carriers moved, as though the house were shaken by an earthquake. Unconsciously, the memory of her father’s bier struck her again. As she cast a last look on the mirror which she had known ever since her birth, she became even more depressed than before, she went back to her sitting place, thinking:

"The mirror should be the last thing I should feel sorry for. It will not reflect a pleasant face for me. "A sweet temper is more precious than beauty." You are the only person to say so, Father. But for me, you would have never said it. I have no beauty, no money, and no father. There were only two hearts that were concerned over my future. One is dead and the other is engrossed in its worries, and I am terribly lonely, desperate, and suffering. I am twenty three years old. How dreadful! When our
circumstances were much better, no husband will put in an appearance. How is it possible, then, that a husband will turn up today or tomorrow?! Suppose that such a husband agrees to be married to a dressmaker, who will pay my marriage expenses? Why should I think of a husband and marriage? No use. No use. I shall remain as I am as long as I live.”

This is what embodied in ugliest and horrific form when Nafisa goes to prepare the wedding dress for that person who once promised her that she would be his bride and robed her most precious thing she had. Her brother Hussein goes to be a glad singer in this wedding. The poverty, wretchedness and ugliness surround her and play around her. There is no sign of hope in the face of unhappy tomorrow, and the loss of honour and dignity. Nafisa is pushed by the social disintegration to have a sexual relation with a mechanic who pays her ten-piaster piece. She gives it her brother ‘Hussain’ who spends for the same purpose in this lost society.

From the very beginning, the writer has drawn demarcation lines between dignity and humiliation which forms the entire novel. The struggle between wretched family due to father’s death and appalling social condition is looking for the family to bring it at the bottom.

Nafisa looked upon herself as a martyr and victim of despondency and poverty. It was the poverty which made her miserable and the misery pierces her flesh as a needle pierces a piece of cloth. Her meagre earnings from her work, swallowed up by the family’s urgent needs increased her misery. As a result, she paid close attention to her appearance to gratify Mohammad al-Ful, the garage proprietor whose motives or intentions were not hidden nor was she ignorant of them. Nafisa also knew that she was not
pretty, and it was impossible that the make up would make her so. But in the market of lechery even ugliness itself is a saleable commodity, and pleasure seekers are not fastidious in their demands. As for the marriage, it is a different matter. But where seeking pleasure is concerned, people are all the same.

However, the feeling of despair and intense desire boiled in her veins, clamouring for gratification. Whenever she surrendered to despair, it stung her to the depths of her being. It was so strong but consciously she denied its existence. Shutting it out of her mind, she would persuade herself that she could accept humiliation for the sake of the money which her family so badly needed. Her family's condition being what it was, she was not lying when she thought in this fashion. But it was only half the truth, the half she admitted while she ignored the other.

After Nafisa's deviation to the sinful way, the writer repeatedly says that she gains pleasure from her sexual encounters. Thus, though Nafisa may not be happy, through this vocation she finds a level of satisfaction of which she would otherwise have been deprived. In a society that values women for their physical charms, an ugly woman has no place, no right to happiness, and certainly no right to physical pleasure. With the loss of Sulaiman, Nafisa knows that she has no hope of marriage. By offering her body she can attract the attention of men who would be repelled by her face. For example, when a sixty year old man took her in his car, a sense of alienation came over her. Sorrow and fear struck her heart, in a feeling of absolute degeneration Mhafouz says:

"It was the first time in her life that she had gone with a man without any preliminary acquaintance, whether brief or protracted. Urged on partly by her sexual appetite, she had previously accompanied men she had met only once, twice, or three times."
But this time, out of pure greed, and feeling no
desire at all, she surrendered to a passer-by. How
complete was her degeneration! And how dreadful
her end?"\(^4\)

Nafisa, a rebel to her social condition, has been portrayed as
a destitute woman. Unlike her prototype, Ihsan of New Cairo, and
Hamida in Midaq Alley, Nafisa demonstrates Mahfouz's ability to
create not only a woman but a prostitute from within. Painfully
class-conscious and aspiring for mobility across the social strata,
she wants to reshape her life but find no way to escape as Mhafouz
puts it:

"Men had given enough pain to make her spiteful.
Nevertheless, the flame of desire which engulfed her
body was never extinguished. Her body degraded
her so much that she came to hate it as bitterly as
she hated poverty. A captive of her body and her
poverty, she knew no way to rescue herself."\(^4\)

'The beginning and the End' continues playing black tune
which drips with un-healing wounds. It plays on tragic vision of
blasphemy of society which inflicts poverty and deprivation on
some people and bestows generously wealth and luxury upon some
others.

Mahfouz' another masterpiece is "the Thief and Dogs" [al-Liss
wa al-Kila'b] which is a psychological novel, impressionist rather
than realist. The novel moves with the central character's journey
which consists, from beginning to end, in learning the essential
facts of life and the different aspects of social oppression, as well as
man's endeavour to find meaning in a world governed by
imbalance and deficiencies on both social and metaphysical levels.

In this novel, the thief [Sai'd Mahran] has appointed himself
both the judge and the executioner. He takes it upon himself to
punish the dogs. The dogs are those who have betrayed his trust
and his love. He rushes on like a hurricane to hound these dogs. However, his bullets miss the mark; they do not kill dogs but innocent people. This is because he is not a true hero as he believes himself to be but a thief, a clown. The tables are turned and, he himself, is chased by real, not figurative, dogs – police dogs – till he is shot down by the police.

Sai’d Mahran was obsessed with the idea that his wife was unfaithful to him and that he should punish her. This was probably why so many people sympathised with him at the time. No one, however, could determine whether he was right or wrong. Naguib Mahfouz established the idea of betrayal in the story of Sai’d Mahran. His wife filed for divorce while he was in prison to marry his friend and follower. The two had taken all his money and his daughter. His friend and rival would not acknowledge that he owed Sai’d anything except for a pile of books, rotten and decayed. The wife and friend might tell a different story which we know nothing about and which is therefore irrelevant to the story. Sai’d Mahran was absolutely sure that he was set-up by these two with the help of the police.

Mahfouz portrays his character in all its ugliness, arrogance and indifference to the feelings of others. Sai’d Mahran hates dogs. But, he himself is a dog, at least, he bears a large resemblance to dogs. He has sharp senses, moves quickly, jumps with agility, but, his bark is as ineffectual as his bite. It was this resemblance to dogs that made Nur, a prostitute, his friend, loves him and becomes attached to him.

In al-Liss wa al-Kila’b, Mahfouz creates a different kind of prostitute. Nur, meaning light, is the only enlightenment that the alienated protagonist can find. She is more honest, more patriotic, and closer to God than is the God-fearing sheikh. Yet like many
other women in Mahfouz’s fiction, Nur is a resource Said Mahran is unable to tap because all he wants is to control her.

In fact, Nur is the incarnation of the proletarian woman whom misery and social ill-fortune have turned into a prostitute. The character of “Nur” provides a framework to bring out more depth in sketching women image and gives an artistic sense and meaning of woman’s appalling conditions in the society. We can view the writer’s amorous notion for a prostitute who loves Said Mahran. Said Mahran says:

“There is nothing more heartbreaking than loving someone like that. It had been like a nightingale singing to a rock, a breeze caressing sharp-pointed spikes. Even the presents she’d given he used to give away – to Nabawiyaa or Ilish.”

What’s more, there is a sense of compassion for Nur and for this kind of human being in the dialogue between Nur and Said:

“Anyway, she isn’t the kind of woman who deserves you.”

“True, neither is any other woman. But Nabawiyaa’s still full of vitality, while you’re hovering on the brink: one puff of wind would be enough to blow you out. You only arouse pity in me.”

Mahouz continues sketching Nur’s misery and suffering, which show his sensitivity towards her:

“At the sound of Nur’s yawning, loud, like a groan, he turned away for the window shutters towards the bed. Nur was sitting up, naked, her hair dishevelled, looking un-rested and run down. But she smiled as she said, “I dreamed you were far away and I was going out of my mind waiting for you.”

The writer never meddled in the description of woman but made it dynamic and ever-moving with all objectivity to deepen
sense of her tragedy and misery and her counterfeit to please the biting and tearing dogs of the society. Mahfuoz says through Said:

“You must not ask when Nur will come back. You'll have to put up with the dark, the silence, and the loneliness – for as long as the world refuses to change its naughty ways. Nur, poor girl, is caught in it, too. What, after all, is her love for you but a bad habit, getting stuck on someone who's already dead of pain and anger, is put off by her affection no less than by her ageing looks, who doesn't really know what to do with her except may be drink with her, toasting, as it were, defeat and grief, and pity her for her worthy but hopeless efforts.”

Afterwards, the writer touches the string of love, which is close to human heart, no matter who has held it, and then makes the feeling for her sorrow and tragedy, as the love manifests and turns into the compassion of lover for being loved.

“The truth is,” she (Nur) said, that to live at all we've got to be afraid of nothing.”... I even forget that, too, when time brings me together with someone I love.”

Astonished at the strength and tenacity of her affection, Said relaxed and let himself feel a mixture of compassion, respect, and gratitude towards her.

Furthermore, Nur clings to a weak thread of delusive hope of happiness when she talks about a ‘fortune-teller’ who spoke to her the way-out with hope for peace and tranquillity and confidence. She says:

“A fortune-teller. She said there’d be security, peace of mind.” ...“When will that ever be? It’s been such a long wait, and all so useless. I have a girlfriend, a little older than me, who always says we’ll become just bones or even worse than that, so that even dogs will loathe us.” Her voiced seemed to come
from the very grave and so depressed Said that he could find nothing to say in reply. "Some fortune-teller!" she said. "When is she going to start telling the truth? Where is there any security? I just want to sleep safe and secure, wake up feeling good, and have a quiet, pleasant time. Is that so impossible – for him who raised the Seven Heavens?"

Mahfouz then sketches skilfully a sensuous picture of her when Said opens his eyes:

He saw her (Nur) there in the dark before him – Nur, with all her smiles and joking, her love and her unhappiness – and the terrible depression he felt made him aware that she had penetrated much deeper within him than he had imagined.

There is an ashen feeling spreading like octopus in his unconscious streams, and casts its shadow on his conscious feeling of loss, destruction and meaninglessness. Thus, we find Sai'd Mahran sees his lone baby who looks to deserve to live a life with simplicity and without any worry. She is alone who does not know the death and desperation. Everything looks eternal and happy in her brownish eyes. Also the negativity of society towards events and incidents and its lax, disgusting apathy towards them are summed up in the Mahfouz's world in al-Liss wa al-Kila'b.

Mahfouz's depiction for prostitutes makes explicit what remains implicit in his other women – that men reify all women to avoid dealing with reality of their lives and experiences. This objectification protects men against their own weakness and allows them to weave fragile delusions of power and control. The best-known examples can be found in the first volume of The Trilogy, Palace Walk.

The Cairo Trilogy—Palace Walk, Palace of Desire and Sugar Street—is usually regarded as Mahfouz's *magnum opus* in which he
traces various aspects of life of an Egyptian middle-class Muslim family and shows how traditional Muslim views of, for example, the marriage relationship developed from one of absolute subservience of the wife to one of near equality. Mahfouz is mainly preoccupied with liberty, and deals with the relationship of the child to the father and of the woman to man.

What is more, the patriarchal desires, aspirations, debauchery, and social ills of the period between 1917 and 1944 form an important aspect of the Trilogy. It is also concerned with the examination of the changing conditions of life for individuals and society across a succession of generations in the given family. Mahfouz got the idea to write the Trilogy from ‘The Tree of Misery’ as he says:

"Perhaps I got the idea for my Trilogy while reading ‘The Tree of Misery’. I was bewitched by the idea of successive generations and the contradictions their lives could reveal, the history of a family could tell what they would feel." 57

Having written the Trilogy, Mahfouz has examined the tragic struggles of the individual against the trials imposed by the society on its aspiring but largely powerless children. In fact, he wanted to put the fragments together and traced the social tension between past and present which led to the situations in which his protagonists faced with the necessity of a stark choice between two irreconcilable value systems. Thus, without being too incredible, one might compare Mahfouz with Galsworthy, with whom he shares ideas of socialism and sympathy for the under-dog.

The first volume of Mahfouz’s Trilogy, Palace Walk transports us into the lives of a Cairene Muslim family which includes four male and three female characters and all of them have their own characteristics. Al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Jawwad, the patriarch subsumes extraordinary contradictions. He is sombre and
tyrannical with his wife and children who cannot guess at his night-time pleasure in his deep sensual satisfaction with erotic and aesthetics. His eldest son is Yasin whose world mounts to the throne with his imagination about women's body and bosom and insatiable lust for life. Wine and women in his life were inseparable and complementary. His passion for the women he encountered was an incurable malady. He scrutinised them as they approached and gazed after their bodies as they drew away.

On the other hand, his second son Fahmy is a young man who gained favour with his father through his seriousness, success in school, and was known for his self-control. He was well grounded in religion and manners and knew how unrealistic and absurd they were. The youngest son Kamal was much clever to escape his father's fury. His quick mind spared him the need to be serious and diligent, although his superior achievement implied he was both. In fact, his diligence was his only virtue worth praising and, had it not been for his naughtiness, it would have won encouragement even from his father.

However, totally ignorant of the outside world, the women characters of the novel reconcile themselves to a type of security based on surrender, willing prisoners in a society where it is forbidden for a virtuous woman ever to show her face to any man outside her immediate family. In spite of all these cosmos and different streams and directions, all Mahfouz's characters rise from one spring of unrelenting rigidity.

Mahfouz's men are safe only as long as the women with whom they consort are subsumed in their roles, for example, Amina had married before she turned fourteen and had soon found herself the mistress of the big house. Though an elderly woman had assisted her in looking after it but deserted her at dusk to sleep in the oven room in the courtyard, leaving her alone in a
nocturnal world teeming with spirits and ghosts. She would doze for an hour and lie awake the next, until her redoubtable husband returned from a long night out.

To her, there was nothing to attract the eye except the minarets of the ancient seminaries of Qalau’n and Barquq. It was a view that had grown on her over a quarter of a century. The view had been a companion for her in solitude and a friend in her loneliness during a long period when she was deprived of friends and companions before her children were born, when for most of the day and night she had been the sole occupant of this large house. Her yearning mingled with the sorrow that pervaded her every time she remembered she was not allowed to visit the son of the Prophet’s daughter, even though she lived only minutes away from his shrine.

Afterwards, the children arrived, one after the other. In their early days in the world, though, they were tender unable to dispel her fears or reassure her. On the contrary, her fears were multiplied by her troubled soul’s concern for them and her anxiety that they might be harmed. She would hold them tight, lavish affection on them, and surround them, whether awake or asleep, with a protective shield of Qur’an suras, amulets, charms and incantations. True peace of mind, she would not achieve until her husband returned from his evening entertainment.

It had occurred once to her, during the first year she lived with him, to venture a polite objection to his repeated nights out. His response had been to seize her by the ears and tell her peremptorily in a loud voice:

"I'm a man. I'm the one who commands and forbids. I will not accept any criticism of my behaviour. All I ask of you is to obey me. Don't force me to discipline you."
Subsequently, she became convinced that true manliness, tyranny and staying out till after midnight were common characteristics of a single entity. With the passage of time she grew proud of whatever her husband meted out, whether it pleased or saddened her. No matter what happened, she remained a loving, obedient and docile wife. She had no regrets at all about reconciling herself to a kind of security based on surrender.

Once, she was suggested that a man like Mr. Ahmad Abd al-Jawwad so strong, wealthy and handsome who stayed out night after night, must have other women in his life. At that time, her life was poisoned by jealousy and intense sorrow overcame her. Her courage was not up to speaking to him about it, but she confided her grief to her mother, who sought as best she could do to soothe her mind with fine words, telling her:

“He married you after divorcing his first wife. He could have kept her too, if he'd wanted, or taken second, third and fourth wives. His father had many wives. Thank our Lord that you remain his only wife.”

Moreover, in spite of everything, perhaps the rumour was idle speculation or a lie. She discovered that jealousy was no different from the other difficulties troubling her life. To accept them was an inevitable and binding decree. Her only means of combating them was to call on patience and rely on her inner strength. Jealousy and its motivation became something she put up with like her husband's other troubling characteristics or living with the jinn.

The writer illustrates an obvious image of Amina who represents a culture at the beginning of the century. She is not only almost totally religiously oriented, but happy to be so and unaware of an alternative. Like the culture she represents, she lived in complete isolation from the outside world, cocooned inside
the house, where all she could see of the outside world was the view from the roof.

After twenty-five years of this protected, blindfolded life, Amina is urged by her children to visit al-Husayn Mosque in the immediate vicinity. While she is out, a car knocks her over injuring her collarbone which confines her to bed for three weeks. The affair comes out into the open. To her surprise, her husband/God does not punish her at once: he waits until she has recovered from her accident and then throws her out and gives her temporary exile as the punishment for tasting of the forbidden tree-of knowledge-of-the extra-domestic.

The patriarchal oppression touched its height when Sayyid Ahmad al-Jawwad sitting at his shop got the news about the death of his son Fahmy. He was informed that there would be a funeral procession for him and thirteen of his fellow martyrs tomorrow afternoon. Meanwhile, the families of martyrs would be allowed to pay their last respects to them in private before the funeral procession. In distress, Ahmad Abd-al-Jawad remembered his wife Amina for the first time:

"She's probably now at the coffee hour with Yasin and Kamal, wondering what has kept Fahmy, how cruel! I'll see him at Qasr al-Ayni Hospital, but she won't. I won't allow it."60

Mahfouz has portrayed Sayyid Ahmad Abd-al-Jawad as arbitrator whose decree can only be received with submission, love and loyalty. Everything in the house yields blindly to his higher will with a limitless authority almost like that of religion. Within walls even love itself had to creep into the hearts timidly, hesitantly and diffidently. It did not enjoy its normal influence or dominance. The only dominant force was his higher will. During his stay at home, the entire family was forced to observe military discipline.
Breakfast was the only time for the boys to sit with their father. The girls, however, were kept away from the dining table at this hour.

In fact, it was the family custom and etiquette that girls had had their meal with their mother. The two girls were not only treated as inferior and were socialized to put themselves last undermining their self-esteem but they were also secluded from outside world and stopped from going to school since they were little girls. They were also forbidden to see someone or to be seen by someone from outside world. Even mentioning their names outside the house by someone was a matter of concern for the head of the family who became uncomfortable as Shaykh Mutawalli known for his healing prayers, amulets, candour and wit once spelled children’s names:

“I pray to God that He may grant your children prosperity and piety; Yasin, Khadija, Fahmy, Aisha and Kamal and their mother, Amen.”

Hearing the Shaykh pronounce the names Khadija and Aisha sounded odd to al-Sayyed Ahmad, even though he was the one who had told him their names a long time ago, so he could write amulet inscriptions for them. It was not the first time the Shaykh had pronounced their names, nor would it be the last, but never would the name of any of his women be mentioned outside their chambers, even on the tongue of Shaykh Mutawalli, without its having a strange and unpleasant impact on him, even if only for a short time. 61

However, Ai’sha, the beautiful and spirited younger daughter dares to peep too closely through the intricate latticed balcony from which the women view the world. She stood at the balcony with interest and longing. She did not have long to wait, for she saw a
young police officer approaching near the house. His face shone with the light of a hidden smile that was reflected on the girl's face as a shy radiance. Immediately, she closed the windows, fastening it nervously as though hiding evidence of a bloody crime. Her heart was divided between the two emotions, each mercilessly trying to attract it. If she succumbed to the intoxication and enchantment of happiness, fear's hammer struck her heart, warning and threatening her. She did not know whether it would be better for her to abandon her adventure or to continue obeying her heart. Her love and fear were both intense. In this manner, days and months had passed until her thirst for even more romance conquered her oppressive fear and she had taken an insane step.

Ai'sha, in her prime, is portrayed as blonde who radiate a halo of beauty and good looks but useless symbol. She is narcissistically obsessed with her beauty, always admiring her reflection in the mirror. She has a carefree temperament, singing or humming all the time in her beautiful voice and showing little interest in housework – all of which may appear to the ordinary eye to be sins of a venial nature but not according to Mahfouzian ethics. Whenever she looked at herself in the mirror, she was immensely pleased with what she saw. Her intense solicitude for every details of her appearance made this clear. She greeted the day by combing her hair and fixing her attire before doing the household chores.

It was not simply interest in her own beauty that caused Ai'sha to want to fix herself first thing in the morning. When the men went off to work, she wanted to be ready to repair to the parlour and open the shutters of the window overlooking Palace Walk with her eyes searching the street anxiously and fearfully. Her young heart pounded while she waited for "him". Then he appeared in his uniform with the two stars gleaming on the
shoulder. When he was close, the faintest of smiles flickered across his face. Afterwards he disappeared beneath the balcony. Ai’sha whirled around to continue watching him from the other window but was shocked to see Khadija standing behind her. Her eyes grew big with unmistakable alarm. She stood rooted to the spot. Khadija said her admonishingly:

“Don’t be obstinate. I saw it all with my own eyes. I’m not joking now. I want to tell you frankly that you made a big mistake. Our family has not known this kind of mischief in the past and we don’t want to experience it again, now or in the future. It’s nothing but recklessness that has landed you here. Listen to me and pay attention to my advice. Don’t ever do this again. Nothing remains a secret forever, no matter how long it may be concealed. Imagine the situation for all of us if someone on the street or one of our neighbours noticed you. You know very well how people talk. Imagine what would happen if the news reached Daddy. God help us!”

Furthermore, when the engagement proposal for Aisha came, the family members reacted in extremely different ways. Al-Sayyid Ahmad frowned in anger and refusing the proposal he said:

“I would despise giving my daughter to someone if that meant stirring up doubts about my honour. No daughter of mine will marry a man until I am satisfied that his primary motive for marrying her is a sincere desire to be related to me...me...me...me.

No man has ever seen either of my daughters...”

Al-Sayyid Ahmad’s verdict became lodged in the depths of her soul and she had firmly believed that everything was really over, since there was no way to escape or to ask for a review. She had no hope that anything would help. It was as though this “no” were one of the processes of nature, like the alternation of night
and day. No objection to it would be of any significance, since only 
obedience was allowed. This belief of hers, whether conscious or 
not, worked to terminate everything and it was terminated.

Finally, Aisha received the good news with the joy of a girl 
who since early childhood had cherished the dream of getting 
mARRIED. Less than three months after one rejection, permission 
had been granted for her to marry. Thus, she would not be part of 
the destiny of the young man for whom her heart had yearned. She 
kept this thought to herself, and no one learned about it, not even 
her mother. To announce her happiness with a suitor, even one of 
whom she had only the vaguest concept, would be a wanton affront 
to modesty. It would have been inconceivable for her to express a 
desire for some specific man. In spite of all this and despite the fact 
that she knew nothing about the new bridegroom except what her 
mother had mentioned in a conversation.

On the other hand, Khadija is quite opposite to her younger 
sister and inherits the positive qualities of her parents' characters 
without their physical beauty with sharp scorn and bitter sarcasm. 
The writer has depicted her as an ugly, energetic, responsible, 
totally committed to her family and above all 'useful', she is a foil to 
her sister. She was strong and plump, her face had acquired its 
features from her parents but in a combination lacking in harmony 
or charm.

Khadija with her combination of physical ugliness and 
redoubtable spirit is a perpetuation of what is best in her parents, 
Abd al-Jawwad and Amina. She felt jealousy toward Aisha and did 
not bother to hide, thereby causing the beautiful girl to be upset 
with her frequently. Fortunately, this natural jealousy did not leave 
any negative residue deep in her tongue. Moreover, she was a girl 
who had a heart full of affection for her family, even though she did 
not spare them from her bitter mockery.
Khadija, like her mother, surrendered to the fates. Her fiery side, inherited from her father, and the complex of characteristics arising from her interaction with the environment were both unable to deal with her fortune. She found peace of mind by relying on her tranquil side, which she had inherited from her mother. So she yielded to her destiny. However, her destiny brought good news as widow Shawkat and Aisha paid her house a visit crowned with an ending none of the family members could have imagined. In the presence of Khadija, the old lady addressed the mother:

“Mrs. Amina, I have come to visit you today in order to ask for Khadija’s hand for my son Ibrahim.”

This happy conversation went on for some time, but Khadija’s attention drifted away. She lowered her eyes for modesty and confusion. The mocking spirit that so often gleamed in her eyes abandoned her. She became uncommonly meek and yielded to the current of her thoughts. The proposal had come as a surprise. The fates had reserved a fine destiny for her. She had been extremely unhappy when Aisha married first. She had not known that Aisha’s marriage was destined to open the doors of good fortune for her.

Though it was fortunate that the two sisters were united in one house but their conditions were not different from their mother’s. Both of them reconcile themselves like their mother to the security based on surrender. Whenever the two sisters visited their parents, the profound happiness of both was tarnished only by anticipation of their visit’s end. The warning would come when one of their husbands, Ibrahim or Khalil, stretched or yawned. Then he would say:

“It’s time for us to leave.” The phrase was a command to be obeyed, not rejected. Neither of two sisters was gracious enough, even once, to tell her husband “You go. I’ll join you tomorrow.”
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