

Vol. 8, Issue-III (June 2017)

ISSN: 0976-8165

# The Criterion

*An International Journal in English*

Bi-monthly, Refereed & Indexed Open Access eJournal



*The Criterion*

UGC Approved Journal [Arts and Humanities, Jr. No. 768]

*Editor-In-Chief - Dr. Vishwanath Bite*

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ISSN 2278-9529

## Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*: A Confession of a Hecatomb to a Comatose Husband

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**Article History:** Submitted-14/05/2017, Revised-18/06/2017, Accepted-21/06/2017, Published-05/07/2017.

### **Abstract:**

Literature is the way that allows every human being to express their life, lifestyles, emotions, opinion, doubts, frustrations and talents. It is regarded as the open way to every human being to express. Literature can be called as the true friend of human because it hears everything, accepts, helps, consoles, molds, directs and also mocks. Among the twentieth century Afghanistan writers Atiq Rahimi plays an important role in the literary field and flourishes in the heart of citizens of the world through his notable works. *The Patience Stone* is Atiq Rahimi's third novel which deals with the suffering of people due to war and the situation of women in the land due to the domination of the male oriented society and the influence of religious believes. This paper deals with the quality of a woman who sacrifices herself for the sake of others those she loves. Atiq Rahimi's sacrificial representation of woman separates herself from human being and make the readers to doubt, are women an incarnation of God?

**Keywords:** Hecatomb, scape goat, crimson, paralysed, comatose.

Atiq Rahimi is one of the Afghan writers who bring out the status of woman that is given by the world in his novel *The Patience stone*. He begins the novel with a description of a young lady whose "body is swathed in a long dress. Crimson. Embroidered, at the cliffs and bottom hem, with a few discreet ears and flowers of corn" (3). In the opening of the novel the writer pictures her as a woman who stays with her paralysed husband and her two daughters. The family resides in a war field locality and there are no neighbors too. By reflecting her beauty and her condition, the writer gives a clue to the readers that he is trying to stress a specific quality of a woman which ranks higher than beauty and higher than everything in the world.

People in the world always consider women with less respect and never think of the struggle they have taken for the growth of their families. Susan Roy and J.G Duresh, in the article "A Womanist Reading of the Novels of Maya Angelou" conveys, "A glance of the

position of the women throughout the world will bring to the fore how women have been marginalized, suppressed and pushed to the periphery in the male-dominated society despite their sacrifices and devoted endeavour for the development of family, society and nation" (1). Instead of honoring her services, men use to blame and hurt her feelings. Even though she is blamed for her weakness and for her faults she is always benevolent to them. Often she is blamed by the patriarchal society without any fault in her side. Even in this critical situation she controls her emotions in her heart and weeps in her loneliness. In front of male oriented society she reflects herself as a sheep which is going to be slaughtered. In this novel Atiq Rahimi shows the above mentioned state of the women through his nameless woman character who is blamed by Mullah that she is responsible for her husband's paralysed condition, though the husband is responsible for his own mistakes. The woman says herself that the Mullah blames her by stating, "you, can't have followed his instructions, must have neglected the prayers . . . Otherwise you'd be getting better" (9). This shows how she is blamed for others mistakes.

As the woman represented in the novel there are lot of women who struggle a lot in the society but they always try to hide their emotion. They raise themselves as angels by allowing them to be hurt. They know that they are blamed without any reason but they never try to take revenge against them. Instead of avenging against the patriarchy they surrender themselves because they know that they are nothing without them. In the novel the woman stays with her husband amidst of Mullah's blames because she wants her husband back and she knows that if she forsake him, certainly there will be no one to help him. The author narrates the truth behind women's surrendering before men by describing his woman character. The woman in the novel denounces her own soul as evil one and she asks forgiveness from Allah because she thinks that, she may be the reason for her husband's ill health. In the same way there are many women in the world who starve themselves and surrender themselves to many religious customs for the cure and purification of the sins of their lovable husband.

In the world every creatures are selfish about their own life but some has the habit of sharing and helping. Even these helping creatures become selfish when they find that their lives are in danger. While considering human being men exhibit the qualities of animal when they are at stake but while considering the women they always look for the safety of their children and their family members. As a mother she never considers her own life when she finds her own children at risk. In the novel the writer describes the quality of a woman who splits a small bun and gives it to her daughters and there is no evidence for what she ate. She shows her love for her children by begging in front of her cruel husband as, "Come back I beg you, before I lose my mind, come back for the sake of your children" (16). She knows that her husband is a cruel person and if he recovers from his paralysed condition also, he will never become a perfect husband. She knows him but she begs him to come back to normal state because she knows very well about the crucial condition of the female children who lives in male oriented society without fathers. Similarly many mothers in the world live with their husband only for the future of their

children. Every mother in the world knows the importance of father's position in their children's life, so they surrender themselves to men for the sake of their loving children.

By nature women are slave to their children by the twin of love because they yield themselves to any kind of torment for the sake of their children. In the novel she stays with her useless cruel husband for the wellbeing of her children. She has suffered much under her father as well as under her husband and she has great anger over the male oriented society. In this state also she stays with her husband, who is even deserted by his own family members because she never wants her children to lead a fatherless life. Thus there are so many women in the world as that of the woman in the novel whose love for her children made her a slave before her own cruel husband, though she got the chance to escape from her own destiny.

In every walks of life, everyone looks for a responsible person and they are even honoured for their faithfulness. In the world no one think women as an honoured one though she lives for others sake. Even in this modern world, women are honoured in every fields for their achievements but since from the past she is not honoured as a daughter, a sister, a wife and as a grandmother. Any responsible person becomes irresponsible during certain crucial situations but in case of women she become more responsible even during her decisive situations. She takes any risk to accomplish her responsibilities because she has the power to carry all sort of burden in her life. In the novel the writer describes a woman who takes care of her paralysed comatose husband though his mother and brothers left him in the war field locality. She stays with him because she knows the true meaning of a wife. She knows that he is useless but she never left him. This points out a truth to the world that there are only limited male nurse in the world and majority are women because by nature they have the capacity to give value to anything without any gain. They take care of others without any intention and without any difficulty in their mind. This shows their capacity to sacrifice their mind and soul to do this holy service.

In the novel the writer indicates a wife who shows unconditional love to her husband in a situation where one can never show their love. Thus the writer gives a new definition to love, the love that makes one to undergo suffering as sweet as honey. The woman character in the novel shows her love by saying, "without you I didn't have nothing" (14) and "even without my hand on your chest, I still breath like you" (7). This shows the unconditional love of a woman who knows the responsibilities of a true wife. This type of love is something a mystical one which can be seen only in a divine heart. Normally women have such heart because they are too sensible to all kind of feeling and emotions. Women have such a heart to accept other's emotions as their own. So they can be easily moved even by the emotions of their enemies. Their melting heart always melts before the melting eyes. This is the reason they always show care to the affected one.

In the society male always have the mentality that they are supreme to women in all means so they act as a master and consider women as their employee. Simone de Beauvoir in his book *The Second Sex* says, "Classically women are inequality creatures, and it is added by Aristotle who views women as an imperfectness of nature" (393). Men always show his extreme power towards his opposite sex to represent himself as a master. Women always reflect her life as a faithful servant to her master. The truth is that she obeys men in all means not because of fear and weakness but out of veneration. She always try to honour men by showing respect to them. In the novel the woman waits before her paralysed husband to give her the permission to go to her aunt's house. By narrating this incident Atiq Rahimi points the eminence of women in the society.

The writer indirectly pinpoints the foibles in the side of men in the society by representing the qualities of men and women in his own society. Ali Mustofa and Adi Putra in their article, "The Woman's Silent Voice towards Patriarchy's Handcuff" says, "The Quran makes it clear that women and men are equal in the eyes of God. This is the weakness of the human, to see something they always see it by what that they can accept, although God has different point of view" (164). This is the clear mistake in the side of male because they never consider women as a being like them. Men always think that they should be respected by women but they never show any respect towards her. Women know that she can never presume love or reverence from male but she never delays in giving respect or care to her opposite sex because of her unconditional love for them. In the novel the woman cleans her husband's body and provides medicines to him because she wants him to be recovered soon. She thinks so because she respects him as a being and as a precious thing that is given by God in her life.

Women always honour her husband and stay with her family even though she is disrespected. This is because she wants to build up a perfect family in her society. Society is decorated by beautiful families but everyone forget the women behind the perfection. If every women in the family raise their voice for respect and begin to go out of the house due to male's mischievous act, there will be no family at all. Thus because of her kind nature, she builds up not only a family but also a good society. This truth is not even looked by the representatives of the society because they are also the by-product of male oriented society.

Everyone in the world always looks for support because if one believes, that they are not alone and they are supported, then this will increase confidence in one's heart. Normally people support others if they are supported by them but in case of woman, she supports any one that she loves. She never offer support to any one with expectations. Her help is always free and remarkable one. In the novel the writer describes that the woman act as a catalyst to bring back her husband to his normal state. She ask her husband, "can you feel my hand"(5), "if you can breath you can able to hold your breath"(6), " can you close your eyes again, you can, you can do it"(20). All these lines show how a woman supports her husband. Here she supports him without

any expectation. She knows that her husband is a cruel person and there is no need to help him but she supports him because she considers him not as a person but as a part of her body.

Women always consider men as a part of their soul and their body because of this reason she shows boundless love to them even though they are not loyal to them. Normally if our eyes look something that is impure to us we never punish our eye because we know that it is a part in our body and if we punish our eyes, we are indirectly punishing our body. This shows a great difference between male and female. The male oriented society not even consider women as a human but women consider them as the part of their body. This tendency make them to forgive the humiliations cast by the male oriented society to them.

By considering male as a part of their body, they surrender their own body to give ownership to male also. This mentality is not because of fear or compulsion but this is the outcome of unconditional love for her fellow being. Women by their life give a new definition to support that one can support and truly help others only when they consider one's pain as theirs and one's difficulty as theirs. Women through their life appeal that supporting others are not helping others but molding one's own defects and deficiencies.

Everyone in the world needs a guide to achieve the goal in their life. The one who shows correct way to life should have certain qualities in their life. The guide should be one who gives value to others because if they are selfish, they train or guide others for their own benefits. Teachers are the good example for a perfect guide because they train others as a service to make them perfect. Sharing one's own knowledge to others is not a simple thing. It is not easy for one to surrender their knowledge before others which they gained out of years of hard work. Teaching profession is decorated mainly by women because they are so open minded. To a child mother is their first teacher because she only has the ability to teach true path and she also knows how to mould her teaching according to their receptor's mind capacity. In the novel the writer shows how a woman teaches her cruel husband who is corrupted by his religion and society.

Women have the capacity to teach others in a good manner because they are the embodiment of good habits. Only a good selfless master is capable to become a true shepherd because only a selfless master tries to save his sheep from other cruel creature without giving importance to his life. Such quality can be seen only in women because they will go to any extreme end to teach their counterparts. Women area good teacher by birth itself but the male oriented society never give ears to her ideas as a brother and as a husband. In this modern world, women get importance as a teacher by profession and not as a mother or as a wife in her family. Male oriented society fail to give importance to women because they think it is by education they become a good teacher and they never consider that right from her birth she is a perfect teacher because of their selfless heart and the mentality to give values to others as that of them.

Women even surrender her self-dignity for the sake of her loved ones. Normally women are considered as the embodiment of kindness, love and humanity. In the society we can see lot of women who never maintain good relationship with neighbours. Men easily mingle with the people to whom they have misunderstanding but the women will never because they never forget the day when their lovable one had been hurt. Men consider such women as stone hearted but they never realise that the stones in heart is made of love. Even in this modern era one can easily say that she is not a woman on seeing her qualities but if one examine them, surely one can find a good reason for her womanless act. In the novel the woman kills the quail of her father, this can be considered as cruel and not supposed to be done by a woman but the actual reason behind her act is that, because of the quail her elder sister's life gets destroyed and she do not want her other sisters to lose their life because of her father's quail fight. Even now the world is filled with lot of women who have the capacity to take any incarnation for the sake of love and for the one whom she loves.

In the novel the writer describes the woman who sacrifices her virginity in order to prove her as a fertile one. This is a common issue that can be seen in the society. The society always blame women if she have no children without knowing the truth about their life. This wrong assumption always leads to social issues. In order to overcome the blaming words of the society some women commit suicide, some go for illegal contact with others and some become mentally affected. This also leads to social issue polygamy. Without analysing couples defect and treating them, the male oriented society always try to destroy the women's life. If the defect is in male as that of the male in the novel, through remarriage he tries to hide his fault and tries to abolish the life of another woman. De Beauvoir, in his book *The Second Sex*, says, "the feminine flesh is for him (man) a prey, and through it he gain access to the qualities he desires, as with any object" (256). This indicates the vision about women in the eyes of men.

Women always have the tendency to express everything to her loved one and she never knows to maintain secrets. In one side, though it is a vicious one but at the other hand by expressing her inner feeling and inner emotions she is purifying her heart. Secrets always lead to misunderstanding and always create problems. Men consider women as chatter boxes and they are unreliable. Men always praise him as reliable but he never thinks that it is the secrets that make their heart impure and leads to ill-health. It is scientifically proved that men are always a slave to secrets, which indirectly leads to stress and chronic disease like heart attack. It is also proved that the life span of men are shorter than women because of his tendency to carry secrets with them without expressing them. Women are a slave to love and men are a slave to secret, but men never realise that slavishness to love leads to mental joy and purity. In the novel the writer pictures a woman who is a slave to love and not to secrets. She comes out of her slavishness under secrets and reveals all her secrets to her husband. By this act she brings back her husband from his paralysed state and she says, "Thank you, Al-Sabur! I am finally released from my

suffering” (135). This shows that she not only rescued her husband but also rescued herself from her own tortures, given by secrets in her heart.

The woman in the novel even takes the risk to reveal her secrets to her husband to show her loyalty to her husband. This shows one of the qualities of women who not only surrender her physical but also her inner soul. She knows that she will be killed by her husband, if he comes back to life after knowing the secrets. She even tries to treat her husband with her secrets to bring back him to normal state. The writer of the novel courageously brings out the life of a woman who sacrifices her own life as a medicine for treating her husband. Among the creation of God, women alone have such a heart to give heart for love and loving one. She has a heart which longs for others heart. Every religion preaches the importance of love and the only living example for love is mother because women always live for love and even sacrifice their life for love.

Though the woman sacrifices a lot in the final end of the novel she is made into a hecatomb to keep up man’s dignity in the society. Her sacrifice everything vanishes from his mind for a skimpy mistake committed by her. Even the felony was done in order to bring him back to life. But the life giver’s soul is butchered to keep up his dignity. Thus by this act she attains the height of a saint. A traditional woman always redeems all her comforts and even her precious life for the welfare of her family. Ali Mustofa and Adi Putra in their article “The Woman’s Silent Voice towards Patriarchy’s Handcuff” portrays, “Women posits herself, although she gets unfair life, although her life is grabbed by the system of men, although her happiness is robbed by the injustice, she just tries and keep trying to be a good wife for her evil Husband” (166). Thus by representing the women as a hecatomb, the author remains as a prolific domicile in the readers mind.

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