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An Analysis of the Factors behind Women's Credulity in the Novel *Islah-o-Nisa*

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Abstract: This study analyzes the factors responsible for women's credulity as portrayed in the novel *Islah-o-Nisa*, a significant reformist work of Urdu literature. The novel reflects the socio-cultural realities of its time, highlighting how women's tendency toward uncritical belief is not an inherent weakness but a consequence of social conditioning. Through textual analysis, the study examines the roles of limited education, patriarchal control, religious misinterpretation, and cultural traditions in shaping women's credulity. The novel presents female characters who rely on superstitions, hearsay, and irrational practices due to lack of awareness and restricted intellectual freedom. By portraying these factors, *Islah-o-Nisa* advocates for women's education and rational thinking as essential tools for reform. The analysis demonstrates that the novelist uses credulity as a narrative device to critique social structures and to promote enlightenment and moral reform among women. Ultimately, the novel underscores the need for intellectual empowerment to overcome ignorance and blind belief.

Key Words: Women's Credulity, *Islah-o-Nisa*, Reformist Urdu Literature, Female Education, Patriarchal Society, Superstition and Social Conditioning, Rational

Thinking Rashid-ul-Nisa's novel *Islah-ul-Nisa* was written in 1881. Rashid-ul-Nisa has the distinction of being the first female novelist in Urdu. Rashid-ul-Nisa has a keen eye on Indian society. Her observational eye looked closely at the aristocracy. Rashid-ul-Nisa was aware of the religious problems of women in the nineteenth century and their causes, and at the same time, she had a sincere spirit of reform in her heart. She had also opened her own madrasa for the sake of this reform, and this novel is also an expression of this reformist spirit and a link in this reformist chain. Rashid-ul-Nisa belonged to a religious family.

Islam is an eternal religion and it will last until the Day of Judgment. Allah Almighty has kept this Sharia in accordance with the principles of nature.. Islam is a religion of the whole world because it is universal. Therefore, shortly after, this chain of guidance and guidance left the land of Arabia and reached Europe, Asia and Africa. Islam, as a religion, had its effects wherever it went. But the influences of each region also had an impact on Islam and its beliefs. Especially South Asia, where secularism had prevailed for centuries. Idolatry reigned. Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism, with their complete tendencies, had influenced the Muslim attitudes. In such a situation, Islam came.. Being a moderate, firm and true religion, the common people of South Asia were the first to accept this religion. Since the lower or middle class lacked education. Reason and consciousness, understanding and perception and the ability to distinguish between right and wrong have also been low. Therefore, the basic beliefs in Islam have also been dominated by consumerist influences.. On this basis, weak beliefs, weak faith have been born. At first, these beliefs influenced the society. Those rituals, practices and customs were already present in the society. They were revived by dressing them in the garb of religion. But most of the victims of these superstitions have been women. When weak faith spreads in society, its reflection is also seen in literature; and when literature expresses it, on the one hand it paints pictures of these attitudes, and on the other hand it also casts a critical eye on them.

"In fact, all those issues of human life that are related to the surrounding environment, its psychology, conditions, and social and economic systems, in other words, all those aspects that are

part of human life or affect it, the name of literature is the portrayal of these issues and issues."(1)

In the novel *Islah al-Nisa*, the novelist has stated that obtaining an education for women is more important than for men. Rashid-ul-Nisa believes that a woman's education not only affects the woman herself, but also has an impact on all men related to her. In the pursuit of education, not only religious education but also secular sciences, English studies, and modern sciences have been declared very important. While Rasheed-ul-Nisa has mentioned the benefits of educated women from educated families, she has also strongly criticized the negative effects of lack of education. She writes about character of Novel:

"Bibi's ignorance was such that she could not even read the Holy Quran. She did not even know what religion and faith were called, nor did she have the desire to learn about it. Nor did she have the desire."(2)

Rashid-ul-Nisa has openly described the effects of weak beliefs through the character of Bibi in the novel. When Bibi did not receive education, then when Bismillah was born to her, she was also deprived of education and no attention was paid to her education and at the same time there was a lack of training. No one can deny the bad effects of this. Consider.

"He did not care about his daughter Bismillah's lack of education, nor did he pay any attention to her. Even if he did, it was only to the extent that when she fell ill, Wazeeran would be called. She would rob the house as much as possible. There was no one to teach her how to read and write, let alone teach her how to read."(3)

Here, Rashid-ul-Nisa's idea is reinforced that due to the illiteracy of women, even the educated class loses the ability to protect the family from bad influences.

"Although Muhammad Moazzam really wanted the girl to study and learn the ropes, when her mother was not paying attention, what miracle could his efforts have accomplished?"(4)

Vows have been of great importance in the context of offerings. To fulfill a vow or obligation for the fulfillment of a purpose is called vowing. Making vows and offering vows seem to have become a part of religion due to lack of awareness. In Islam, Rashid-ul-Nisa has mentioned lighting a lamp of vow or a candle of vow.. The act of making a vow when a child falls ill and putting the necklace of HazratBarey Peer around his neck is part of the novel Islah-ul-Nisa:

"It has been about three or four years since this boy fell ill. When I felt like it, I made a vow to HazratBarey Peer. With the blessings of this vow, he got well".(5)

The novel tells us that those who play a great role in ending such rituals, and especially those who consider vows to be bad, find it very difficult to prove their point.

And those who do not believe in feet are greatly disliked by these people of bad faith. They wish that they too should start worshipping feet like us. Apart from this, praying for good from feet, seeking refuge from evil and sending offerings and gifts to them is also part of such people.

"Oh Wazeeran, I am feeling very helpless these days. Should I say, take care of my condition as well. Please tie my hands and feet on my behalf and tell them to have mercy on me. May God bless my days. I am here. Accept whatever may happen at this time. Yes, tell me what should happen?"(6)

In fact, there are two types of errors in belief:

"One type is that which destroys and destroys the faith, and the perpetrator, God forbid, becomes an infidel. The other type is that which causes a deficiency and weakness in this faith."A person sometimes becomes an apostate by saying something, doing something, believing something, or doubting something. All four of these things create a negation that creates confusion in the belief and makes it invalid."(7)

The novelist, through the characters of women, has shown how social, economic, and psychological problems arise due to distance from religion.Rashid-ul-Nisa has

made women the subject of his novel. Rashid-ul-Nisa has based his novel on the principle that women of the 19th century are in greater need of religious reform and education. Because women are more prone to misguidance and disbelief than men. And in these societies, men are forced and helpless to watch this misguidance.

This study examines the social, psychological, and cultural factors that contribute to women's credulity as portrayed in the novel *Islah-o-Nisa*. The novel highlights how lack of education and restricted social exposure make women more vulnerable to credulous beliefs. Patriarchal structures in society play a significant role in shaping women's unquestioning acceptance of traditions and authority. The narrative reveals that emotional dependency and fear of social rejection further reinforce women's credulity. Through its characters, *Islah-o-Nisa* presents credulity not as an inherent trait but as a product of social conditioning. The novel also describes how people resort to magic, amulets, etc. when they are in trouble. Bibi has such thoughts about her husband.

"Bismillah's father has been bewitched by his brother-in-law and has become so completely devoid of intelligence and understanding." (8)

The novelist tried to bring out the complex factor that these women were known to their servants and used to take money from them for amulets and evil deeds, along with various problems of that time. Thus, huge expenses are incurred on these magic tricks. But people who are victims of these bad beliefs even take loans but do not stop doing these things.

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