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AN OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF NOVEL IN AFGHANISTAN (1913-1940)

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the development of the novel genre in Afghanistan, during the first three decades of its emergence which starts in the second decade of 20th century. It emerged after the translation of European novels in Dari and Pashto languages of Afghanistan. The article discusses various novels in Dari and Pashto languages that were written and published in Afghanistan during 1910s and 1940s. The article describes the various categories of novels, including translated novels, creative novels, incomplete novels, published novels, unpublished novels, and novels published in installments in newspapers and magazines. The article also presents a chronological order of the development of the novel in Afghanistan. The article provides information on the Dari translations of the novels of Jules Verne, translated into Dari language by Mahmud Beg Tarzi. The article also mentions the first creative novel in Afghanistan, "*Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar*." One of the novels discussed is *Jashn-i Istiqlal dar Bolivia* authored by Murtaza Ahmad Muhammadzai, originally written in English and published in *Aman-e-Afghan* newspaper in serials. *Zinat*, a historical novel by Nur Muhammad Alizad, *Pata Mina* (Hidden Love) by Burhanuddin Kashkaki, *Pa Pata da Pato Platane* (Secretly Seeking the Hidden Ones) also by Burhanuddin Kashkaki, *Dwa Sara Mayen Zrona* (Two Loving Hearts) by Muhammad Rafiq Qani, and *Be Tarbiyata Zway* (Untrained Son) by Noor Muhammad Taraki, are other novels that have been discussed in this article. Among these novels, the creative ones emphasize education, training, modernity, and the cultural and social practices of Afghanistan in that era. In previous studies the

development of Dari novels and Pashto novels have been separately dealt by scholars which does not show an overall development of the novel in Afghanistan but this study presented an assessment of the genre of novel in Afghanistan during first three decades regardless of languages. This study is a systematic literature review for which qualitative content analysis method has been employed for exploring themes, patterns and meanings.

INTRODUCTION

For the first time, novel as a genre, appeared in English literature with Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* written which is published in 1719 in London. Novel as a genre emerged in Afghanistan in the second decade of twentieth century. This genre was imported to Afghanistan from the west through translation of French and English novels. This new literary genre adjusted itself easily because Afghanistan already had rich literary tradition particularly in fiction and storytelling. While discussing the history of the development of novel in Afghanistan, one face with various types of novels such as translated novels, creative novels, incomplete novels, published novels, unpublished novels, and novels published in installments. Understanding these categories are important because in each category there are claims of first novel in Afghanistan. This article, although discusses all of these categories but presents development of novel in Afghanistan in chronological order regardless of its association with any of the mentioned categories. Novel as a literary genre emerged in Afghanistan in the early three decades, mainly written in Dari and Pashto languages. The history of the emergence. Origin and development of novel in Pashto language is quite old but all of them belong to the region outside of modern Afghanistan. Similarly, novels written in Persian language have their own long history but here our discussion is limited to the novels written in Dari language of Afghanistan.

Translated Novels

Mahmud Beg Tarzi brought the novel to Afghanistan and translated many novels from French and English into Dari language. Tarzi is considered as father of journalism in Afghanistan. After independence, he became first foreign minister of Afghanistan. He born on August 23, 1865 in Ghazni. During the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman, the family of Mahmud Tarzi was sent on exile to Turkey on account of their support of Sardar Muhammad Ayub Khan. They went to Karachi, then Baghdad and then Damascus and settled there. The young Tarzi very soon learnt Arabic and Turkish languages followed by German, French and English. He became acquainted with Syed Jamaluddin Afghani during the years 1896-97. Tarzi and his family came back to Afghanistan as invited by Habibullah Khan, after spending 23 years abroad. He was appointed head of the royal translation centre by Habibullah Khan. Among the works he translated were Jules Verne novels from French into Dari, which he then published. Jules Gabriel Verne, a French author, is known for pioneering the science-fiction genre with his notable novels, including *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864), *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873).

Verne's imaginative writing about space, air, and underwater travel predated the inventions of practical submarines, navigable aircraft, and means of space

travel. He is the second most translated author of all time, after Agatha Christie, and his popular novels have been adapted into films. Verne and H.G. Wells are often recognized as the "Fathers of Science Fiction".

He also translated several significant works from European authors into Dari language. Initially these works have been translated from French into Turkish and Mahmud Tarzi translated from Turkish language into Dari. His translated novels are being introduced in the following lines.

Siahat dar Jaw-e-Hawa (A Journey to the Center of the Earth)

The novel was originally written by Jules Gabriel Verne and published in 1864. The novel was translated into Turkish language by Ahmad Ihsan. Later on it was translated into Dari by Mahmud Beg Tarzi. Enayat Publishing House in Kabul published the Dari version in 1331/1913. The story follows a professor, his nephew, and a guide as they journey to the center of the Earth through a volcano in Iceland. Jules Verne, a French author famous for his Voyages extraordinaires series. The book is a blend of scientific facts and adventure fiction, and it is the second book in the series that ran from 1863 to 1910, pioneering the genre of science fiction. The story follows a teenage boy named Axel Lidenbrock and his uncle, Professor Otto Lidenbrock, a geology professor who lives in Hamburg, Germany. One day, Otto shows Axel a manuscript, which contains a note that leads to the center of the earth in a dormant volcano in Iceland. The journey to find the passage starts off with Otto dragging a hesitant Axel to the area. They hire an Icelandic eider hunter named Hans Bjelke and, after a difficult climb to the summit of Snaefell, they locate the correct crater and descend into the passage. Along the way, they encounter a variety of underground wonders, including an underground sea, giant mushrooms and prehistoric creatures like mastodon bones. They also witness a fight between two ancient species of sea creatures and experience other dangers, such as an electrical storm. After two months of exploring, they blast their way through a rock and are propelled on a torrent before being carried upward by a volcanic eruption. Eventually, they emerge on the surface of Stromboli Island, off the coast of Italy, having discovered a fossilized human and a giant man shepherding mastodons along the way. Themes such as understanding natural phenomena, importance of science and significance of scientific studies have been highlighted in this novel (Khan et al, 2008: 115).

Siahat Pa Daur-e-Zamin Dar Hashtad Roz

It is also a novel on the theme of science fiction. Jules Verne wrote it in French language and published in French in 1873. Tarzi carried out the Persian/Dari translation of Ahmad Ihsan Turkish translation of the novel. Enayat Publishing House in Kabul published Mahmud Tarzi's Dari translation of the novel in 1331/1913. According to Khan (2008: 115). The story follows the journey of Phileas Fogg and his valet, Passepartout, as they travel around the world to win a bet of £20,000. However, their journey is complicated by Fogg being mistaken for a bank robber and pursued by a detective named Mr. Fix. Along the way, they encounter various obstacles and adventures,

including rescuing a widow from a suttee and surviving an attack by Sioux Indians. It is part of author's Voyages and is one of his most popular works.

Bisst Hazaar Fasrah Sihat dar Zir-e-Bahar

This novel falls in the category of science fiction. It is written in French by Jules Gabriel Verne. The novel was moulded into Turkish language by Ahmad Ihsan. Later on it was translated into Dari by Mahmud Tarzi. Tarzi's Dari translation of the novel, consisting of 362 pages. It has been printed in Kabul in 1332/1914. The title of the novel refers to the distance traveled under the sea, with "leagues" being a literal translation of the French unit "lieues". The French league was standardized as 4 kilometers (km) in the metric era. The book is part of Verne's science-fiction. It is considered one of his most popular works. The story is narrated by Professor Pierre Aronnax, who joins an American frigate tasked with investigating a series of attacks on ships by an amphibious monster. However, they soon discover that the creature is actually a submarine called the Nautilus, which sinks Aronnax's vessel and takes him, his servant Conseil, and a tempestuous harpooner named Ned Land as prisoners. The group encounters the mysterious Captain Nemo, who takes them on a year-long adventure. The novel is known for its exotic settings, descriptions of technological advancements, and the intense relationship between the three captives and Nemo. The novel highlights the use of technology and introduces submarines (Khan, 2008: 115).

Jazira-e-Penhan (The Hidden Island)

This novel is a science fiction. It is written by Jules Gabriel Verne in French language in 1874. Ahmad Ihsan translated it into Turkish language, and later on translated by Mahmud Tarzi into Dari language. The novel, The Hidden Island, authored by Jules Verne, was included in his Voyages extraordinaires series. It narrates the story of a group of survivors who, after being stranded on an unexplored island, utilize their survival skills to construct a functional society. The group, along with a dog, is blown off course in a hot-air balloon while escaping from Richmond, Virginia, during the American Civil War. After a pirate attack, they are saved by an anonymous individual who is later revealed to be the elusive Captain Nemo, who is also featured in Verne's previous work. Captain Nemo dies and is buried at sea in his submarine, and the castaways are eventually rescued by a passing ship. There are some of the prophetic ideas of Verne about the submarines presented in this book (Bezhan: 2010).

Novels Written in Dari Language-I

The first creative novel written in Afghanistan in Dari language is *Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar*. A brief introduction of this novel is given below.

Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar

Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar is the first novel written in Afghanistan (Khan, 1931:291). Some scholars have mentioned its name as Jihad-I Akbar (Greatest

Strive) (Ahmadi, 2014:67) but the author called it *Jihad-I Akbar wa Asghar* (Khan, 1931, p. 291). It was written by Muhammad Hussain Khan (Dinakhel et al, 2022, p.). He is also known as Maulwi Muhammad Hussain Panjabi, who had Afghan ancestry and was a native of Jalandhar, in the Punjab province. In 1907 After Habibi Lycee was founded, Muhammad Hussain came to Kabul to teach. Because of his ties to the first Junbish-e Mashrutiyat, in 1909, at the age of twenty-seven, during the reign of Amir Habibullah Khan, he was imprisoned until 1919 (Sadat, 2008:296). During his imprisonment he wrote this novel.

Ahmadi (2014:67) is of the opinion that it may be the first Persian novel in Afghanistan. It was published in *Mu'arif Marif* [Introduction to Education]. It was a monthly magazine published by the Ministry of education Kabul. The author of the novel, Muhammad Hussain was its first editor (Ahmadi, 2014:67). This magazine was being published from 1919 to 1928. Its contents were related to students and teachers (Rafi, 1978: 181-82). The first part of this novel printed in serial form in this magazine between 1919 and 1921 (Ahmadi, 2014:67). According to Sadat (2008: 296) its first part was printed in 1920 but the second part was never published. According to the author this novel contains two volumes and only the first volume is published in serial in the magazine *Mu'arif Marif*. According to Ahmadi (2014:67) its setting is based on first Anglo-Afghan war. *Jihad-e-Akbar* concerns the Afghans' resistance against colonial Britain during the first Anglo-Afghan war. Wazir Akbar Khan is the hero and the central character of the novel. The first Anglo-Afghan War was triggered by Lord Auckland. The East India Company, along with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, launched a two-pronged invasion of Afghanistan. In December 1841, Wazir Mohammad Akbar led an uprising and assassinated William Macaghten. Akbar Khan then escorted his father, Amir Dost Mohammad, up the Khyber Pass to Kabul to assume his throne as the Afghan ruler. Most Afghans recognize Wazir Akbar Khan as the victor of the first Afghan-Anglo War (1839-42). It was believed that Wazir Akbar Khan was poisoned by his father, Amir Dost Muhammad Khan, for opposing his pro-British policies (Sadat, 2008: 296). Main theme of the novel is his courageous struggle against British oppression during the war (Sadat, 2008:296).

The novel's story revolves around the resistance. The characters are not stereotypical, with unique traits and features that avoid generalizations and binary portrayals. The narrative includes elements of irony, complications, and entanglements. The resolution involves the romantic relationship between an Afghan man and a young British woman. *Jihad-I Akbar* is a nationalist narrative that synthesizes the nation's cultural affiliation, natural belongingness and religious identity to a place and people. According to Bezhan, the novel blends fantasy with history and employs contemporary slang to enrich Afghan literature's vocabulary and bridge the gap between society and literature. Traditional Afghan literature elements such as those found in Rumi and Jami's works are also present, along with verses from the Quran, traditional storytelling, poems, phrases, and local dialects (Bezhan: 159-160). According to Sadat (2008:296) the story addresses social realities such as discrimination, complicating issues of social classes, gender, and ethnic tensions. For instance, a man from the Panjshir valley comments that

Panjshiri men are wood choppers and women work as housekeepers and servants, and a Shia girl's marriage into a Pashtun royal family of the Sunni denomination raises ethnic tensions. It also had information about politics and royal family. Therefore, the author considered it appropriate to get permission for its publication from Amanullah Khan. He handed over it to Sardar Muhammad Kabir Khan for review who wrote adverse remarks on it (Khan, 1931:28). Later on it was presented for exhibition during celebration of Esteqlal and it was highly appreciated by the intellectuals (Khan, 1931:33). Bezhani (2006) is of the opinion that this is the second novel in Afghanistan.

Taswir-e-Ebrat ya Bibi Khore Jan

It is a truly modern Afghan novel. It was written and published in 1922 outside of Afghanistan, in Madras, British India. Muhammad Abdul Qadir Effendi (b. 1888) wrote this novel. In about 1881, prince Muhammad Ayub Khan fled to Persia, where he was arrested and, in 1888, handed over to British officials in British India. Most scholars believe that Effendi was probably born in exile in Turkey. (Sadat, 2008, p. 296). Although it is published in 1922 but it is said that it was written prior to 1919. It is evident from some of its hand written copies. It has reprinted by Faridullah Bezhani in Kabul by Nasharat-e-Dawlati in 1987. This novel assesses the condition of women and their sociocultural engagement. It is the story of a woman belongs to royal family of Afghanistan. (Bezhani, 2006: 171).

Jashn-I-Istiqlal dar Bolivia [Independence Day Celebrations in Bolivia]

This novel was written in English by Murtaza Ahmad Muhammadzai. Later on it was translated into Dari by Ghulam Nabi. It was published in instalments in the Kabul newspaper Aman-e-Afghan in 1927. Along with "Zinat" and "Taswir-e-Ebrat," it is considered one of the earliest Dari novels and competes for the title of the first Afghan novel. Aman-e-Afghan was the newspaper that replaced Siraj-al Akhbar on April 12, 1919. Abdul Hadi Dawi was the first editor of this newspaper (Rafi, 1978:127). It needs further investigation to find out the exact date of writing of this novel but some of the themes reveal that this novel appeared soon after the appearance of Jihad-Akbar wa asghar. An Afghan author Murtaza Ahmad Muhammadzai originally wrote this novel in English, which takes place in Bolivia, a Latin American country that is home to many expatriate Afghans. The protagonist of the novel is Ahmad Gul. He is an Afghan capitalist. He falls in love with a Bolivian woman, but he faces a powerful adversary in a local politician. After Ahmad Gul wins a duel against the politician, the adversary passes a new law in the Bolivian national congress that requires the expulsion of all foreigners from countries without diplomatic ties with Bolivia. Ahmad Gul prepares to leave Bolivia. However, he knows that his country has gained freedom and has established relations with Bolivia. (Ahmadi, 2014:67-68).

Zinat

Nur Muhammad Alizad wrote this historical novel. Alizad served as an official in the court of Habibullah Khan. However, it remained unpublished.

The reason of its remaining unpublished is censorship and the absence of free printing presses that could have facilitated its publication, as stated in Sadat (2008: 296).

Novels Written in Pashto Language

All of the above-mentioned novels reveal that initially novel in Afghanistan was introduced in Dari language. Some of them were translated from French, Turkish and English languages into Dari while some others were written originally in Dari language. This development of novel in Afghanistan in Dari language is followed by novels written in Pashto language and again some novels appear in Dari language during the early three decades of the emergence of the novel. Novel was introduced in Pashto literature through the Pashto translation of John Bunyan's novel *The Pilgrim's Progress* as *Sair-al-Salikin* by Qazi Abdur Rahman in 1877. It was followed by Pashto translations of Urdu novels *Mirat-al-Urus* (1869) and *Taubat-an-Nasuh* (1874) of Mulvi Nazir Ahmad. *Mirat-al-Urus* was translated into Pashto by the name of *Naqsh-e-Nagin* by Mian Hasib Gul Kaka Khel in 1876 which was published in 1957. Another Urdu novel *Taubat-an-Nasuh* (1874) of Mulvi Nazir Ahmad was translated into Pashto by Mian Mohammad Yusuf Kaka Khel. It was published in 1905 in New Press Rawalpindi. First creative novel in Pashto titled *Mah Rukh ya Natija-e-Ishq* written by Rahat Zakhili, appeared in 1912 (Abid, 2011: 269). These early novels have been written or translated by writers from the geographical boundaries of present day Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. In this article our focus is on the novels written in present day Afghanistan.

In the following lines, a few novels written originally or translated into Pashto language, in Afghanistan during the early three decades of the development of novel, are being introduced.

Pata Mina [Hidden Love]

It is written by Burhanuddin Kashkaki. Initially it was started publishing in *Islah* newspaper in December 26, **1938**. It continued in consecutive 31 issues of *Islah* newspaper (Anzor, 2022:10). Later on it was published in book form by the publication section of *Islah* newspaper. Its first printed version contains eighty four pages. Although the novel was based on the theme of foreign media but reflects on Afghan society and culture. It bears Pashto proverbs, idioms and Islamic values. Studying medicines, visiting cinema, eating on dining table and receiving letters through post office were common practices at that time in Afghanistan (Anzor, 2022:20). Kashkaki in the novel also emphasized on education which is also visible in other writings of that time. The theme is taken from world media sources. It is not a translation but the themes have been localized by the author. The author was a journalist and translator. He born in 1271/1892 in the Kashkak village of Nangrahar. He got his education in India. He was the editor of magazine *Itihad-e-Mashriqi* during the reign of Amanullah Khan. He has written numerous books. He died in 1323/1953 in his village Kashkak in Nangrahar (Anzor, 2022:11). On the base

of available information, it is considered as the first Pashto novel written in Afghanistan.

Pa Pata da Pato Platane [Secretly Seeking the Hidden Ones]

It was translated by Burhanuddin Kashkaki (Anzor, 2022: 5). It was first published in *Islah* newspaper and later on in a book form in **1939**. *Islah* newspaper first started in the city of Khan Abad followed by Paktia and Kabul. Its first issue published on February 18, 1921. (Rafi, 1978:256)

Dwa Sara Mayen Rona [Two Loving Hearts]

It is written by Muhammad Rafiq Qani. It is the second Pashto novel among the *taba'zad* (creative) novels in Afghanistan. It was published one month after *Pata Mina*. It started printing in *Islah* newspaper on March 16, 1939. It was published in consecutive fifty three issues of the *Islah* newspaper. Last part appeared on May 18, 1939. Later on it was published by the publication section of *Islah* newspaper in book form. It contains 140 pages (Anzor, 2022:24). Muhammad Qani, the author was also the editor of *Islah* newspaper and also a contributor to Pashto section of the newspaper. Qani also emphasized on modern education and training. As already mentioned at that time efforts were going on for expansion of modern education in Afghanistan. It describes life and problems and achievements of a middle class Afghan family. The author born in 1264/1885 in Kabul. He got his early education from his father. He became first teacher of the first school at Paghman in 1301/1922. He died in 1336/1957 in Kohistan and had buried there (Anzor, 2022:23). On the base of available information, it is the second Pashto novel written in Afghanistan. It has been written one month later of the first novel by Kashkaki mentioned above. The author emphasized women education in this novel. In this regard a few poetic lines from the novel are given below (Anzor, 2022:33).

له یوې هوښیارې ښځې جار شه
 سل بی باکه او بی عقله نارینه
 چې د کور مېرمن لري پوهنه، عقل
 هغه کور به ښائسته وي رنگینه
 ټول اولاد به یې خاوند د علم و فن وي
 چې لري په کور هوښیاره ارتینه
 د کوچنیانو ورومبې مکتب په کور کېښي
 د د خپلې مهربانې مور سینه
 له (انې) او (تورپیکې) نه که څوک واخلي
 د روزنې پاکه صافه آئینه
 نو به پوه شي چې هسک بام د ترقی ته
 ورختلي ده په کومه لار زینه

Translation:

One wise woman is worth more than a hundred careless and stupid men who should be sacrificed for her. A house becomes beautiful and colorful with the presence of a wise and knowledgeable woman. If there is a wise woman in a

house, all of her offspring will have knowledge and art. A kind mother's lap is the first school at home. Those who receive education and training from their mothers and grandmothers /will be able to climb the stairs to reach the roof of progress.

Be Tarbiyata Zway [Untrained Son]

Noor Muhammad Taraki wrote this novel. It is not a complete novel. Only three of its serials appeared in 1940 in *Kabul Majallah*. First installment printed in March-April 1940 followed by April-May 1940 and May-June 1940. A few years back Muhammad Sadiq Zharak has published this incomplete novel in a book form.

Novels Written in Dari Language-II

As already mentioned that initially novel introduced in Afghanistan in Dari language which was followed by novels written or translated into Pashto language. In the early three decades of the development of novel in Afghanistan Dari and Pashto have followed each other. Therefore two other novels belong to this particular period, written in Dari language are being introduced in the following lines.

Begum [Lady]

Begum (Lady) is another modern novel printed in Afghanistan. Sulaiman Ali Jaghori wrote this novel in late 1930s. The story is about a Hazara woman who lives in a village in Jaghori. It is the first work that sheds light on the situations faced by the Hazara people. Begum portrays the poor living conditions, gender relations, advocates for women's rights, and emphasizes the importance of patriotic values for future salvation.

Talabah-I Ma'rif ya Huquq-I Millat

The novel *Talabah-I Ma'rif ya Huquq-I Millat*, authored by journalist Muhyi al-Din Anis. It was published as a single tome, unlike its predecessors which were serialized in papers. The didactic novel comprises nine chapters, each depicting a meeting among a group of students of modern schools. They discuss topics related to the rights of the nation and how to define, protect, and enforce them within the framework of the law. (Ahmadi, 2014:69).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the genre of the novel emerged in Afghanistan during the second decade of the 20th century. This modern literary genre was brought from the West through translations of European novels into Dari and Pashto languages of Afghanistan. Initially novel was introduced in Afghanistan in Dari language followed by novels written and translated into Pashto language. Some newspapers and magazines such as *Islah*, *Aman-i-Afghan*, *Anis*, *Kabal Majallah* and *Mu'arif Marif* significantly contributed to the development of novel in Afghanistan. Mahmud Beg Tarzi played a significant role in introducing the novel in Afghanistan by translating many works of English

and French authors into Dari language. Initially, the novels were categorized as translated novels, *taba'zad* or creative novels, incomplete novels, published novels, unpublished novels, and novels published in installments in newspapers and magazines. However, this article presented the development of the novel in Afghanistan in chronological order, irrespective of its association with any of these mentioned categories. The article discusses some of the prominent translated novels of French language by Tarzi. The article also discusses the first creative novel written in Afghanistan, *Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar*, which was written by Muhammad Hussain Khan. Overall, the article sheds light on the history of the development of the novel in Afghanistan and the contribution of Tarzi and Muhammad Hussain Khan in introducing and creating this genre in the Afghanistan. The first *taba'zad* (creative) Afghan novel is contested between "*Jihad-e-Akbar wa Asghar*" and "*Taswir-e-Ebrat ya Bibi Khore Jan*," These novels discuss Afghan society, culture, and values and highlight the importance of education. Despite initial censorship and lack of independent printing houses, these novels provided a platform for Afghan writers to express their ideas and perspectives. This article has introduced almost all of the novels written, translated and published by Afghan authors during the thirty years of the development of novel as literary genre in Afghanistan. Later on this genre have developed in Afghanistan and numerous novels in Dari and Pashto languages have been written and published.

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