



## Linguistics and Literature Review (LLR)

Volume 7, Issue 1, 2021

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.71>

ISSN: 2221-6510 (Print) 2409-109X (Online)

Journal Homepage: <http://journals.umt.edu.pk/llr/Home.aspx>

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/llr.71.04>

Article History: Received: August 20, 2020  
Revised: March 3, 2021  
Accepted: March 16, 2021  
Published online: March 31, 2021

QR Code:



Citation: Humaira Riaz (2021). Innocent Texts Conspiring with 'Imperial Desire': A Critique of Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, *Linguistics and Literature Review* 7(1): 43- 55.

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A publication of the  
Department of Linguistics and Communications Institute of Liberal Arts,  
University of Management and Technology Lahore, Pakistan

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## **Innocent Texts Conspiring with *Imperial Desire*: A Critique of Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran***

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### **ABSTRACT**

'Native informant' acclaims the transmission of stereotypical representation of Muslim society as a general rule and women specifically. The present work provides a comprehensive prospect of women status defined by religion Islam to build consciousness globally. Through qualitative inquiry, the present study critically analyzes Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003). Iranian writer Azar Nafisi assumes the role of 'native informant' who amplifies the narrative to authenticate her account. The study employs 'amplification' as apparatus to scrutinize fundamentalist perspective of religion Islam reflected in Iranian fiction. Spivak's concept of 'native informant' is reproduced in the narratives to establish the narrator's role as a hybrid character whose thoughts regularly record and oppose the assumed fundamentalist obligations set by the Islamic regime. The narrative begins in the narrator's house, who ardently assembles her university students and discusses various classical literary works. The memoir recounts a woman's experience in Tehran before, during, and after the revolution. Names of characters are concealed to keep individuals safe from probable vengeance and degradation. Primarily, the study enquires how knowledge production through writing personal narratives runs into mainstream culture, characterizing the representation of stereotypes. Narratives inform about a specific culture and mirror the role of 'native informant' in amplifying fundamentals of native culture and religion. Nafisi's account of extensive cultural and religious judgments from context-specific attempts to extrapolate that Islamic Republic Iran vehemently formed a desperate unobtrusive region, which maltreated women. Nafisi may have a self-protective standpoint for women, but she emerged more like a "native informant" rather than a social reformer by amplifying the situation.

**Keywords:** Apparatus, native informant, revolution, stereotype, amplification

### **Introduction**

*Reading Lolita in Tehran* as a work of fiction reflects 'native informant' and amplifies various aspects of Iranian culture in the wake of Islamic Revolution 1977. The present study synthesizes the terms 'amplification' and 'native informant'. Genette described 'amplification' as a technique

to enlarge and expand details by adding descriptions. Furthermore, by multiplying specific "episodes and secondary characters", a situation is expanded to appear dramatic scarcely "dramatic in itself" (1997: 264). In other words, amplification is a process in which a text is focused on rational elements of another text [or situation] to expand, specify, and highlight it. Genette (1997) discusses 'amplification' as a procedure primarily through "diegetic development", which refers to "the role of expansion, distension of details, description" (264). It is 'the discursive actualization of narrative structures'. Nafisi's narrative shows the 'diegetic development'. Nafisi, in her memoir, uses the technique defined by Genette as a narrative style portraying an interior prospect of the world, which represents the experiences of characters explicitly rather than through enactment. She performs the role of the narrator, telling the story to an audience. She explicitly narrates the particulars of her culture. She recounts the story rather than showing or enacting it.

Native informant is given a privileged position in Spivak's theory, which hypothesized native informant functioning as an expelled 'foreclosed' subject in modern western philosophy whose removal facilitates (self-) identification of modern western subject (1999: 355). Spivak's theory exposed problematic relationship between "observer-native informant (subject vs. non-subject or enlightened vs. not-yet-enlightened)". The relation affected ethnographic studies in order to produce any kind of meaningful explanation, not only European but also third world nationalists' ways of documenting history, which have been contaminated by a tendency arising from this 'foreclosure', which in turn drives philosophical, historical, cultural domination of west over east (Spivak, 1999: 355).

The present study reworks Spivak's notion of 'native informant'. Spivak's reading of Kant, Hegel, and Marx illustrates the seemingly "innocent" texts conspiring with "imperial desire".

Native informant (and occasionally she) is a blank, though generative of a text of cultural identity that only the West (or a Western-model discipline) could inscribe (Spivak, 1999: 6).

Mahmood identifies that 'native informant' helps "manufacture consent" for the negative projection and "fear-inducing" image of Islam in "an authentic Muslim woman's voice" (para.3). Undoubtedly, proven for the most part erroneous and guilty of extreme generalizations, such portrayals became massively popular in West. The reason is that native "testimonials" promote and confirm around the world the 'misogynistic attitudes' of Muslims (Eltahawy, 2015). Islam, through teachings and practices, ensures security and equality for females. Though patriarchal standards mingled with religion interpret a confined and limited life for a woman, Quran and Hadith ascertain powerful position to women in society by considering her role greatly influencing every facet of life.

Scholars perceive the situation analogous to the believers in Hinduism and Christianity in Vedas and Bible, respectively. Encyclopedia Britannica provides the women exposé in different religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism, presenting all women as inferior to their male counterparts. However, highlighting the oppressive treatment of women in religion, Islam appears an agenda founded on prejudice to disparage the very religion and its followers. Women

are subdued by culture and not religion. Roman law presents a woman entirely dependent on her husband or father. Hindu scriptures describe a good wife as a woman whose body and soul are entirely in submission to her husband, and through that, she attains massive recognition in the world and the next. Athenian women treated as negligible were controlled by their male members of the family. However, the situation of the Muslim woman is exploited and amplified. Nafisi, in her memoir, appears to have ignored the facts and teachings of Islam and takes a radical feminist stance to portray the Iranian women with a western mindset. Recent studies support the idea of Muslim women being passive, oppressed, and neglected as mere constructs (Ahmed et al. 2015: 61-62).

Amy and Parhizkari (2018) attempted to explain “the sub-national variation in gender-egalitarian values across Muslim-majority countries” and its impact on individuals. The study used multilevel analysis (Hierarchical Linear Modeling LHM 7.0) to focus on samples from Egypt, Iran, and Turkey to find effects on unmarried women who supported gender equality. Tonnessen (2018) found many women in the Middle East and Northern Africa played an active part in political decision-making through “soft” areas of women’s issues, such as family welfare. From religious perspective, women’s participation in politics is understood within the biological and complementary differences of women and men. The study promotes a conventional view of women in an Islamic society, which needs to be challenged worldwide as Islam ensures equality for all genders. Warren (2018), in a study, contested the construction of new Muslim female identities. The investigation focused on Muslim women working in media who negotiated their identities frequently. The situation developed politics of identity and belonging molded for their benefits. In fiction, the same politics appears in different ways.

The present study highlights amplification as a tool used by the writer to embellish the sentence by adding supplementary information to augment its value and understandability. Genette’s term is reserved for “thematic expansion” and “stylistic expansion”; a tool to expand a narrative upon other text. It is the ‘obverse of condensation’ (1997: 262). He further calls it ‘an object which most often consists in synthesis and convergence’ (Genette 1997: 262). However, Nafisi uses it to re-emphasizes the segregation of Iranian culture by presenting a synthesis of religion and politics.

Narrative can get more meaning by “amplification”. Just as tragedy emerged from the amplification of few mythical episodes, Nafisi’s narrative is situated in the backdrop of Shah’s regime and its aftermath.

The present study exposes Nafisi’s memoir, which emphasizes certain historical events and issues foregrounding her to make her account credible. The objective of the present study is to make [readers] see that the circulation of the stereotypical image of a Muslim society is credited by “native informant” (Conrad: 42). What becomes more striking is Nafisi’s massive familiarity with the technical challenge of writing a fiction book. Nafisi correlates with Spivak, who solicits her implied readers, the -hyphenated Americans, seeking economic and political asylum rethinking themselves as potential exploitation agents but not the sufferers (Spivak, 1999: 357). The contemporary age of telecommunication regards native informant unswervingly as indigenous

knowledge is open employing technological sources. Spivak argues that 'the tracker herself performs the figure' (1999). To trace and analyze the sketch of 'native informant' is not enough in any discourse. 'Native informant' reveals a 'position' that can be appropriated.

### *Significance of the Study*

Discerned in the milieu of Crusades, Islamic Revolution, and ancient Muslim Christian rivalries, Islam and West form an opposition in the contemporary world. These conflicting views have given rise to emotional and psychological issues. Colossal stereotypes of Muslim women exist in the West, disfiguring the massive gender and class variations in their circumstances and status. The present study helps understand the agenda against women's position in Islam and Muslim society in general and Iran in particular. It provides a comprehensive prospect of women's status defined by religion Islam to build consciousness globally.

### *Research Question*

How do personal narratives employ amplification as a linguistic tool to illustrate female stereotypes in Muslim society?

### *Objectives*

- To explore the stereotypical image of women in Muslim society reflected in personal narratives.
- To highlight 'amplification' as an effective linguistic tool employed to seek and strengthen political asylum.

### *Methodology*

Qualitative in nature, the present study textually analyzes Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) to interpret the role of the writer as a 'native informant' who magnifies sentences to validate her account. Textual analysis focuses on the content of communication rather than its structure. It is valued in research because it lets researchers understand meanings and ideas communicated through written words (Catherine, 2005; Bazerman et al., 2004). Terms 'amplification' and 'native informant' are used with and without inverted commas in the course of discussion. Sentences were randomly taken from text to highlight additional information added for embellishing and conveying implied meanings that the memoir contains for offering credibility.

### *The Conceptual Framework*

The study employs "amplification" as a linguistic apparatus to scrutinize the fundamentalist perspective of religion Islam reflected in Iranian fiction. Amplification is a process in which a text is focused on rational elements of another text to expand, specify, and highlight it. Genette (1997) discusses "amplification" as a procedure primarily through "diegetic development", which refers to "the role of expansion, distension of details, description" (264). It is "the discursive actualization

of narrative structures". The present study utilizes its "diegetic development". The study also reproduces Spivak's concept of 'native informant' reflected in the selected memoir to establish the narrator's role as a hybrid character whose thoughts regularly record and oppose the assumed fundamentalist obligations set by the Islamic regime. "Native informant" reveals a "position" that can be appropriated. That does not explicitly belong to anyone but appears to have been borrowed. She demands that the reader "work [her] agenda out" (Spivak, 1999: 358). Nafisi equally demands the same from her readers.

### **Remaking Vision of Islamic Society and Iranian Culture**

Iranian feminist Azar Nafisi set the memoir *Reading Lolita in Tehran* in the milieu of the Iranian Revolution. Her fundamental contention that Muslim culture detests women propels powerful stereotypes of Islam and contempt of women (Eltahawy, 2015). It positions Nafisi's memoir within an evolving tendency of "native informants" whose personal experiences of suppression under the Islamic regime result in significant literary texts production. However, such texts primarily amplify the truth to the extent of generalization by merely pointing at the dark aspects. Inspiring readers' responses and sympathies biases are strengthened. Nafisi's voice immerses the valid message of intellectuals. The Western scholars and feminists enthusiastically argue that Islam oppresses women (Eltahawy, 2012; de Vries et al., 1998; Marks, 2016). Muslim female writers need to take a stance that is not secular because no culture supports secularism. Faith is the foundation of a society, and every culture adheres to its norms, whether social, linguistic, or religious.

Nafisi endeavors to depict the position of women in Iranian society. In her own fascinating ways, she describes a group of her students. Her purpose may be to record authentic accounts of these Muslim women's lives; however, it appears to have already been decided what those accounts would likely be. To say she reinforces negative stereotypes in the western readers' minds who would love to see the exhibition of 'weird marginal sexualities (Ghalith, 1994: 79) of the Muslim females is far from being false. She narrates the stories herself that corroborates the data she is presenting. Assuming the role of 'native informant', her appeal to the readers is to consider her narrative as a factual record of that regime. Spivak discussed the role of native informant as one 'to speak after a fashion (1999). Native informant provides information acting as a source and body of knowledge.

Nafisi lived a life in Iran. She witnessed the Rule of Shah and the imposition of the Islamic regime. Migrated to the United States, she attempts to write a memoir. A question may arise why she did not hold protest within her own country for her rights being a woman. Isn't migration an escape from a situation? It certainly makes her narrative incredible. Another reason is Iranian women accepted the role of religion in their lives very well. What Quran interpreted for them, they appropriated that role. Often, the interpreters (in this case, the religious scholars) exaggerate by asserting patriarchy, but there are many other societies parallel to Iran where men interpret lives for their women. If patriarchy is a common characteristic of every culture, why does Nafisi highlights the Iranian society pointing at Islam as a religion of oppression? Her narrative can be

viewed as a work with an agenda that belong to someone who ‘possibly is an agent of exploitation rather than a victim’ (Spivak, 1999: 179).

“Amplification” in connection to the position of “native informant” is dovetailed in theme and style throughout the narrative. The first phase of this narrative anticipates Iran's situation in the wake of the Islamic revolution when Shah of Iran was defeated and Ayatullah Khomeini rendered strict Islamic rule in Iran. The account recounts how Nafisi, a university lecturer, symbolically refuses to continue teaching in the university when the new regime imposes strict laws. Here starts her saga of memory.

Critics such as Singh (2005) call Nafisi “not just... a political, she is militantly so”. He refers to her as someone “strongly oriented to the freedom of imagination”. However, she runs her imagination to the extent that enlarges the social, political, and religious aspects extremely. Teaching her class Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby*, she redirects them “to inhale the experience... [and] start breathing,” underlining her vision of Islamic society where women are not free to breathe and express (Nafisi, 2003: 7). It is to say fabricating assumptions. Islam, when institutionalized, is viewed as a tyrant (Mehrdad, 2003). Political contentions seek to establish norms or a systematic way of doing things.

Nafisi sketches the condition of Iranian society after “the so-called Islamic Revolution a progress from modern realism to abstraction (2003: 11). She intensifies her sentences by calling “reality so intolerabl[y] ... bleak” that allows “the colors of dreams” to be painted only for few as not all “get the chance to paint the colors of their dream”. It entails Nafisi’s pessimism of the Iranian future (2003: 11).

Leaders of Islam are often part of an inside enclave of clerics who ordain, elect and make recommendations. Their expertise is not because they are on a spiritual journey. It is mainly due to the training requirements they fulfill. Further, these leaders interpret social and religious ways for the people. Islamic Revolution in Iran has witnessed the same. Islam is a religion of tolerance and ensures equality and security to the females, preferably rather than aggression and suppression. Nafisi eludes these aspects. Although her memoir provides discussion encompassing a wide range of themes such as personal freedom, social obligations, commitment, imagination, and most of all, moral courage, she depicts herself and her characters caught in an extreme situation in revolutionary Iran. The question arising out of the situation is if she presented a genuine document. Representing her female characters shy, uncomfortable, and unaccustomed to being asked to speak their mind, Nafisi circulates and reassures a Muslim Woman's stereotypical image (Joseph, 2005). Nafisi shrouds the details of all the female characters, and under fact, research has to enquire if they existed or are mere fabrications.

Revolution has shaped Nafisi's Iranian characters' lives, all hermits; however, they have less in common except vulnerability and audacity. “Affiliation with a dissident religious organization” sends Mahshid to jail for five years (2003: 3). She is barred from attending university for two years after release. She is habitual of wearing the scarf for religious reasons long before it was made mandatory for women in Iran. However, she is offended by being forced to wear it. Manna is a poet. Her husband, Nima, is desperately eager to be a part of the group at Nafisi’s

home. Manna loves colors and feels suffocated in a dull world around her as a result of the revolution. The description is made exaggeratedly colorful by additional personal information.

The one to the far right in the second photograph is our poet, Manna, in a white T-shirt and jeans. She made poetry out of things most people cast aside (Nafisi 2003: 3).

Sanaz's love for Ali torments her brother though Ali left Iran six years before. Yassi is a logophile. She is the youngest in a group and loves to explore words frequently. The rest of the group members are Mitra, Nassrin, and Azin. Mitra, wedded to Hamid, ultimately tries to immigrate to Canada. Nassrin becomes a sexual victim by an uncle who abused her physically but wished to remain "pure" for his spouse (2003: 19). Azin, a tall and blond lady, ended up in three unhappy marriages. Nafisi characterizes her seven students one by one as they enter her home on their first workshop. The disparities in these women demonstrate enormous diversity in dress, attitude, and beliefs prevailing among Iranian women despite "the regime's attempts to define them only as Muslim women" (Nafisi, 2003: 28). The situation is amplified as follows:

The Islamic Republic coarsened my taste in colors, Manna said, fingering the discarded leaves of her roses. I want to wear outrageous colors, like shocking pink or tomato red. I feel too greedy for colors to see them in carefully chosen words of poetry. Manna was one of those people who would experience ecstasy but not happiness (Nafisi, 2003: 10).

Throughout the memoir, Nafisi suggests that Islamists rob women of their freedom. While her claims may generate impressive responses from West, they do not replicate the multifaceted truth. Islam ensures equal rights to women. The portrayal of women's rights in Islam as archaic by Western media demonstrates subjectivity and prejudice against religion. Women's liberation in the West pertains to a concealed sort of physical abuse, depriving her of respect and demeaning her character. Islam explicitly characterizes man and woman as complementary, not conflicting to each other. It is based on partnership, not contradiction, as to endeavor for authority. Islamist movements differ widely worldwide, just as conventional and faith-based political movements vary widely within and among countries with the Christian majority.

Moreover, religion, when politicized and institutionalized, leads to oppression. What oppresses a woman in America differs from what oppresses her sisters in South Korea, Bolivia, Greece, Australia, or South Asia. Religion cannot be divorced from the cultural and historical contexts in which it is practiced. Nafisi seems to overlook the fact. Dabashi, an Iranian-American Professor alleged Nafisi- who convened a secret book society for two years at her home in Tehran. She attempts "to reprocess 'a kaffeek latsch'" adaptation of English literature, paving "ideological foregrounding of American empire" (Dabashi, 2006). Nafisi's reading of Western classics such as Austen, James, Fitzgerald, and Nabokov (her memoir is based on these literary texts) seems to undermine Persian cultural autonomy. Her memoir brings forth the times-old "Orientalised pedophilia" appealing "to the most deranged Oriental fantasies of a nation" (Dabashi, 2006).



Withdrawal into one's dreams could be dangerous, I reflected, padding into the bedroom to change; this I had learned from Nabokov's crazy dreamers, like Kinbote and Humbert (Nafisi, 2003: 8).

Although Nafisi blames the institutionalization of religion as a core problem of Iranian society, however, her narrative frequently deviates from reworking an agenda. One cannot label her 'anti-Islam' as she utilized fiction to present a fabric of Iranian society. Being a part of the structure, she performs the role of "native informant," providing information about Iranian society's culture and institutions. Nafisi portrays the situation explicitly counting on sentences:

For nearly two years, almost every Thursday morning, rain or shine, they came to my house, and almost every time, I could not get over the shock of seeing them shed their mandatory veils and robes and burst into color. When my students came into that room, they took off more than their scarves and robes (Nafisi, 2003: 4).

Nafisi, in her memoir, symbolizes oppression by depicting females wearing veils. Their attire inside the cloak is reminiscent of their zeal that demands liberation from such coercion. In the beginning, stunning photos that Nafisi describes depict the mindset of the characters who find shelter and comfort in her house through literature discussions. This desire can be traced through biblical sources first. After Adam sinned, God clothed Adam and Eve by making skin robes (Genesis 3: 21). Further Quran authenticated this and forbade females to wear clothes that reveal their body parts that may attract the opposite sex. Nafisi pictures an extremist view by referring to veils and the liberty that these females feel after unveiling themselves. According to Quranic interpretation, it carries social and moral significance.

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e., monitor themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) not to be annoyed. Furthermore, Allah is Ever Often Forgiving, Most Merciful” (al-Ahzaab: 33:59).

Quran, like any other religion, directs women towards chastity. Revealing the body is forbidden in all religions. Exposure to western media and feminist philosophies has gravely affected the scenario in Muslim cultures where women readily embrace feminism as a school of thought that argues about their liberation. However, the liberation has gone to the extent (termed Post Feminism) to utilize their bodies for their benefits. A slogan such as "my body, my choice" has aggravated the situation by encouraging prostitution. Liberation is understood as an extreme opposite to limitations. Limitations are there, and civilized people draw these to make the society distinct from a jungle. There is a great deal to investigate and find what 'liberal' and 'radical' indicate.

Not women, Islam has set equal obligations on men as well; the problem is its interpretation and implementation. Western media propagate a fallacy that Muslim woman is spiritless and

senseless. If we trace the history, the Council of wise men in Rome during the seventeenth century unanimously approved it. Islam ensures man and woman equality and similar spiritual nature, “O humankind reverence your Guardian-Lord, who has created you from a single person and created like nature his mate” (Quran, Chapter.4, Verse No.1). Quran says, “We have made for you companions and mates of your nature” (Surah Nahl, Chapter.16, verse No.72). Islam does not rest any financial obligations on women. Instead, the burden is on the shoulders of the man in the family. However, if she wants to work, she can take professions subject to conditions that are not physically sensuous and provoking. There is a long list when we talk about woman's rights in Islam. The only insurance is body protection on the part of her, which is supported by every religion. Indeed most of the evils start from here when a woman stops covering the private body parts. It causes great destruction in society. Nafisi’s ironic depiction of the veil reveals her thoughts as a radical and not liberal. Wrong is wrong, or God would have never ordered Adam and Eve to cover their bodies with leaves. All divine religions conform to it.

Islam preaches modesty. Women use the veil as a symbol of piety. Modesty invigorates their freedom, and they keep bodies covered instead of exposing them. Besides religious context, human evolution and civilization have witnessed that human beings always desire and need to cover their bodies. This makes them distinct from animals.

Middle Eastern thoughts about Western women who wear miniskirts and bikinis are founded on their belief that Western culture has oppressed, objectified, and sexually commodified female bodies (Wilson, 2016). As it appears unreasonable to presume that all women wearing high heels denote oppression, similarly, it is exaggeratedly erroneous to believe that women wearing ‘niqab’ or veil are oppressed by men or religion.

Undoubtedly, Nafisi candidly highlights her social concerns that she personally observed and experienced. Nevertheless, Muslim females around the world may disagree with her theological views. This by no means suggests that the study uses adequate first-hand knowledge to perceive simplistic deformations of multifaceted cultures. Misconceptions are omissible.

Quran in Surah al-Ahzaab, ayat 59, explicitly states the command of Allah given to His Prophet Muhammad, “O Prophet! Say to your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers that: they should let down upon themselves their jalabib.”

From Arabic sources such as *Lisanu 'l-'Arab*, *Majma'u 'l-Bahrayn* or *al-Munjid* describes *Jalabib* جَلَابِيب is the plural of *jilbab* جِلْبَاب , meaning loose outer garment used for covering the body. *Al-Munjid* defines *jilbab* as “the shirt or a wide dress—القميص أو الثوب الواسع.” While al-Turayhi, in *Majma'u 'l-Bahrayn*, defines it as “a wide dress, wider than the scarf and shorter than a robe that a woman puts upon her head and lets it down on her bosom...”

“Help women”, a Western slogan, is promoted by Nafisi, who speaks out forcefully against inequalities in Iranian society if genuine or fabricated. However, it is significant that her readers understand the dangers of reporting, which mainly amplify intricate issues of gender, politics, and religious celebration in countries with the Muslim majority. The way Nafisi has approached the subject gives rise to a tendency that arises from 'foreclosure' that drives philosophical, historical, and cultural dominance of West over East (Spivak, 1999).

Historical accounts illustrate arguments supporting women's rights; however, these imply imperialistic, political, and aggressive ends. The exaggerated portrayal of emotions and sensations accomplish little to broaden our consideration of the specific contexts and conditions which shaped aggression against women in the Iranian region today.

*It shall be no crime in them as to their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sister's sons, or their woman, or the slaves which their right hands possess, if they speak to them unveiled (Quran, 33:55).*

Nafisi amplifies certain events and issues which coincide with her point of view. *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003) centers on female students in Nafisi's house who conduct discussions on English literary masterpieces that the new government bans in Iran. The lives of the group members are affected by Iranian Revolution. Each contributes her life story to the discussion. Readers learn about female oppression, sexual molestation, and the restructure of patriarchy norms in Iranian society and culture during stories. Nafisi encourages this female group to discover means for re-creating their identities to breathe freely in “their own little pockets of freedom” (Nafisi, 2003: 11). The system and the world seem entirely new and different from the one their mothers grew up in for them, within the parameters of such restrictions, “the minutest opening[s] become a great freedom” (Nafisi, 2003: 11). She narrates: “Teaching in the Islamic Republic, like any other vocation, was subservient to politics and subject to arbitrary rules” (Nafisi, 2003: 7). However, the situation is not the same in every culture and society where Islam is the dominant religion.

Works such as *Reading Lolita in Tehran* tend to lurk in the resolution to destroy one and many others. The knowledge produced through language and ethnography flows into popular culture, and employing amplification characterizes the circulation of stereotypes and information about the particular Iranian culture. Initially resisting the new Islamic regime in Iran, Nafisi settles into a life of compromise that involves a veil and ban on reading western literature. Nafisi compares her personal experiences with the reading of *The Great Gatsby* (1925). For her, “the ideologically hyper-charged climate” is essential (Singh, 2005). The betrayal of ideas in *The Great Gatsby* shapes the philosophical foundation of Nafisi's approach to literature as “the absolute failure of platonic forms” (Singh, 2005).

Nafisi's narrative continues with a detailed account of the consequences of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and relates it to each of her student's narrative by giving comprehensive descriptions. The narrative focuses closely on the relation between different Iranian factions. She increases a sense of hand sight and retrospection by building on what has previously occurred (Hazbun, 2015). She amplifies the truth, referring to the Islamic Republic “as capricious as April when small periods of sunshine would give way to showers and storms” (Nafisi, 2003: 9). She calls the regime ‘unpredictable’ (Nafisi, 2003: 9). However, the majority of Iranians welcomed the new regime, which replaced “a pro-western absolute monarchy” with an “anti-western authoritative theocracy” (Abbas, 2011). Revolution has relatively been violent now that redefined “the meaning and practice of modern revolution though violence followed in its aftermath” (Ritter, 2010).

Punishing female students for laughing aloud and barring them from entering university premises "alleged for keeping a blush in bag" are the tales that echo Nafisi more as a feminist (Nafisi, 2003: 9). Islam does not impose restrictions on the makeup of women though it marks a boundary for them to observe chastity, which is the core philosophy of every religion and belief system. Making codes of conduct in social or political is the sign of civilization, and so does Islam. Situations like these are found in all cultures though their nature is different. Associating it all together with Islam burdens Nafisi's tale with an objective and personal view of the situation. Powdering face categorized Scarlett O' Hara among coquettish women in American writer Margrette Mitchel's legendary plantation saga *Gone with the Wind* (1936). Nafisi appreciates her characters' physical beauty and mocks by adding descriptions of their families who fail to offer them protection in the absence of a veil.

Her skin is the color of moonlight, and she has almond-shaped eyes and jet-black hair. She wears pastel colors and is soft-spoken. Her pious background should have shielded her, but it did not (Nafisi, 2003: 9).

Nafisi's sarcasm on "lying to the Revolution Guards" carries its implication for all the cultures and religions worldwide, most specifically Christianity that has a staunch life code for the nuns in a church. Islam and its law became her foundational narrative, which later moves to another level, emphasizing the necessity of reading western literature. This provides the western audience with a byword for Islam as an oppressive and tyrant force.

She does not celebrate idealization by teaching Gatsby; instead she points at the ingenuity that surrounds the ideals. Ideals are dashed to the ground. The undercurrent of Fitzgerald's Gatsby is the shattering of American Dream, which is comparable to Iranians' dream in the wake of the Islamic Revolution; what Nafisi highlights is the guest ion of loss of an illusion (Singh, 2005). Gatsby dreams of prosperity, love, and freedom social hierarchical restrictions. Likewise, in Iran, dream for an affluent and face oppression in the name of religion afterward. Nafisi projects the individual woman in her literary group as Fitzgerald depicts Gatsby, who possesses a hare sty of imagination (Fitzgerald). Referring to Ayatollah Khomeini during her narration, Nafisi's key is what Singh calls the danger of ideals (2005). Her account shows that upholding the flag of ideals and reinforcement are entirely different matters. It is practical. For Nafisi, literature provides means to conceive and imagine liberally. A repressive hold of the new regime changed her thinking. Her "a rigidly orthodox mode of reading" fails to justify the cognitive complication in choosing to write her narrative about post-Revolutionary Iran (Singh, 2005).

Nafisi chooses to address a western audience. It cannot be argued that the abjection of her harsh criticism of Iranian society is to invite fellow Iranians and call for reformation. Instead, it appears that she is more concerned in informing her western audience identifying the weaknesses and deficiencies of the Iranian society in general and the Muslim women in particular. It reinforces the Muslim stereotypes and culture, providing the West more grounds to disparage the Muslims and the females in an Islamic society. Islam gives teaching to know everything, and adaptation according to social, cultural, or religious conventions is likely a norm in almost every society. It believes in an unbiased study of the universe.

Nafisi features *The Great Gatsby*, *Lolita*, and *Pride and Prejudice* in her class discussion focus on reflections on the function and value of literary study. However, to say literature conflicts with Islamic values and undermined in Islamic Republics is but an exaggeration. Emphasis of the narrative on *The Great Gatsby* sets the political and social context of Nafisi's memoir. Fitzgerald envisioned "the American Dream" that categorized *The Great Gatsby* "an American classic". Nafisi follows the tradition. Yet, she goes a little too far by presenting female characters under the oppression of religion aspiring for the "green light" (*The Great Gatsby*). Gatsby is the role model for these women, and they want to achieve what Gatsby desired, though in a different perspective as they are placed in an entirely different situation.

Living in Post-Revolution Iran is for Nafisi what Nabokov calls "a night marish quality of living in an atmosphere of perpetual dread" (Nafisi, 2003: 23). The actual depiction of an Islamic society emphasizes peace and harmony as its foundational elements. By comparing Iranian women to Nabokov's Cincinnatus C. Mars, women's actual status in Islam is marred. It urges Muslim women "to fight with their instincts" to be free in order to survive (Nafisi, 2003: 23). Islam never teaches to "to poke fun at [one's] own misery in order to survive" (Nafisi, 2003: 23). "Execution" is not by the religion (Nafisi, 2003: 23). Nafisi experiments the "corporeal metaphor" (Mendell, 1997) while describing the world outside her house as "other world", "where the bad witches and furies were waiting to transform us into the hooded creatures of the first" (Nafisi, 2003: 24). Using the technique of logos, she appeals to her reads to imagine the world as she creates it by her words and conception.

Nafisi also re-appropriates words such as "upsilamba!" to her situation, creating a secret language within the students group to open a "secret cave of remembrance" (Nafisi, 2003: 20). Chapter fourteen of Nafisi's narrative depicts an even more discriminatory and objective tone where she pictures herself "going up the stair...never...coming down" (Nafisi, 2003: 90). Here the narrative adopts "an enumerative, exaggerated and overstated style" (Hazbun, 2015). She refers to Iranian women wrapping "chador" not with "shy with drawl" for safety purposes but out of 'political' necessity (Nafisi, 2003: 192). The critical impression is of religion as a tyrant explicitly condemned in Nafisi's memoir. Frequent portrayal of woman in veil re-enforces patriarchy in Iranian culture. Here the oppressor is man as well as religion' (Nafisi, 2003: 179).

## Conclusion

Condition of Post-Revolution Iranian society is integrated with western literature to extend support to Islam and Iran's Western ideology. It also conforms to the Western notions of liberalism in sharp contrast to the teachings of Islam. Representation of Islam becomes more nuanced in the narrative. Nafisi depicted Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) as an oppressor barring women from freedom. She situated her arguments in her female characters' specific contexts who gathered to study English literature in her house. Western literature was discussed among the female group as liberal, offering freedom of thoughts and action to women. Their personal experiences were set in opposition to Islamic values and conduct of life. Nafisi's conscientiousness in her extrapolation of extensive religious and cultural verdicts from context-specific abuses implied that the Islamic Republic in Iran toxically created a hopelessly backward region that treated women as animals

flock. Nafisi may have a defensive stance for Iranian women, but she appears more like an informant rather than a reformer by amplifying truths.

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