

Untying Refugee Actualities by Exposing the Imprints of Stranger King Theory in Nadia Hashimi's *When the Moon is Low* (2015)

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Abstract

Each and every human rule his life and habitation as a king and queen. It is unimaginable that if suddenly such kings and queens are impelled to leave their own habitation and tends to live a pathetic life without any identity. Such cruel act offers them a name, "a refugee". A refugee is a person who has been urged to leave his or her dwelling place due to war or persecution. It is to be noted that without taking place in any disputes, they turn to victims to the core. The stranger king theory speaks about an external figure which can be believed to be the solution to present conflicts even if that external figure ultimately becomes a new colonizer later. In this article, such journey of displacement is referred as "the Stranger King" who takes them to a new place where they believe that they will get a secured shelter. And in the end, the same Stranger King grasps the people's liberty and lead them to wander as a mendicant until they possess it. This article vehemently sketches out the exorbitant experience of Fereiba the protagonist of the novel, *When the Moon is Low* (2015) by Nadia Hashimi. Both theoretical and thematical study are done to make this article as a complete analysis. This paper aims to forecast the optimistic ideas on the struggles the people face when they begin to solve the problems and be the real kings and queens of their life by facing the temporary stranger kings bravely.

Keywords: Refugee, Stranger King, Colonizer, Displacement, Mendicant and Optimism,

Introduction

The people who are baptized as refugee by the literates have been lived once in their own homes like kings and queens. They need not to possess castle and gemstones. The people who have small home, a loveable family and the ability to rule their life in virtual path are considered as real kings and queens. When all of a sudden, if it gets collapsed by an external force unexpectedly, they are torn up into almost lifeless flowers longing for some stalks to stand. When the flower wishes to save its life by moving away from its own garden and flies to a new one, it is supposed to meet a lot of challenges. At some moment the new journey may become its greater struggle since it is unpredictable. This article deals with the

challengeable journey which acts as the only possible way of escape which also acts as a laborious part for a refugee family. This crucial journey is considered as the Stranger King. The Stranger King Theory discusses about an irrelative element that is observed as the key solution to current struggles which turns out as a new colonizer in the end. This article carries out the thorough analyzation of the novel, *When the Moon is Low* (2015) by applying the Stranger King theory to give an absolute view of a pathetic life of refugee even in their way of escape.

Review of the Literature

People leave their home temporarily or permanently all over the world to seek a new life and to achieve their dreams. They may feel comfortable or unworthy but they enjoy their independence to work hard to attain their aim. It happens everywhere. But banishment is completely different from this volunteer displacement. Banishment steals the dreams of people and imprisons their independence. Instead, it gift them darkness. Edward said quoted in his book, *Reflections on Exile*

... exile is irremediably secular and unbearably historical; that it is produced by human beings for other human beings; and that, like death without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography? (Said 174)

Humans always prove that they are rational animal. As wild animals hunt their own species to fulfill their hunger humans hunt their own blood to fulfill their earthly happiness. They forget that "Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience" (Said 173).

They may not know to fight with their enemies with swords or rifles but they know how to wake up from their failures recurrently to fulfill the dreams of their family. They find their happiness not in the triumph they attained in the battlefield but in their family's growth. Refugee meets chain of such unpredicted challenges which become their stranger king which rule them in new unknown way.

The Stranger King Theory is progressed by Marshall Sahlins, an American cultural anthropologist. He is very popular for his ethnographic work in Pacific. He is also known for his benefactions to anthropological theory. The stranger king theory speaks about an external figure which can be believed to be the solution to present conflicts even if that external figure ultimately becomes a new colonizer later. The theory also gives a refined view on how society encounter the external supremacies and how apparently disruptive incidents can be as chunk of wider, present process of social and political transitions, within the context of colonialism. In the novel, *When the Moon is Low* by Nadia Hashimi readers can find a lot of cues of the stranger king theory.

Contexture of Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the countries which is very rich in natural resources. The country holds thousands of mineral fields which contains precious minerals like chromite, barite, gold, copper, lead, petroleum, lithium, gemstones and so on. Badakhashan province in Afghanistan consists of six lapis mines. Such resources are worth enough to make the country as one of the richest mining regions in the cosmos. The government trusted that the optimistic evolution of the country is very possible with the aid of mineral resources which lead to good economic upswing. When the United States Geological Survey estimated the production of Barite, they have discovered that it is about 2,000 metric tons; 6,000 tons of chromite and 45,000 barrels of natural gas liquids.

Instead of the great wealth, Afghanistan is well known for war and explosives. On bringing about the short-term interest human leaves the long-term requirements. They recurrently get into critical mystifications on becoming conscious of what is to be thought highly of, the way to accomplish and by whom it is possible. To fulfill the dreams of themselves, humans started to steal the independence of others. In the name of religion and spiritual faith they fail to understand the importance of humanity. Their quest for power has transformed themselves into a fanatic group. They put an end to women employment, education and social participation. They also proclaim several restrictions in the life style of common people. Even if a man from the same community declares his defiance against such restrictions he will be given vulnerable punishment or sometimes sentenced to death. This peculiar rebellion struggles affects the innocent people crucially. The novel, *When the Moon is Low* by Nadia Hashimi is packed up with such a life history of the protagonist Fereiba.

Author's Biography

Nadia Hashimi (1977-present) is an American writer whose ancestors have been rooted in Afghanistan a long ago. She is a soul touching writer who scripted the life of Afghan refugee, women and children in her heart soothing novels. Her way of portraying every character is appreciable. Her books are celebrated as powerful, heart-wrenching and unforgettable for its challenging, complex and controversial themes like intolerance, dual identities, communism and racism. She uses vivid descriptions, evocative prose and rich diction to transport her characters and themes lively into the imagination of the readers. Some of her such evocative novels are *The Pearl That Broke Its Shell* (2014), *One Half from the East* (2016), *Spark Like Stars* (2021), *Spilled Ink* (2024) and so on. Her novel *When the Moon is Low* (2015) inscribes the refugee catastrophe back in 2015, which has been still enduring at present. The novel has two narrators who narrates their struggles they face while they pull out of their country, Afghanistan which is prosperous in all resources to foreign country to survive as refugee.

Circumstance Which Leads to Refugee in The Novel

Fereiba, the protagonist of the novel, *When the Moon is Low* by Nadia Hashimi is a woman grown up in orthodox family. She is given a very limited rights being a woman in such a religious land. When she gets married, she tracks down an escape hatch. It is her husband, Mahmoud. He is a scholarly well-read man and enlightened too. He execrates blind principles followed by the people in the name of culture and religion. He wants his wife to use her freedom which has been stolen by her family in the name of religion and ethics. He makes her to dress up herself as she wishes. He offers her good education as much as he could after their marriage. His act is strictly hated by the natives of the country. The rise of Taliban rebels turns her happiness into temporary emotion. They kill her modernized husband. With a son, a daughter and a new born child she is deserted in her own country. It results in displacement from her mother land. To save their lives as a single mother, Fereiba supposed to face crucial situations. She believes that this new journey is the solution for her present issue. Because of her crucial situations, the same journey turns into a greater struggle. It turns her life as a challenging game.

The Stranger Who Wore The crown

A man can fulfil both his physical and emotional requirements in his home. When he is not able to identify himself in his dwelling place, estrangement occurs. While self-awareness becomes lower there shall be an internal war take place within every human's psyche. He keeps dreaming for his identity. In such case, people are uprooted from their own land to other nations like orphans even though they might have strong ancestors in their country by losing their identity in search of peaceful life. Fereiba is also pushed to this situation. She decides to leave her mother country to give a good life as her husband gifted her. She believes her displacement is the only solution of all her miseries. She plans to go her sister's house which is located in London. But as she believes her journey is not easy for her. As a new widow she faces cruel challenges on her way. Her way of escape itself turns into a new struggle. The face of her journey starts to reveal its true colour.

Fereiba's life must be noted as the life of refugee. It is a very good example for how war and persecution force a well-educated family to suffer like a vagrant. The challenges she faces on the way is hard to fix the words to explain. Unexpectedly Samira, her daughter is traumatized by her father's murder and stopped speaking to anyone. Fereiba crossed Iran, Turkey and some notable places in Europe to reach her sister's house in London. When they reach Turkey Saleem, the elder son of Fereiba arises as the second narrator of the novel since he gets separated from his mother, the focus moves from Fereiba to Saleem. He suffers by new struggles. After becoming tired of searching her son and to protect her new born baby Aziz, Fereiba decides to leave Turkey. It makes Saleem to fight alone by himself in a very new environment.

To keep him alive, having no other way he joins in a brigand, sleeps in the platforms and lives like a slum. Fereiba does not abandon her son. Instead, she has a complete faith that he could overcome from all his struggles and reach her one day.

The cruel journey has taken the crown as the Stranger King. Initially the journey gives a lot of hope to Fereiba that there is a colourful life waiting in London. It is going to be the healer of all her struggles. She enjoys the fresh air as soon as she leaves Afghanistan. Truly, the journey seems as the way of escape. As the journey continues, she starts to meet struggles in order. More than the external enemies, poverty which is gifted by the stranger king let her to suffer deadly issues. In birth she does not belong to economically challenged family, her country is not poor in natural resources, she is not a coward because she is bold enough to guide her children in all her way alone when displacing from one country to another. But she is forced to leave her own country only because of war and persecution and turns as a rootless refugee. To accomplish the earthly interests like to dominate other people, to show up oneself, to become glad by seeing others' sufferings and so on, human leaves the long-term requirements like family, love, humanity, and gratitude which gives all kinds of goodness.

The sudden sunrise turns black as soon as Fereiba has started to enjoy. She believes the world which possess around two hundred countries may give a small land of peace to live for the four. When she decides to move to her sister's place, London she is almost treated like a vagrant to get food for her children. Earth is a mother land of every creature. It covers all the elements. In this earth every species is interrelated to one another. Without one species another cannot survive. Even though earth is filled with natural resources a helpless woman is in empty hands without food to fill her stomach. But her journey which is illustrated as the stranger king is not as she dreamt of. This is the situation of every refugee when he or she struggles to search for dwelling place. They are also humans to get appetite, tired of working hard and shame to be unclothed. But there are no hands to lift them up.

Generally, people put their trust on their son more than the daughters. They believe their sons as the pillars of their family. Fereiba also put her trust on her son, Saleem after her husband's death. But the journey deserts her son also away from her. Appetite leads Saleem to join with thieves. It is not Saleem's desire but his choice. People can argue that it is people's accountability to choose the right way even in the darkest situation. But when they supposed to face such dark situations, they stumble to walk firmly. Being a very young boy, Saleem's thoughts fight within himself. Finally, his appetite wins. His tiresome journey forced him to join with wrong people because of his inability. The stranger king offers him platforms to sleep. When he has been in Afghanistan with his parents, he has been pampered and given comfort shelter. Displacement earned him the title, refugee and left him with zero hands. His nights become sleepless nights; tears become his only companion. Fereiba continuous her

journey with the only hope that her son will find her one day and brings happiness into her life. She starts her walk with her daughter and new born baby.

Quest for Identity

Refugee people need not a tree to give life but to give them shelter. They just need stalks to tie them together. They can spread their roots and born as a new plant. In the novel, *When the Moon is Low* (2015) the characters are forced to flee oppressions or human independence infractions such as torment. Marrying Mahmoud is like a rebirth of Fereiba. Because she gets unconditional love with proper independence only from her husband after the marriage being Mahmoud is a well-literate and cultured person. His character emphasizes the importance of education. When a man gets educated, he learns how to lead a disciplined life. Discipline is not like being strict on following the rules of a community and ethics of a religion, making others also to follow. Discipline lies in how far a man respects another man; how far he gives importance to other's ideas and desires as he gives his own; how much he let others to live a happy life as he lives. Mahmoud is such a gentle man. But his goodness is opposed by a group of people, they kill him at last without thinking about his family even a new born baby. This act, makes the readers to think if the rules are greater than one man's life, then there will be no man in future to follow the same rules. The world may become empty.

No people are said to be refugee when love is shared among all the people unconditionally. As per the ancestors' words people come from dust and they return to dust again, people have come into this world with empty hands, when they die, they cannot tie up anything with them. Until they get call from nature, it is good to spread love to one another and make everyone in this world to believe that they have beautiful families to take care. Because humans are the only creature who can communicate, educate, being educated, analyze, respond, love, sacrifice and good cognitive skill to choose right path. Refugee people need not a tree to give life but to give them shelter. They just need stalks to tie them together. They can spread their roots and born as a new plant. The stranger king also comes to an end when human reaches his aim by acknowledging his power. The people can expect any external figures to retrieve them from their struggles. Eventually, they need to learn to use that external figure as a hand stick. People need to be trained to use that properly. When they fall down, they must rise to continue their progress. They should not get fear or frustration which burry them soon. After reaching their place they must also remember to throw the hand stick away. Or else they may forget their ability.

Conclusion

The journey of Fereiba is the stranger king which offers her true solution to move away from her problematic region. Her journey is not easy. Even though the journey is not a permanent part of her life, she faces a lot of struggles which teaches her

unforgettable lessons. The stranger king which offers her a good solution also offers her poverty, anxiety, depression and isolation. But Fereiba does not care about the problems colonized in her mind because of the stranger king. Instead, she fights with them boldly to build a new dynamic life for her children. Solutions are always brought to the people. But they hesitate to accept them because of the fear of future. It is better to take it in the hands and handle it independently.

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