



مجلة العلوم التربوية والدراسات الإنسانية



ISSN: 2617-5908

## The Concept of Others in Ghafoory's "Sa'ada's Braids"(\*)

By

**Dr. Baleid Taha Shamsan Saeed**

Associate Professor Faculty  
of Arts, Education and Science  
at Alturbah Taiz University  
Mail: [btshamsan@yahoo.com](mailto:btshamsan@yahoo.com)

تاريخ قبوله للنشر ٢٠٢٠/٥/٣ م.

٢٠٢٠/٢/٢٤ تاريخ تسليم البحث م.

### ملخص البحث:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة مفهوم "الآخر" في رواية الغفوري جدائل صعدة والتي نشرت في ٢٠١٤. تبحث الرواية وضع الناس في مدينة صعدة الواقعة في الجزء الشمالي من اليمن وتتحدث عن مجموعة من الناس يطلقون على أنفسهم "الأسياء" ويحكمون المدينة مستفيدين من غياب الحكومة هناك مستخدمين الدين كدعاية لحماية وجودهم وحكمهم على المدينة. يفرض هؤلاء أيديولوجيتهم ومعتقداتهم الدينية على المجتمع المحلي وبالتالي فهذا يخلق نوعاً من سوء الفهم بين الآخرين. يؤمن الأسياء بأنهم الأشخاص الوحيدون الذين لديهم الحق في الحكم ويعتبرون الباقي غرباء "الآخر". في الواقع، يسيء الأسياء فهم موقفهم الحقيقي وهذا يؤدي إلى نوع من سوء الفهم للعديد من جوانب الحياة مثل الدين والأدوار الاجتماعية ومدونات السلوك، ونتيجة لذلك يتم تشكيل مفهوم مثل "الآخر". وهكذا، يشير مفهوم "الآخر" إلى أشخاص من نفس الديانة والجنسية ولكن بسبب وجود نوع من سوء الفهم الديني، فقد أصبحوا أعداء تحت مفهوم "الحكام والآخر". لدى السادة الكثير من العيوب التي تسبب كل هذا النوع من سوء الفهم بين الناس من نفس العرق وفي هذا البحث سيتم تحليل استخدام الرموز واللغة والسلوك لدعم الموضوع الرئيسي التي تدور حوله الرواية وهو أنه لا يمكن إقامة الإنسانية بسهولة إذا تجاهل الناس بعضهم البعض. كما سيتم تسليط الضوء على كيفية استخدام الدين في صعدة، وكيف يصرف الناس عن واقع الحياة بسبب هذا المفهوم الخاطئ وينقسمون إلى مجموعات عرقية صغيرة تقتل بعضها البعض. نتيجة لذلك، فقد الناس هويتهم وأصبحوا مجهولين وعزلوا أنفسهم في منطقة صغيرة خائفين من تأثير "الآخر".

## The Concept of Others in Ghafoory's "Sa'ada's Braids"

### Certificate

**This is to certify that the work entitled: The Concept of Others in Ghafoory's "Sa'ada's Braids", is original and has been carried out by Bal-eid Taha Shamsan Saeed. This paper has not been published in any journal and is not considered for publication either.**

### Abstract

**Title:** The Concept of others in Alghafory's Sa'ada's Braids  
This research aims at studying the concept of others in Alghafory's Sa'ada's Braids, a novel written in 2014. The novel investigates the situation of people in Sa'ada, a city in the northern part of Yemen. A group of people call themselves the masters are ruling the city availing from the absence of the government there and they start using religion as a propaganda to protect their presence and rule over the city.

The masters impose their ideology and religious beliefs on the local community. Consequently, this creates a kind of misunderstanding among other people. The masters believe that they are the only people who have the rights to rule and consider the rest as outsiders "the others". In fact, the masters misunderstand their real attitude and this leads to a kind of misconception of many facets of life such as religion, social roles and codes of conduct, and as a result a concept such as "the others" is formed. Thus, the concept of others refers to people of the same religion and nationality but because there is a kind of religious misconception, they have become enemies: the rulers and the others. The others' attitude towards religion does not happen to be in the same circle of the masters' faith.

The masters have many flaws that cause all this kind of misunderstanding among people of the same race. The use of symbols, setting, language, allusions and behavior will be analysed to support the novelist's main theme that humanity cannot be established easily if people ignore each other. How religion is utilized in Sa'ada is also highlighted and as a result, people are distracted from the reality of life and they have formed the concept of others.

Finally, because of this misconception and the forming of the others, people are deluded from the reality and divided into small ethnic groups killing each other. As a result, their identity is lost and they have become unknown. They have secluded themselves in a small area being afraid of the influence of the "others" who are considered untouchable and should be rejected and fought.

**Key Words:** Alghafory, -the other- misconception- Sa'ada's Braids - masterhood – enmity- inequality-

## Literature Review

Marwan Ghafoory dedicates his novel **Sa'ada's Braids** to humanity, peace and equality among people. He tries to show clearly the disease of the masters' role in Sada'a. A woman is the central character of the novel which also shows how women are abducted from the scenario of life as if she is a kind of disease that may harm the body.

In this regard, Abdulsalam Alrubaidi writes about Marwan Ghafoory's **Sa'ada's Braids** in an article titled *Humanism in the Yemeni Novel and its Use in the School Curricula*, (14/8/2017) where the novel is one of the important evidences used for the writer: *"In Marwan Al-ghafoory's Sa'ada's Braids (2014) women takes a central role in the narrative, telling the story of crushed womanhood in Yemen. This specific portrayal of women in the novel is structurally related to the state of political and tribal traditions."*

Ghafoory's **Sa'ada's Braids** depicts the true definition of humanity and shows how individual is important. Consequently, Abdulsalam adds: *"By humanity I mean placing importance on individual, removed from any identities added to her or him through socialization and circumstances that have shaped her or his life. In other words, to be humanist is to respect basic human identity regardless of any ethnic or religious affiliations or geographic belongings. It implies also respecting an individual's attitudes and convictions."*

Ghafoory focuses on many ideas regarding the place and the people who live there and how politics and religion are well utilized for some personal matters. In this regard it is written in a review (28-12-2015) on [www.8gharb.com](http://www.8gharb.com): *"The novel is about Sa'ada and Iman who tells her story to the novelist, the main narrator. How Iman's hair braids are fallen from the top of the mountains, the secret of her swollen belly, the war, and traditions are also highlighted in the novel. The mercenaries and those who utilize religion to fulfill their political and personal desires have important roles in the novel and they become the reasons behind war and obstinacy which also help in crushing womanhood."*

Although the novel focuses on many ideas, its main object is to show people are lost when they are divided by some blind beliefs. War and disunity take place instead of love is another important theme that the novel focuses on.

The locked society is vividly described by the strange beliefs and traditions which causes woman to suffer a lot as a result of being abandoned. Mr.Faiz Alam writes in another review (25/5/2015): *"Through her letters, Iman depicts how her society is blocked and as a result, woman is subjected to injustice. She is not allowed to study because of the unbelievable vacuumed ideas practiced by the people there."*

In another review by Aljazeera (15/11/2014), it is written that **Sa'ada's Braids** focuses on love and war as an important idea for Ghafoory: *"The novel depicts the struggle between love and war. The war is*

*presented as a kind of worm that stole the happiness from the whole country, started in Sa'ada and spread to the whole parts of the nation."*

Moreover, the technique of narration is brilliant in the story as the novelist focuses on one central character using the third person point of view. In this regard, Aljazeera described (15/11/2014) **Sa'ada's Braids** *"as one of the most important novels which reflects the miseries of the whole nation through the life of a single character, Iman. The novelist goes deep into the catastrophe faced by the Yemeni citizen and how he looks forward to get rid of these obstacles that handicap a glamorous future."*

In the same review of Aljazeera, it is mentioned that, *"the dilemma of the whole narration is embodied in the problem of the Yemeni woman who is surrounded by the unfair traditions and wrong belief which deprived her from her rights of living."*

The novelist uses a shrewd tool of narration as the novelist himself becomes the main narrator who is speaking with the heroine using his real name, Marwan. Regarding this, in a review, (22-01-2015) in raseef22.com, Mr.Faiz Alam writes:

*"Marwan Ghafoory exchanges letters with the heroine of his novel Iman who tells her story and the narrator answers all Iman's questions. He also encourages her to continue writing and at the same time, he reminds her of her previous details. He never hides how her letters influences him and what feelings they have created inside him."*

It is obvious that the technique of narration helps the narrator to show how woman is presented as a victim that cannot even speak about her rights of life and if she does, she is considered a traitor that should be punished.

Furthermore, the novelist condemns illiteracy which is expanded as a result of the increase of the misconception of wrong beliefs that are practiced in Sa'ada. Many people become the victims of illiteracy as they are led to the battlefield like goats. Even woman becomes one of these victims who is always the pole of suspicion and therefore she is deprived from her freedom. Fatima Wasel writes in a review on Soundcloud (27/11/2014): *"Iman is the daughter of a Yemeni city called Sa'ada. She recounts her story and how people with their suspicion and strange traditions condemns her unfairly. Iman becomes the symbol of every Yemeni woman who sews their beauty out of the sun"*

Finally, Iman echoes all the Yemeni women who need freedom to live without being prisoned by some false misconceptions. **Sa'ada's Braids** is of 239 pages and it is the best voice about the condemnation of war that kills brothers of the same race, nationality and religion. It attacks those who exploit religion for their personal interests. The novel also rejects illiteracy and considers it as a disease that blinds the generation and it also denounces the crushed womanhood by ignoring their least needs and rights.

## The Concept of others in Ghafoory's "Sa'ada's Braids"

### Introduction

"Sa'ada's Braids" is a novel written by Marwan Ghafoory whose popularity flourishes as a novelist and a political writer in the twentieth century. The quality of his writing improved and added to the world of literature in Yemen. This novelist has rebelled against the superficial and traditional style of other Yemeni writers. He is considered as a modern Yemeni novelist as his novels embraced more interesting and complex themes.

These themes are related to religion, politics and gender equality. He tries to reflect in his novels the religious and political instability in the country. The religious and political conflicts provide Marwan the best environment for his fiction. Most of his books depict the life of Yemeni people which is full of difficulties and sorrows caused mostly by the misuse of religion and politics.

Marwan is considered as a humanist writer who has shown respect to the individual. He shows respect to the basic human identity of his characters regardless any religion norms, or region. Furthermore, his books imply respect for the individual's convictions and attitudes. The novels depict these humanist manifestations through the characters' behaviour. These characters show their emotional values through human and social feelings such as gratitude, respect and recognition.

The issues of political and religious crisis are the essential components of Marwan's novels. He shows these issues as a result of what happens in the country. In other words, he blames the political and religious regimes for what has been brought to the country such as war and the threat of death to many citizens.

Marwan's characters have embraced humanist philosophical thoughts which reflect how people suffer under some religious and political trauma. Thus, they depict a terrible Yemeni scenario which lacks peace and equality among people in an expanded philosophical way.

Marwan's novels study the recognition of the others by giving them the right to exist like other Yemeni citizens. His novels show that "the others" have complete historical, political, and cultural belongings but under the misuse of religion and politics, they become minor humans and they do not have the right of equality. In other words, these equalities are not recognised at all because of some political and religious attitudes of the masters.

Marwan's Sa'ada's Braids is a shout in the face of an oppressive religious norms practiced in Sa'ada. It condemns the political and religious performance of a group of people called the Masters who believe that they are God's chosen and therefore, they have the rights to rule and impose whatever they want on the others. The masters believe that the others are chosen to be servants for them. Under their rule, there is an absence of a distinctive demand for liberty and freedom which are the basic fundamentals of humanity. In other words, social

harmony based on logic, justice and mutual recognition are always dissolved and replaced by the misconceptions of reality and life.

The story of the novel takes place in Sa'ada which is a governorate in the north part of Yemen and it shows how people there use religion as a cover for their political propaganda. It introduces the story of a Yemeni girl, the heroine of this novel. She tells her story through corresponding letters to Marwan who is himself the author of this novel.

"I am a girl from Sa'ada, my pseudonym is Iman." The author puts the elements of seriousness in his story from the beginning as Iman tells him that she is afraid that her story may die out: *"I have the desire of dying, and I am afraid that my story will die with me."* P: 25 Iman lives with her family: her father, mother, her sister Abeer and her brother, Hassan. She tells her personal story with her hair braids, her swollen belly, and the war that attacks each house in Sa'ada by killing many people.

**"Sa'ada's Braids"** focuses on the story of Iman with her masters and their strange behavior and beliefs. She has a family who belongs to the masters. However, Iman revolts against what the masters believe in, and she shows her revolt in her letters to Ghafoory who is the only correspondent with her. The character of Iman is employed to show how ridiculous the masters are when practicing and imposing what they believe in on the others. This is all shown to be ridiculous by the narrator throughout the story from the beginning to the end in a fabulous manner using some literary elements such as allusions symbols, the language, and the setting of the novel.

**An overview to the novel** The main story is about Iman's belly which is formed by a strange disease that attacks her belly from inside. This story is used as evidence to reveal the blindness of the masters. The people believe that Iman has committed an adultery and become got pregnant and look at her with suspicion. However, Iman does not get weak and wants to prove to the whole village including her family that she is not pregnant and what she carries in her belly is no more than a disease. Therefore, she decides to leave Sa'ada and go to Sana'a for therapy. In Sana'a the doctors find that Iman has got a tumor inside her belly which proves that she has been misjudged by her people. Moreover, this also reflects that what people in Sa'ada believe in does not help them to judge others correctly. The masters always behave as if they were superior to the others. This kind of superiority creates a kind of blindness and misconception of truth.

Furthermore, the novel portrays the misconception of belief, and what it comes after. For instance, the title of the novel **"Sa'ada's Braids"** suggests the dark side of the muddle that surrounds people there. "Braids" suggests the inequalities among people which help to create the class distinctions based on the misconception of religion which causes that the whole community is flawed by this kind of misbelief.

This kind of misconception increased among people of the same nationality which is nourished by misusing religion, and consequently, the masters and those who believe in them become narrow-minded. For instance, Iman's mother believe entirely of what the masters say about



heaven, and even she hates the Jews not because of some personal matters but the masters say that they are bad. The following dialogue between Iman and her mother about Iman's meeting with a Jewish lady called Shama'a shows this kind of attitude that people are forced to adopt what is imposed on them blindly: *"Your father does not want you to visit Shama'a anymore," the mother said. "Why?" Iman asks. "The Jews do not like us, and we don't trust them."*

*"But, why? they are Yemenies like us. They believe in the prophet Mohammed and they like our land exactly like us."* *"She is vicious. She says they believe in the prophet Mohammed?"* The mother wonders. *"Yes. "Did you ask her? Or did she say that by herself?" the mother impatiently asks. "I asked her." "Why did you ask her?" "I don't know." "What else did the Jewish woman say?" "She said that Mohammed is a prophet.....but of tribes."* *"Cursed. Didn't you understand? The prophet of tribes!"* The mother replies angrily. *"God bless us. What did you say to her?"* the mother asks again. *"She said they think that Mohammed is a prophet!"* the mother adds. *"Why don't you try to understand her?"* Iman enquires. *"Impolite. I don't want to understand her. She says he is the prophet of the tribes."* The mother says. *"But he is a prophet."*

*"Be careful. Never be heard by your father or any."* P:31:32

Obviously, the masters believe that they are the true chosen to rule and they do not find clear reasons for their opinions of the others. They practice some kinds of discrimination in their judgment on the others. Like his mother, Hassan gets confused when he is asked by his sister, Iman, about the reason why he kills a soldier who comes from Taiz which is another city in the middle of the country. Hassan could not provide a satisfactory answer to his sister.

### The setting

The novel begins when Iman starts corresponding with Ghafoory telling him her story. The author chooses two main places for his story either Sa'ada or Sana'a and there are also some other places that reechoed the theme of misconception. In this regard, Iman says:

*"I am a girl from Sa'ada . My name is Iman and this is not my real name. I have my story and I am really a story. Just let me know if you are ready to hear it. I don't claim that my story will leave a moral lesson, nevertheless, it will be a source of pain...I don't know my enemies to defeat them. My enemies don't know me, either. We are just divided into defeated and winners."* P:5

The story is narrated using the flashback as Iman begins her story when she is in Sana'a, the place that she moved to from Sa'ada:

*"Yesterday before dawn, it was very clear and there was no voice except the dog in our neighborhood. This section is signed by Iman while she is in Sana'a:*

Iman



Sana'a, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2014

In his first reply, Ghafoory writes:

*"You are from Sa'ada?"*

*Ok. Impressive. A victim wants to get a victory on a defeated rival:"*  
P:7

It is clear that Alghafroy did not expect that the correspondent would be from Sa'ada, and his reply shows how terrible this place is, by the way the character writes. Sa'ada is described as a place where people are killing each other and this is why he uses the term "defeated".

Furthermore, Alghafroy refers to "Belad Waq Alwaq", a novel written by Alzobery, a Yemeni poet and novelist, as a witness to what is happening in Sa'ada. The situation is the same either in the story presented by Alzobery or Marwan Ghafoory: people are divided into classes; each class is a victim for the other. There is only one winner in this chaos which is the past.

Iman is now in Sana'a, the capital of the country and she is referred as if she has just won the war by her leaving Sa'ada and coming to this place. Sana'a is considered the center of the Yemeni revolution of the year 2014. This proves Ghafoory's support for the revolution. He writes about the 2014 revolution, as if it was not just a revolution: *"it was a magic dramatic history."* P: 9

The setting is reechoed either by repeating the names of the places or the time, and sometimes by repeating the story itself. Iman tells her story and Ghafoory repeats it again in order to provide a real circle of life to the whole story. In addition, all the places and dates connections are real which also adds clarity to the story and to the historical references.

Furthermore, the capital Sana'a is renamed as "the Open Sea" which is a symbol of a cosmopolitical place of attitudes and beliefs comparing to Sa'ada. This "Open Sea" is connected with Iman as she is compared with Albringo, a historical literary figure, who got out safely from the mouth of the whale. Iman comes from Sa'ada with its dangerous connotations and so is referred by the whale to Sana'a, the Open Sea. She has breathed a new life in Sana'a as it is the city of revolution against all the misconceptions that are well-demonstrated in Sa'ada. She becomes the symbol of hope when she reaches Sana'a, the safest place for her story. Her story will not die as she is afraid of. She is now like Albringo who lived in a deserted place such as Sa'ada. Both Iman and Albringo could live either in Sa'ada or in the Atlantic because they have a strong faith of success. Comparing Iman's story to Albringo, Algafoory wonders:

*"How did Albringo live all that time in a horrible place in the Atlantic?"* P:23

*"You are a woman who got out of a jungle and came into a jungle." P: 23*

Moreover, the description of the village in Sa'ada where Iman lives and the way the houses are built reinforces the theme of misconception. It creates a big gab of misunderstanding among people. Iman describes her village saying:

*"Our village consists of a long lines of houses built in a mountain from down up...The mountain is the back wall for our houses. There is no backyard, and the horizon is opposite us in which there stands a long various plains and small and quite medium hills. This horizon is closed by high mountains. These plains do not belong or indebted anything to anyone." P: 27*

It is clear that everything is closed even the natural beauty such as plains or mountains. There is always an end for any horizon, which manifests itself symbolically to show how people are closed in their belief. They feel ashamed of their religion and they do not want the others to share them as they become afraid of being fluctuated between their belief and the others. They think that they have been chosen as God's messengers to be the only race who are responsible for the aspect of religion and its spread, and they look at others suspiciously when they speak about religion.

In fact, the author invades Sa'ada using the character of Iman as he deeply explores the villages details and he shows how misconception changes people and droves them to the darkest age. Consequently, the people in Sa'ada become blind to the fact that such misunderstanding creates a kind of precarious ambiguity among the people of the same race and religion. This is why Ghafoory chooses Sa'ada to be the main place for his novel.

Such type of confusion and misconception is very clear in Sa'ada because people there are suffering from this kind of dilemma. In this regard, Iman says that her father does not hate the Jews but he says that they are blind because they do not follow the right path. She is certain that because the belief of Alwhabion in Sa'ada spreads speedily - Alwhabion is a name refers to a religious group of people who followed the doctrine of Mohmmmed Abdulwahab appeared in the Arabian Peninsula in the eighteenth century -, her father is driven mad because he thinks that this kind of danger that may shackle the belief of his group.

Furthermore, the whole village of Iman is free from any public school. She says that one cannot see any schoolboy or school uniform in any place in Sa'ada. It is a disastrous situation which attacks every individual there as people neglect every aspect of civilization because of their strange ideas. This is all happens because of misunderstanding of the concept of religion which creates this kind of misconception.

The whole place of the city is haunted with the idea of paradise and its citizens. For instance, Iman's mother says:

*"God has divided the sustenance and ancestries. He created the poor people to serve the chosen ones, and in return the chosen will use their holy mediation in the hereafter to help the poor."* P:15

Iman refuses this idea and tells her mother:

*"That was not fair and not even true." The mother warned her daughter not to speak such ideas again because they are against their beliefs. Iman continues:*

*"Mom, they are also speaking about the paradise young people."*

*Iman says:*

*"My mother quickly puts her hands over my mouth and does not let me continue speaking, and she said:*

*"Shh. Be careful, Iman." P:15*

Clearly, the setting reflects the purpose of the novelist of showing the imprisonment of life that caused by the masters and their misuse of religion. In other words, life is not worthy living there as the people are surrounded by these false norms of politics and religion. They do not have control on their life but they find themselves led by some ugly false ideas.

### The character of Iman

Iman is brought up to be educated and have a close view at the different beliefs run in her village. She studied the masters' ideas and Alwhaby's books. She is a social woman who does not mind listening and sharing others' beliefs. She always visits the Jewish lady, Shama's and walks with Saffia who is considered superior in race to other masters' girls. She says:

*"We always visit Shama'a to listen to her stories. We never ask her about the Jews or Muslims before this meeting. She has also never been conservative or afraid of us. Shama'a has also been the best and kindest old woman for me." P:30*

Iman is open-minded and likes to listen and compare the ideas even if they are strange to her belief. She says that one of Alwhabeens called Yahea gives some books and cassettes to her close friend Saffia. The latter does not want to listen to them as she is afraid that her beliefs would be disturbed. Iman takes some of these cassettes and books. She reads and listens, and accordingly she starts warning Saffia about her relationship with Yahea. Regarding what she has read, Iman warns Saffia:

*"It is better for a man to be nilled on his head rather than to have a relationship with a woman illegally"* P:41

It is obvious that Iman has inferred that Yahia's belief will not allow him to continue with Saffia. She becomes very intelligent and practical.

She advises Saffia to stop her relationship with Yahea and tells her that he will betray her because he does not believe in what he writes. She says that Yahea's books say that *"love has no meaning only in marriage."*

*Saffia says: "He tells me he will marry me."*

*"Nonsense. Only if he stops to go away." Iman replies. P:41*

Iman has a wide knowledge on the beliefs of others. She likes reading books. Her father as well as her grandfather have a big library in which she used to visit and read. Her mind is always nourished from these books. She is also open-minded as she never minds sharing others' ideas.

Ghafoory writes to her:

*"keep in revealing the secrets of the village very simply. Your readers will not believe that you are a girl who brought up in Sa'ada. Like me they will think that your story is the golden door of the whole country." P: 65*

Iman is also described as a modern Yemeni character who has her own Facebook account. She is interested not only in the net as a modern social media but she is a movie fan, too. She writes to Ghafoory:

*"I think this idea has pushed you to be silent when I told you that I would stop my Facebook account and disappeared. I left you a smile gesture but you sent me a movie link. I copied the link in a file in my computer." P: 65*

Later on, she writes:

*"I watched the movie of **Wuthering Heights** with my friend Zainab in Sana'a, the one I have told you about before." P: 65*

Iman now indulges in the movie and starts reflecting and comparing her correspondence with Ghafoory like the story of Heathcliff and Catherine in Bronte's **Wuthering Heights**.

Ghafoory satirizes the values of the masters through the character of Iman. She is constructed as a self-realizing heroine in her village either in her family or with her female friends. She is presented as an independent girl who is lively, wit, charming and intelligent. Moreover, she has a revolutionary belief about her people and the city, particularly the masters' approach to the relationship between religion and life which humiliates the position of others who do not belong to the masters' rank.

The novel was written in 2014 after the breakout of the 2011 revolution in which Ghafoory himself was a part through his writings. Thus, it is not strange that Ghafoory manipulates the character of Iman by providing her with some of his revolutionary thoughts. Iman has keen knowledge about the masters of her city and the others' attitudes

towards what happens. Therefore, she serves Ghafoory's aim in searching for equality between people.

Regarding her role in the novel, Iman interacts and shares her ideas and beliefs frankly with her girl friends such as Saffia and the Jewish lady, Shama'a, as well as with each member of her family. In addition, she is a good reader and a student, too. Her role is utilized perfectly as a witness of what happens. However, Ghafoory does not portray the masterhood as a kind of vengeance of enmity; rather he shows that the masters are practicing wrong beliefs and concepts which cause a kind of racism. The others are portrayed as a second race in the master dominated society. Therefore, in order to understand what happens in such society, a detailed story is constructed to accompany Iman in her journey of revolution.

In addition, Ghafoory has constructed the character of Iman in a such a way to be independent, and to be able to reflect how and why equality should be there in her society. Iman interacts with the other characters such as Saffia or Shama'a in order to reveal their thoughts and show how different they are. For instance, Saffia suffers from an excessive masterly pride while the Jewish lady, Shama'a who is mostly considered as an abhorring character to the master because she is a Jew, is attached with a kind of humanity and simplicity.

Ghafoory's Iman acts as a symbol of revolutionary voice against the whole misconceptual rules and beliefs of the masters. Iman's intelligence and liberal mind shows the clues about the exposition of social indifferences caused by the misuse of religion. She is also free and brave to convey her views and opinions. For example, she expresses her opinion about the people she saw in Sana'a during the revolution:

*"They sold me some biscuits in the morning and bread in the afternoon. They smiled at me, and they were very polite with me, too." P:15*

And about herself, she says:

*"I was beautiful like the moon, as my sister Abeer used to say. But they quickly got rid of me, as if they were waiting for such chance. I lost the ability to talk and comprehend about the things around me." P:93*

It is clear that Iman is a revolutionary character and she can express her thoughts regardless the social and religious obstacles the masters have enrolled upon people.

It is unconventional for a girl from Sa'ada to begin a conversation or correspondence. However, Iman rejects the silence and the place the masters have planned for people in Sa'ada. She becomes courageous enough to express her own thoughts unlike her other people. For example, when she is in the car, with her brother and the sheikh's son on their way to Sana'a, she expresses her opinion openly how war is bad:

*"War has brought us misery whether its champions were mujahedeen or criminals." P:128*

On top of that, Iman has a high degree of self-confidence. She always faces her mother and her brother regarding the tumor in her belly. She tells Ghafoory that she realizes how people look at her with suspicion but she never gives up life. She persuades her family to take her to Sana'a for the purpose of therapy.

From the beginning of the novel, Iman never gives up her pursuit for showing the reality of what happens in her village to the whole world let it dies:

*"I am afraid that my story will die with me" P:25*

She believes that the class distinction is too big in her village due to the masters' established and enlarged ways of dealing with the others. This kind of separation among people causes a kind of engulf and enmity. Iman gives many details to support her belief of the false norms practiced by the masters.

### **The Masters**

As far as history is concerned, the "masters" is a group of people appeared in the farthest part of the north of Yemen. They took the advantage of the absence of the government there and established themselves under the name of "Masters". They claim that they are the descendent of the prophet Mohammed. Sa'ada is a rural and isolated place in the northern part of the country and the absence of the government there encouraged these people to control the area and impose their beliefs on the other dwellers.

### **The flaws of masters**

The masters believe themselves to be above the others. They assume that they know better than the others. They also believe that they are better and the others are ignorant and less intelligent. They always think that they are extraordinary and flawless people because they have been chosen to be the purest race. They possess a kind of pride and vanity whereas the others are thought to be an inferior race.

Copnsequently, the community falls a victim for such miserable thoughts. The masters affect the thoughts of the individuals who live there. Everyone in this community becomes a prey for the strange thoughts and beliefs of the masters. These thoughts and beliefs attack each individual and as a result, they suffer the absence of the logic.

Ghafoory writes about the society which is concerned with misconceptions, appearances, and strange beliefs. These beliefs fuel nearly all the social and religious gatherings. The theme of judgment is very important to reestablish these beliefs. It becomes customary for people to judge each other according to their titles in the society. In other words, the "Masters" is a title which is entangled with the idea of righteousness. If you belong to the masters, then you have the right to



judge or live above the "Others". If you don't belong to the masters, you must live as a guest in your land, and you don't have the right to ask about these beliefs: you just listen and obey. Consequently, a big gap is established between the two social sides: the masters and the others. The others, whether in Sa'ada or outside, find a kind of disrespectability and therefore, a lifetime of insecurity and unhappiness is created.

Ghafoory shows the flaws of the masters by presenting their behavior and relationship with the others. The novel includes a number of interesting components such as an intriguing plot, standard language which is full of images, allusions, symbols and some brilliant characters. The novelist presents his novel through a dialogue between Ghafoory, who is considered as the main narrator and the heroine of the novel, Iman. Ghafoory has involved himself as a narrator and actor at the same time.

The characters and their flaws are described in a serious interesting manner by Iman. The reader is indirectly involved into this kind of seriousness as he is presented to the peculiar behavior of the characters. The novelist shows his brilliant authorship as he lets the reader reflects how ridiculous and absurd the masters are.

### **Religion is utilized**

Religion is important for the individual and the society. It is the best foundation to spread morals and good behaviour among people as it organizes their behavior and dealing with others. It also helps them to build good relationship with each other and let them take the right decision regarding the good beliefs, faith and traditions. The individual uses religion to acquire the best virtue as a bridge of connection with God.

People believe that religion contributes to establish peace, stability and tranquility in the societies because the individuals' behavior is well-balanced under the right practice of religion. In religion, there is a kind of discipline among people that helps to spread respect and duty. It eradicates the differences between people and all together help each to get rid of their shortage. Therefore, they try to seek unity under the name of religion whatever the differences are. Under the concept of religion, the individual becomes responsible of his role in society, regarding building, education and other concepts which helps to enhance the process of social development.

As a result, religion organizes these sets of morals, beliefs and understanding, and the individual then uses them to achieve his role in society. Religion is needed by the individual and this explains why people spontaneously ask God to help them when they are in trouble. Moreover, religion contributes to establish the equality among people by eradicating their differences.

However, religion can be misused for some political and worldly purposes which creates problems. For instance, practicing politics through religion causes weakness among people's contributions to establish differences and emphasizes social class divisions which lead



to create different kinds of conflicts among people. And as a result, the policy of living together fails which is the basic foundation of the modern society. Living together is a necessary tactic to spread peace among people but because religion is used wrongly, failure is the final procedure.

Ghafoory's "**Sa'ada's Braids**" aims to explore the consequences if religion is utilized for some political purposes. Religion becomes a bloody and successful weapon on the hands of politicians. It is used to make the nation succumb blindly to some shadow elements. This is what happened in Sa'ada as it is shown in the novel. The author shows how people are committed to some aspects of religion blindly. They think that their life has no meaning only if they surrender to religion. Politicians are very successful as they make people believe that they have no identity without believing in the norms of ventures that are created under the flags of the politicians.

The novelist here wants to show that people should eradicate these foolish paths of thinking and begin to form new views of their own. He strongly believes that people must not blindly pursue religion without thinking of what is right or good for themselves. They should not be obsessed with religion simply and obey their masters thoughtlessly. According to Ghafoory, religion is utilized politically for some worldly purposes in such a way which leads to hypocrisy and then division among people takes place which causes differences and then war breaks up. This negative attitude by people is clearly revealed in the novel through the use of characters, their names, the way they think, their behavior and especially through the symbols and the plot itself.

It is clear that Ghafoory is very familiar with the type of religion practiced in Sa'ada and the social problems that arose mostly from the wrong misconception and the absence of people's awareness towards the political utilization of religion. Thinking of religious misuse of those people in that area is a clear examination made by the novelist to question the existing religious forces that have made people blind towards each other. He has used some bitter and tragic stories in the novel to help the reader perceiving the reflection of his strong negation of that belief practiced in Sa'ada.

The stories chosen are plainly provided and explained to attract the sentimentality of the readers. Therefore, he could show the ugly faces of the politicians who have misused religion for some political purposes. He describes many situations of different characters. From the different social masses used in the novel such as "the masters" "the Jews" and "the common", the novel arouses the sympathy of the readers, and accordingly Ghafoory paves the way for a suitable alternative to dissolve these differences.

These stories are disappointing and through their presentation the novelist tries to seek a kind of revolution against the harsh thoughts of those people who have established the idea of "others" using religion. And this is why he states his ideas clearly through the character of Iman who revolts against these beliefs as she shows this in her letters.

Through his heroine Iman, the novelist condemn the social behavior engulfed by the misuse of religion. He emphasizes that the existing beliefs are not fair and they are the direct responsible behind creating the norms of "others" that leads to the destruction of the whole society. He unveils the hidden social crests that are terribly affected by the wrong religious beliefs implemented there. The whole society is mocked which is controlled by some absurd ideas. He also criticizes these people who believe in these ideas and instead they should have important roles in each others' lives that may help to make their society better.

Most of the incidents and the way the dialogue takes place show the novelist's harsh sentences and contempt against the people and their wrong beliefs. He shows how ridiculous to practice that strange outdated belief among people and utilized their lives to satisfy their wants. In this concern, Ghafoory writes:

*"to those whose health are deteriorating and then they died in the mountains like goats despite their masters' bliss. The masters are not to be blocked at but those people who usually die and others never understand. The others frequently keep coming to the masters and they never question the absurdities of these ideas: P:52*

Regarding the masters's bad deeds against Iman, he says:

*"Whatever their justifications, they are guilty, and this is what we know about them. The woman of your village want doubtlessly to prove your guilt not because it is attributed to God, but defending themselves. They have polluted your chastity and the war has smirched their blood" P:81*

His dialogue with Iman, suggests the type of religion practiced in Sa'ada which has become useless because it helps to corrupt the citizens' minds which also leads to their divisions.

Ghafoory's Iman describes how poor thinkers her people are, even those who are supposed to be good intelligent readers like her father, follow the masters blindly without questioning them. The novelist tries to say that even the rulers themselves do not try to use logic in their dealing with others. They do not guide people to save them and even they are not able to answer people's questions. They drive people into another dilemma instead of guiding them to the reality. This is clearly shown when Iman asks her mother who is supposed to be from "the masters" about religion. Iman's mother shows an absolute blindness of her faith:

*"That was not fair and not even true." The mother warned her daughter not to mention such ideas again because they are against their beliefs.*

*"Mom, they are also speaking about the paradise young people." .*

*Iman says:*

*"My mother quickly puts her hands over my mouth and does not let me continue speaking, and she said:*

*"Shh. Be careful, Iman."* P:15

It is noticeable that their faith has become a kind of worldly slogans. It has nothing to do with religion or people's life or goods. These slogans are just dictated to people and they have to follow and interpret themselves. Moreover, they help to create blind people who can't negotiate their reality.

Iman realizes the presence of "others" around her as she feels lonely and this justifies her needs for Ghafoory. Because of such realization, she becomes an alien to her people and her place. Ironically enough, she is loaded with a tumor as if she has become strange among others. This kind of reaction against those people justifies their absurdities due to their insensible and unreasonable slogans. In all the ways, Ghafoory tries to condemn the slogans practiced there as well as the followers of these slogans.

In a way, the novelist wishes that humans should be with God through pure logical beliefs. People should know what they follow by using their minds. He wishes that the belief practiced should promote people to be real humans who follow their minds but not slogans made by people for special purposes. So that people turn to make a change and build the way for their better lives and happiness.

Moreover, the novelist highlights on the conversation between the characters to show how religious slogans limit people's knowledge about the world around them and this is clearly manifested by their consideration of their capital city, which is shown as a different world. Because of such limitation, their life has no target; only live to be killed. The religious slogans cause people's misery instead of happiness. The novelist has successfully shown how these religious matters are dangerous, and he always tries to pave the way for better change by awakening the people's minds.

The novelist wants to suggest that there is a strong reaction and tendency in such characters such as Iman to reflect that these regulations are not helpful at all. On the contrary, they just act as opposite by creating a strong enmity inside people's minds which leads them to build the image of "others". They fight each other without obvious reasons: only they have different beliefs. For instance, Iman's brother Hassan is involved in the war against the "others" without knowing why he is fighting. To answer his sister's question about the reason of his fighting, he is stammered as he is not able to find a clear answer. Humans are turned to beasts because of the blind obedience to such slogans and this is what the novelist tries to suggest.

As he opposes to such kind of misbelief, Ghafoory suggests that people become blind because they do not only obey their masters but also they become ignorant to anything beyond religion such as science or any kind of creativity. They lose their balance even in accepting any other forms of social or scientific norms. They even think that adhering to the

idea of science is against their beliefs. They advocate their close minds to accept nothing but only what their masters say.

This becomes clear when Iman's father gets sick and people believe completely that their master who has a knowledge of the holly medicine can cure him. Iman's father is suffering from a disease which attacks his lever but they depend completely on the master who is Safia's father instead of taking him to the hospital. Iman says:

*"I did not believe at all in what the masters doing regarding healing people. I was sure enough that Safia'a father had nothing to do with sick people. It was just nonsense. However, when my father was about to die, I prayed that Safia's father could do something to save my father from death.*

*I was shouting, "please, read, read. Use your secret. This time it will help."*

*But he answers. "It is an evil. He got an evil cold. Just draw water on his body." P: 73*

In addition, the novelist doubts the sincerity of the blind obedience of people and he tries to get some answers through the reaction of Iman to the religious attitudes of her people. He thinks that people are using these kind of conventions to mask their lack of faith, and this is why they pretend to be religious.

Consequently, Ghafoory tries to put ahead the alternative change which is humanity and dialogue. For him, what people need is not strict religious regulations or slogans but the most original feeling in human nature and dialogue. He suggests that understanding each other does not lie in religious slogans, but in how people use their minds. What rescues Iman is the dialogue with the novelist as well as the doctor in Sana'a who reflects that human beings are those who stand for the mutual feeling.

### **Ghafoory's search for humanity**

The determination of dialogue and humanity is love, which is a human demand for everyone. To live in peace and understand each other is what the author claims. In other words, the religion of humanity is what needed rather than a definite religious belief that leads people to follow humans blindly and ignore their minds. Ghafoory wants to say that love, humanity, dialogue, feeling the presence of others, the rights of others to live and mutual understanding among people could make them safe and content instead of feeling hopeless, unsaved, and wrongful.

The author pays attention to human dignity, understanding dialogue and feelings. He indirectly lets his readers believe that these norms or the religious slogans practiced in Sa'ada will be turned over. He hopes that people should be courageous enough to desert these despairing beliefs and replace them with love. He aims to spread a new type of life decorated with "good will". Ghafoory shows his readers that by mutual

understanding and dialogue with each other they could live harmoniously in Yemen.

Ghafoory's ideologies of dialogue and spirit are reflected in his work, which look unfamiliar to those people who live in Sa'ada, and are stuck in the deformed religious traits. People's natural belief has been consumed in the new belief brought to them from the outside world. They fall victims to these religious slogans that are nurtured by politics. As a result, they live a narrow and shallow space constructed by fear, misunderstanding and hopelessness with nothing in their minds but hatred, and aimlessness. They have forgotten the real meaning of life and they lose the significance of their humanity.

In fact, the novel is a sharp weapon against both this kind of society under such beliefs and these people who practice such kind of hypocrisy. It shows how societies are destroyed and shattered when people follow some particular slogans blindly. As a result, corruption, cruelty and immorality replace humanity, love and hope which are the true aspects of life that can be the best alternatives for malice and desperation.

Moreover, humanity is replaced by religious slogans that led people to divide themselves into different social and religious classes. The concept of "others" is constructed and people then start working with it as it separates them from each other. It limits people's opportunities to learn about the "others". The "others" now are considered inferior as they are defined as enemies. Consequently, tensions stimulated and war takes place instead of understanding. A kind of absurd generalization and wrongful judgments on the "others" becomes the only slogan practiced there.

For instance, Iman's friend Saffia is from the masters. She can't get married to Yahea, a teacher there as he belongs to Alwhabeen, another religious title, and this is clear in Iman's words:

*Saffia's father is a venerable man in our village. She knows that she can't get married to Alwhabe Yahea. Her family will not allow this, not because of his different dress or he prays differently ...but because her father believes that he is the prophet's grandson. Therefore, as one of the masters, Saffia has to marry a man who belongs to the same class. She will wait for a groom who has the quality of the masters. Their blood should be the same." P: 45*

Similarly, what happened to Abdulhafheth, the teacher there shows how misunderstanding leads people to be divided. Iman says:

*"Abdulhafeth comes back from Saudia Arabia and he was expelled to the village of the Jews for a long time. Later, the Jews were expelled too and Abdulhafeth's car was seen fired and thrown down to the end of the valley." P:45*

The novelist continues digging at the way humanity is destroyed by the separation of people and by giving examples such as in the case of

Abdulhafetah or even in the situation of one of Iman's friends in the village. In this regard, one of Saffia's friends says to Iman:

*"You want to compare yourself to Zainb? Even not in your dreams. Despite your knowledge of many books, you are still nothing; a duster even if it is cleared twenty times. Tribesmen and the masters are not equal."* P: 93

It is clear that Iman herself does not find a suitable place for her among the others. Compared to Saffia whose father is superior in rank, Iman is less respectable.

## Symbols

The novel **Sa'ada's Braids** is painted with the colour of using symbols. Ghafoory employs some symbols to convey the main message of misconception such as the title, the tumor, the character of Iman and the little girl.

### 1) The title

The word "Braids" is used in the title symbolically. Braids are always long, curvy and entangled which are the features of ambiguity and non-ending darkness. Sa'ada is absorbed into the dilemma of darkness and misconception truth. Moreover, the word "braids" indicates the difficulty of decoding the right path. When we read the title "Sa'ada's Braids", we expect that the story is holding a romantic approach as the title suggests. However, the word "Braids" later becomes a symbol of disease, confusion and tyranny. It is linked with Iman who suffers a lot from the tumor, people's misjudgment and the masters' behavior towards her from the beginning of the novel till the end.

### 2) The symbolism of tumor

Iman describes her internal pain as the *"real war that nobody cares of, and nobody wants to know anything about."*P:98 The pain stands as a strong creature inside the character which reflects the new faith of Iman. This faith is useless in such a remote place like Sa'ada. It will face a lot of contradictions since people do not want that faith. It is the new route to reality that people miss, and because it has been absent from people's minds for a long time, it becomes now strange.

Iman suffers a lot carrying that pain inside her. She is presented as a prophet who carries his belief and has his companions such as her sister Abeer and her brother Hassan. This belief is described as a "tumor" which is in itself difficult to remove. It also shows how Iman's belief in humanity is strong, nevertheless the rumor of people which accompanies her life during all her period of staying there. Similarly, the prophet mission is not easy to succeed. It needs a strong faith as it is always rejected by many people. It is always rejected by many people. Iman's thoughts are always strong to her people, too.

### 3) The symbolism of Iman



Iman is an important symbol in the novel as the author addresses her using words such as *"the city of God, My sun, the flower that has lightened the mountain, plain.....The country wind that has brought peace but withered by war....."* Iman becomes "a symbol of God, or faith that the author summons to stop the flag of war. The name "Iman" has a very deep consideration in Arabic language which means faith. She is the faith of hope and peace as the writer describes her as a goddess. He calls her many times in the novel to save the world since she is capable enough of holding peace and establishing humanity among people.

The author continues his summing for Iman as he says:

*"I have waited so long for you." "I have called you the sun of God, but it has been withered. Then you have come back again with another name called Iman..." P: 98*

Ghafoory believes in Iman and considers her as a goddess:

*"If you say you could cure people, or if you were a shaman in a forest, I would come to you and pray to heal me and pure my soul eternally. You are the saint with your long braids." P:51*

Iman is treated as all religions or faiths and this is why the author has used symbolical names such as Zainab or Iman or the Sun of God. This is a call for the different types of all faiths to be united. It is the unity of all gods. Each name has its own quality. For example, the name Zainab has been recollected with rains, or the birds of the jungles. In other words, the author wants to emphasize that each kind of faith has its positives but people distort it by misusing it. The true faith is strongly needed to stop war which is cursed many times throughout this novel:

*"If war continues in such a manner, all our young men will be killed and there will be no men to marry our daughters." P:104*

On her way out of Sa'ada, Iman says: *"I have not turned back to look at my village."* She is treated as the prophet who was asked *"never to look back."* The village is the source of evil and it should be cleared out from outside, and this is why Iman leaves Sa'ada to Sana'a.

After that, Iman calls herself "a bride" referring to her new life which is of course better than the past. She is accompanied by songs which is also a symbol to the traditions of bride in the country. During her way out of the village, other women look at her as if they have envied her. Ironically enough, without the tumor Iman can't get enough: the tumor becomes the symbol of deliverance and freedom.

During her trip, Iman comes across the village of the Jews and describes it as "deserted" because of the villagers' mistreatment of the Jews who are obliged to leave it. Clearly, the villagers' wrong beliefs are distorted by sowing its negative impact upon the surroundings. She wishes that if the prophet Mohammed or as she calls him *"the prophet of the tribes"* has been there, he will not blame her for the tumor as the



villagers do. Iman wants to say that what her people believe in cannot be the same belief of their prophet.

Moreover, Iman's brother Hassan is presented as the true companion for the messenger of peace and hope; the qualities that are manifested through the character of Iman. Hassan believes in Iman and he has never trusted the truth of her faith. Iman says that they are more than being brothers. He always confronts her suffering.

*"I have believed in you." Hassan says to Iman P: 108*

*"Don't get depressed, I am your history" P: 115*

Hassan believes in Iman and he is sure that one day they will go back to their village to erase doubts and correct their faith.

The author himself becomes one of Iman's companions and he is sometimes manifested as her brother Hassan, the first one who believes in her faith. The author is a representative of every citizen who suffers the chaos of war, and needs the help of Iman whatever her caste is, a faith that respects all others' beliefs, a faith that does not contempt others. Therefore, he quotes many to support her journey for the purpose of establishing peace. He falls in love with what Iman believes in, and he wishes she continues and never fails him down. She becomes the only hope for bringing peace into a place that has been distorted by enmity and war into a place that has no a strong faith but only a place where killing and abhorrence become the only inhabitants.

#### **4) The symbolism of the little girl**

On her way to Sana'a, Iman finds a young girl carrying the same name, Iman. She is another important symbol who reflects the new generation that will curse the old one. This girl belongs to a village whose inhabitants including her family members have all gone to the war, and the village becomes deserted. It is very melancholic and it shows how the situation is regrettable because of the war. The girl says:

*"Those who got to war never come back" P: 118*

The girl holds a goat strongly as she is afraid of losing her only companion because everybody has gone to the war and never gone back again. However, this girl has also given Iman another twinkle of hope and a sense of optimism.

#### **The use of allusions**

Jules Verne who is considered the father of science fiction wrote many novels where the themes of innovation, unity and equality are his most concerns. He is used in Ghafoory's novel for the purpose of innovation which is prohibited in the world of the masters due to their restricted beliefs and norms. Most of the characters of Vern's novels are working as one team. They work with each other, complement each other and they depend on each other. In other words, Verne believes in the work of unity and equality among people so that people can succeed to

innovate. Ghafoory uses the ideas of Verne to prove that without equality and unity, it is impossible to achieve peace. There can be no sign of innovation or improvements in the society if people don't believe in equality among them.

Allusions such as the story of Alkhazragy or Robinson Crusoe reflect the urgent need of a new faith. Iman's journey to Sana'a is similar to that of Robinson's where both characters are looking for innovations, freedom and improvements whether on the level of personal or social purposes. They have taken the innovative of change by taking the flag of journeys so that they can get rid of the strange beliefs that restrict their unity and equality. Robinson is a belief that may help in the equality of people. Before reaching that Island and achieving his dream, Robinson meets many obstacles and difficulties but he never gives up hopes. Similarly, Iman wants to overcome all the social obstacles made by the masters. She faces a lot of problems and difficulties and as a result, she has become an obstinate character enough to achieve her goal which is the equality and peace.

The story of Al-ezy, is another important allusion that has a historical background regarding faith. During her journey to Sana'a, Iman has noticed the phrase:

*"I have waited for a long time" which indicates that Al-Eezy has announced the coming of the new faith. P: 116*

The journey to Sana'a is a mission of reflection and hope. There are many sights of difficulties whether the road itself which is full of frightful cliffs or the many villages abandoned by the war. Iman meets some army men, who called "mujahedeen" a term used to call these who fight for the side of the masters. According to Iman, these mujahedeen are responsible for the damage that destroyed her village.

The writer suggests that by love people can reach peace and unity. And this is why he uses the story of Zal and Rodaba which is another example of allusion borrowed from the Iranian history. Zal and Rodaba fall in love with each other and they get married in spite of all the difficulties and problems their families have made to stop their marriage. Their story is a tale of love and war in which love wins. Similarly, Marwan uses "Rodaba" as a title to call Iman in the sense that they both resemble each other. Marwan hopes that like Rodaba, Iman will also win the battle of life at the end.

Furthermore, Iman has also exposed her history which reflects how different she is comparing to others in the village. She has grown up as an educated lady who has read a lot of books in her life. She is influenced by her father and grandfather as they are good readers. She has read about the meaning of life from her teacher Abdulhafeth. She is now accompanied by the car driver and Alsheikh's son and her brother Hassan. She frankly started exploring something related to her opinion about the war:

*"war has brought nothing but misery..... My mother used to force Hassan to hide his gun in an isolated room in my grandfather"*

*house. The gun was disgusting. We hated it. Its sight left us a kind of blight and fear. My father had a gun but it was different from my brother's. We did not like our father's gun but we respected it. Even my mother used to clean it every Friday..... However, Hassan's gun was neither a part of my family nor of our emotion. Although it did not bring us misery but it was a witness upon it" P: 129*

It is clear that Iman's role in the novel is to convey the author's mission which is to spread peace and love. She hates the war and why people are indulged in the war, too. She assumes that the reason of going to the war are inadequate. Thus, the elements of allusions help the writer to pave the way for establishing peace and love.

### **The language and the form of narration**

The novel is narrated by using letters correspondence between Ghafoory and Iman. It is considered as an epistolary novel in which honesty of narration is a primary aspect of truth which gives the novel a kind of reality and power over the place, time and social status that surrounds the characters and events.

There is an enough space for the narration to spell out the freedom of self-expression. This space reflects the smoothness of mood, deep vitality and vigour of spirit. All these are well employed by the author to reveal a sense of dramatic influence over the characters themselves. For example, the character of Iman becomes the writer himself of the events as if she is surrounding with a form of dramatic monologue.

As an important technological device, social media has its own effect on the form of narration which reflects deeply and clearly the spirit of the nation. Iman expresses this feeling through her Facebook account which adds a kind of civilized feature to the characters who belong to a rural area such as Sa'ada. Iman succeeds to show how women are confined by unfair social habits and inequitable customs that deprive them even from the slightest rights to live as humans such as education. Iman tells the story of war that attacks the city and how it destroys the villages and kills people leaving negative impact upon the coming generations.

Although, the period of correspondence does not take a long time in the ladder of narration almost two months, the 4<sup>th</sup> of February to 21<sup>st</sup> of March during the year 2014, the novelist succeeds to reflect a long time of the character's life. He devotes an obvious importance to Iman and never gives deep attention to the revolution of 2011. The writer distinctly wants to manifest how humanity is more important than revolution.

Ghafoory's language is bitter which directs its attack as a weapon against the living culture that looks down on the others and it is used as a tool for revealing the voice of woman which is magnified through the character of Iman. The author provides Iman with some skills to observe her environment and picture her life with the masters vividly. He uses the character of Iman to judge critically the masters and show how they think.

The novelist describes Iman as capable of being independent against the laws of the masters. He uses direct description which make Iman a living and strong character. The language is also simple, sincere and it has a profound kind of honesty.

Iman is the main narrator of the story and therefore, the novelist passionately identifies himself with Iman using the first person point of view. He employs a strong imagination to give her personal freedom. Therefore, Iman narrates her story in a atmosphere of rebellion against the harsh thoughts and norms of the masters. She despises them with a considerable feeling of humanity in order to gain the sympathy of the readers on her story. Consequently, the readers does not only believe the story but he also deals with Iman as if she were alive.

By using honesty of narration and personal attachment, the novelist has successfully condemned the colours and the social settings that Iman lives in. The language does not only criticize but leads the reader into a kind of investigation about the reasons and the purposes of using religion by the masters. In fact, the novelist has succeeded to reveal how religion is condemned by showing the masters' social and human follies.

Moreover, the language is developed as the story progresses. Iman's use of language is improved as the story moves on. She is described as a soldier who needs his tools to continue his journey. Similarly, Iman's language becomes bitter as she uses sharp words to attack the masters. She becomes a revolutionary character to repel independently against the religious misconceptions which are used to attack the others.

On the other hand, the language of the masters is another important aspect which shows how people's minds are controlled. Iman comments that the people who pray feel happy when they heard the phrase: "*protecting its borders*" referring to the Islamic nation. In other words, the preacher uses complicated classical Arabic so that people do not know the depth of that phrase because most of them are illiterate and they cannot reach the real meaning. The speech is beyond their linguistic abilities except from some promoting phrases such as "*protecting its borders*" that are used to stimulate people to go to the battlefield. Iman comments that by the end of the speech, we know that we have to send our men to the battle. She adds:

*"The rest of the speech was very eloquent that we could not even grasp or remember."* P:95

The language is used for some political purposes which clearly means to participate in the battlefield either by sending army men or mujahedeen or any kind of support.

## Conclusion

This paper has investigated the elements of narration used by Ghafoory's **Sa'ada's Braids** to reflect the concept of others that has been established by the attitudes of the masters in Sa'ada. The masters have utilized religion for their worldly purposes. Ghafoory has

criticized the way the masters' way of dealing with the others by creating Iman as an independent character who has revolted against the radical rules used by the masters and their harsh ways of controlling people's life.

The reasons why people are distracted from the reality and why they follow their masters blindly without even trying to investigate its truth are clearly analysed. Ghafoory's Sa'ada's Braids reflects the heroine Iman with an independent identity. She shows intelligence, wit, charms and liveliness in dealing with the problems of her society.

Ghafoory narrates his novel by criticizing the continuous regulations and conventions of the masters in Sa'ada. The novel emphasizes how masters-dominated belief underestimates the life of the others. Their belief has deprived the others from their life. Moreover, the masters have utilized religion to ridicule the others' ability to live or understand the purpose of their life. However, Ghafoory has not lost the hope of preserving humanity and therefore, he has created the character of Iman. He has shed light to the idea of hopefulness which is manifested by the idea of humanity. In other words, humanity cannot be achieved without understanding the purpose of life.

There is also the element of the setting which helps to achieve the purpose of the novelist. The description of places in Sa'ada such as the abandoned villages, evacuated houses, high mountains, pilotless aircraft and deserted schools provide a suitable setting to show the ugliness of the masters' ideas when they practice them.

Apart from using the elements of environment, entangling symbols are manipulated in such away to picture the consequences of applying the rules of the masters. In order to achieve that, Ghafoory symbolically depicts the names of the characters, their behavior, and dialogue to deepen the dilemma caused by the masters and their beliefs. He has successfully reflected the dark shadow perspectives of these rules.

Moreover, the element of allusions is used particularly in the first part of the novel to add real significance and historical attitudes to the heroine of the novel. The reader is left with the impression of being logically convinced with the real problem and catastrophe Iman has been surrounded by. She has been crowned by a sense of gravity and seniority when she is attached with historical figures such as Robinson Crusoe or Albringo, .... etc. In other words, the character of Iman has been globalized and developed to comprehend the reality around her.

The presentation of Iman is also used to support Ghafoory's search for humanity and love. Iman becomes the symbol of love and humanity. In order to achieve that, she is provided with the element of independence and courage. She is pictured as a healthy character who is courageous enough to express her thoughts, face to face with the masters themselves.

Finally, Ghafoory has successfully shown the ugly implications of the masters. As a result of the harsh belief and arrogances of the masters, people are divided and they become enemies killing each other.

Therefore, he has created an amazing character such as Iman to revolt against the stupid and ugly belief of the masters. By creating such character, Ghafoory has finished the novel with an important message that the equality among people should be taken into consideration. He inspires people to gain their freedom and voice in such society where masters dominate it. Furthermore, he encourages the importance of equality between masters and others in the twentieth centuries and according to him religion or any other social doctrines should be used to help the belief of equality and establish peace.

## WORKS CITED

### Books

- A Dictionary of Literary Symbols. Second Edition, (2007), expanded Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,.
- Ahroni, R. (1986). Yemenite Jewry: Origins, Culture, and Literature. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Alexander Mikaberidze (2011). "Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia". ABC-CLIO. p. 159.
- Bell, J. Bowyer. (2005).. "Assassin: Theory and Practice of Political Violence".. New ed. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers,
- Bidwell, R. (1983). "The Two Yemens". Boulder, CO.: Westview Press.
- Bonnie G. Smith (2008). "The Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History (in Arabic)". 4. Oxford University Press. p. 163.
- Broeze (28 October 2013). "Gateways Of Asia". Routledge. p. 30.
- Burrowes, R. (1987). "The Yemen Arab Republic: The Politics of Development". 1962-1986. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Burrowes, R. (1990). "The Other Side of the Red Sea and a Little More: The Horn of Africa and the Two Yemens". Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute.
- Caton, S. (1990). "Peaks of Yemen I Summon: Poetry as Cultural Practice in a North Yemeni Tribe". Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Derryl N. Maclean; Sikeena Karmali Ahmed (2012). "Cosmopolitanisms in Muslim Contexts: Perspectives from the Past". Edinburgh University Press. p. 54.
- ....."Meet The Group That Now Rules Yemen". BuzzFeed. 6 February. 2015.



- Dresch, Paul (2000). "A History of Modern Yemen". Books.google.com. Cambridge University Press. p. 115.
- Eagleton, Mary. (1996). "Working with Feminist Criticisms". Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers,
- Eric Maroney (2010). "The Other Zions: The Lost Histories of Jewish Nations". Rowman & Littlefield. London .p. 94.
- Farhad Daftary. (2005). "Ismailis in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Historical Introduction to an Islamic Community". London .p. 92
- Ghanem, I. (1981). "Yemen: Political History, Social Structure and Legal System". London: Arthur Probsthain.
- Halliday, Fred. (1996). "Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East". London:
- Han, Carolyn. (2011). "Where the Paved Road Ends: One Woman's Extraordinary Experiences in Yemen". Washington D.C.
- Ken Blady (2000). "Jewish Communities in Exotic Places". Jason Aronson. P:9
- Kjetil Selvik; Stig Stenslie (2011). "Stability and Change in the Modern Middle East". I. B. Tauris. P: 90.
- Lewcock, R. (1986). "The Old Walled City of Sana'a". Paris: UNESCO.
- Madsen, Deborah L. (2000). "Feminist Theory and Literary Practice". London: Pluto Press,
- Marta Colburn (2002). "The Republic of Yemen: Development Challenges in the 21st Century". CIIR. p. 15.
- Paul Wheatley. (2001). "The Places Where Men Pray Together: Cities in Islamic Lands, Seventh Through the Tenth Centuries". University of Chicago Press. p. 128.
- Peter T. Struck . (2004). "Birth of the Symbol Ancient Readers at The Limits of Their Texts". Princeton University Press.
- Peterson, J. (1982). Yemen: The Search for a Modern State. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Shlomo Sand (2010). The Invention of the Jewish People. Verso. p. 193.
- Stephen W. Day. (2012). "Regionalism and Rebellion in Yemen: A Troubled National Union". Cambridge University Press. p. 31
- Van Dijk, Teun A. (1989). "Structures of Discourse and Structures of Power". Communication Yearbook 12. Ed J.A. Anderson. Newbury Park: Sage, 18-59.



### Articles

- Al-Haj, Ahmed (6 February 2015). ["Yemen's Shiite rebels announce takeover of country"](#). The Columbian. Retrieved 6 February 2015.
  - al-Naggar, Mona (6 February 2015). ["In Yemen, Hard Times Remain a Constant as Rebels Take Charge"](#). The New York Times.
  - Hendawi, Hamza (12 October 2014). ["Yemen's crisis reflects arc of Arab Spring revolts"](#). Yahoo! News.
  - Phillips, Sarah. ["How Did it Come to This." Yemen and the Politics of Permanent Crisis](#). Abingdon: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies.NY.2011.
  - Hill, Ginny (1 April 2009). ["Yemen's point of no return"](#). London: The Guardian. ["Regime and Periphery in Northern Yemen: The Huthi Phenomenon"](#) (PDF). 17 September 2010
  - Siobhan Gorman; Adam Entous (14 June 2011). ["CIA Plans Drone Strikes in Yemen"](#). Wall Street Journal. New York.
  - ["Losing Yemen: How this forgotten corner of the Arabian Peninsula became the most dangerous country in the world"](#). Foreign Policy. Washington DC. 5 November 2012. Archived from [the original](#) on 30 May 2013.
  - ["Yemen's Forever War: The Houthi Rebellion"](#). Washington Institute. Retrieved 22 February 2013.
- Net sites**
- [https:// www.8gharb.com](https://www.8gharb.com)
  - [https:// www.raseef22.com](https://www.raseef22.com)
  - [www.aljazeera.net/news/cultural](http://www.aljazeera.net/news/cultural) and art/2014/11/15
  - <https://arablit.org/2015/03/27/6-authors-who-are-part-of-yemens-literary-history-and-literary-resurgence>
  - <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/30/best-books-fiction-2017>
  - <http://aiys.org/blog/?p=762>
  - [www.state.gov/g/tip](http://www.state.gov/g/tip)