

E-ISSN: 2709-9369  
P-ISSN: 2709-9350  
[www.multisubjectjournal.com](http://www.multisubjectjournal.com)  
IJMT 2022; 4(1): 128-132  
Received: 12-01-2022  
Accepted: 18-03-2022

**Mohammad Zarin Anzor**  
Former Director of  
Afghanistan National Radio  
Television, Afghanistan

## **Study of contemporary Pashto story writing in the light of historical consciousness**

**Mohammad Zarin Anzor**

### **Abstract**

Pashto fiction literature is an interesting part of the study of contemporary fiction in relation to the history of Pashtuns. This study explores the aspect of contemporary literature. What the Pashto story has to do with history, the historical struggles of the Pashtuns and how much and how the historical consciousness of the Pashtuns is reflected in the Pashto stories.

There are not many historical stories in Pashto, but most of them have preserved important historical chapters of Pashtun national struggle in their artistic-narrative form.

The first published short story in Afghanistan, written by Ustad Abdul Hai Habibi, "Brave Pashtun Lady" is a historical story. The subject matter of this story is the manifestation of one aspect of the Anglo-Afghan war and the Pashtun struggle.

In Pakhtunkhwa, along with the efforts of 'Afghans Reform Society' and 'Servants of God' movements, literature also joined these national-historical efforts and many writers wrote anti-colonial and anti-despotism works. Master Abdul Karim, Mehdi Shah Mehdi, Ajmal Khattak, Wali Mohammad Tofan, and many others are worth mentioning.

Literature, especially fiction, has played a significant role in the development and dissemination of historical consciousness in Afghanistan and Pakhtunkhwa.

**Keywords:** Story, history, historical consciousness, novel, freedom, struggle

### **1. Introduction**

In this study, an attempt has been made to study contemporary Pashto story writing from a new angle. Whether the Pashto story has a relationship with the historical events of the Pashtuns in terms of subject matter and content or not, it is an important part of researching the content of Pashto stories.

Attempts have been made to explore this aspect of contemporary Pashto story writing and fiction Literature in general. What history has given to these stories as an important material and how it has been given?

### **2. The value of the subject**

The value of this research is the fact that a particular aspect of the content of Pashto stories has been selected for research. This is an aspect that has not been given much attention in our research before.

This fusion of history and fiction is a result of a combination of historical facts and artistic creation, and a new look has been given to this aspect in this article. Apart from this, the issues of Pashtuns' lives, and issues within their consciousness are also explored, such as the life of women in the society and so on.

### **3. Research Questions**

- Which aspects of Pashtun history are closely related to the Pashto story?
- How are historical events reflected in art?
- To what extent has the Pashto national-historical consciousness made its way into their stories?
- How does history position itself as one of the best materials in art?

### **4. Research methods and methodology**

The type of research is library-based and its method is descriptive and analytical.

### **5. Discussion**

A historical study of our story writing can reveal to us what points from the historical study of this process there are which we can learn as lessons.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Mohammad Zarin Anzor**  
Former Director of  
Afghanistan National Radio  
Television, Afghanistan

What the role of historical consciousness is in our contemporary short story and what aspects of historical consciousness of Pashtuns are most prominent in our story writing.

On one hand, finding traces of historical consciousness in story writing shows the impacts of these events and changes on our story writing from historical, political, and social aspects, while on the other hand, we can explore the points in this study that what the effects of these stories are on the historical consciousness of the Pashtuns in terms of context and content or what their contribution is in the development, expansion, and success of this consciousness.

In this series, I will try to focus on these few aspects of the Pashto story writing process in particular.

In the first part, I will talk about the relations between history and Pashto stories. How historical consciousness has been incorporated into Pashto stories as historical events and themes, or how Pashto story writers have evoked the spirit of historical consciousness in their stories from the pages of history? Research in this section will shed light on what kind of historical stories we have and what the relationship between history and stories is.

In the second part, the impact of contemporary political events on the contemporary life of the Pashtuns will be explored in the form of historical awakening consciousness. In other sections, with the selection of contents of stories, other social issues of the life and lifestyles of the Pashtuns which are also related to their historical consciousness will be explored.

5.1. Story and history, though different subjects and themes are not unrelated to each other. There are certain features of history in fiction and in the story itself. Ehsan Tebri quotes from the beginning of one of his historical narrative works and writes:

"History is the story that it was so. The story is the history that was so and the historical story has both characteristics." The author of "Story Writing" says:

"History deals with the obvious aspects of events, not with the esoteric or internal aspects. The historian is not a judge of the spirits of historical heroes and celebrities but reveals the events that befell them or they have faced. Story deals with the inner nature of a human and is governed only by human existence.

The story is more accurate and real than the history because the inner and esoteric aspects of the life of the heroes are described with accurate details.... "(2).

We also have anecdotes, stories, and versified myths and legends in our past literature that have covered and saved historical events or have pointed out certain historical events, but we cannot discuss them here in our research. As it does not fit into the features of contemporary fictional works and therefore a mere mention of it is sufficient here.

Several points are worth considering a lot in historical story writing. The first one is the writer of historical stories must have an in-depth and comprehensive study of the original historical event. He can create a lot of artistic beauty in his narrative work, but cannot control or change the original historical event. He should choose an event in which he has a special interest from a sentimental aspect. We can read some historical monuments that express the historical greatness of a nation, its spiritual greatness, even its greatness is greater than the historical monuments. For example, the famous Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's work "War and Peace" is worth mentioning. The novel is based

on one of the most sensitive periods in Russian history, 'the Napoleonic Invasion and War'. During this period many historical works have been written and a lot of research has been done, but if one looks deeper, no other historical work will show the sacrifices, struggles, and love of the people of his country against the invader Napoleon and his bloody armies, and the hopes have not been expressed as accurately and deeply as Leo Tolstoy has done it in his book, "War and Peace". (3)

In contemporary Pashto story writing, "History" is considered a major subject. The well-known history of short stories in Afghanistan begins with the story of the late Ustad Abdul Hai Habibi 'The Brave Pashtun Lady' which is based on the Anglo-Afghan War. In addition, the historical narratives of the writers, 'Ghaus Khyber, Mohammad Ibrahim Atayi, Mustafa Jihad, Baryalai Bajauri, Zarin Anzoor, Naseer Ahmad Ahmadi, and others are worth mentioning. (4)

In Pakhtunkhwa too, many writers have tried writing historical stories and have written several historical stories such as:

Most of the stories of Sayed Mir Mehdi Shah Mehdi, Abdul Rauf Nowshewrawi and Mohammad Yusuf Kakakhel's 'Durshahwar', Samandar Khan Samandar's 'The Pashtun Ladies' and others. (5)

In these historical-artistic stories, historical information is also passed on to future generations as historical lessons and can undoubtedly be considered valuable for the revival and awakening of historical consciousness.

5.2. The new era of Pashtun political-historical struggles in Pashto story writing is particularly noteworthy. This new process is an interesting combination of historical-political consciousness and artistic features and aspirations. In contemporary Pashto story writing, the light of historical-political consciousness is wide and is related to various national-freedom achieving movements.

The process of anti-colonial struggle in Pakhtunkhwa has contributed greatly to the development and rapid progress of Pashto short stories. One writer points out how the story finds a connection with historical consciousness and historical progress. He says:

"Story writing in its present form could not occur during the period of 'Standing and Unconscious history.' 'Standing and Unconscious history' refers to the absence of a social consciousness development for social purposes. It shows how important role the history has played in the emergence, development, and perfection of the story. The writings emphasize the importance of history and society in emergence. Therefore, some popular critics of stories, for example, Walter Alan, Arnold Katal, and Inn Watt, have emphasized the importance of history and society in the emergence of story writing.

And in our writing of Pashto short stories, we have to consider all such factors and all these motivations. The Pashto story, once and suddenly, does not change from the same ongoing tradition to an artistic short story, but it is the same social life and these are the traces of a new civilization in which the artistic short story also emerges separately." (6) The evolution and changes of short stories or myths can be researched all over the world, as well as in the historical process of Pashto story writing, it should be taken into consideration. The political and social conditions of life have a serious effect on this process of writing.

The late Mohammad Azam Azam has a good discussion on this subject in "Pashto Myth - Research and Criticism". He says:

"Under what circumstances the Pashto myth that has begun, and under what circumstances it has crossed the brink of evolution and has reached a certain stage, indicate the revolutionary changes in every aspect of life our country politically, economically, and culturally seeks new ways of thinking for the human mind.

Due to all these situations, the Pashtun Authors for the first time started writing in social styles. They destroyed the castles of selfishness and came to the wide grounds of society and the environment. They shattered the idols of personality and inner world and started struggling against the people who have given pains and problems to their society. They started seeking cure for their society which had suffered a lot. As a result of their holy and long struggle, the thing which Pashtu myths have achieved can be given only one name and that is the color of realism in Pashto fiction because the bitterness of grief is more important to our writers than the sweetness of grief. Whatever the case may be in other genres of literature, our fiction writers have looked at life as a reality and have a mature folk and social consciousness about life that has firmly connected them with the realities of their society and environment and has largely shunned the luxury of outdated fantasy and romance. Even in love and romance topics, they have taken special care of the specific Pashtun temperament, however, they have never taken love as a basic issue of life... This is the reason the new stories of the early Pashto period are also popular and reflects reformist and revolutionary issues and this is what gives Pashto fiction a special and unique position..." (7).

Many stories from 'Afghan Reform Society' and 'Servants of God' about the political life of Pashtuns, the struggle for freedom and the evolution of the nation's thinking, education, and the struggle against bad traditions were an important part of the struggle. The leader of the movement 'Fakhr-e-Afghan Pacha Khan', and his colleague authors from the movement were the leading writers of literary struggles and had top well-known positions in writing short stories. The names of Master Abdul Karim, Mir Mehdi Shah Mehdi, Ajmal Khattak, Qalandar Momand, Wali Mohammad Tofan, Hamesh Khalil, and many others are worth mentioning in this series. Their stories are truly the best examples of the clarity of the historical consciousness of the Pashtuns during this period.

Under what circumstances did this political-social and cultural movement and literary endeavor arise? What was the position of society at that time? According to Mr. Archiwal:

"In the twentieth century, the Pashtuns of Lower Pashtunkhwa faced many difficulties. Their language was on the verge of extinction. They faced an unknown economic, social, and cultural in every aspect of lives. The culture and the Pashto language were on the verge of extinction. Literary and political activities were almost non-existent. Their whole lives were being spent in fights due to arrogance and quarrels with their paternal cousins. They spend the whole day fighting with each other and had no time to fight the English.

Their existence as a nation as a whole was under threat. Most importantly, the Pashtuns, with a few exceptions, accepted the situation of helplessness, ignorance, or even

intent, and the scope of their vision reached only their respective villages. The general identity of the Pashtuns was in danger of disappearing and they were reluctant to revive that identity. Pashtuns lagged behind other ethnic groups in India. Their educational status with other ethnic groups was not comparable. In 1920, 98% of Pashtuns were illiterate. Due to backwardness in the field of education, Pashtuns were lagging in all the areas of life... Pashtuns could not read and write in their language... (8)

Under such circumstances, first the "Afghan Reform Association" and then the "Servants of God" movement were formed. Many awakened Pashtun poets and writers became friends of this movement, thus in Pashto story writing, the struggle of the devoted Pashtuns against the English and their successors became stories.

Master Abdul Karim is the renowned author of this series. His writings are valuable to us and to the history of our literature on the one hand and the history of his struggles on the other hand. He spent most of his youth in political struggles, spending the sweetest years of his life in prison. The darkness of the prison slowly darkened the dawn of his life and accompanied it with darkness and then put him on the way to death, but these difficulties and hardships did not stop him from doing so. He continued to insist on fighting for his (Goal) and this insistence lasted till the last moment of his death... (9)

In the story collection "Sack of Flowers", 'The author died' is an example of his art and political thought, in which the historical consciousness and artistic beauty have intertwined with each other.

Sayed Mir Mehdi Shah Mehdi is a powerful historical-political conscious author of this period. He has written unforgettable stories of this period. Most of his five published collections of stories are related to the historical and political struggles of the Pashtuns. He says in the introduction of his book 'Lala Guloona', "This is the fourth collection of my myths, and whoever reads all these collections of mine, will surely have the opinion about me that Mahdi can write only one kind of myth and I want this opinion to be true about, because I decide that the art of my fiction will be special to show the cruelty and oppression of the oppressor and in my opinion, after the independence of the country, the leaders of the Pashtun nation, the leaders of entire Pakistan, especially leaders of the Pashtun state, have committed atrocities against the Pashtuns, even the English have not committed it in the war of independence against the Pashtuns. In my opinion, therefore, there have not been any incidents that have attracted my attention... the atrocities that have been committed against the Pashtun nation by the government of that time are all such myths artistically written. I am sure that for a long time a novelist like me will be free from the hassle of writing fiction. I firmly claim that there are countless stories in every village, neighborhood, and street. So only someone has to collect it. The second reason is that Pashto Nation Youth has been kept ignorant of the history of that time till now. Let them be aware of it and how many hardships and sufferings they have gone through for the freedom of their beloved country and before the freedom of their homeland and Islam and how many challenges have they faced when they were accused of betraying the country and despite it, how much patience and perseverance they have shown..."

Ajmal Khattak, in his preface to the 'Mehdi story collection', has considerable points about this and writes in

one place: " We can state that fiction of Mehdi Pacha is a struggle of the Pashtuns in the mirror of art. I believe as time passes and the national feeling increases, the value, and respect for Syed Mir Mehdi Shah's short story and along with it Pacha's personality will become stronger... At a time when our peoples read the legends of Mehdi Shah, Jeddah their emotions of awakening, bravery, sacrifice, and struggles will arise.... I am sure that these myths were popular yesterday, they are popular today, but the importance of today's time seems very clear to me...."

Wali Mohammad Tofan has written a few short stories, however, according to Prof. Asir Mangal, "His short stories clearly show his love and affection for his people and his land and he has given strong national consciousness to his readers.)"

We have examples of many other story writers in the 'Servants of God' movement, but these examples suffice in this discussion.

Many other stories have been written about the political content and the political changes and needs in the lives of Pashtuns. When the lives of the Pashtuns faced various national-political crises, the story writers also reflected it in short stories. Even after the series of writers of the historical aspect of the story of freedom against the British and the writers of the socio-political movement of 'Servants of God', fictional literature has been created that is related to the struggle of Afghanistan and Pakhtunkhwa.

The former Soviet invasion of Afghanistan strengthened the spirit of resistance in our literature and many writers have written stories in this field. The situation in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the former Soviet Union brought new challenges to the historical consciousness of this nation and several writers have written and are still writing stories about this catastrophe of the war. Undoubtedly such topics are the main themes of our contemporary short stories.

All Afghans across the country are facing the same dilemma of terrorism and insecurity, and the tragedy is still intensely in progress. The story makes the author record these themes in the collection of his stories in the light of his historical consciousness and presents them to his readers.

There are more examples in this series. However, I will present some examples from Southern Pakhtunkhwa, considering the place of the seminar:

The stories of Dr. Naqibullah Simab, Farooq Sarwar, and Dar Mohammad Kasi are also noteworthy in this regard. According to Prof. Asir Mangal:

"Pashtun Land has been burning for decades. What the Pashtun people across the land had suffered, we are now suffering. This has been reflected and shown artistically in 'Magician' and 'The last Promise'. Similarly, it talks about the life of the Pashtuns in Karachi and the problems they face there.

"Anonymous Traveler" is a complete myth written on the scourge of terrorism and it reveals everything in this short sentence: "I am an anonymous traveler; my homeland is in ruins...". (2)

Mr. Farooq Sarwar is one of the authors of this series who also has an in-depth study of international literature and symbolically covers many new issues as stories. As we read the introduction to his collection "Chains": "Today, whatever game is being played on my soil and what jokes are being made with the Pashtun people, this magical writer of ours is also aware of it and has poetically pictured it and can make people aware of this misery." the condition of my

brothers in Quetta, Peshawar, Kabul or Karachi is not hidden from anyone today He has tried to cure the wounds of his people. He has a deep understanding of his time and creates a sign according to the times... If anyone wants to find the color of resistance in Pashto prose literature and the image of Pashtun in the current crisis. He will put Mr. Farooq Sarwar's short stories in the front row..."). (10)

In my opinion, in the fictional works of Mr. Farooq Sarwar, "Mano" is a story that can symbolically present the greatness of the historical consciousness of the Pashtuns. This is the story of an army colonel and his father, I don't want to give its details here but this story tells us how the "colonels" become alienated from their history and identity and from their fatherland - What they do with their (homeland-identity and history)?

This is a very deep story. (11)

5.3. Many other topics in the life of Pashtuns are also present in the new short story in Pashto which can be mentioned as traces of the historical consciousness of Pashtuns. There are many similar topics, but we will summarize the main ones:

A. Women's problems, unhappiness, and violence, as a tragic aspect of Pashtuns' lives, are also present in the stories, from Ustad Rahat Zakheli's "Widow Girl" to Mr. Farooq Sarwar's "Chains". This theme forms the content of the story as an integral part of the tragedy of Pashtuns' lives. The oppression of men against women, along with the ignorance, darkness, illiteracy, and poverty in Pashtun society, which women have to endure, forms part of the historical consciousness of Pashtun writers. Although our male writers have written extensively in this series, female writers have paid close attention to it and we can read about it in detail in the stories of these writers:

Zaitoon Bano, Mubarak Sultana Shamim, Kubra Mazhari, Salma Shaheen, Parveen Malal, Sayeda Hasina Gul, Wagma Saba, Jalalzai, Fariba Zahir, Shafiqah Khpalwak and others.

B. The issues of poverty in the society, the constant struggle between rich and poor which can be considered as "social class writings", the idea of reform of Pashtuns, and various other issues which the author has mentioned as part of the historical consciousness of Pashtuns, has encouraged the author to present his aspirations of the freedom, security, harmony, equality, progress, and prosperity of his community to his people in the form of short stories.

We see that historical consciousness manifests itself in the historical process of Pashto story writing and the blood of this historical consciousness is still flowing in the veins of the new story writing process.

## 6. Conclusion

The study of Pashto fiction literature reveals the historical events of Pashtun life, the tragedies that befell the lives of the people of Afghanistan and Pakhtunkhwa, their struggle against occupation, and other aspects of history, are one of the best content of fictional literature.

In contemporary Pashto story writing, some writers have written excellent works on this subject. Although there are not many such works, those that had been written and published are vague to us.

The historical narrative of the long misery in the lives of Afghans is more visible in our literature, more in poetry and verified works, and to a small extent in the story, but in a much better way.

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