



A Comparative Study of the Question of Honor in Sadegh Chubak's *Tangsir* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*

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Abstract

This comparative study endeavors to analyze the question of honor and the means through which it is gained or restored in two novels chosen from two apparently distant territories and nations; i.e., Sadegh Chubak's *Tangsir* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. This study analyzes the process through which the protagonists of both novels find themselves entangled in the controversial web of maintaining honor which has been either lost or on the verge of being lost with unbearable consequences. Both novels are contextualized and the embedded images and symbols are analyzed in this paper.

Keywords: *Question of Honor; Comparative Literature; Sadegh Chubak; Tangsir; Harper Lee; To Kill a Mocking Bird*

1. Introduction

Beside life, death and love some other substantial themes have also been regarded as human beings' chief concerns regardless of their ethnicity and culture throughout the ages. One of these has been the issue of honor and maintaining it. Its universality bespeaks of its not being confined to either the East or the West. Both Sadegh Chubak in his novel *Tangsir*, and Harper Lee in her novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* treat the fundamental issue of the question of honor in their own way through their specific methods. Even though there are significant disparate differences between the two works hence their distinctly different source cultures, interestingly enough some striking parallels can also be drawn between these two apparently dissimilar works. The protagonists of both stories are basically southerners who come from a land that was and is still manipulated by a minority that has usurped the majority. In *Tangsir*, Zar Mohammad has even experienced confronting the British soldiers in the south in 1920s, but the battles or conflicts he goes through in the course of the novel are not merely against the foreign invading forces; instead, they are also aimed at some of the close and the already-trusted countrymen who dared to take advantage of his trust and generosity. The conflicts and battles in *To Kill a Mockingbird* that Atticus Finch as a lawyer has to deal with, though are of different sort in comparison, still endanger the same territory in his life, i.e. his honor. Even though this lawyer's principle concerns might appear to be internal, he at a time even steps into some physical entanglement that comes as astonishing to even his children and intimate friends. The significant question that arises here is that is it really honor that is restored in both cases or is it honor exchanged for dishonor as long as the means are not honorable?

2. Objectives

This study intends to analyze the question of honor in two chosen novels, for in both works the protagonists take heroic roles at times when they feel the necessity of being called upon by their inner selves. Hero is most often defined as the character who sets off on a journey in order to seek the truth and more often than not he has to sacrifice something precious to get closer to his intended objectives. Through the process of the sacrifice, the hero essentially experiences some sort of transformation as well and must pass through an ordeal. According to Campbell “The black moment is the moment when the real message of transformation is going to come. At the darkest moment comes the light” (Campbell 1991, p. 44). The archetype of hero together with its basic characteristics can well be traced in both stories and this paper’s second objective is to study the embedded images and symbols clarifying the question of honor.

3. Significance of the Study

Attaining and maintaining honor and good reputation have always been regarded as the central value in both Western and Eastern societies and consequently in modern literary works. It can even be traced in some medieval Persian texts where heroes strive to go beyond themselves to carry out this function not merely for themselves but primarily for their tribes. While the modern story is written in a different context than the medieval epic poem or romance, as Loewen writes “the theme of gaining and maintaining the good name persists throughout. Medieval texts portray this all-encompassing struggle in the life of the legendary heroic warrior, who models the struggle for protagonists in modern stories” (Loewen 2013, p.71). The conflicts emerging in different cultures also initiate honor seeking or preserving struggles that can in their own turn be reflected in literary works. As Azadibougar states, “the conflicts of every culture are specific to it and energized by the network of values and ideologies that pre-exist the literary object and in Layoun’s usage, the novel should represent and propose imaginary solutions to them. Therefore, recognizing any society’s conflicts is significant in the study of its novels” (Azadibougar 2014, p.36). Chubak’s *Tangsir* is deeply entangled with both the past and the present. As Sadegh Chubak himself mentions “if you want to understand *Tangsir* better, you should know that what you read there as a story is the clear cruel reality I myself have witnessed” (qtd. in Payandeh 2016, p. 440). In this comparative study, the significance of restoring honor and maintaining it is highlighted.

4. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This study is based on Remak’s theory about interdisciplinary studies. According to Remak’s “Comparative Literature: Its Definition and Function”, comparative literature is the study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature on the one hand and other areas of knowledge and belief, such as the arts, on the other (Remak 1961, p.1-57). Comparative literature itself as A. Anushiravani observes, does not have a single definition and does not rely on a specific theory, approach and method. Basically, the vitality and the secret of the survival of comparative literature among the multitude of theories and criticism approaches and literary research methods, especially in the contemporary era, is due to its being dynamic and flexible (Aushiravani 2012, p.3). Both novels have been contextualized in this study.

5. Discussion

5.1. The Southern Spirit

The literature of the South has its own specific attributes; “the cruelty of nature and getting involved with a direct confrontation with colonialism provides the Southern fiction with a sort of cruelty which cannot be found in Northern fiction. That is why best Southern stories have applied the concise and tough tropes of writers like Hemingway” (Mirabedini 2004, p. 400). Different instances of Zar

Mohammad's displaying courageous actions have variously been depicted in *Tangsir* and interestingly enough not all are concerned with battles fighting the foreign soldiers or even those who have in one way or another wronged him. The most conspicuous one is undoubtedly his breathtaking confrontation with the widowed Sakineh's unruly bull which has run wild with no one there daring to take control of it. His relentless and unstoppable struggle with it acts as an interlude to the upcoming confrontation that is to emerge in the course of the novel. These incidents also according to Payandeh demonstrate "Chubak's objective and ruthless view of corruption and ...[especially] for the Iranian readers who have had enough of other authors' constant emotional and preaching style, primarily contributed to this novelist's fame" (Payandeh 2015, p.241). In this struggle, even Zar Mohammad's religious practice is also depicted when he resorts to shrine and vehemently asks for their aid. The heroic action in mythology and ancient drama most often necessitate invoking a muse and in this circumstance Zar Mohammad's muse is selected in accordance with his religious beliefs which is fundamentally his whole commune's whose support is to be magnificently won if this very first step is to be taken appropriately and on a firm ground. This inclusion of religious belief in this part might bespeak of some other significant issues as well. At the time during which this story has been written, Marxism also would fervently propagate its own political and social system and ideologies. This very fact could by no means be overlooked by an astute modern writer like Chubak:

Chubak's omission of Marxists in this narrative indicates his awareness that this ideological path fell short of the reality and importance of religion among the Iranian masses. That said, both Marxists and Islamists fervently called for the use of violence to combat socioeconomic, political, and national oppression. (Bidemeshki-Tahani 2012, p. 113)

At this stage, Zar Mohammad is still the man with a lost cause who has undergone a disastrous treatment and whose honor is endangered and he has got no time left for oscillation. Even though lack of action on Zar Mohammad's side at this state has evoked some critics' disapproval, there are some who would disapprove of his very method of regaining his honor. As Shojaie argues Zar Mohammad's dealing with those who cheated him is to be criticized, for "Not only does he dispatch human lives with a callousness that is chilling, but he takes absolutely no responsibility for his own folly. What was he doing, turning over all his money to people with reputations for stealing?" (Shojai 1975, p.228)

The drive to gain and maintain good reputation (honour, good name) in society functions as a primary core value in Middle Eastern and Asian societies. This phenomenon is best reflected in real-life stories that are not confined to the East; a noticeable number of Western real-life stories have been written and published. Courage has indisputably been conceived of as an indispensable attribute of heroes regardless of their abode and its pertinent cultures, so is the case with the protagonists of *Tangsir* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* who on their way to have their honor restored, display unprecedented instances of courage. In Zar Mohammad's opinion "There's nothing in life that matters so much as honor and dignity. Not even staying alive and keeping a wife and children alive" (Chubak 1963, p.55). Fariba Adelhah in her *Being Modern in Iran* prefers to apply the term "javanmardi" to refer to Persian instances of courageous behavior noting that there are some elements of "sekhavat", i.e., "generosity" in it that is not necessarily included in the English version:

The word "javanmardi", which thus defines an existential ethics-that is a lifestyle- comes from the idea of youth (javan, young, mard,man). It is the Persian translation of the Arabic word futuwwa (pronounced as fotowwat in Persian), which in turn comes from the root fati (young). Those who act in accordance with this code of ethics are called javanmard or fati. They are distinguished by two essential traits: the spirit of generosity (sekhavat) and courage (shoja at). But those terms have a richer meaning (Adelhah 2000, p.33).

5.2. The Notion of Superiority/Inferiority

The preliminary steps of the grandiose action starts from this very stage and is not be confined to those countrymen who swindled him, for there are explicit references to the maltreatment of the British

figures present in the novel as well. As Fanon argues in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “This is why a Marxist analysis should always be slightly stretched when it comes to addressing the colonial issue...in the colonies the foreigner imposed himself using his cannons and machines” (5). Consequently, “the implementation of racism” (Hook 2004, p.129) according to Fanon, at a number of different levels further rationalizes and justifies “notions of difference, notions of superiority/inferiority, originally made on the level of the body. Particularly interesting in this respect is his description of the colonial division of space, and how this comes to reify constructed notions of psycho- logical, cultural, moral difference” (129).

The story of both novels has been based on some actual events that occurred prior to the time when they were written and published. The actual happening that took place during the Chubak’s childhood in Bushehr and “was previously depicted in a short story by Rasul Parvizi (1919-77) in *Šhalvārḥā-ye vašledār* (Tattered Trousers, 1957)” (Encyclopaedia Iranica), the novel tells the story of a rural worker whose all savings have been taken from him by four already-trusted individuals in his hometown. Failing to legally regain what he lost through their swindling, he decides act on his own rule of life, and after killing the four oppressors he escapes together with his wife and children. What distinguishes this novel from Chubak’s previous writings is according to Hillman its being “a romantic novel of heroic bent, as opposed to Chubak’s earlier naturalistic short stories, was a turning point in his literary career” (Hillmann 2009, p.71). *Tangsir* has also been noted for its being a “historical document of narrative technique, language, and structure (İşbari, pp. 313-16; Yusofi, pp. 465-74), and also as a “historical document of culture (Tabari, pp. 313-16; Yusofi, pp. 465-74) as well. Above all, its portrayal of “the life of the people which is as black as the night” (Barāheni 1969, p.670) has given it a distinguishing characteristic. This novel initially did not receive approving reviews in terms of its subject matter; there were some critics who would criticize the novel for its not portraying the life of the oppressed people, and that it instead depicted an ordinary person as “an unrealistic champion”, “similar to the fist-fighting characters of Hollywood films” (Dastghayb, p. 24 ; Tina, pp. 345-56; Kiānuš, p. 189). Later, however, when it made it to be labeled as one of the well-known novels and was also adapted into a movie directed by Amir Naderi starring Behruz Vosughi in 1974, the critics’ reviews also turned in to more favorable ones.

In a similar way, Harper Lee’s novel has also been based upon an actual event. Several different sources have been “the famous Scottsboro Trials in Alabama in the 1930s” (Milica 2012, p.109) through which Nine black men were accused of committing rape, went through trials and were eventually “convicted for having raped two white women” (109). The fact that all the trials were done in a hurry leaving no opportunity for the accused to provide any evidence proving their not being guilty even though they also tried “several appeals and new trials” (109) , the ultimate consequence for the Scottsboro boys was that all these “several appeals and new trials that enflamed the spirits both in the North and in the South” (109), merely “drew attention on prejudiced, all-white juries that tended to protect the white instead of upholding justice” (109).

The time of the publication of *To Kill the Mocking Bird* “coincides with the Civil Rights Movement marking a change in the attitudes concerning racial divisions and violence” (Milica 2012, p. 108). Thus, the narrator is given a certain distance from the actions of the 1930s in order to focus more on characters more; those prefer to tolerate and be reconciled than to be taken on violent actions to “institutionalized forms of justice” (108). Though in different countries and even different continents, the two stories are set in regions where separation, biased treatment of various classes and races and poverty are too difficult to eliminate. Both Bushehr (Chubak’s region) and Alabama (the state where Lee’s setting is located) were Southern districts still under the influence of distinctions of class, gender, race, and also poverty and economic hardships targeting the ordinary people. In a survey “covering the lynching in the Unites States between 1882 and 1962”, . . . Alabama is on the fifth place with 299 victims (*Lynching by State and Race*)” (108). Another similarity between the two texts is the mob’s reaction to a case regarding women. Whereas in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, it is the reported rape that evokes the mob’s outrage when Atticus Finch, the lawyer, tries to defend the black accused of rape as innocent through evidences, in *Tangsir* the protagonist’s attacking, injuring and in one case killing women leads to the public’s reaction

against Zar Mohammad for violating the ethic of not attaching women due to their being the unprotected and hence weak gender.

5.3. The Significance of Race

Gender in both stories evokes conflicts primarily due to its being inherent in the Southern regions. In neither case, women have been regarded the sole cause of conflict, for none of their assumed lost right is really to be restored. Instead, they act as a catalizer in both cases to promote the oppressors' side with no convincing evidence to justify their accusations. Whose honor is to be maintained? The white woman who appears to be in a more hazardous circumstances at her father's abode in *To kill a Mockingbird* or those combative women at one of the oppressors' who put Zar Mohammd in a defensive position? Neither case is suggestive of the female being as the symbol of purity and innocence and above that, in both cases particularly in *To Kill a Mockingbird* case, it is crystal clear that it is the color of the skin of men there that matters and even white women are merely tools to facilitate the process of condemning the purposefully accused ones.

In both novels, the supremacy and the impact of being white are pervasively depicted even though in *To Kill a Mockingbird* it appears to be of stronger effect due to the black's being deprived of almost all the privileges provided for the white. In *Tangsir* the Southerners are also required to obey the British forces and their agents even though they have never been formally colonized as is the case with the black in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The pervasive feeling of being treated as the inferior in comparison with the white race is apparent and is reminiscent of how Fanon states the imposed supremacy through the perspective of a colonized person: "I begin to suffer from not being a white man to the degree that the white man imposes discrimination on me, makes me a colonized native, robs me of all worth, all individuality, tells me, I am a brute beast...that I have no use in the world" (Fanon 2004, p. 98).

5.4. The Significant Role of Children and Women

Children also play their own roles in the novels even though the one in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, who happens to be the protagonist and the narrator, grows up and reaches maturity in the course of the novel. Even though a child, Scout's viewpoint, as Granville Hick points out, "is not primarily about the childhood experience," (qtd. in Bloom 2-10, p. 5) for Harper Lee's objective is centered on "the perennial southern problem" (5). The challenging issue for the novelist according to Hicks, however, "has been to tell the story she wants to tell and stay within the consciousness of a child" (5). Even though Scout can be regarded as "the hero of the novel" as Seidel argues, (Seidel 2007, p.89), "it is important to differentiate between the adult Scout, who narrates the tale, and the young Scout, who acts as the focalizer" (89). Scout has experienced some change of attitude, for "Scout the narrator has a deeper understanding of events and their consequences than Scout the focalizer" (89), and apparently it is dangerous to attribute the narrator's wisdom to the child character. According to Johnson the novel's influence has not been restricted to its own time, for "it allows the reader, through the lives of children, 'to walk around in the shoes' (as its main character says) of people who are different from ourselves. The novel challenges our stereotypes—of the Southerner, the African- American, the eccentric, the child, the young lady" (xi).

At the beginning of the novel, Scout is on her way to become one of those southern ladies. She is rebellious, even turns to violence at times to secure her honor which in almost all cases is for a trivial childish cause with no good reasons behind it. Scout is prone to fighting; she is seen in the novel practicing on Walter Cunningham in by "rubbing his nose in the dirt" (Lee 1961, p.29). She beats up Dill twice to get his attention. When it comes to fighting Walter Cunningham in the schoolyard, she treats it primarily as the question of honor in her then understanding of honor and race. In her viewpoint at that time, Cunningham belongs to a lower class in the society and has to be put in his place to be reminded of this fact. Scout "embodies all the faults of the Old South when we first meet her" (Seidel 2007, p.79). Beside all these, she also "labels people according to their social class, denigrates them, and justifies her mistreatment of them because of what she perceives to be their genetic tendency for inferior behavior" (79).

Both Zar Mohammd's wife and his son act beyond what is expected from them. When Shahru strives to evoke rebelling spirit in her husband, she is in fact turns from his mere wife into his compatriot who keep on reminding him of his being a Tangsir and that is sufficient for Zar Mohammad to be reminded of his community as well. There comes the time when he says to her, "You never used to be this timid, so what's come over you now...anyway, you're a Tangsir too, aren't you?" (Chubak 1963, p. 65). "Shahru is a real woman with features quite different from sickly women in Chubak's other works. She and Zar Mohammd are the only lively dynamic characters in the novel who go through some growth and development; other characters are still images and do not change from the beginning to the end" (Payandeh 2015, p. 442). His son Sohrab supports his father's rebellious attitude and does not question it when he is asked whether he knows his father has killed some, he retorts: "So what? What's that to me?" (Chubak 1963, p. 116) and also when he is asked about his father's whereabouts, he answers fearlessly that "I'd not say if I knew" (117). This very thing marks a differentiation between Sohrab and Scout the focalizer as children. Through all this Chubak has implicitly made a Rostam-like figure of Zar Mohammad even though his merely naming the son Sohrab and referring to his being a hero in Sohrab's conversation with one of the soldiers suffices.

The significant factor in shaping Scout the focalizer's attitude and bringing about her gradual shift of ideas comes through her hero in the novel that is her father Atticus Finch's speech and conduct. It does not appear to be accidental in the novel that the name of Scout's father should be Atticus. Interestingly enough his namesake, i.e., Atticus the philosopher was the friend of the eminent Roman philosopher Tullius Cicero, who as the statesman and lawyer is most famous for his "admiration for the Stoics' conceptualization of life, including the belief that people embody natural laws enabling control of passion, love of justice, and courage born from reason" (Seidel 2007, p.78). As far as Scout's development of thought and mentality is concerned, no simple method was capable of leading her into subverting her already-established system of thought and belief. As Seidel states "Lee's allusion to this school of thought is borne out in the novel's discourse between the dignity that Stoics accorded to the individual's role in society on one hand and the Southern code of honor in which the individual's loss of face within the tribal group justifies acts of revenge and violence on the other" (78). This school of thought has the fundamental role in leading Scout to resist the conventional modes set for Southern womanhood by gradually turning into her father's favorite philosophy, i.e. stoicism.

5.5. Violence Justified

Violence is also embedded in Zar Mohammad's actions, but it is indeed for good reason in his viewpoint. It is not his means of action *ab ovo*; the same case can be noticed in Atticus Finch's course of action. *Tangsir* can be regarded as a novel of protest, for it does endorse violence and justifies its application when sustaining manly honor necessitates it. Talattof 'however, sees *Tangsir* as an instance of "militant literature"' (qtd. in Tahani-Bidmeshki 109) for even though "Zar Mohammad acts alone he has the support and solidarity of the masses through every step he takes on this fateful summer's day in Bushehr; however, he takes his liberation into his own hands rather than joining forces with any ideologically inclined groups" (qtd. in Tahani-Bidmeshki 2012, p.109)

5.6. The Significance of Language

Beside race, language has also been regarded as both a means of expressing resistance, revolt and being looked down upon. The mastery of Culpurina, the black servant over two languages is depicted as an approved of feature for the children at *To Kill the Mocking Bird*, but at the same time, it hints at the imposed segregation between the black and white races; "the African American vernacular is nonetheless dismissed as inferior" (Jay 2015, p. 33). The imposed inferiority is best portrayed through Culpurina's own statements explaining the black's situation among the white for Scout: 'You're not gonna change any of them by talkin' right . . . when they don't want to learn there's nothing you can do but keep your mouth shut or talk their language' (Lee 1961, p.167). How language is related to honor can also be noticed in Scout's question addressed to her father as a lawyer: "Do you defend niggers? ..." (82). Scout the focalizer does not consider it as "the rule of law" (Seidel 2007, p.79), but "a code of honor" (79)

violated if her father Atticus Finch strives to defend a “nigger”, which is by itself an offensive racist word.

According to Payandeh, “basically, Chubak finds it more realistic a depiction to state the common people’s life in reconstructing their language” (Payandeh 2015, p.443). He also mentions that before Daneshvar, Chubak started deploying the vernacular language in portraying the life of the victimized” (399). Even though he applied Western techniques like stream of consciousness in his narrative and was deeply under the influence of American novelists like Hemingway and Steinbeck, he preferred to apply the common language of the middle and the lower class of society specifically when related to the fiction of the South, his native region. Zar Mohammad shares his interior monologue in local dialect. “*Tangsir* values violence and armed resistance as valid means of resistance, especially when yielded by the noble and respectable individual; here, Lion Mohammad” (Tahani-Bidmeshki 2012, p. 126). The use of the word “brother” by the community to refer to Zar Mohammad after his acting independently and on his own is reminiscent of some of Fanon’s concepts regarding resistance shaped among the masses explained in *The Wretched of the Earth*. According to Fanon “Brother,” “sister,” “comrade” are words outlawed by the colonialist bourgeoisie because in their thinking my brother is my wallet and my comrade, my scheming.” (Fanon 2004, p.11)

5.7. The Significance of Religion

When it comes to biases related to race, gender and social class, religion does not appear to be left immune from the pertinent influences. According to Bloom “prejudice is not limited to race. *To Kill a Mockingbird* addresses all types of bigotry—those engendered by class, sex and religion” (Bloom 2010, p.39). The segregation between the two genders is explicitly depicted in the church itself as a place where “[N]egroes worshiped in it on Sundays, and white men gambled in it on weekdays.” (Lee 1961, p.157).

As Behruz Vosughi suggests in the movie version of *Tangsir* known as *Ghaysar*, “Marxists failed in comparison to the Islamists for the simple fact that the Marxists misrecognized the high-level of religiosity in the masses whereas the Islamist leadership nurtured and catered to the religious beliefs of the masses (qtd. in Tahani-Bidmeshki 2012, p.113). Chubak, as a southerner is utterly aware of both the significance of religion and religiosity in the South and also of its being rooted in both its culture and its people’s life and belief.

Even when Zar Mohammad out of rage turns to violence to restore his lost honor as the strong-willed man known to all for his manly might and heroic endeavors, he does not discard religion, religious belief in God above and the Islamic holy prophet and his descendents. When he confides in his father-in-law and makes him aware of his secret plan for taking revenge on those who mistreated his trust and honor, he does not neglect his suggested solution rooted in Islam, but prefers to apply some other solution still based on religious practices. Zar Mohammad in response asks his father-in-law this rhetorical question that “Didn’t God say in Qur’an that a thief’s hand should be cut off?” (Chubak 1963, p. 50) Through this clever reference Chubak intends to both justify the protagonist’s resorting to violence and highlight the significance of the loss of manly honor by likening it to theft that is by itself not only a wrong social conduct, but also a sin from a religious viewpoint. He obviously understands the theme embedded in both instances and believes in them, and thus he lets others know that his violent actions and decisions should not be regarded as inhumane or violent as long as they can be justified by the words of God and what he decrees. To Zar Mohammad, when it comes to restoring the lost honor, justification is not too hard to acquire. Chubak thus aims at fortifying the ground for the hero of his novel and thus prevents him from falling into the category of social outcasts who merely act on their own regardless of their violating social norms and religious ethics.

5.8. The Significance of Animal Symbols

Both Chubak and Lee deploy animal symbols in the course of the novel to both illuminate some aspects of their characters and shift the already established norm of the events in accordance with the

protagonists' choices. When Zar Mohammad prepares to deal with the widowed Sakineh's bull, there is "a wave of pain surged up from his insides" (19) and even at that intense time, he still has the rage burning inside him due to the injustice he has experienced. He considers it as an opportunity given to make him restore his manly honor at least partly in the eye of the people of his tribe. Even though Zar Mohammad captures the bull, the honor this action brings him is no less than killing it. In mythology, the sacrifice of the bull is "expressive of the penetration of the feminine principle by the masculine, of the humid by the igniferous" (Cirlot 1971, p. 33). Beside "honor", "power" should also be both restored and displayed; according to Accadian, 'to break the horn' signified 'to overpower' (34) and he has managed to break the unruly bull's horn as an interlude to the upcoming vengeance.

Chubak has astutely depicted Zar Mohammad's treatment of insects and animals from the beginning of the story to let the readers know turning to violence for no good reason is not the shape of his hero's heart. Interestingly enough, the other animals depicted in the story are either in want of some vital requirements (the emaciated dog) or involved in a constant attempts (the ants struggling for the body of a beetle or the mice who like Zar Mohammad and his wife have two children). These instances can also foreshadow the aid he is going to receive on his way struggling for regaining the lost honor. Ants at the beginning of the novel are also highly suggestive, for beside being "an attribute of Ceres" (Cirlot 1971, p. 14) and fertility, according to an "Indian myth" they "symbolize the pettiness of all things living—the fragile character and impotence of existence" (14) that are quite relevant to the situation in which Zar Mohammad has quite unwontedly and unjustly found himself. He himself notices the affinity between the two cases.

Dog as another animal symbol also appears in both novels. Even though the treatment dogs in two stories receive differ, when viewed in the light of honor they appear to touch the same ground. In the episode when Atticus shoots the mad dog dead, this violence is justified by law as Zar Mohammad's capturing the wild bull is justified by the people who feel threatened. In none of these cases honor is tarnished, for the former is known as "a southerner who is 'the deadliest shot in his region'" (Lee 1961, p. 106) and "resorts to violence only when necessity presents itself" (82). Interestingly enough, in mythology dog can also be regarded as relevant to sacrifice, for it "has a similar significance when it appears in scenes depicting the Mithraic sacrifice of the bull" (Cirlot 1971, p. 84).

The central characters in both novels also have not been left untouched in the realm of animals, for both have been either directly or indirectly involved with the names or attributes of some animals. When Zar Mohammad eventually manages to avenge himself and restore the lost honor, his countrymen and people from his community start calling him "Shir Mohammad", i.e. "Mohammad the Lion". In mythology, lion is "the 'king of beasts', symbolizes the earthly opponent of the eagle in the sky and the 'natural lord and master'—or the possessor of strength and of the masculine principle" (190). As Frobenius observes, "the motif of the solar lion which tears out the throat of the lunar bull is repeated interminably in Asiatic and African ornamentation" (190).

5.9. The Significance of Bird Symbols

Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is replete with bird symbols from the title itself to the end of the novel. The common Mockingbird is known "to imitate the songs of 20 or more species within 10 minutes" (Encyclopaedia Britannica). It can sing its own songs which are as delicate and as beautiful as the ones imitated. As Miss Maudie, one of the characters in the novel, explains to Scout "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but . . . sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." (Lee 1961, p. 30). In this novel it can stand for both those who have been innocently killed chiefly due to their being oppressed and having no voice of their own to articulate their mind and those who decide to change their viewpoint in the course of the novel when they eventually manage to let go of the false honor they gain through merely sticking to the rules of the society at the expense of humanity and empathy.

Finch is another bird which is referred to in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It is the last name of the narrator's hero, that is Atticus Finch. What makes this bird different from the mockingbird is that "Finches

are generally excellent singers. However, their songs can range from the complex and beautiful repertoires of the song sparrow (*Melospiza melodia*) to the monotonously unmusical notes of the grasshopper sparrow (*Ammodramus savannarum*)” (Sy Montgomery, Encyclopædia Britannica). They are not known for mimicry as is the latter. In the course of the novel Atticus Finch is more often than not depicted as a reliable character who strives to voice his mind against all odds and bears the consequences particularly when it is concerned with the question of honor. Just like Zar Mohammad in the other novel, he is a father figure as well.

The question that arises about the title is that who is the mockingbird? Does it really refer to someone or something? Can it refer to more than one? Is it innocence in the form of the non-guilty Robinson whose unbearable sin is his being black among the possessive white? Can't it be Boo Radley whose presence is made explicit at the end of the novel just because he is needed to rectify the things others could by no means set right even though those very people ruined his life through eradicating his presence when they did not really have to? Can it be Atticus himself as the lawyer who eventually manages to find an explicit balance between following the social rules and securing honor as a human being who respects all? Even Scout the narrator can claim to have killed the mockingbird inside Scout the focalizer. As controversial as it might seem, mockingbird can embody both innocence and mimicry, for both can be traced in the novel.

Conclusion

There are various themes in any human being's life that are universal and cannot be confined to specific nations and cultures one of which is maintaining honor. Maintaining itself might at times appear controversial, for as long as honor is as vital as life to most, even dishonorable ways and methods might advertently or inadvertently be deployed to maintain it. In this comparative study, two novels from both Western and Eastern countries have been studied in the light of the question of honor. The protagonists of both Sadegh Chubak's *Tangsir* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* find themselves entangled in the controversial web of maintaining honor which has been either lost or on the verge of being lost with unbearable consequences. Both have undergone moments of applying not totally honorable means to restore the lost honor. As paradoxical as it might seem, at the end of the day, they find both the restored honor and the already tarnished means sufficiently justified in the eyes of the majority. Both novelists have applied various animal or/and bird symbols in their portrayal of different conflicting issues at hand from race, gender, religion, language and culture to enhance the depiction of the minute details shaping both the character of the protagonists, the heroes, and their viewpoints and actions. This study has been based upon the parallels drawn between the two chosen novels.

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