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## **P A socio-literary criticism of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's *Sin* Story**

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### **Abstract**

In this article, the story of *Sin*, by Jalal Al-e Ahmad, is analytically criticized in a two-sided comprehensive view. Literature is a link between art and thought, and an important part of the ideas visualized in literary texts are social. The story, and especially the short story, is an appropriate genre for expressing the writers' thoughts and thus it is a distinguished context for sociological-literary interdisciplinary research. Generally, the criticism of these works is one-dimensional and one-sided, and usually either literary is examined regardless of the social context, or the former is overlooked at the cost of the latter. Jalal Al-e Ahmad on the one hand, due to his excellent writing and literary skills, and on the other hand, because of the precision, sensitivity, and specificity to social issues, has a special place among the short story writers. In the *Sin* story of the *Se Tar* collection, describing the narrator-hero inner characteristics, he has depicted the social conflict and, consequently, the anti-normalization. Gender discrimination, misbeliefs, ignorance of the truth of religion, and, as a result, hypocrisy, and weakness of religiousness, routine life, and stagnation of society are other features depicted in this story.

**Keywords:** Socio-literary criticism, Al-e Ahmad, *Se Tar*, *Sin* Story.

### **1. Introduction**

Writers and analysts, from a long time ago, have expressed social thoughts in the form of literary works, using linguistic, literary, and artistic possibilities. Social thought has existed in literary works for a long time, but in the sixth century, Sana'i introduced it wildly and deeply into poetry. After this, the process continued strongly or weakly in different periods. Alongside the beginning of the constitution and the creation of widespread social, political, cultural, literary, and other developments, this trend intensified; so the political and social context was one of the main intellectual features of constitutional literature. On the other hand,

social conditions have a great influence on literary works and their structure and content. These are mutually beneficial. This feature has led to the formation of relatively new research fields, such as sociological criticism and sociology of literature.

The sociology of literature and sociological criticism are nowadays important interdisciplinary research over the world. The socio-literary temes have several subdivisions on which valuable works have been published. Madame De Stael is a pioneer in the sociology of literature, but Hippolyte Adolphetaine was the founder, and people like Lukacs and Lucien Goldman are well-known experts in the field. They examined the impact of society on the form and content of literary works, as well as the influence of society on these works (→Wellek, 1998: 47). A political-social theorist, Isaiah Berlin, further goes on to say: "All art is an attempt to represent the inexpressible image of a never-ending activity that is life with the help of symbols (Berlin, 2009: 197).

Other scholars have taken a different view of the relationship between literature and society. Marxists have taken literature as a reporter of social realities with a certain approach and a deterministic view. Some have also taken an economic approach to literature and considered literary works as commodities and examined the issues of production, distribution, and consumption concerning these works. Some have also defined and analyzed terms such as "literary sociology", "sociology of literature" and expressing their differences, and believe that literary sociology discusses the structure of its work and its relation to society and that it relates to the science of literature. But the sociology of literature tends to be empirical and is a sub-discipline of sociology (→Asgari, 2010: 68-9).

In Iran, some of these important researches are devoted to the content of literary works and fall under the heading of sociological criticism. Truly, these studies are considered to be a type of sociology of content: "Content sociology examines literary work as a social document" (Ibid. 70). In such studies, literary works are usually considered the product of society.

Although the sociological critiques mentioned are very valuable and useful, they are limited to the content. Also, the aesthetic and personal creativity of the great writers is unfortunately ignored. Therefore, the relationship between the content, the form, its important role, and enormous impact has not been taken into account. Whereas what makes the prominent works influencing, popular, famous, and durable is the link between the art and thought. This neglect has caused the discontent of some literary and art experts and readers. "For them, the objection to the method of social criticism is that the existence of the individual is completely forgotten. While the contribution of individual innovation in literary works, if it is not greater than those of social factors, it is not less" (Zarrin Koob, 1373: 48). According to Wallace Martin, critics who emphasized the technical features of the novel believed that the subjective point of view and conscious recording were important factors in the literature when the philosophy of political thought and society emphasized individual independence (Martin, 2003: 8).

They expect that this type of criticism could also evaluate the artist's tastes, feelings, emotions, creativity, and ingenuity of the writer and poet in expressing social thought. Since, literature is one of the types of art, beauty, and therefore the pleasure, are of the important elements and its inseparable characteristics. So what distinguish literary works from non-literary ones are these elements.

### **1-1. Method of criticism in this research and its importance**

The authors of this article attempted to address those aspects of Al-e Ahmad's storytelling and writing techniques that help the reader understand and comprehend the social ideas of the time. In other words, the focus is on finding the techniques that Al-e Ahmad used to frame and express the social themes in the story. These social and intellectual themes are also extracted and categorized from within the content of the story. The "sociological critique of literary works" requires that the two categories of sociology and literature be intertwined and analyzed, and, as Lucien Goldman puts it, the subject of this kind of criticism is the relation between the literary form and the structure of the social environment that form has evolved in (Goldman, 1997: 28).

### Research Questions:

In this study the aim is answering the following questions:

- 1) How successful was Jalal Al-e Ahmad for expressing the social realities of his time in the story of *Sin*?
- 2) How has he used artistic and literary techniques and tools for social enlightenment and criticism in this story?
- 3) What are the sociological implications of the *Sin* story?

### 1-2. Research background

Generally, some books, articles, and dissertations have been written focusing on sociological criticism and particularly on social criticism of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's works. For example, in the field of analysis of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's works, one can refer to the book of *Semantics and Criticism of Contemporary Fiction Literature (A Criticism of the Works of Ibrahim Golestan and Jalal Al-e Ahmad)*"; a treatise entitled *Criticism of Social Realism in the Short Stories of Jalal Al-e Ahmad Based on Lukacs and Bakhtin Theories*, and a published article entitled "Idealism in the realism of Jalal Al-e Ahmad". As mentioned above, these works have examined the social aspects of Al-e Ahmad's works and are very useful and valuable, but they are still one-dimensional and one-sided and have not paid attention to their technical and literary aspects. There is also no work specifically devoted to criticizing and analyzing the *Sin Story* in this way. This article is also innovative because it has a mixed approach. The writers have also published an article in the *Journal of Literary Arts* on the Al-e Ahmad's *SeTar*.

### 2. The *Sin*, the Link between Thought and Art

In today's world, storytelling is a very popular and attractive literary form and an effective tool for expressing various thoughts. "The story is narrating the events in the sequence of time" (Forster, 1353: 36). The modern and industrial life, with its time shortage and the need for time management, is one of the major issues and concerns, which has led to the tendency for short stories more than other forms. In the definition of this popular literary form, it is stated: "It is a story in which characters or main characters are represented in a single event to express a single message" (Mastoor, 2008: 12).

Many Iranian writers have also tried to express their thoughts, criticisms, and ideas through short stories. Some of these works have been much more artistic and therefore more successful in achieving their goals. Al-e Ahmad's works belong to this group. Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1302-1348) is a capable and influential writer in the field of contemporary fiction literature and has a variety of works in the form of novels, short stories, translations, essays, travelogues, and monographs. His life coincided with the onset of major developments in the world, including the tendency for social reform and the rise of the proletariat in the United States, which led to its massive reflection in the literary works of the world in the 1930s (→Green, 1376: 286).

Short stories are the Al-e Ahmad's most important works that have been written in a simple, explicit, descriptive, humorous, and near to speech-language. These stories reflect the author's social, cultural, religious, and political thoughts and ideas. Al-e Ahmad uses a special way of telling the story. His method is to capture individuality from events, environments, times, and other narrative elements in such a way that each of these elements shows a general type (→Sheikh Rezai, 2003: 4-73). He is trying to push the

personalities to the general types so that they can represent a social class. The heroes of Al-e Ahmad's stories are often seen everywhere and the people know them all. The raw materials of his writings are people (→Daneshvar, 1371: 10-9). Thus, his works have a good potential for sociological criticism and analysis, and because of the author's special abilities in integrating the art of storytelling with thoughts and ideas, they can also be examined from a sociological point of view. In fact, in such stories, the two concurrent streams have progressed and together achieved the goal.

### 2-1. Summary of the story

*Sin* is a short story of Se Tar collection by Jalal Al-e Ahmad. The narrator is a forty-year-old woman who narrates one of her ten or twelve-year-old memories. He remembers that they would prepare the house weekly for Father's weekly lamentation (Rawze)<sup>1</sup>, a male assembly. Looking back, she finds herself going to the rooftop after the courtyard is ready to expand his home beds as usual. After that, some of the family members sit on the rooftop watching the men who were lamenting. The narrator's lifelong wish is to sleep in her father's bed, which is covered in white sheets and expanded always further away from her, her sister, and her mother. Finally, one night, she fearlessly enters her father's bed and falls asleep due to fatigue. When she wakes up, she sees her father beside her while his back is toward her. The girl is ashamed and frightened of this event. She hurriedly gets out of bed and tells the story to her mother, and the mother does not blame her act, returning from her. Here, we first discuss some of Al-e Ahmad's writing skills and then analyze the author's social thoughts.

### 2-2. Socio-artistic ambiguity

Al-e Ahmed's art has been exhibited from the very beginning in the title of the story. A significant ambiguity and illusion in the name of the story can be seen that makes the curious reader thoughtful. What does it mean? Who is guilty of the sin? At first glance, the reader's mind focuses on the girl's guilt, but with a little reflection, he is attended to the father's guilt. This mental game continues and is pleasing to the reader. The author does not end this mental conflict in favor of either of the two main characters and leaves it to the reader. Because he is well aware that this is a creative technique that causes the reader not to close its window in the mind after reading the story and not leave it out and continue to think about. On the other hand, it shows that Al-e Ahmad is not the author of the market and vulgar stories, but rather a clever, aware, astute author and an exquisite psychologist. With this artistic and clever ambiguity, he depicts the confusion and ambiguity in the society which caused and sponsored by a group of claimants of religiousness. With this trick, he challenges and critiques their claims and ideas.

## 3. Belief-oriented narrative

Al-e Ahmad's social ideas have been made clearer by choosing an appropriate method of narration because the narrative is an effective and dynamic expression of a very broad and ancient scope. This style of expression begins with the history of mankind and has never been without a narrative. This approach is very lively and dynamic. The narrative "is a kind of expression that deals with action, with the course of events and with life in motion" (Mir Sadeqi, 1998: 150).

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<sup>1</sup>. Commemoration of the martyrs of Kerbela; the act of narrating the tragic events about Kerbela.

The storytelling style of Al-e Ahmad can be contemplated in several ways. On the one hand, his way of showing the narrator's gender is surprising and ambiguous. The reader is unaware of the narrator's gender until the middle of the story. In this story, Al-e Ahmed begins with the material of his family history that is a scene in which the reader familiar with Al-e Ahmad's (family spirituality) family, suppose that he is the narrator, but in the middle of the story, without any preface, the narrator is introduced. "For a girl or a woman who should never pray aloud ..." (Al-e Ahmad, 1389: 72). And the reader realizes that the first image of the narrator was false and a girl is a narrator. This surprise makes the reader's mind shake and the story more appealing. Of course, this initial secrecy, aside from its artistic aspect, illustrates the author's cautious mention of the narrator's gender to infuse the social spirit of the time in his story.

Another point to consider is that a reader who modifies his mental perception from the middle of the story and notices that the narrator is a girl is confronted with the following sentence at the end of the story: "Right, what a feeling I was! During my forty-year life, even once, I haven't felt it" (Ibid. 77). The reader is again surprised and modifies his reception. He enjoys this playwright's artwork, never gets bored and tired, and if he is curious, he comes back and reviews parts of the story.

Another point is that the point of view of the story is the first person and the narrator is of the story characters. Choosing this angle of view is worthwhile in two ways. Although the point of view is the first person, the scenes are described from the beginning of the story as accurately as if the story was told from the omniscient point of view. Everything is so thoroughly described that the reader is less aware that the narrative is expressed in the language of the main character. This is in itself the result of the genius of the writing of Ahmad. He manages the story well by taking the narrator to the rooftop and choosing the place of the main character in the opening scene. Seeing the courtyard and the lamentation ritual from the rooftop raises the narrator's full knowledge of the details of the scene. This position rectifies the narrative weakness in the first person's language and unawareness of some of the details. From the first-person point of view, some details are not explained due to the narrator's lack of knowledge. But in the story of *Sin*, Ahmad, by placing the narrator on the roof, covers this weakness well, so that the narrator, like a sensitive camera, explains all the details to the reader. This is a sign of ingenuity and proficiency of the author.

### **3-1. Purposeful description**

The other literary art of the *Sin* story's author is the description. Al-Ahmed describes the scene in detail. Of course, he is purposeful in this detailed view, and in fact, he has used the description as a tool to steer the narrator's mind into the narrator's concern. These descriptions illustrate the mindset and environment that the narrator deals with every day as a family girl. Al-e Ahmed describes all the details of the backyard pots from the ponds around the carpets and the darkening of the air to the character descriptions, their seating place, and the arrival of the father's comrades in the house and the description of the expanding of beds are all very detailed. For example, he speaks about the coming of an old man: "Again, the old man, when he was crying, one supposes that he is laughing. He came and sat in his usual seat at the special chair of lamentation declaimer" (Ibid. 70).

Although this character has no role in the storytelling process, Al-e Ahmad is so finely accurate that he also describes the place he is sitting in. Or, in describing another character, says: "There was another one who would not cover his face when he was crying. Everyone else was doing like him ... He was looking ahead and his tears streaming down his eyes soundlessly and fall on his face and gray beard. Finally, when the lamentation was over, he would first go to the basin and washes his face, and then while his face was

wet, he drank his tea and went. (Ibid. 71). Although the story is short, Al-e Ahmed's writing skills make him meaningfully pay attention to some of the details more than others.

Al-e Ahmad's purpose in the descriptions can be seen by focusing on some details more than others. For example, in describing the father's bed in the narrator's language, he says: "Every night when I spread out his bed, I would shake the mattress and lay the pillow over it and gather the quilt down. It also had a large white bed sheet that I would throw on top of it and smooth it around. (Ibid. 74) .Al-e Ahmed looks very detailed in describing this bed and spreading it because much of his story is related to it. The narrator's perpetual fantasy was the dream of sleeping on and finally taking possession of her father's bed, for one night. These are all that the story revolves around, so we can see the details of the bed and spread it. However, the tiresome descriptions are not found in the *Sin* story. The author knows well when it is needed more elaborate descriptions, and was to pass with a brief hint, and this is the skill of the author.

### **3-2. Internal conflict within the narrator and society**

The story of *Sin* is based on conflict; an internal conflict which also represents the struggle within the community; "Internal-emotional conflict is when there are an uprising and a rebellion and the personality's mind of the story is agitated." (Mir Sadeghi, 1380: 74). The narrator wishes to sleep in her father's bed and one night fulfills her wish. She has been fighting with herself as long as she thinks about the dream; finally, she overcomes it and enters the father's bed. But, after achieving the dream, she still struggles with herself which is due to the contradiction of his wish with the prevailing view. Therefore, she tries, getting out of the scene, release her from this struggle.

The narrator has rebelled against the prevailing laws of society, its principles, and its social conventions. There are two dimensions to the conflict in the *Sin* story. The first dimension is between two genders, male and female. But in the second dimension, the scope of this conflict goes beyond the individual and manifests itself on a broader level, the family and society. In this kind of conflict, the individuality of a person is no longer considered. Throughout the story, one (male) dominates the other (female); as this domination begins from her body (leaving the housework to the girl) and continues to her soul.

Discrimination and difference between the two genders represent the patriarchal rule in Al-e Ahmad's society. There is a conflict between two minds. Gender differences are evident throughout the story; including the brother's going to school and doing homework like spreading the beds by the family girl and the non-participation of women in the lamentation ritual. This discrimination is not unique to the narrator's family but can also be seen in the neighbor's house, which is a symbol of society. "I have remembered that to our neighbor's daughter who came to spread their beds ... I didn't pay attention" (Ibid. 73-4).

The narrator witnesses a great deal of discrimination; the importance of the man and the triviality of her gender such as "When I sat on my mattress that was not mine alone and I usually slept on it with my seven-year-old sister, I found it very cool" (Ibid. 73). Elsewhere, the narrator says of her longing, "I want to go slowly and lie on my father's bed (Ibid. 74). Lying on the bed of father is the narrator's taboo to the extent that she doesn't even dare to dream about it. "I still didn't dare to sleep on it." (Ibid. 74). These become the background that leads the narrator to get into the father's bed in a sudden act; the bed which is symbolized for discrimination in the society. This movement is the narrator's struggle with the traditions of society. In the end, he wins by sleeping on her father's bed. In this way, the author uses the "struggle" beautifully and

subtly to achieve her social goals in the story and culturally and theologically fights with conditions that she doesn't like.

### **3-3. Social reflection of attitude towards women in characterization**

Al-e Ahmad's way of personification in the story of *Sin* can be contemplated. He does not elaborate on the story and does not speak about the appearance of the main characters because, on the one hand, his chosen format is a short story, and on the other hand, the purpose of the story is to address the internal personality, not the external. However, we do face with cases that are highly reflective and strategic towards the purpose of the novelist; As in many stories of Jalal Al-e Ahmad, such as the headmaster of the school (→Sarami-Moqisah, 2013: 18), the character is also an example of a class, group, or type; It is a phenomenon of society Which is accommodated in a smaller situation such as a primary school or a family. A very striking example of this kind of social criticism in attitude towards women and the dogmatic community which is hostile to real emotions, there has also been in classical literature, the most notable of which is the *lily and Majnoon* of Nizami (→ Behrouz, 2014: 149-156).

Al-e Ahmad does not provide any description of the narrator who is a girl of ten or twelve years old and her mother. But on the contrary, he pays close attention to the father of the family and the men who come to the assembly of lamentation. This is a strategic point, and Al-e Ahmad is trying to show the strong presence of men in society compared to women and criticize gender-based discrimination. This realistic writer wants to show that women are not seen in her community. From the absolute presence of men and the absence of women in the assembly to the portraying the face of the loudly crying man and describing a man with grizzled hair, we find that the shadow of the man in this story is vivid and, in contrast, in the mind of the reader, there is no subjective and objective image of the narrator and the mother. Al-e Ahmad aligns his style of personality with the dominant mindset in society and magnifies it.

Also, the reader's recognition of the main hero is an inner cognition. Understanding the narrator's feelings, emotions, and wishes, and their spiritual and psychological consequences, he discovers the main hero's inner world and spirits, and this is the goal that the author deliberately chooses and leads the audience toward.

## **4. The sociological motifs of the story**

The aforementioned were part of the elements used by the author to express the ideas and social thoughts of his time. Al-e Ahmad is a realist writer and time in his stories is more influenced by the era in which Jalal himself was present. In all of his stories, time is real, not imaginary, or fantastically (Shahriari, 1390: 63). He has deeply understood and received the attitudes and ideas of the society of his time and presented them in the form of a story. Events such as patriarchy, hypocrisy and pretense, anti-socialism, weakness of religiousness, repetition, and staying in the daily process are the anomalies and damages that are criticized in the form of the short story of *Sin* which is analyzed below.

### **4-1. Criticism of patriarchy and the attitude towards women**

In Al-e Ahmad's society, the boundary between men and women is much highlighted. Women in his community are not seen as men; they do not matter; their rights are not well known and they are less involved in social activities. He describes this reality in an implicit and veiled way in the narrator's language,

as he says in the description of the family beds, "We put my father's bed alone on the other side of the roof, and my mother and the kids slept here. And we spread my brother's bed that was two years older than me on the other side, at the end of the row of our beds" (Al-e Ahmad, 1389: 74).

And somewhere, this discrimination and difference get worse. "I stood by my father's bed. His bed only had sheets" (Ibid. 74). This discrimination and difference have permeated society so much that it is sometimes natural and obvious to Jalal Al-e Ahmad. Although one of his goals is to criticize this discrimination, he is sometimes so subordinate to the thinking of his community that he justified that relying on religious laws. "The Butler ... he prays loudly. How aloud I wanted to pray ... for a girl or a woman who never had to pray aloud, how true this wish could come" (Ibid. 74).

Elsewhere, this discrimination is expressed in a way that greatly affects the reader. A girl who likes to go to school but has to stay home and work long enough to get up: "My brother was going to school and I was just helping my mom with her chores. The tiredness of the day's work and the bedding I had spread had made me desperate" (Ibid. 76). The unanswered questions in the reader's mind are: Why didn't the family girl go to school? Why did they make her work so hard and treat her like a house-worker? Why would she have to spread all the beds at this young age while this is a completely personal thing and everyone has to do it himself? Where is the place of feeling and emotion in this family? Is this injustice justified in a religious family? And questions of this kind that come to mind throughout the story, affect the reader and concerns him. The differing view of families on boys and girls and the discrimination between them was a fact seen in the author's community and he has criticized it in the story of *Sin*.

#### **4-2. Anti-socialism**

In a society where there are pressing factors such as discrimination and injustice and there is no room for criticism and protest, antisocialism is prevalent, and groups quarrel with this injustice and discrimination. This is a psychological reaction to the conflict. From a psychological point of view, some of the behaviors of a person can be a reaction to undesirable factors called the defense and adaptation mechanism. Defense mechanisms arise in response to the factors that cause stress. In this story, the prohibitions that exist in the narrator's life are stress factors that cause tension for him. The narrator employs a defensive mechanism of displacement to relieve this psychological stress; the "displacement" response is a change in direction of a stretch from a horrible and unfavorable environmental object or situation to a more desirable object or environment that has less anxiety" (Shafiabadi, 1365: 58).

The narrator cannot accept the restrictions that society and family impose on her as a woman, so she tries by violating Father's privacy and sleeping in his bed to adapt herself. In doing so, she breaks the boundaries set by society and feels proud and delighted because of breaking the boundary. She is the product of a society that restricts women. She should not enter the weekly lamentation assembly. She should not freely witness men's rituals; she should not pray aloud. She doesn't go to school. She sees that she must sleep away from her father, and she sees that the best belongs to him. "Only the father's bed had a bedsheet. I remember well" (Al-e Ahmad, 1389: 74).

Or "When my dad enters, he will take off his shoes that corner, down the wall, and stand for a few minutes on his small Turkmen rug, which he spreads under his feet" (Ibid. 72). All these restrict his freedoms, and he dares to revolt against all these frustrations by going to his father's bed. Suddenly I dared and threw myself on my father's bed (Ibid. 75). These behaviors are, in fact, the psychological reactions that are seen in society against the factors of pressure.



### 4-3. Weakness and lack of cognition in religiousness

Another motif derived from the story of *Sin* is the weakness in religiousness. This theme has been the basis of many of Jalal Al-e Ahmad's stories, including *The Se Tar* and *Pilgrimage*, a weakness that is rooted in unawareness and inaccurate cognition of religion (Khosravi-Zare'ee, 1397: 71). The narrator's family is a religious family with a father very tied to religious rituals. But in this religious center, there is a weakness in religiousness. The narrator's secretly watching to the men's lamentation, ridiculing the old man whose crying was like laughing, pretending to be asleep when the neighbor's daughter comes to the roof, the discrimination between the family boy and the girl. Also somewhere the narrator goes beyond due and she forgets the existence of God. "I didn't dare do it until that night. I don't know what it was. There was no one to see me" (Ibid. 75). Not praying in time by the narrator and lying to her father about praying and even beyond that, "I had not prayed, from the beginning of the night that I had come up I hadn't gone down anymore. But if I had prayed, I would have lied to my father and said that I had prayed.

In the end, this was the escape route itself, and it could save me" (Ibid. 8-77). Also, the fight between her mother and her father over a prayer tent for her daughters is another example. A religious father is expected to spend more on religion. One of these costs is the provision of prayer supplies, including prayer tents for his daughters, while the narrator points to the mother's struggle to buy prayer tents. "What a kind mother we had ... she would always side with us and quarrel with our father for the tent of prayer for us" (Ibid. 73). Again, questions arise in the mind of the reader: Why does a father who claims to be religious, refuse to pay for his religion? Is he pure in his religiousness? Is he aware of his religious duties? A religious person should be kind and merciful, but this father is unkind to his family. So, despite its appearance, he is weak in religiousness, and questions like those. Al-e Ahmad still artistically and influentially displays a social reality that challenges his community.

### 4-4. Repetition and routine life

One of the issues that have been criticized in the story of *Sin* is the day-to-day life and surrendering to habits. Repetitive habits and moments without any beneficial changes and evolution that results in stagnation and laziness are seen in the very first sentences of the story. "It was our weekly lamentation night" (Ibid. 71). This category also permeates the language of the story. The author's use of continuous verbs in sentences shows the repetition of life more prominent. For example, "Our yard would have been filled with carpets in the summertime and pots around the pond regularly." "When I was done, in the dark I would sit on the roof and watch the courtyard. It was my habit when it was summer and we were holding the lamentation rituals in the courtyard" (Ibid).

The last sentence is a confirmation of the repetition motif in the story. Elsewhere, it speaks of the arrival of people who come to the assembly. "In the courtyard lighting, I watched people who come in one by one and sit in their usual places. I remember well that again the old man whose crying was like laughing came and sat in his usual seat under the chair of the lamentation declaimer. My sister and I were always laughing at this old man's cry." (Ibid). Repetition in the life of the narrator is strong. Somewhere the narrator even without seeing his father, surely knows that what his father and others are doing. "We didn't need to see them, I knew all" (Ibid. 72).

Repetition and routine life make the story's main character tired to the extent that she releases her biggest fun; watching the lamentation. For breaking this routine life, she does something that has always been worried about. That is, lying down in dad's bed. The narrator by breaking the tradition ends her routine life

and experiences a new feeling.

#### 4-5. Deviation in religion

One of the injuries that religious communities have been affected by, during history, is a misinterpretation of religion and making a deviation in it. This damage that consciously and unconsciously has entered the realm of religion has followed by side effects and unpleasant results. One of the major complications of this injury in the contemporary world can be called anti-religiousness. Al-e Ahmad in the story in question has pointed to this important issue as well. In the world of *Sin* story, misinterpretations of divine commandments cause anti-religiousness. Of course, the author deals with this fact indirectly and implicitly. So, understanding it requires reflection. Including that in the story has been talked about a religious father who performs lamentation rituals every week and always prays in the mosque. But alongside these behaviors, we also see religious deviations. *Sin* has a different meaning in Al-e Ahmad's story.

This can be understood from the words of the mother. When the narrator Out of shame runs towards the stairs and brings herself to Ivan, and tells the mother the story of sleeping in her father's bed, "Well girl, thou has not done a great sin" the mother says (Ibid. 78). Or, as she sits next to the father, says: "But did you realize how was terrified your daughter? She thought that has done a great sin" (Ibid. 79).

The nimble author of the story speaks of his heart in the langue of mother and he criticizes that why the father's behavior and his strictures caused that the act which is never a sin, in his daughter's eyes, be considered a great sin. These misconceptions, which are the consequence of the behavior of religious claimants, lead to religious escaping, especially in youths and adolescents. When the flagmen of religion present a harsh and severe picture of religion, a simple behavior like sleeping in dad's bed which can have a good emotional and feeling sense, becomes a great sin and not only does it have no emotional function, but also terrifies her, and this is the harm that society must notice and prevent.

#### 4-6. Hypocrisy and pretense

Hypocrisy in religion is the other theme of the story; A plague that infiltrates religion and shows religion in another way. An example of hypocrisy is expressed in the language of the main character of the story. As the father asks her about praying, the girl pretends: "I had not prayed ... but then I thought and I remembered. As if I said in his answer: Yes, I have prayed" (Ibid. 78).

Here religion is a means of avoiding danger and achieving the goal. Another point is about descriptions of the story. Al-Ahmed is more concerned with the margins than the text and deliberately does so. For example, in processing and describing the characters do not speak of the appearance of any of the main characters. But in describing the minor and pale characters of the story, he becomes accurate. Somewhere he says: "There was another one who would not cover his face when he was crying. He would not lower his head. Others did it all as if they would be ashamed if someone else saw their tears, but this one neither lowered his head nor put his hand on his face. As the lamentation declaimer was declaiming, he would look forward and his tears would stream down her eyes on his face that had a short gray beard" (Ibid. 71).

Since one of the purposes of narrating the story of *Sin* is to show hypocrisy and pretense, he does so. While crying, the man neither covers his face nor lowers his head. In Ahmad's view, he is hypocritical. Everyone should see his tears. His other behavior is reflective as well: "When lamentation was over, he would go and water his face" (Ibid.). Al-e Ahmad uses the verb "would water" rather than would wash his

face; so the man does not want his face to be cleaned, he wants to make his face appear more tearful; even the author points out: "Then he would drink his tea and go as he was wet" (Ibid.). That is, he does not dry his face to make it appear full of tears. Another point in this description is the last sentence of this phrase. "He drank his tea and went away" (Ibid.).

The shortness of sentences in this episode creates a sharp rhythm in the story and reinforces the idea that the man has come to perform a play; it means that he comes to cry, water his face, drink tea and go. This marks the peak of hypocritical behavior. In the following, Al-e Ahmad says in the language of the narrator: "I was very interested in this one. Even when I was alone, I didn't laugh at her cry; but I would become sad" (Ibid.). The narrator in the story is the reporter of the author's feelings, and one can see that the reason for his interest in this character is that the hypocrisy and pretense of that man are far from artificial because he behaves very subtly and in a way that is natural and not hypocritical. He has been more successful and intelligent in hypocrisy than others and has achieved his goal of gaining popularity and attracting others. So, he easily deceives the narrator who represents society. "He cries quietly. His shoulders do not move." (Jam: 71). But other people in the assembly do not behave like this. Pointing to his silence is a testament to the loud cries of others. And not shaking while he was crying is the reason for the restlessness state of others.

The narrator's speech shows though others are covering their faces when they cry during lamentation, at that time they start to yawl and howl so that their hypocrisy is more evident than the man in question. Another sentence that comes to mind about this person and should be noticed is: "he had no definite place. Every night he would sit somewhere else" (Ibid. 71). This sentence also shows the pretending by this person seems more natural than others because they don't sit in a special place every night, but at the beginning of the story, in describing the old man whose crying makes the narrator and his sister laugh, he says: "He came and sat down in his usual seat at the chair of the declaimer" (Ibid. 70). He also in describing the people who would come to assembly says: "In the courtyard light, I was watching people who come one by one and sit in their usual places" (Ibid.). Sitting in a certain place in assembly is a form of display and pretense that the popular person in the narrator's opinion does not. This is what makes him popular because of the narrator. The narrator's interest in the man shows that the hypocrite has succeeded in attracting others and enticing the populace.

Butler's behavior is also hypocritical. He seems to be praying out of sight. "Butler in nights of lamentation, on the other side, in the dark, behind the pots, was standing and praying (Ibid. 72). The author first with a few adverbs like "on the other side", "in the dark" and "Behind the pots", in particular, by their sequence evokes the image of humble prayer, but all at once, saying this: "I could only hear his voice praying" (Ibid.) breaks the image like an idol, making the bitterness and poignancy of the butler's prayer more bitter and poignant.

Al-Ahmed's art of writing is that when he refers to his subject, he no longer pursues it; he opens a window and leaves it half-open. As in this episode, after pointing to the loudly praying, he leaves the subject and immediately goes to another direction: "How much I wanted to pray aloud." After this, the reader has to think of the events mentioned and judge if necessary and understand the author's purpose.

#### **4-7. Women's acceptance of misbeliefs**

Another aspect that Al-e Ahmad has addressed in the story of *Sin* is the wrong beliefs about females. When the girl sleeps in her father's bed and wakes up, she goes to the porch and tells her mother the reason for her fear. The mother's reaction is reflective. "When I told her I remember it well that she turned her face away from me quickly ..." (Ibid. 78). Although her mother is of the same gender as the narrator, she accepts

the belief that invasion of man's privacy by a woman is a sin. Her turning away from the girl demonstrates this false belief in her mind. This idea is deeply rooted in the narrator's mind. So that she considers sleeping in the father's bed as sleeping next to a not intimate man. "As if in my father's bed had been a not intimate man and he had seen me ... Now that I think I see the fear and horror that I felt at that time, the embarrassment that melted me was the embarrassment of a woman hugging an unmarried man" (Ibid. 78-9). This belief is accepted by the father too. This can be seen from the ending of the story and his reaction. When the mother described the girl's horror, "my father neither laughed nor spoke. Only the sound of the dragging his mustache was too long and extended" (Ibid. 79). The long silence and dragging confirm that the man of Al-e Ahmad's society believes the idea.

Another example is where the narrator expresses her feeling of shame. "Like when I was combing my hair and my father was entering through the door, and I was frightened and embarrassed and ran away (Ibid. 76). The shame because the father sees she is combing her hair is the acceptance of the false beliefs that her society is overwhelmed, and this acceptance penetrates deeply into the narrator's entity so that after about 40 years, she still feels this fear and shame. "Whenever I thought about that night, I was still ashamed and my hair was straightened on my body" (Ibid.). What has been criticized in the story is the acceptance of misbeliefs by the women and being passionate against them.

## 5. Conclusion

*Sin* is a work of art that has both artistic and social value and can be criticized in both fields. Therefore, the two-sided critique of this story is more comprehensive and can better evaluate it. In terms of storytelling techniques, the story of *Sin* has certain characteristics. The main event is one and the author only expresses the thought of the main character. The story, therefore, lacks a multiplicity of personalities, dialogs, different scenes, and types of conflict. It can be said this point due to the shortness of the story is one of the benefits of Al-e Ahmad's writing and his art of storytelling.

This story lacks the dialogue element, and this feature is purposeful because the story revolves around the narrator's feelings and thoughts, and what matters most is the description of narrator-hero's internal that is dealt with extensively. So the reader well identifies it. Since the goal is to express the thoughts and emotions of the main character, two conflicts affect the behavior of the main character. The internal conflict ultimately leads to social conflict and then to anti-traditionalism and anti-normalization. In this story, the characters do not speak but relate, by their behavior, with the audience. The narrator also expresses her inner feelings only through narration.

Al-Ahmed is a realistic story-writer and his writing is influenced by the period in which he lives. This feature opens the way for a sociological critique of his work. Investigating the characters and speeches of the narrator, who is the main hero of the story, makes the story of *Sin* capable of sociological criticism in describing the events and scenes. What the story tells is gender discrimination in Al-e Ahmad's society, which is seen in the father's behavior and the duties of the narrator who is a girl.

The ignorance of the truth of religion and, as a result, the weakness in religiousness and stopping in its appearance are other aspects of the society. Doing repetitive tasks in the story depicts the routine life and non-dynamism of the Jalal's community. Deviation in religion and hypocrisy are other well-represented themes of the story which takes into account the space in which the narrator is placed, that is, the lamentation

assembly. Accepting the wrong beliefs is another feature portrayed in Al-e Ahmad's story that shows cultural backwardness. In telling this story, Al-e Ahmad refers to some of the social problems of his community and thus pictures the era in front of the reader.

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