

## **Religious Reflections in the Works of Parvin Etesami and Emily Bronte**

NafisehEmadi<sup>1</sup>, AtoosaBahadori<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M.A. English Translation Studies, University of Tehran, nafise.

<sup>2</sup>PhD Gender Studies, Centre for Women's Studies, University Of Hyderabad  
Corresponding Author: NafisehEmadi

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**Abstract:** This study investigated religious themes in the works of Parvin Etesami, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Persian poetess and Emily Bronte, a 19<sup>th</sup> century English novelist and poetess. First a biography of both of the leading figures in the world of literature was provided, then their religious ideas and backgrounds were explained in detail. It was found that both, Parvin Etesami and Emily Bronte, applied their religious beliefs in their works, especially the concept of afterlife and eternity that played a significant role in their writings.

**Key words:** Comparative Literature, Religious Reflections, Parvin Etesami, Emily Bronte

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### **I. BIOGRAPHY OF PARVIN ETESAMI**

Parvin Etesami was a 20<sup>th</sup> century Persian poetess of Iran. She was born in 1906 in Tabriz (one of the historical capitals of Iran). According to Pazargadi (2002), she was highly interested in literature and started to compose poems even in her childhood. Her father, Yusof Etesami, was a writer and translator and for many years, he was a chief librarian in the Iranian parliament library. Parvin studied at the American Girls College in Tehran where she became interested in the Western culture and started to learn English. She graduated from the College in 1925. In 1934, she married her father's cousin and moved to the city of Kermanshah (a city in the western part of Iran). But the marriage only lasted for about two months and she returned to Tehran. After the divorce, Parvin's father encouraged her to publish her divan (poetry collection) in order to make her feel better. Her divan published in 1935, was warmly welcomed in literary events to the point that the Ministry of Knowledge awarded Parvin a "scientific" medal that Parvin refused to accept. Parvin died of typhoid fever in April 1941, when she was thirty-five years old, three years after the death of her father. She is buried next to her father in Qum (Moayyed, 1998). According to Moayyed:

"Parvin wrote about men and women of different social backgrounds, a wide-ranging array of animals, birds, flowers, trees, cosmic and natural elements, objects of daily life, abstract concepts, personified and symbolizing her wealth of ideas. Through these figures she holds up a mirror to others showing them the abuses of society and their failure in moral commitment (Moayyad, 1974, 117). Likewise, in these debates she eloquently expresses her basic thoughts about life and death, social justice, ethnics, education, and the supreme importance of knowledge.

### **II. BIOGRAPHY OF EMILY BRONTE**

Emily Bronte was a 19<sup>th</sup> century English novelist and poetess. She was born in 1818 at Thornton, Yorkshire, England. She had five siblings; her father was a clergyman. Her mother died of cancer when Emily was three years old. In 1824, when she was six years old, Emily was sent to the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge along with her two oldest sisters, Elizabeth and Maria. Maria and Elizabeth died there a year later of tuberculosis, so Emily returned home with her other sister, Charlotte. In 1835, Emily was enrolled at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, Mirfield, but she soon returned home when she became greatly homesick. After a few years, Emily and her sisters Charlotte and Anne moved to Brussels, Belgium in 1842 where they learned French, German and Music. In 1845, Charlotte accidentally noticed Emily's poems which made her angry. However, Charlotte convinced her to have a mutual work on a poetry book, so, they published the poems of *Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell* in 1846. The following year *Wuthering Heights* was published, the only novel written by Emily Bronte, which was a highly imaginative work of passion and hate. Emily died on 19 December 1848. She now rests with her mother and father and siblings in the family vault at the Church of Saint Michael and All Angels in Haworth, West Yorkshire, England (Biography – Emily Bronte).

### III. RELIGIOUS REFLECTIONS IN THE WORKS OF PARVIN ETESAMI AND EMILY BRONTE

Emily Bronte inherited her religious beliefs from her father, Patrick Bronte. Emily was taught that religion is the main source for happiness and there is punishment for the sinners. Emily's father believed that if a sinner was to be saved, he/she must primarily reflect upon his/her life and actions, and then take necessary measures for self-improvement. Thus, the person goes into the heaven in his/her afterlife due to accomplishing God's acceptance. Aunt Elizabeth Branwell, who had been helping to raise the children of Bronte family after the death of their mother, also influenced Emily's ideas on religion. So, one of the frequently used themes in Emily's writing is the afterlife. She composed more than 120 poems during her short lifetime; about thirty of them dealt with the afterlife concept. Hence, it can be said that Emily experienced the religious influences during her upbringing. Her poems as well as her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*, is full of allusions of God (Crosier, 2012, p.1).

In Emily Bronte's poetry there is enough indication of the poetess being well familiar with Christian piety that makes man respect all living creatures, no matter how superior or inferior human might be to them. The universal influence could be connected with the idealistic vision of the poetess of the Almighty. In Emily Bronte's point of view, man holds one characteristic that definitely gives him the chance to remain what one was in one's lifetime: and that is that, one's life comes to an end. "What you touch at present you may have; but my soul will be on that hill-top before you lay hands on me again." (Bronte, 1847, p. 93). There are many instances of poems where the tomb, in the physical insight of this term, is but the threshold into the world that surpasses the traditional system of human senses as well as his imagination. It is a way out into a world of its own, where the soul joins with its true spirit. Opposing from both the traditional Christian respect for the passed-away (and thus innocent) individual, the poetess praises the tomb as the shelter from all generally grounded strains and worship of only one God (Boutchkova, 2001).

Parvin Etesami was highly under the influence of her family's beliefs on religious teachings; in her poems, ethical values, religious teachings and beliefs play a very significant role. Her divan is full of religious terms and expressions found in the Quran (the central religious text of Islam). For instance, she frequently uses the names of the prophets that are available in Quran. For example, Moses, Abraham, Solomon, Ishmael, and Noah. Like Emily Bronte, Parvin also believes in the afterlife and eternity. She believes that human beings should collect provision for his/her afterlife since that is the eternal place. She also considers the heaven as the place for people who conduct good deeds. According to Parvin's idea, there are not only worldly punishment, but also eternal torment. Accordingly, she believes that for people who do good deeds, heaven is prepared by the God, on the other hand, those who conduct evil deeds, must expect the doom of hell. Also, people would receive the result of their deeds in this world (Shoaei & Modarresi, 2013, p.87).

### IV. CONCLUSION

Parvin Etesami and Emily Bronte composed many profound poems despite their very short lives. Parvin and Emily were under the influence of their family, especially their father's religious ideas which is evident in their works. The religious thoughts are inspired by Islam and Christianity in Parvin and Emily's works, respectively. They both considered God, sin, afterlife and other religious beliefs in their poems. They also believed in the heaven for those who conduct good deeds, however, Parvin also believed in the hell which is the eternal place for people with evil deeds. This study makes a contribution to research on the lives of outstanding poets and their writing theme.

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