A COMPARATIVE EXPLORATION OF GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN PERSIAN SUFI LITERATURE AND MODERN LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract

The research examines how gender is depicted in Sufi and modern Persian literature, exploring the complex factors that influence the representation of gender roles and identities throughout different historical periods. The study meticulously reviews these literary genres to identify the many perspectives on gender, acknowledging that each genre provides a distinct viewpoint through which societal values are conveyed. The investigation delves into not just literary aesthetics but also the cultural and historical conditions that have shaped the development of gender norms. It examines how Sufi and modern Persian literature, which are deeply influenced by their specific time periods and cultural contexts, mirror and distort societal perspectives on gender. By analyzing the development of these representations over time, the study sheds light on the profound transformation of gender norms and identities throughout the course of Iranian history. This inquiry enhances our comprehension of the complex relationship between literature, culture, and gender dynamics, providing significant insights into how literary works reflect and influence society's perspectives. The results of this study not only enhance academic discussions on Persian literature but also offer a subtle perspective to analyze the wider cultural weave of Iran.

Keywords: Sufism; Gender, Persian Sufi Literature, Persian Modern Literature.

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FARS TASAVVUF EDEBİYATI VE MODERN EDEBİ ESERLERDE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET TEMSİLLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI İNCELEMESİ

Öz

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Araştırma, Tasavvufi ve Modern Fars Edebiyatı'nda cinsiyetin nasıl tasvir edildiğini inceleyerek, farklı tarihsel dönemler boyunca cinsiyet rolleri ve kimliklerinin temsilini etkileyen karmaşık faktörleri araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, bu edebi türleri titizlikle gözden geçirerek, her bir türün toplumsal değerlerin iletilmesinde farklı bakış açısı sağladığını kabul edip, cinsiyet konusundaki çok yönlü bakış açılarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu süreçte cinsiyet normlarının gelişimini şekillendiren kültürel ve tarihsel koşulları ele alıp, belirli zaman dönemleri ve kültürel bağlamları tarafından derinlemesine etkilenen Tasavvufi ve Modern Fars Edebiyatı'nın, toplumsal cinsiyet perspektiflerini yansıttığı ve çarpıttığı biçimleri incelemekte; bu tasvirlerin zaman içindeki gelişiminin analizi aracılığıyla, İran tarihinde cinsiyet normları ve kimliklerinin derin dönüşümünü aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda edebiyat, kültür ve cinsiyet dinamikleri arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi değerlendirerek, edebi eserlerin toplumun görüşünü nasıl yansıttığını ve bu görüşlerden nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymaya çalışır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, sadece Fars Edebiyatı üzerine akademik tartışmaları güçlendirmekle kalmaz, İran'ın geniş kültürel dokusunu analiz etmek için ince bir bakış açısı sunar.

[Geniş Öz, çalışmanın sonunda yer almaktadır.]

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tasavvuf, Cinsiyet, Fars Tasavvuf Edebiyatı; Modern Fars Edebiyatı.

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Introduction

Gender representation in literary studies is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is critical for promoting inclusivity and diversity in the literary world. Historically, male writers and male perspectives have traditionally dominated literature, leaved little place for the voices and experiences of women and other genders. We can broaden the scope of literature and better reflect humanity's different experiences by deliberately searching out and including literature written by or about women, and other gender minorities. Gender representation in literary studies is also crucial for promoting gender equality and eliminating gender labels. Literature has the measurements to shape our perception of the world and its inhabitants, so researches that generally works by males or about men reinforcing damaging stereotypes and limiting our knowledge of gender roles and dynamics. We may foster greater knowledge and acceptance of gender variety by presenting literature that questions gender conventions and presents varied viewpoints on gender.

Furthermore, gender representation in literature studies is dynamic

for giving role models and inspiration for future generations. When young people see themselves represented in literature, they are more likely to feel valued and powerful, and to pursue their own hobbies and interests. By presenting a diverse range of gender views in literary studies, we may encourage the next generation of writers and readers to explore their own identities and experiences, also female representation in literature is critical for academic rigor and intellectual variety. Literature studies should be concerned with the complete variety of literary expressions across diverse genders and cultures, not just canonized works and authors. We may increase our awareness of literary traditions and provide a more comprehensive grasp of literary history by including literature from a diverse variety of genders.

At last female representation in literary studies is critical for promoting inclusivity, challenging prejudices, offering role models and inspiration, and encouraging academic rigor and intellectual variety. We may stretch the scope of literature and better reflect humanity's different experiences by deliberately searching out and including writing from a wide range of genders.

A. The Significance of Comparing Gender Representations in Persian Sufi and Modern Literature

Gender representation in the case of Persian literature, has been impacted by Sufi doctrine, which originated in the 8th century and had a tremendous impact on Persian writing, particularly poetry. Sufi literature is frequently regarded as the embodiment of Persian culture's best literary achievements, and its gender depictions have piqued the interest of researchers, particularly when compared to modern literature.

For numerous reasons, comparing gender depictions in Persian Sufi and modern literature might be useful. Firstly, it helps us understand how gender roles in Persian society have evolved over time. Sufi literature reflects the gender roles and expectations of the time, whereas modern writing represents contemporary ideals and ideas. We can learn about the progression of gender roles in Persian society by comparing the two. Second, by analyzing gender representations in Persian Sufi and modern literature, we can gain a better understanding of the function of literature to establish cultural values and norms. Literature has long been used to shape public opinion and cultural ideals. We can learn about how literature has been used to support or question gender norms and expectations by evaluating gender portrayals in Persian Sufi and modern literature. This is particularly

significant in civilizations where gender inequality persists, because literature may be used to promote gender equality and challenge established gender norms. Finally, comparing gender representations in Persian Sufi and modern literature can help us identify areas that require additional research. While some research has been conducted on gender representations in Persian Sufi literature, much remains unknown about this subject. We can identify places where more research is needed to completely understand the progression of gender roles in Persian culture by comparing these depictions to those found in current literature.

B. Elucidating the Distinction Between Gender and Sex in Scholarly Discourse

Although sometimes used interchangeably, "sex" and "gender" are separate notions that have important implications for academic study. Understanding this differentiation is crucial for accurate communication and subtle comprehension, especially in fields that overlap with identity, culture, and social systems**.**

1. Sex:

- Refers to the biological and physiological attributes that define individuals as male, female, or intersex.
- Determined primarily by a combination of factors including chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs.
- Traditionally categorized as a binary system (male/female), but acknowledges variations in chromosomal makeup (XX, XY, variations), hormonal expression, and anatomical development. (Costello, 2020, pp: 199).

2. Gender:

- Encompasses the social and cultural aspects associated with masculinity, femininity, and non-binary identities.
- Shaped by societal norms, expectations, and roles ascribed to different sexes. Includes:
  - Gender identity: An individual's internal sense of their own gender, which may or may not align with their assigned sex at birth.
  - Gender expression: The outward presentation of one's gender through clothing, behavior, mannerisms, etc.
  - Gender roles: Socially constructed behaviors, activities, and traits expected of individuals based on their perceived gender.

(Polderman, and Kreukels 2018); (Mazzuca, Majid, Lugli, Nicoletti, 2020).

3. Key Distinctions:

- **Biological vs. Social:** Sex is rooted in biology, while gender is informed by social and cultural constructions.
- **Fixed vs. Fluid:** Sex is typically considered relatively fixed at birth, while gender identity and expression can be fluid and dynamic.
- **Assigned vs. Chosen:** Sex is typically assigned at birth based on physical characteristics, while gender identity is a personal choice or realization (Ehrhardt, 1981; Byne, 2006).

4. Understanding these distinctions is crucial for:

- Avoiding harmful stereotypes and assumptions based on sex or gender.
- Recognizing the diversity of human experiences and respecting individual identities.
- Engaging in inclusive and equitable research practices.
- Analyzing the complex interplay between biology, society, and individual agency in shaping human experiences (McDermott, Hatemi, 2011).

5. Further Considerations:

- The understanding of sex and gender is constantly evolving, influenced by new scientific discoveries and social movements.
- Intersectional analysis acknowledges how factors like race, class, and sexual orientation further shape experiences of sex and gender (Harris, & Bartlow, 2015).

C. Challenges and Critiques of Gender Binaries in Persian Sufi Literature and Modern Literature

Gender binaries, or the assumption that there are only two fixed and different genders, have been the subject of significant controversy and criticism in Persian Sufi and modern literature. In these circumstances, some of the challenges and critiques of gender binaries include:

- **Limited understanding of gender**: Gender binaries oversimplify our understanding of gender by assuming there are only two fixed and distinct genders. This oversimplification ignores the diversity and complexity of gender identity and expression.
- **Reinforcing of stereotypes**: Gender binaries often reinforce

gender stereotypes, such as the idea that men are strong and rational while women are emotional and nurturing. This can be harmful and limiting, particularly for individuals who do not conform to these stereotypes.

- **Exclusion of non-binary identities**: Gender binaries exclude non-binary identities, such as those who identify as genderqueer or non-binary. This can lead to erasure and marginalization of individuals who do not fit within the binary framework.

- **Role of patriarchy**: Gender binaries have often been used to justify patriarchal systems and structures, which prioritize men and masculine traits over women and feminine traits. This can reinforce gender inequality and discrimination.

- **Historical context**: Persian Sufi literature and modern literature have different historical contexts, which can influence how gender is represented and understood. For example, Persian Sufi literature may reflect the gender norms and expectations of its time, while modern literature may challenge and subvert these norms.

D. Historical and Cultural Context of Persian Sufi Literature and Modern Literature

Persian Sufi literature and modern literature have been shaped by their distinct historical and cultural circumstances. Persian Sufi literature flourished during the Islamic Golden Age (10th until the 17th century), when Islamic scholars produced great works of literature, science, and philosophy. Sufism, the mystical branch of Islam, originated during the same time period, and its adherents sought a direct personal experience of the divine (Karamustafa 2007, pp: 56).

Persian Sufi literature reflects the Sufi's emphasis on inner spiritual experience and the pursuit of heavenly love. Early Persian Sufi poets such as Rumi, Attar, and Hafez inspired not just Persian literature but also international literature. They portrayed their mystical experiences via the use of symbols, allegories, and analogies that continue to inspire readers today. These poets were part of a thriving cultural context that included other literary and aesthetic traditions such as Persian epic poetry, calligraphy, and music (Chittick 2003).

Political and socioeconomic changes have influenced Persian literature in the modern age. The twentieth century in Iran was distinguished by colonialism, authoritarianism, revolution, and war. These events have influenced how Persian literature is produced and read. The government

supported modernization and westernization during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), which resulted in a wave of modernist writing that tried to escape from traditional forms and subjects. However, following the 1979 Islamic Revolution, leading to a shift toward more socially and politically engaged literature (Debbaşi 1985).

Despite these changes, Persian literature remains one of the world's richest and most diverse literary traditions. Modern Persian literature reflects the complexities of present Iranian social and political circumstances, but Persian Sufi literature continues to inspire readers with its spiritual depth and universal themes of love and unity. The historical and cultural factors of Persian Sufi literature and modern literature have influenced the evolution of both literary traditions over time. Persian Sufi literature arose during a period of cultural flowering, whereas modern Persian literature was formed by the upheavals of twentieth-century Iran. Both traditions are still regarded highly for their contributions to Persian and world literature.

E. Traditional Gender Roles and Representations in Persian Sufi Classic Literature

Persian Sufi literature is a rich and diverse body of material that spans centuries and includes poetry, prose, and mystical treatises. While gender roles are represented differently in this literature, traditional gender roles are frequently reinforced through allegorical depictions of male and female characters. Women are frequently depicted as symbols of beauty and love in Sufi writings, whereas men are depicted as searchers of spiritual truth and wisdom. Women are frequently described by their physical looks, whereas men are portrayed as cerebral and spiritual people. This perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes that describe women as passive and decorative, while males are aggressive and commanding. There are, however, examples of Sufi writing that challenge traditional gender roles. For example, Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet and one of the most well-known characters in Sufi literature, frequently depicted women as spiritual equals to men. He described the Divine with feminine imagery and language, and portrayed female characters as knowledgeable and enlightened spiritual advisors (Galin 2007).

Persian Sufi literature reflects, but also challenges, established gender roles of the time through its investigation of mystical and spiritual subjects. Women are frequently portrayed as the object of the male protagonist's spiritual quest, symbolizing the human soul's longing for unification with

God. Women, for example, are frequently utilized as metaphors for spiritual enlightenment and oneness with the divine in Rumi's poetry (Fomeshi 2021). While Persian Sufi literature reinforces traditional gender roles, it also challenges them through themes like love, passion, and devotion. The object of the protagonist's love is frequently depicted as a holy person in Sufi poetry, regardless of gender. This contradicts the traditional Islamic view of homosexuality as a sin and emphasizes the significance of spiritual love and devotion over physical desires (Fomeshi 2021). In Hafez's poetry, for example, love is frequently depicted as a fantastic force that transcends gender and society boundaries. Also, another Persian Sufi poet who questioned traditional gender roles is Attar, a 12th-century poet and mystic famed for works such as "The Conference of the Birds" and "The Book of Secrets." Attar frequently employed female figures as symbols of spiritual wisdom and enlightenment in his poems. Attar also questioned traditional gender roles by employing language and imagery that defied gender expectations. He utilized masculine vocabulary to describe female characters and feminine language to describe male characters, for example, subverting traditional gender roles and challenging cultural standards. In addition to questioning traditional gender roles through his poems, Attar pushed for men and women's spiritual equality throughout his life. He was known to have accepted women into his inner group and to have treated them as equals in their pursuit of spiritual enlightenment. In short, while allegorical depictions of male and female characters frequently reinforce traditional gender roles in Persian Sufi literature, there are also examples of this literature challenging and subverting these roles by portraying women as spiritual equals to men and celebrating their independence and strength.

Overall, Persian Sufi literature depicts gender roles and representations in a diverse and varied manner. While allegorical depictions of male and female characters frequently reinforce traditional gender roles, there are numerous examples of poets who challenged and subverted these roles by portraying women as spiritual equals to men and using language and imagery that defied gender stereotypes.

F. Gender Stereotypes in Traditional Classic Persian Literature

Gender stereotypes in traditional Persian literature reflect prevalent societal beliefs on gender roles and identities. Men are frequently described as strong, authoritative, and dominant in traditional Persian literature, whereas women are regarded as meek, subservient, and relegated to domestic roles.

Men are generally portrayed as the principal providers and protectors of their families in traditional Persian literature, while women are expected to be willing and subordinate to their male counterparts. Women are frequently assigned household responsibilities, and their thoughts and wants are either ignored or discarded. These gender stereotypes are reproduced in literary forms such as poetry, prose, and theatre. Women, for example, are frequently portrayed as objects of desire in traditional Persian poetry, and their beauty is glorified through romanticized descriptions.

Women are frequently depicted as inferior to men in traditional Persian literature, with little access to education, political authority, or economic prospects. This maintains the patriarchal order, in which men wield authority and dominate women (Karami 2020).

G. Mystical Love: The Depiction of Male-Male Love in Persian Sufi Classic Literature

Mystical love, often known as Sufi or spiritual love has long been a motif in Persian literature. This form of love is not limited to romantic or sexual love, but rather a deep and profound bond between persons, which is frequently represented through metaphors and symbolism.

Male lovers and homoeroticism are recurring themes in Persian classic literature, especially poetry. This is known as "mystical love" or "divine love," and it appears frequently in the works of poets such as Hafez, Saadi, and Rumi.

Firstly Male-male love is frequently depicted in Persian literature as a metaphor for the love between the human soul and God, and as such, it is seen as a pure and beautiful form of love. This tradition began in pre-Islamic Persian literature and endured throughout the Islamic period (Najmabadi, 2001, pp: 86). Sufi literature's depiction of male-male love also, it is rather depicting the tie between a spiritual mentor and a student or a guide and a seeker. The love shared between the two reflects the divine love shared by the seeker and the sought. The narrative of Rumi and Shams, which is widely known and cherished in the Sufi tradition, is the best example of male-male love in Persian literature. Rumi, a 13th-century Persian poet and Sufi master, met Shams, a traveling mystic, and they had an intense and deep friendship. Their friendship was founded on a deep spiritual bond and mutual respect for each other's teachings. Rumi penned many poems and stories about Shams, depicting their relationship as mystical love. Another example is Hafez's poetry, which frequently wrote about male-male love in a mystical and allegorical manner. This type of love is usually used in Persian Ghazals

(Lyric poetries) of the Iraqi style.

Secondly, male-male love is used to question society conventions and expectations about gender roles and relationships. Male-male relationships are generally regarded as primarily sexual or forbidden in many cultures. In Sufi literature, however, the relationship between two men is portrayed as a pure and platonic love that transcends physical desire and is founded on spiritual connection and devotion. This undermines society's narrow and restrictive view of love and relationships.

Thirdly, portrayals of male-male love in Sufi literature are utilized to express the idea that love is not restricted to a specific gender or sexual orientation. It emphasizes the universality of love and how it can take many forms, not just typical romantic or sexual relationships. This concept is especially essential in the context of Sufism, where the goal is to cultivate a deep and profound love for the divine that is not limited by gender or sexual orientation.

In Table 1, we can see a brief description of gender roles in Persian Sufi literature:

Table 1. Gender Stereotypes in Persian Sufi Literature

Aspect	Gender Stereotype in Persian Sufi Literature	
	Men	**Women**
Roles and Responsibilities	Providers, Protectors, Leaders	Homemakers, Caretakers, Submissive
Physical Appearance	Strong, Handsome, Brave	Beautiful, Delicate, Vulnerable
Behavior	Rational, Courageous, Dominant	Emotional, Brutal, Coquettish
Relationships	Assertive Pursuers of Love, Desire	Objects of Affection and Admiration, also, as Symbol of God, Divine Love
Social Status	As the Superior Gender, with More Rights and Privileges	Inferior and Restricted in their Actions and Opportunities, But as a Symbol of God's Pretty and Divine Love in a Superior Position Compared to Men

H. Contemporary Gender Representations in Modern Literature

Modern Persian literature has attempted to deviate from traditional

gender stereotypes by depicting gender roles and identities in a more complex and realistic manner. It has questioned traditional gender roles and emphasized the importance of gender equality. This type of literature, which arose in the twentieth century, contains a varied spectrum of works that represent shifting perspectives in Iranian society concerning gender roles and stereotypes. While some authors reinforce gender stereotypes, others challenge them by portraying women as active and empowered figures.

Women are still depicted in traditional positions as passive and ornamental figures in some modern Persian literature. Male protagonists frequently dominate the narrative and are regarded as the story's driving force, while female characters play supporting roles. This maintains traditional gender norms and preconceptions of women as second-class citizens to males (Saeidian, & Hosseini, 2013).

While there are examples of contemporary Persian writing that challenge established gender stereotypes and depict women as active and empowered people. Women, for example, are portrayed as agents of change in the works of contemporary Iranian authors such as Shahrnush Parsipur and Simin Daneshvar, challenging patriarchal norms and asserting their independence (Beigi, 2020). In Shahrnush Parsipur's novel "Women without Men," for example, women reject established gender norms in order to achieve freedom and self-determination. The story delves into the lives of five women who meet in a garden and build a group that opposes Iranian society's patriarchal traditions. Simin Daneshvar's novel "Savushun" likewise disrupts established gender stereotypes by showing women as active and independent protagonists who shape the story. The novel delves into the lives of a family living in a small village in Iran during World War II and the ensuing Allied occupation. Zari, the female protagonist, is a strong-willed and independent woman who confronts patriarchal hierarchies and defies traditional gender roles (Parsipur 2011, pp:1-140; Daneshvar 1969, pp: 1-307; Beigi 2020).

Women's struggles and the fight for equality have been prominent subjects in contemporary Persian writing. Women writers have emerged as prominent voices, questioning the patriarchal order and portraying gender roles and identities in increasingly diverse ways.

Male characters in contemporary Persian literature have also been shown in a more complicated and nuanced manner. Male authors have investigated the impact of cultural expectations on men's life, questioning traditional masculine notions of power and domination. The novel "The

Colonel" by Mahmoud Dowlatabadi (2009, pp:1-240), for example, examines the life of a retired army officer and the impact of societal changes on his identity. The work questions established gender roles and portrays masculinity in a multifaceted light (Khosravi, 2009).

Also, contemporary Persian literature has attempted to portray transgender identities too.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition and representation of diverse identities in Persian literature, including the portrayal of transgender individuals. However, with the rise of contemporary writers, a new wave of literature has emerged that challenges societal taboos and delves into the complexities of gender identity. This shift has opened doors for transgender narratives to be explored in Persian literature, offering a platform for marginalized voices to be heard and understood.

Contemporary Persian literature (especially works written by authors living abroad) strives for authentic representation, aiming to capture the lived experiences of transgender individuals with empathy and sensitivity. Through meticulous research and personal interviews, authors seek to understand the struggles, triumphs, and everyday realities faced by transgender people in Persian society. By presenting multidimensional characters and humanizing their experiences, these narratives foster empathy and help break down stereotypes and prejudices (Najmabadi, 2013).

Transgender identities are woven into a wide range of themes and narratives in contemporary Persian literature. Some works explore the internal struggles of transgender individuals as they navigate their identities in a society often plagued by prejudice and ignorance. Other stories focus on familial dynamics and the impact of gender transitions on relationships, emphasizing the importance of love, acceptance, and understanding (Arbatani, Aqili, Labafi & Omidi, 2016).

These narratives challenge societal norms, encouraging open conversations and fostering a more inclusive cultural landscape. Through authentic representation, compelling storytelling, and the exploration of various themes, these narratives challenge societal norms and promote empathy and acceptance. As these literary works continue to influence cultural attitudes and contribute to social change, they pave the way for a more inclusive and understanding society, where every individual's identity is respected and celebrated.

In short, modern Persian literature has strived to deviate from old gender stereotypes by depicting gender roles and identities in a more complex and realistic manner. Women writers have emerged as prominent voices, opposing patriarchy and emphasizing women's battle for equality. Male writers have challenged traditional male norms by exploring the impact of cultural expectations on men's lives. Additionally, non-binary gender identities have been depicted in contemporary Persian literature, challenging the binary notion of gender.

In Table 2, we can see a brief description of gender roles in Persian Modern Literature:

Table 2. Gender Stereotypes in Persian Modern literature

Aspect	Gender Stereotype in Persian Modern Literature	
	Men	**Women**
Roles and Responsibilities	Breadwinner, Protector, Decision-maker	Nurturer, Caregiver, also, Decision-maker
Physical Appearance	Tall, Muscular	Slim, Fair-Skinned, Delicate Features
Behavior	Dominant, Assertive, Aggressive, Submissive, Emotional	Submissive, Emotional, Forgiving, Merciful, Devoted
Relationships	Leader, Dominant Partner	Subordinate Partner or Leader
Social Status	High social status, Respected	Equal social status, Objectified or High Social Status, Respected

I. Intersectionality and Multiple Identities in Modern Literature

Intersectionality is a notion that acknowledges that people have various identities that interact and intersect with one another to form their experiences and viewpoints. It has played an important part in contemporary Persian literature, allowing Iranian writers to examine complicated problems like as identity, power, and marginalization. These writers' works have given a forum to underrepresented voices and questioned the mainstream narratives that control Iranian society. In other hand, we can say intersectionality has been a key issue in modern Persian literature, allowing Iranian writers to examine their characters' multifaceted identities and experiences. These writers' writings have challenged

prevailing narratives and provided a forum for underrepresented voices, shed focus on the challenges of Iranian women, immigrants, and other oppressed groups. As the world grapples with identity and power issues, the intersectionality in modern Persian literature serves as a vital reminder of the importance of diversity and representation in literature and society as a whole. Persian literature also addresses the intersectionality of transgender identities with other aspects of life, such as culture, religion, and politics. These works delve into the complexities of the transgender experience, examining the challenges faced by individuals who must navigate multiple identities in a rapidly changing world (Heidari, Abdullahzadeh, Naji, 2020). These narratives challenge societal norms and encourage readers to question existing biases and prejudices.

Shahrnush Parsipur's work is one of the most notable examples of intersectionality in modern Persian literature. Women without Men (2011, pp:1- 140) and Touba and the Meaning of Night (2006, pp:1- 418), two of Parsipur's novels, investigate the lives of Iranian women and the intersections of their gender with other identities, such as class and religion (Koirala & Eshghavi, 2017). Parsipur's works draw light on the diverse experiences of Iranian women while also challenging the patriarchal rules that dominate their life (Farahmandfar & Abdollahi, 2022). Laleh Khadivi, an Iranian-American author, is another example of intersectionality in current Persian literature. Khadivi's works, such as The Walking (2014, pp: 1-261) examine the lives of Iranian immigrants in America and the interconnections of their ethnicity, class, and religion. Khadivi's work underscores the difficulties that immigrants encounter as they navigate their numerous identities in a new cultural context (Farahmandfar & Abdollahi, 2022). Besides, Forugh Farrokhzad (1934- 1967), an Iranian poet, is an example of intersectionality in modern Persian literature. In Farrokhzad's poetry, gender, sexuality, and religion intersect in Iranian society. Her work questions traditional gender roles and promotes female sexuality, which was considered forbidden in Iran at the time.

Azar Nafisi is another renowned Iranian writer who has investigated intersectionality in current Persian literature. Reading Lolita in Tehran (2003, pp:1-400) is Nafisi's memoir about the intersection of gender, religion, and politics in post-revolutionary Iran. Nafisi underlines the ways in which the Islamic dictatorship has restricted women's rights and the value of literature in creating a space for freedom of expression from her personal experiences as a female professor of literature in Iran (Rastegar, 2006). Furthermore, the work of Iranian writer and filmmaker Marjane Satrapi

exemplifies intersectionality in contemporary Persian literature. Persepolis (2004), Satrapi's novel, and its film adaptation address gender, class, and politics in Iran through the eyes of a little girl growing up during the Iranian Revolution. Satrapi's art confronts prejudices and misconceptions about Iran and its people, highlighting the complex reality of life under a rule of law (Naghibi & O'malley, 2005).

J. Comparative Analysis of Gender Representation in Persian Sufi Literature and Modern Literature

Persian Sufi literature, which first appeared in the 10th century and flourished until the 17th, is noted for its mystical and spiritual themes. Many prominent Sufi poets, such as Rumi and Hafiz, have received widespread acclaim for their poetic language and profound insights into the nature of humanity and the divine.

Gender is frequently used metaphorically in Persian Sufi literature to describe many aspects of divine and human nature. Also, the feminity is sometimes linked with beauty, elegance, and compassion, whereas the masculinity is sometimes connected with power, strength, and wisdom. It is crucial to note, however, that gender portrayal in Sufi literature is not limited to binary categories and frequently surpasses typical gender roles and identities (Najmabadi, 2001).

Modern Persian literature, on the other hand, which originated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, has been influenced by Western literary traditions and frequently reflects the social and political realities of modern Iran. Gender portrayal in modern Persian literature is increasingly diverse and complicated, reflecting women's and men's changing positions and identities in contemporary Iranian society.

While there is still a significant gender gap in the representation of female writers and characters in contemporary Persian literature, there has been a growing trend in recent years toward more inclusive and diverse gender and sexuality representations. In their writings, many contemporary Persian writers, including Shahrnush Parsipur and Simin Daneshvar, have challenged traditional gender roles and probed the nuances of identity and power (Beigi, 2020).

Overall, gender representation in Persian Sufi and modern Persian literature reflects the broader social and cultural circumstances in which these literary traditions arose. While Sufi literature emphasizes the spiritual and mystical dimensions of gender, modern Persian literature reflects Iranian society's ongoing struggles and aspirations.

Persian Sufi literature frequently emphasizes the concept of divine love, which is sometimes expressed through the metaphor of a lover and beloved. The beloved is frequently depicted as a feminine person, such as a mystical guide or a heavenly manifestation, whereas the lover is depicted as a masculine figure, such as a seeker or a disciple. It should be noted, however, that these gender roles are not necessarily fixed and can be fluid and interchangeable (Vali-Zadeh, 2022).

Gender portrayal in modern Persian literature frequently reflects the social and political realities of Iranian society, including concerns of gender inequality, sexuality, and patriarchy. Many contemporary Persian writers have addressed these issues in their works, challenging gender stereotypes and advocating for greater social justice and equality (Kheshti, 2012).

Briefly can be said, a comparison of gender representation in Persian Sufi literature and modern Persian literature reveals the shifting roles and identities of men and women in Iranian society over time. While Sufi literature emphasizes the spiritual and mystical aspects of gender, modern Persian literature reflects Iranian society's ongoing struggles and aspirations for greater gender equality and social justice.

In Table 3, we can see a brief description of comparative analysis of gender representation in Persian Sufi Literature and Modern Literature:

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Gender Representation in Persian Sufi Literature and Modern Literature

Aspect	Persian Sufi Literature	Modern Literature
Male/ Female	Emphasis on the unity of the divine and the human soul, which transcends gender distinctions. Women are often portrayed as symbols of the divine, and gender is seen as a fluid concept.	Traditional binary distinctions between male and female are often reinforced, although some contemporary writers challenge these norms and explore gender fluidity.
Active/ Passive	Emphasis on the annihilation of the self and the union with the divine. The self is often portrayed as passive, surrendering to the will of God. Gender is not a defining factor in this process.	Some contemporary literature challenges traditional gender roles by portraying women as active and powerful, subverting the idea of the male hero or protagonist. However, many works still rely on traditional gender roles, with men as active agents and women as passive

		objects.
Heterosexual/ Homosexual	Homosexuality is not a prominent theme in Persian Sufi literature. Love is often portrayed as a metaphor for the soul's longing for the divine, and gender is not a defining factor in this love.	Contemporary literature often explores themes of homosexuality and queerness, challenging traditional heterosexual norms. However, many works still portray heterosexuality as the norm and depict non-heterosexual relationships as deviant or abnormal.
Gender Roles	Fluid, often transcends binary categories	Traditional gender roles are sometimes challenged or subverted
Feminine/Masculine	Used metaphorically to represent aspects of the divine and human nature	Gender roles are explored through characters and themes
Divine Love	Often celebrated through the metaphor of a lover and beloved, with the beloved often represented as a feminine figure and the lover as a masculine figure	Not a major theme, but romantic relationships and love are explored in a more realistic and nuanced way
Patriarchy	Not a major theme, but can be present in some texts	Often explored through characters and themes, challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for social justice
Social Realities	Emphasizes the spiritual and mystical dimensions of gender, reflecting the broader social and cultural contexts of the time	Reflects the changing roles and identities of women and men in contemporary Iranian society, addressing issues related to gender inequality, sexuality, and patriarchy

Conclusion: Understanding the Differences and Similarities in Gender Representation in Persian Sufi and Modern Literature.

Gender portrayal in Sufi and modern Persian literature has developed over time, reflecting cultural perceptions toward gender roles and identities. While both genres portray gender in similar ways, there are significant

differences that reflect the unique cultural and historical contexts in which they were written.

Gender is frequently depicted metaphorically in Persian Sufi literature, with male and female figures reflecting distinct elements of the divine or human psyche. These portrayals frequently question traditional gender roles by emphasizing spiritual characteristics over physical attributes. At the same time, women are frequently presented as meek and submissive, their worth defined primarily by their relationship with males.

Gender roles in modern Persian literature are more complicated and varied, reflecting the changing status of women in Iranian society. Women are frequently presented as active participants in their own lives, defying patriarchal standards and striving for their rights and autonomy. Men, too, are frequently portrayed in more complicated and nuanced ways, reflecting evolving masculine norms in modern Iran. Overall, while there are similarities and differences in how gender is represented in Persian Sufi and modern literature, both genres provide insights into the changing role of gender in Iranian culture and society.

As a spiritual and mystical genre, Persian Sufi literature frequently employs gender as a tool to symbolize divine and human attributes. In Sufi poetry, for example, the lover-beloved relationship is frequently depicted as a metaphor for the relationship between the human soul and God. Gender is not necessarily viewed as a rigid binary in this setting, but rather as a flexible and symbolic manifestation of spiritual traits such as love, compassion, and devotion. However, despite this fluidity in gender representation, there are still instances where women are portrayed in limited and stereotypical ways. Women are largely viewed as objects of desire or passive receptacles for the transfer of spiritual truth in some Sufi literature. This is due to the patriarchal society in which these writings were produced, in which women had little agency and were frequently restricted to domestic and reproductive tasks.

Modern Persian literature, on the other hand, depicts the changing roles of women in Iranian culture and the struggle for gender equality. Women are frequently presented as active participants in their own lives, defying patriarchal standards and striving for their rights and autonomy. Women's experiences and opinions are highlighted in contemporary Iranian literature, reflecting the richness and diversity of women's life. Besides, modern Persian literature investigates the shifting expectations of masculinity in Iranian society. Men are shown as more complicated and nuanced personalities, deviating from stereotypes of stoicism and emotional

detachment. Instead, they are portrayed as weak and emotional, struggling with their own identities and cultural expectations.

In conclusion, while there are similarities and contrasts in the representation of gender in Persian Sufi and modern literature, both genres provide insights into the changing role of gender in Iranian culture and society. We can acquire a better understanding of how gender roles and identities have been constructed and evolved throughout Iran's history by evaluating these depictions.

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FARS TASAVVUF EDEBİYATI VE MODERN EDEBİ ESERLERDE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET TEMSİLLERİNİN KARŞILAŞTIRMALI İNCELEMESİ

 Pune KARIMI[a]

Geniş Öz

Araştırma, Tasavvufi ve Modern Fars Edebiyatı'nda cinsiyetin nasıl tasvir edildiğini inceleyerek, farklı tarihsel dönemler boyunca cinsiyet rolleri ve kimliklerinin temsilini etkileyen karmaşık faktörleri araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, bu edebi türleri titizlikle gözden geçirerek, her bir türün toplumsal değerlerin iletilmesinde farklı bakış açısı sağladığını kabul edip, cinsiyet konusundaki çok yönlü bakış açılarını belirlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu süreçte cinsiyet normlarının gelişimini şekillendiren kültürel ve tarihsel koşulları ele alıp, belirli zaman dönemleri ve kültürel bağlamları tarafından derinlemesine etkilenen Tasavvufi ve Modern Fars Edebiyatı'nın, toplumsal cinsiyet perspektiflerini yansıttığı ve çarpıttığı biçimleri incelemekte; bu tasvirlerin zaman içindeki gelişiminin analizi aracılığıyla, İran tarihinde cinsiyet normları ve kimliklerinin derin dönüşümünü aydınlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda edebiyat, kültür ve cinsiyet dinamikleri arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi değerlendirerek, edebi eserlerin toplumun görüşünü nasıl yansıttığını ve bu görüşlerden nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymaya çalışır. Araştırmanın sonuçları, sadece Fars Edebiyatı üzerine akademik tartışmaları güçlendirmekle kalmaz, İran'ın geniş kültürel dokusunu analiz etmek için ince bir bakış açısı sunar.

Fars Tasavvufi edebiyat, İslam akademisyenlerinin edebiyat, bilim ve felsefe alanında büyük eserler ürettiği İslam Altın Çağı'nda gelişmiştir. İslam'ın mistik dalı olan Sufizm de aynı dönemde ortaya çıkmıştır (Karamustafa 2007, pp: 76). Bu edebi tür, Sufinin içsel manevi deneyim ve göksel aşk arayışına

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vurgu yapmaktadır. Rumi, Attar ve Hafız gibi erken dönem Fars Mutasavvıf şairler sadece İran edebiyatına değil, uluslararası edebiyata da ilham kaynağı olup mistik deneyimlerini günümüzde bile okuyuculara ilham vermeye devam eden semboller, alegoriler ve analojiler kullanarak aktarmışlardır. Bu şairler, kaligrafi ve müzik gibi diğer edebi ve estetik gelenekleri içeren bir kültürel bağlamın parçası olmuşlardır (Chittick 2003). Genellikle Tasavvufi veya manevi aşk olarak bilinen mistik aşk, İran edebiyatında bir motif olarak bilinir. Bu aşk türü romantik ya da cinsel aşkla sınırlı olmayıp, kişiler arasında sıklıkla metafor ve sembolizmle temsil edilen derin bağdır. Erkek maşuklar ve homoerotizm, klasik İran edebiyatında, özellikle de şiirde yinelenen temalardır. Bu, "mistik aşk" ya da "İlâhî aşk" olarak bilinen erkek-erkek aşkı, Fars edebiyatında insan ruhu ile Allah arasındaki aşkın metaforu olarak sıklıkla tasvir edilir ve bu haliyle aşkın saf ve güzel bir şekli olarak görülür, bazen ise bu aşk tasvirleri, aşkın belirli bir cinsiyet veya cinsel yönelimle sınırlı olmadığı fikrini ifade etmek için kullanılır. Sevginin evrenselliğini ve sadece tipik romantik veya cinsel ilişkiler değil, birçok biçime bürünebileceğini vurgular. Bu kavram özellikle, gerçek amacın ilahi olana karşı cinsiyet veya cinsel yönelimle sınırlı olmayan derin bir sevgi geliştirmek olduğu, Sufizm bağlamında önemlidir. Toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri de bazen metaforik olarak tasvir edilir; kadın figürler ve maşuk kimliği ilahi ruhu veya insan ruhunun farklı unsurlarını yansıtır. Bu tasvirler fiziksel özelliklerden ziyade ruhani özellikleri vurgulayarak geleneksel cinsiyet rollerini sorgular.

Öte yandan, bazı metinlerdeyse kadınlar uysal ve itaatkâr olarak sunulur, değerleri öncelikle erkeklerle olan ilişkileriyle tanımlanır.

Modern çağda ise siyasi ve sosyoekonomik değişimler Fars edebiyatını derinden etkilemiştir. İran'da yirminci yüzyıl sömürgecilik, otoriterlik, devrim ve savaşlar öne çıkınca, bu olaylar Fars edebiyatının nasıl üretildiğine ve okunduğuna tesir etmiştir.

Modern Fars edebiyatındaki toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri daha karmaşık ve çeşitlidir, bu da İran toplumunda kadının değişen statüsünü yansıtır. Kadınlar sıklıkla ataerkil standartlara meydan okuyan, hakları ve özerklikleri için çabalayan, kendi hayatlarının aktif katılımcıları olarak sunulur. Erkekler de modern İran'da değişen eril normları yansıtacak şekilde daha karmaşık ve incelikli şekillerde tasvir edilir. Genel olarak, İran tasavvuf edebiyatında ve modern edebiyatta toplumsal cinsiyetin temsil edilme biçiminde benzerlikler ve farklılıklar olsa dahi, her iki tür de İran kültüründe ve toplumunda toplumsal cinsiyetin değişen rolüne dair içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Kesişimsellik, insanların deneyimlerini ve bakış açılarını oluşturmak için birbirleriyle etkileşime giren ve kesişen çeşitli kimliklere sahip olduğunu kabul eden bir kavramdır. Bu konu Çağdaş Fars edebiyatında İranlı yazarların kimlik, güç ve ötekileştirme gibi karmaşık sorunları incelemelerine olanak tanıyarak önemli bir rol oynamıştır. Bu yazarların çalışmaları, yeterince temsil edilmeyen seslere bir form sağlamış, toplumu kontrol eden ana akım anlatıları sorgulamıştır. Öte yandan kesişimselliğin modern Fars edebiyatında önemli bir konu olduğunu, İranlı yazarlara karakterlerin çok yönlü kimliklerini ve deneyimlerini inceleme olanağı sağladığını söyleyebiliriz. Bu yazarların yazıları İranlı kadınların, göçmenlerin ve diğer ezilen grupların karşılaştığı zorluklara odaklanarak hâkim anlatılara meydan okur ve yeterince temsil edilmeyen sesler için bir form sağlar. Günümüzde dünya, kimlik ve güç sorunlarıyla uğraşırken, modern Fars edebiyatındaki kesişimsellik anlatısı, bir bütün olarak edebiyatta ve toplumda çeşitliliğin ve temsilin öneminin hayati bir hatırlatıcısı olarak hizmet etmektedir. Fars edebiyatı aynı zamanda transseksüel kimliklerin kültür, din ve siyaset gibi yaşamın diğer yönleriyle kesişimselliğini de ele alır (Heidari, Abdullahzadeh, Naji, 2020). Bu anlatılar toplumsal normlara meydan okur ve okuyucuları mevcut ön yargıları sorgulamaya teşvik eder.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tasavvuf, Cinsiyet, Fars Tasavvuf Edebiyatı; Modern Fars Edebiyatı.

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5. Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı:

Yazar, herhangi bir çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmektedir.

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