

ARAB WOMEN

IN THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY IN THE WORK OF EGYPTIAN FEMALE WRITER NAWAL AL-SA'ADAWI

LAS MUJERES ÁRABES EN LA FAMILIA Y LA SOCIEDAD EN LA OBRA DE LA ESCRITORA EGIPCIA NAWAL AL-SA'ADAWI

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ABSTRACT

The gender situation in the Arab Middle East is a topic of crucial importance for understanding the social and familial dynamics of the region. In this context, studying the work of Egyptian author Nawal Al-Sa'adawi (1931-2021) offers a valuable perspective on the place, role, and rights of Arab Muslim women in family and society. Despite extensive literature on the female condition in the Arab world, there is a gap in integrating literary analysis with political activism and professional experience in mental health, as exemplified by Al-Sa'adawi's work. This study aims to examine Nawal Al-Sa'adawi's contribution to understanding and promoting Arab Muslim women's rights through her prolific literary, journalistic, and medical-psychological work. Key findings reveal that Al-Sa'adawi, a psychiatrist graduated from Cairo University and Columbia University, used her professional experience and political activism to address issues such as protecting women's rights and freedoms, combating gender-based violence, and promoting equality. Her work, translated into more than 30 languages, reflects her active participation in significant political events, including her imprisonment in 1981, her candidacy for the Egyptian presidency in 2005, and her presence in the 2011 Egyptian revolution. The implications of this study are significant for understanding the evolution of the feminist movement in the Arab world. Al-Sa'adawi's life and work demonstrate how the intersection of medicine, literature, and activism can be a powerful tool for social change and the promotion of women's rights in complex cultural contexts.

Keywords: Arabic literature, Egyptian literature, Gender inequality, Feminism, Discrimination against women, Nawal Al-Sa'adawi.

RESUMEN

La situación de género en el Oriente Medio árabe es un tema de importancia crucial para comprender la dinámica social y familiar de la región. En este contexto, el estudio de la obra de la autora egipcia Nawal Al-Sa'adawi (1931-2021) ofrece una perspectiva valiosa sobre el lugar, el papel y los derechos de las mujeres árabes musulmanas en la familia y la sociedad. A pesar de la extensa literatura sobre la condición femenina en el mundo árabe, existe una brecha en la integración del análisis literario con el activismo político y la experiencia profesional en salud mental, como lo ejemplifica el trabajo de Al-Sa'adawi. Este estudio tiene como objetivo examinar la contribución de Nawal Al-Sa'adawi a la comprensión y promoción de los derechos de las mujeres árabes musulmanas a través de su prolífica obra literaria, periodística y médico-psicológica. Los hallazgos clave revelan que Al-Sa'adawi, psiquiatra graduada de la Universidad de El Cairo y la Universidad de Columbia, utilizó su experiencia profesional y activismo político para abordar cuestiones como la protección de los derechos y las libertades de las mujeres, la lucha contra la violencia de género y la promoción de la igualdad. Su obra, traducida a más de 30 idiomas, refleja su participación activa en acontecimientos políticos importantes, como su encarcelamiento en 1981, su candidatura a la presidencia de Egipto en 2005 y su presencia en la revolución egipcia de 2011. Las implicaciones de este estudio son importantes para comprender la evolución del movimiento feminista en el mundo árabe. La vida y la obra de Al-Sa'adawi demuestran cómo

la intersección de la medicina, la literatura y el activismo puede ser una herramienta poderosa para el cambio social y la promoción de los derechos de las mujeres en contextos culturales complejos.

Palabras clave: Literatura árabe, Literatura egipcia, Desigualdad de género, Feminismo, Discriminación contra la mujer, Nawal Al-Sa'adawi.

INTRODUCTION

Nawal Al-Saadawi was a groundbreaking Egyptian feminist, physician, and author who lived from 1931 to 2021, left an indelible mark on the landscape of women's rights advocacy in the Middle East and beyond. Throughout her illustrious career, she fearlessly confronted entrenched patriarchal systems, leveraging her medical background as a psychiatrist and public health expert to champion women's political and sexual autonomy (Maftsir, 2023). Al-Saadawi's unwavering commitment to gender equality manifested in her establishment of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association and her prolific writing, which masterfully exposed the complex interplay between religious dogma and gender oppression. Despite facing legal persecution and accusations of heresy for her progressive views in 2008, she remained undeterred in her mission to challenge societal norms (Lindsey, 2021). Her most celebrated work, "Woman at Point Zero," exemplifies her radical feminist philosophy and continues to inspire activists globally (Addison, 2020; Atiyat et al., 2022; Kouachi, 2023). Al-Saadawi's crusade against harmful practices like female genital mutilation, informed by both her medical expertise and personal conviction, demonstrated her holistic approach to women's liberation. As a towering figure in Egyptian feminism for over five decades, her legacy endures through her powerful critique of conservative social structures and her tireless advocacy for women's empowerment, resonating with successive generations of activists and intellectuals who seek to build upon her revolutionary vision (Eisenstein, 2022).

The exploration of Arab women's roles within familial and societal structures has been a focal point in Nawal Al-Saadawi's literary oeuvre, reflecting a complex interplay of gender, culture, and religion. The literature surrounding El-Saadawi's work reveals a nuanced critique of patriarchal systems and the multifaceted identities of women in Arab societies. Nkealah (2013) posits that El-Saadawi's portrayal of the female body serves a dual purpose: it is both a site of male dominance and a powerful symbol of female independence. This duality underscores the political dimensions of the female experience, revealing how women's bodies can be weaponized in the struggle

against patriarchal oppression. El-Saadawi's narratives often align with the broader movements of African women writers who challenge traditional norms, thereby redefining literary expressions of womanhood and resistance. Building on this discussion, Al-Mhairat & Al Miniawi (2016) delves into the implications of familial relationships, particularly the brother-sister dynamic, to illustrate how gender oppression manifests from childhood. They highlight El-Saadawi's feminist critique of religion, suggesting that her interpretation of sacred texts is inherently political, challenging the static nature of religious doctrines as imposed by patriarchal figures. This perspective emphasizes the fluidity of religious interpretation and its impact on gender roles, suggesting that El-Saadawi advocates for a reformation of religious thought to align with ideals of justice and freedom.

Abd Rabouh (2017) contributes to this discourse by examining the intersection of gender and religion in El-Saadawi's novels, noting how her characters confront male-dominated religious interpretations. The article highlights the challenges faced by feminists within Islamic contexts, where addressing religious issues can lead to societal backlash. El-Saadawi's direct engagement with these themes positions her as a formidable figure in the feminist landscape, navigating the complexities of cultural identity and religious critique. In a critical analysis of El-Saadawi's narrative strategies, Balaa (2018) argues that her works do not fall into the trap of Orientalism, instead presenting authentic portrayals of Arab women's experiences. This approach serves to dismantle stereotypes perpetuated by both Western and local narratives, reinforcing the idea that El-Saadawi's literature is a vital counter-narrative to dominant discourses about Muslim women.

Hezam (2019) further contextualizes the conversation by examining contemporary Saudi women writers and their attempts to articulate female identity within a rapidly changing society. This article resonates with El-Saadawi's themes of female empowerment and societal critique, suggesting that the struggle for women's voices continues to evolve in response to cultural shifts.

Thus, the main objective of this research is to analyze and evaluate Nawal Al-Sa'adawi's contribution to understanding and promoting Arab Muslim women's rights. The study examines how her literary, journalistic, and medical-psychological work has influenced the perception and debate about women's roles in the Arab Middle East context. The research employs a multifaceted methodological approach, including literary analysis of Al-Sa'adawi's works, content analysis of her journalistic as well as historical contextualization of significant political events in her life and their impact on her work. The study incorporates

some elements of biographical analysis, examining Al-Sa'adawi's life experiences in relation to her work, and conducts a comparative analysis of her work with existing literature on the female condition in the Arab world. These methods provide a thorough understanding of Al-Sa'adawi's significant contribution to the discourse on women's rights in the Arab world.

DEVELOPMENT

What does it mean to be a woman in the Arab East?

The Arab East, which inspired human progress with its ancient civilization, now exhibits a regional landscape of endless wars, misery, ignorance, and backwardness. Among the issues vividly reflected in this picture, gender inequality characterizes the "uniqueness" of the Arab East in a negative sense worldwide. These problems include early marriages, violations of women's rights in family and society, violence against women, social injustice, high rates of illiteracy, and unemployment among women, among others. A brief overview of relevant statistics can provide a detailed picture of these issues. For example, the statistics of early marriages show rates of 45% in Somalia, 37% in Yemen, and 32% in Sudan (Woman in Arab society, 2024). This indicates a potential high population growth rate in the region and, consequently, increasing unemployment problems as the share of the active labor force grows.

According to calculations by the League of Arab States, considering current population growth rates in the region, 51 million new jobs were needed by 2020 to address unemployment. Generally, women represent a higher percentage in unemployment figures, with the gender gap doubling or even tripling in some Arab countries. Women typically work in informal jobs - primarily in agriculture, cleaning, and the service sector. For instance, in Yemen, 88 percent of active working women worked in agricultural sectors between 1995-2005, compared to Syria (58%), Morocco (57%), Egypt (39%), and Palestine (34%) (Botcharova, 2010).

Religious views are often cited as the primary reason for women's low participation in the formal workforce. However, it should be noted that religion often serves as a facade, with other artificial barriers, unwritten conservative views, and prohibitions in Muslim Arab society provoking gender inequality. At the core of the gender imbalance is the exclusion of girls from education. Unfortunately, women's illiteracy in the Arab East remains an unresolved historical problem, with rates exceeding 50% in the 21st century (Zhigalkin, 2002). Consequently, women face employment challenges as they often lack even primary education and are forced to work in informal sectors.

The problems extend beyond access to official employment, as discrimination and artificial obstacles against women in government positions create a troubling picture. For example, in the developed UAE, a woman first held a ministerial position in 2004. Generally, women remain a minority in the legislative and executive bodies of most Arab states. Looking at parliamentary representation, women constitute only 3.1% in Kuwait and 3.8% in Egypt, while other countries show varying rates: Iraq (25.5%), UAE (22.5%), Tunisia (19.3%), Mauritania (17.6%), and Sudan (16.4%). With these figures, Arab countries rank last globally in terms of women's parliamentary representation (Voice of America, 2011).

Modern Arabic literature against gender inequality

The realities experienced by women in the Arab East today are surprising, alarming and saddening when compared to the high position and rights granted to them by the Islamic religion and the Holy Qur'an. The cases of discrimination against women, which are observed in almost all Arab countries, are manifested in an even more terrible and frightening form, especially in Egyptian society. This situation is constantly reflected in the reports of local, regional and international organizations. For example, in 2017, the "Thomson Reuters Foundation" called Egypt the most dangerous metropolis for women (Goldsmith, 2017).

According to a statement by the "Egyptian Edraak Foundation for Development and Equality", in 2021, 813 cases of violence against women were recorded in the country, in 2020 this figure amounted to 415 facts. It should also be noted that there were 296 murders of the indicator recorded in 2021, and unfortunately, the vast majority took place on a family-household basis. Meanwhile, it is worth noting the fact that the Egyptian Center for women's rights reports that a minimum of 200 thousand cases of sexual harassment acts occur in the country every year (Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, 2024). During the survey conducted by the UN, more than 99 percent of women in the country admitted that they had been sexually assaulted at least 1 time in their lives (NEWS.ru, 2022).

Starting from the end of the 20th century, and especially in the 21st century, this sad scene has been brought to the agenda by representatives of literature, who more actively take the pulse of society. When summarizing these statistics, it's important to note that such cases are not only documented in reports from various international organizations and official government agencies. This reality is also widely depicted in literature, which serves as a mirror reflecting society's deepest subtleties and horrors.

It is worthwhile to provide a brief context for this literary movement. Topics such as the violation of women's rights,

artificial obstacles in work and education, discrimination against women in family and society, violence against women, and social injustice led to the emergence of a distinct school of writers in Arabic literature, particularly at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Since the late 20th century, numerous literary works began to appear condemning gender inequality and violence against women while emphasizing women's role in society.

Najib Mahfuz (1911-2006), known as the "Emir of the Arab novel" and winner of the Nobel Prize (1988), addressed these issues in almost all of his works. Following his example, other famous Arab writers expressed various manifestations of discrimination against women through artistic narratives. For instance, Alaa al-Aswani explored these themes in his bestselling works of contemporary world literature, "The Yacoubian Building" (2002) and "Chicago" (2007). Similarly, Khaled al-Khamissi (1962) addressed these issues in his widely acclaimed novel "Taxi" (2007).

Nur Abdulmajid's extensive body of work provides particularly vivid portrayals of women's lives in the modern Arab East, specifically through Egyptian women's experiences. Her works include:

- "Cinderella Returned Barefoot" (2006)
- "Women... but!" (2009)
- "Despite Break Up" (2010)
- "I Want a Man" (2011)
- "Forbidden Dreams" (2012)
- "I'm a Traitor" (2013)
- "Solo" (2013)
- "Great Deprivation" (2014)
- "Forbidden Memories" (2014)
- "La Scala" (2016)

These works collectively reflect the unvarnished reality of women's lives in the contemporary Arab East.

Life and work of the feminist leader of the Arab East Nawal Al-Sa'adawi

It is right to mention the name of Nawal Al-Sa'adawi (1931-2021), who managed to become influential in modern Egyptian and world literature with her novels that talk about the difficulties faced by most Muslim women in Arab countries, artificial obstacles and discrimination against them in society, psychological pressure and domestic violence.

In 1955, she graduated from the medical faculty of Cairo University, became a doctor-psychiatrist by profession, and worked in different positions in the field of health care for many years. She worked as a general director in the Sanitary Department of the Ministry of Health, general secretary in the Cairo Medical Association, doctor-psychiatrist, founded the Egyptian Association of Women Writers, and was the editor of the magazines "Health" and "Medical Association". After the publication of the book "Women and Sex" in 1972, she was relieved of her duties.

She was arrested in 1981. In 1988-1993, due to her political views and feminist speeches, her name was included in the "death list" of Islamists, and she was forced to emigrate to the United States. The feminist political activist, who lectured at various universities, was able to return to Cairo only in 1996 and still did not deviate from her path. She experienced the 2011 Egyptian revolution in Tahrir Square and died on March 21st, 2021, after a long illness.

Problems of gender inequality in Al-Sa'adawi's works

The rich literary, documentary, journalistic, and medical-psychological creativity of this feminist writer has been translated into more than 30 languages worldwide. Calls for the protection of women's rights and freedoms, the cessation of violence against women, and the provision of gender equality have always been the main themes of her work. "God Dies by the Nile" (1974), "Woman at Point Zero" (1977), "The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World" (1977), "She Has No Place in Paradise" (1979), "Memoirs from the Women's Prison" (1983), "The Fall of the Imam" (1987), "The Innocence of the Devil" (1991), "Love in the Kingdom of Oil" (1993) and among her other works reflecting this idea, the novel "Memoirs of a Woman Doctor" (1958) bears special significance (al-Sa'adawi, 2001a).

Throughout the novel, the writer talks about how girls and boys are treated differently in the family from an early age, and after coming of age, women are deprived of the most basic human rights in society. Returning to this problem in her novel "Love in the Kingdom of Oil" (1993), Al-Sa'adawi emphasized the trampling of the rights of most Muslim women in the Arab East, not only within the family and household but also broadly in society. This is how the writer expressed the bitter realities of the Arab East: a woman cannot stay alone in a place outside the home; she cannot read books; she cannot take leave without her husband's permission, she cannot take a day off without her husband's knowledge, etc. (al-Sa'adawi, 2001b).

Let's return to the author's memoirs (referring to her novel "Memoirs of a Woman Doctor"): she recalls her mother and grandmother, who spent their lives in the kitchen. She

remembers being embarrassed as a child because she was born a girl. As her body changed with age, she remembers that those around her forced her to be ashamed, to hide her body; she was not allowed to play with her peers, was instructed to pay attention to her steps when walking, to her laughter when laughing, and was forbidden to run, jump for joy, or loudly manifest her feelings and excitement. And the little girl who lives through all this is ashamed to be a woman; she doesn't want to be a woman. This experience of girls in Arab countries is described similarly in Al-Sa'adawi's work "No One Told Her" (al-Sa'adawi, 2015, p. 80). The writer highlighted the topic of girls who are not satisfied with being children and playing, instead "growing up" immediately after the onset of menstruation.

Towards the end of the work, we see that the female protagonist is a professional doctor, breaking the stereotype that reigns in most Arab countries: "women cannot, only men can be good professionals, connoisseurs, specialists in their work." However, after getting married, her husband is dissatisfied with the fact that she spends more time at work, demanding that she not examine male patients and ultimately quit. In these scenes, the writer tries to draw attention to the character defects, weaknesses, excessive ego, and jealousy of adult men, which are formed by the wrong education given to boys in Arab countries from a young age. She emphasizes that such men's minds and thoughts, their pasts, and ultimately their lives are "crippled."

For example, by creating the image of a man who beats his wife for looking out the window in her work "Beauty," she tries to show that this is actually a disease syndrome (al-Sa'adawi, 2015, p. 115). That man thinks his wife will feel happy and loved because he is jealous. The psychologist-writer clarifies that some people do not experience or know such feelings as happiness, care, trust, or love at all; in fact, this is a state of illness, a mental disorder. In other words, she considers it important that such despotic behavior of some men should not be explained by religion, society, or conservative traditions, but should be treated as a mental disorder, and that society in general should be treated and cured of such sick, defective behavior and attitudes. Because it is inevitable that sick individuals also make society sick.

In the work "Two Women" (al-Sa'adawi, 2015, p. 107), Al-Sa'adawi once again brings attention to the fact that society itself is sick and in need of treatment. Against the background of women who are beaten by their husbands and subjected to domestic violence, injustice, and inhuman treatment, she emphasizes that only by addressing

these issues is it possible for everyone to live equally and happily in society and to build an ideal community.

The writer also raises the issue of men being wrongly educated in conservative Muslim countries since childhood in another work - the novel "The Innocence of the Devil." It is noted that boys are indoctrinated from an early age with ideas such as "Men Are the Masters of Women" and "A man commands a woman, and a woman obeys" (al-Sa'adawi, 2004, p. 103). The protagonist does not obey the demands of her husband, choosing the path of divorce. Thus, the writer emphasizes that it is right for a person to choose the path that will make them happy, rather than the path that others consider appropriate or appreciate (al-Sa'adawi, 2001a, p. 60).

The idea that it is right not to give up, to walk the road until you get what you deserve and want, is one that Al-Sa'adawi draws attention to in all her works. In another novel - "The Fall of the Imam" - the writer raised the same problems, criticizing the unwritten laws and flaws of society that led to moral decline. In this work, relations between men and women and gender issues are investigated in the context of family and household, as well as in the social sphere (al-Sa'adawi, 2003).

Among the numerous works of Al-Sa'adawi, who consistently chose to focus on and solve the problems of women in Arab countries, her work "She Has No Place in Paradise" (1979) attracts attention with its ironic mood. Taking a brief look at the plot, we can witness how the author touches on deep points with jeweler's precision. The story tells about the life of a mature woman who lives with the dream of heaven until her death and after (al-Sa'adawi, 2015).

The heroine of the work is the mother of 8 girls and 1 son. The life of this woman, whose name is "Jennat," is unbearable, painful, and burning like hell. From an early age, she experienced abuse in her father's house and physical violence in her husband's house. They claim that women will not go to heaven, even if they think of dying and going there to get rid of the difficulties and pains of this world. Supposedly, women are such stupid, disgusting creatures that even heaven does not accept them. The woman thinks - if heaven does not accept people like her, whom does it accept? She wore a headscarf from a young age and did not say anything to her parents, brothers, or husband at home except to say "Yes sir" to her husband. She never stole or lied in her life. She did not touch anyone's property. Throughout her life, she prayed regularly and fasted from an early age. Why does heaven not accept her?

Later, after the death of her husband, the woman, who became a widow with 9 children at a young age, could

not withstand the heavy burden of life and the tortures of fate. She passed away early and heard her mother's last words while her coffin was being taken to the cemetery: "You will see your husband in heaven." The writer continues the subject with an ironic tone. Here, the woman has won the paradise she wished for. She believes that she will see in heaven the kind attitude from her husband that she never saw in life. Indeed, she sees her husband in heaven: sitting on a bed, with a *houri* on his right and a *houri* on his left. The *houris* are wearing light-colored tulle dresses, their white arms and legs are bare, and yellow silk hair is scattered on their chests and shoulders. Her husband does not hear or see her coming amid the laughter. And the woman thinks that someone wearing a black veil has no place in heaven, and so she returns to a life of hardship...

As mentioned earlier, the work was developed with an ironic tone, and Al-Sa'adawi touched upon very subtle moments behind this veil of irony, addressing global problems in the Muslim East. Another work by the writer worth discussing is "The Hidden Face of Eve" ("The Hidden Face of an Arab Woman", 1977), which differs in form and content - it consists of separate articles, historical documentary research, analysis, and comments. These materials were formed based on Al-Sa'adawi's patients' stories, medical histories, and personal observations during her treatment work, as well as psychological research and, of course, real events, feelings, and experiences she encountered. In this respect, the work is not completely artistic but written in a different style. The work can be called fiction-documentary, art-journalistic, and scientific-medical, all while being shrouded in history. In the work, the writer explores the stages of the social evolution of women against the background of world history and contemporary times, using examples from different countries, especially in the context of the realities experienced by Muslim Arab women, and carries out the mission to reveal dark, hidden moments. The writer rightly emphasizes that throughout history, socio-political structures, regimes, and methods of government and cultures have changed and developed, freedom was given even to slaves, but not to women, just as in some Arab countries' women are still treated like slaves (Al-Sa'adawi, 1991, p. 147).

The writer also spoke about the despicable attitude towards women in Muslim Arab society in her novel "Woman at Zero Point," which had a great impact on the world, written shortly before "The Hidden Face of Eve" (written in 1975, published in 1977) (Al-Sa'adawi, 2013). The creation of the work itself involves an interesting history. In 1972, after the publication of "Woman and Sex," Al-Sa'adawi was removed from her posts and began to

investigate the symptoms of neurosis in Egyptian women. While studying the medical histories of various patients for her research, the doctor-writer also met women in mental hospitals and women's prisons. While in Qanatir prison, a woman sentenced to death attracted her attention, and she wanted to meet with that woman to listen to her story and write it. What a person to be executed feels before death, their last words, their desires, interested her from the point of view of her research. She also believed that a woman who was to be executed for murder had the right to tell the truth and that someone needed to listen to her, understand her, or even say that she was innocent.

The woman agreed to meet with the writer exactly one day before the execution to tell her story and answer questions. The doctor-writer, who had longed for this meeting and had been preparing for days, forgot everything she planned to ask when she stood in front of the prisoner and entered the empty, dark, stone cell. She sat silently in front of the woman who had only a few hours to live. The woman herself told everything from beginning to end. And the main character of the writer's work "Woman at Zero Point," which gave voice to the world, was also this condemned woman - Firdaus...

The character says that during her life she experienced many blows, torture, and betrayals, and after all this, she decided to become another Firdaus: "A woman who has experienced everything will no longer be afraid of anything, because she has already experienced everything that will hurt her" (al-Sa'adawi, 2013, p. 90). The protagonist says that all her experiences have made her stronger, that she has become fearless because she has nothing to lose. However, at the end of the work, we see that Firdaus is still a victim of gender inequality, ignorance, and injustice in society at the hands of a man. When the woman who stabbed someone who wanted to take possession of her by force was accused of murder, she rebels, saying, "I am not guilty. You have to be a man to be a sinner. All men are guilty - fathers, uncles, husbands, male lawyers, doctors..." Listening to Firdaus's story, the writer considers not the woman who will be executed, but the society that put her in this situation as the real criminal. The author emphasizes that while the world is full of lies, hypocrisy, and injustice, many women like Firdaus pay for it with their lives.

CONCLUSIONS

It is worth noting once again that calls for the protection of women's rights and freedoms, the cessation of violence against women, and ensuring gender equality have always been the main themes of Nawal Al-Sa'adawi's work. Throughout her writings, the author focused on the

trampled rights and destroyed lives of Muslim women across the Arab world, choosing as her main focus the difficulties, obstacles, problems, injustice, and violence faced by Egyptian women in society. In general, Al-Sa'adawi was one of those who believed that the future development and well-being of countries and societies depends on the freedom, success, and literacy of women who bring new citizens into the world. She constantly emphasized, both in her creative work and social activities, that gender inequality is the primary obstacle on this path, noting that this problem particularly plagues the Arab East. The writer's conclusion in her works—that solving problems arising from gender inequality is possible only through the reformation of not just individual members of society but society as a whole—is particularly significant. In "A Woman at the Zero Point," the feminist writer emphasized that unless societies are reformed, there will be many more Firdauses.

Unfortunately, the same situation and ideas remain relevant many years later in the Arab East. This theme is echoed in the work of another Egyptian writer, Salwa Bakr, in her novel "The Golden Chariot" (1995). Stories of women living prison lives involve murder, theft, drug trafficking, violence against women, trafficking in women, and many more crimes that implicate the dark layers of society. Bakr looks at these seemingly innocent women with pity and heartbreak. She tries to draw attention to the fact that her protagonists are victims of injustice, hypocrisy, poverty, unemployment, religious arbitrariness, and immorality prevailing in Egyptian society. It is evident from the stories that women resist greatly against their surroundings and wrong attitudes to avoid taking forbidden paths and crime, but they cannot achieve a good life in a lawful way "without paying the price." In this regard, Bakr, like her predecessor—feminist writer Nawal Al-Sa'adawi—calls not for women but for society to reform. Otherwise, unless society is reformed, these women's prison cells will never be empty.

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