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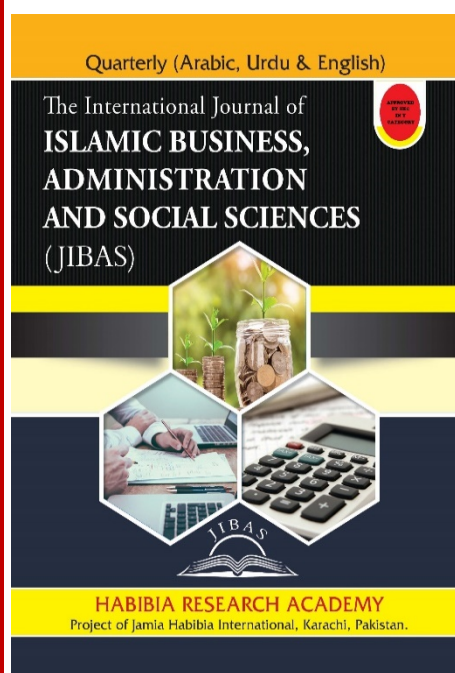
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TOPIC:

**MAY ZIADE: BIOGRAPHY AND HER EFFORTS
FOR THE BASIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN**

AUTHORS:

1. Dr. Shabana Nazar, Assistant Professor Department of Arabic The Islamia University of Bahawalpur. Email: shabana.nazar@ymail.com Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2787-4205>

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**MAY ZIADE: BIOGRAPHY AND HER EFFORTS
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Shabana Nazar,

ABSTRACT:

The theory of freedom for both the genders is a recent contemplation but equality is a concept traced back to the times of ancient Arab. This article focused on the work of a female Arab poet and author known as May Ziade who raised her voice against the gender discrimination. May Ziade throughout her life fought against the world for the basic rights of women. Her contribution in constructing the lives of Arab women is evaluated in this paper through literature review approach. The findings of the literature review focused on the work of May Ziade which state that throughout her life she fought against the world for the basic rights of women and raised voice for people who were not given their desired status and respect. She wrote at times of male presiding society Ziade looked for equality for women by asking questions on cultural values and traditions.

KEYWORDS: *May Ziade, Contemporary Arabic Poetry, Arab Women, Settler of Oriental Feminism, Equal Rights of Women and Men*

INTRODUCTION: In the Arab world, since from the ancient times, females are subjected to the deprivation of their own due rights whether social, cultural, political, economic or religious in short, be it any field of life. Although, the teachings of sacred book of Muslims the Holy Quran have respected women to the utmost. In order to help women, attain their due rights, various well-known scholars have played their part in this noble cause. Jama al-Din Asad Abadi is considered to be the pioneer of this movement, followed by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Qasim Amin. The theory of freedom for both the genders is a recent contemplation but equality is a concept traced back to the times of ancient Arab. In Arab, women were not given even their basic rights such as freedom to choose their spouse etc. According to a Christian author, May Ziade, the first human in ancient person who introduced the concept of equality between males and females was the great Jesus Christ (Ziade, 1913). After this, when Islam flourished in Arab world, women succeeded to attain a more respectable position because Islam had equal rights for women in all aspects of life except the right in heritage which is given from father to daughter, sons have greater proportion as compared to daughters. Thus, Islam is considered to be a major revolution for women, which proved the derogatory statements such as death is the only better option for women or the ultimate dignity is the birth of boys and death of the girls wrong (Giv & Nia, 2016).

Despite of all the advancements done in pre historic times of Islam, still modern times Arab history clearly depicts the deprivation of Arab women of their due rights especially in under developed areas with low literacy rate where women still suffer a lot. The indicative events of these are that the women there are not given the right to earn, get proper higher education or even choose a life partner of their own choice for

themselves. All this reflects the gender-based discrimination of Arab world, all though, it is certain that women and men enjoy privileges in certain aspects of life more than the other but the base of this concept is to consider them equal in places where they are thought to be of one entity and do not interchange the due positions of men and women with each other (Abbott, Tyler, & Wallace, 2006).

This article focused on the work of a female Arab poet and author known as May Ziade who raised her voice against the gender discrimination. May Ziade throughout her life fought against the world for the basic rights of women. Since her birth in Nazareth her teenage was among the nationalist and anti-British anxiety in Cairo. After declaring healthy by doctors in a psychiatric hospital in Beirut she returned back to Cairo where May Ziade spent her final days in extreme loneliness. She throughout her life raised voice for people who were not given their desired status and respect (Grandi,2018). A very well-known Lebanese journalist named Esfahani collected much of Ziade's work related to journalism where as another journalist known as Nawal Mustafa wrote life history of Ziade. Waciny Laredj a well-known Algerian novel writer wrote about Ziade in her novel called " Isis Copia". She herself printed almost 15 books and her literary salon was known worldwide and was attended by many intellectuals of that time. Besides Khalil Gibran she was in contact with many other great authors of her time like Ahmed Lutfeil Sayed, Taha Husain, Abbass El Akkad and rhymer Wali Al Din Yaken. She was deeply saddened by the death of her parents and the demise of Khalil Gibran led her towards severe depression. She therefore went back to Lebanon where her family admitted her to a mental hospital in order to overcome her depression so that once again, she can live a healthy normal life. She went back to Egypt and died at the age of 55 on October 17, 1941 in Maadi Hospital situated in Cairo. According to the resources of the book Dergham her funeral was not attended by well-known writers and poets of that time rather students of Maranoite School and some intellectuals attended her last ceremonies. Her eulogy was published in a newspaper. The newspaper declared May Ziade as one of the greatest activists, and author of her time (Mahmoud, 2021).

Biography:

A creative Christian writer of Arabic newspaper, a rhymer, translator and essay writer famously known as May Ziade (nèe Marie with Zaide also written as Zidaè, Ziadah, Ziyad) (February 11 1886-1941). Ziade was the author and poet of number of famous and widely read books and poems. She was one of the first feminist and "Settler of Oriental feminism". Ziade was the center figure of Arab intellectual scene. Ziade took birth in a Lebanese family. Her father was from a Chahtoul family and her mother being a Palestinian was from a Beirut Valayt (Ottoman Syria). Ziade's father Elias Ziade was proofreader of a newspaper called al-Mahruša. She got her basic education from Nazareth. When she was 14 years old her father moved to a region Kesruoun of Mount

Lebanon where she continued her studies in a French convent school for girls at Aintoura. Her studies in Aintoura familiarized her with French and Romantic literature. Before returning back to Nazareth in 1904 to live with her parents she joined many Roman Catholic schools as well. At a very young age of 16 she issued her first article. Ziade had a relationship with one the greatest Lebanese-American rhymer and author of the twentieth century Khalil Gibran although she was never married to him but had a contact with him until his death in 1931(Agsous,2021). Ziade lost her parents and Khalil Gibran between 1928 to 1932 because of which she was heartbroken and went into severe depression. She went back to Lebanon where her family members admitted her in a psychiatric hospital in order to treat her severe depression. Nawaal El Sadawi revealed that she was sent to hospital because of expressing her feminist thoughts that were not acceptable to the people back in time. Ziade was greatly tortured because of her feminist sentiments but she later left the hospital after declaring healthy by the team of doctors treating Ziade. She died on October 17, 1941 after returning back to Cairo. Ziade wrote various articles for the newspaper al-Máhrusa which her father founded after migration to Egypt in 1908.

Ziade read intimately at home combined with some French Catholic education. She always had a knack for learning languages therefore in order to get degree in modern languages she took admission in a native university as well as a result of which Ziade was fluent in speaking French as well as Arabic and was also familiar with English, Latin, Modern Greek, German, Italian and Spanish. She passed university in 1917.

Ziade founded a literary salon in 1912. She was a very famous person in Arab intellectual society and received many letters from male and female authors at her literary salon. Those writers who often paid visits to salon were Taha Husain, Ahmed Lutfeil-Sayed, Khalil Moutrane, Antoun Gemayal, Yaccoub Sarrouf, Abbas el Akkad and Waledain Yakan. Ziade never got married. She had a contact with Khalil Gibran since 1912 but they never met because Khalil Gibran lived in New York city. Their contact lasted for 19 years because Gibran died in 1931. Ziade familiarized Egyptians with Khalil Gibran's writings. She was highly appreciated for her this act. Carrying idealistic streak since childhood she was highly inspired by Shelly, Byron, Lamartine and finally Khalil Gibran. They all had a very great impact on her work as she was greatly inspired by their personalities and work. Thus, creating an impactful and influential personality in herself, motivated from a number of people.

Literature Review:

The poet and the writer May Marry Ilias Ziadah (1886-1941) famous for arranging a literary salon in Cairo every week that unified many cultural icons of the city (Marwat, 2009). In addition to this, in 1930s the narrative also tells us that Tuqan, a famous Arab poet was influenced by the text of a Nazareth-born feminist, rhymer, translator Mai

Ziade (1886-1941) who was also a close friend of Khalil Gibran (Moore Gilbret,2014). Shuwaqi composed for the magazine under the heading of "Contemporary Arabic poetry" he focused on the work of a Syrio-lebanese paraphraser and rhymers Mayy Ziadah who attended many of her academic peers while moving to Egypt in the start of the twentieth century (Goikolea and Amiano,2020). Ziade had a knack for learning languages. She was a bilingualist. She could speak Arabic and French smoothly and was also familiar with Modern Greek, Spanish, English, Latin, German and Italian.

In times of Ziade the literary field was male presiding and no women author or poet was known that time. Indeed, there was no such concept of women's proper education or schooling. In fact, it was very tough for a woman to not only get education but to also build up image as a poet all alone in such male dominating field and era. In times of such male presiding society Ziade looked for equality for women by asking questions on cultural values and traditions. In one of her remarkable work that later became very famous she wrote:

"We sing beautiful words like phrases of freedom and emancipation to no purpose. If you the men of east keep the center of servitude in your homes illustrated by your wives and daughters the children will never live a free happy life".

Ziade was a well-known advocate of women's liberation and equality for both genders. She had a very important role in bringing the term feminism into male dominating Arab world. Hassan Aql who was an author and a critic expert who gave her credit of first using the term "Women's cause" in the Arab culture. She was a very well-educated feminist who talked about women rights and inequality in a male presiding Arab society. A foreign Christian among Muslims and a woman highly educated in a male commanding society she always thought of herself as an outsider written by Antje Ziegler in the biography of Ziade. She got French education in Lebanon therefore published her first assemblage of rhymes called *Fleurs de Reve* in French. Nevertheless, she later started to write her poetry more in Arabic (Inside Arabia,2020).

In addition to this the columns of Ziade mostly had the comparison of the societies of Arab and west. She also made clear about women's freedom in a society (Mahmoud,2021). Dergham found out that Ziade's liberal and evangelist talent developed from the ideas in Egypt both and said that in such conditions her representation of women's rights was a great example. She pens down in her article that "It is a misconception that education drags girls away from family".

She further added, "What is a distorted and deformed education"? Never believe that culture ruins womanhood it always enhances women's abilities.

She stated that "those people who do not honor women are ill fated".

Women's Avoidance of Indecency and Chastity:

Women were restricted to their houses in Arabic society and were not allowed to participate in anything; they could not leave their houses without permission. Many modern Arab intellectuals like Qasim Amin, Hafez Ibrahim and Jamil Sedghi al-Zahawi were totally against this tradition and were strong supporters of women's emancipation and thought that hijab is a sign of women's subdevelopment. They questioned that hijab is a hurdle for women participating in different affairs. According to these people hijab is not in Sharia. Indeed, when someone talks about women's emancipation people relate it with western freedom which is like encouraging faithlessness. Thus, they linked freedom to deviation from Islamic values and laws. In opposition to these writers there are many new authors with magnificent ideas like May Ziade said:

"The righteous and greatest blessing given to women is Femininity. If she leaves it behind and steps out of the boundary then everything including her life will be affected and she will be distracted from the motive for which she was born". Furthermore, he added we need competent and strong women with male transformation there is no need of leaving sweetness, fondness and dilution behind (Ziade, 1983).

From this group's point of view the word freedom is developing from negligence which is against western concept of liberation.

May Ziade while stating about women's purity and honor said" A women is just like a flower ringed by spikes. These spikes are nothing else but her purity, honor and dormancy" (Ziade,1913).

Equal Rights: Women and Men:

The liberation of men and women was suggested in the modern period but the equivalence of their rights has a huge long history. Arabs neglect women a lot in this specific case because of which many women are deprived of their privileges. Here, May Ziade stated that the first man to deal women with goodness was Jesus who also developed equal rights between men and women. The position and status of women was further elevated with the arrival of Islam which declares that both men and women are equal except for inheritance where Arabs never gave desired status to their women. This deals with the lies and beliefs of Arab people. For example, the fake beliefs are "demise is much better than life for a woman" and "The great splendor is in the survival of boys and demise of girls" (Giv and Nia, 2016).

Present Arab antiquity is full of events related to women's deprivation of rights specifically in the neglected class. These deprivations include lack of financial independence, job and no right to choose life partner. It is obvious that the base of all these injustices is gender discrimination. Each sex has its own rights in any field therefore it is not right enough to speak about men and women equality. The best way

is to give the accurate status to both genders. It is a misconception that a girl should live the same way as a boy. In this way they will forget their womanly things and will have a bad effect on society (Pamela, Wallace and Taylor 2001). The profess is observed in some parts of the novel when the

leader interacts with students:

The honor of woman is not different from that of a man. It is a bitter reality that women face restrictions in this regard while men are able to do whatever they want. It is very important for our future generation to give same rights to both the genders (Kilani,2005). Through these agitating mottos the leaders of Communist party tried to destroy Islamic values. They are very well informed about the necessities of Muslim communities specifically curtailment on women. Therefore, they highlighted the weaknesses of Muslim community. In these difficult times Fatimah tried to awake people and quoted that;

If we believe that men and women are equal, we are truly wrong and this is even proven scientifically that both the genders have particular nature. The hormones of women ate not like that of a man. Their powers are not same and indeed have different roles to play. It is impossible to neglect the truth (Al Kalani, 2012).

Public and Family Life of Women:

The holiness of mother has a separate status in every community. In Islamic Eastern society this position holds a great significance. She plays a very crucial role in raising her children. Disciplined and decent women play a very important part in growing of her family and have a huge impact on society as well. Women in any household impacts on the three basic axes.

Status and honor of women in any household and community is the first basic axis. In order to raise our generation in a better way educational system has a key role in our society. The second point is how much a woman is contributing to grow the financial status of women and the third axis is how a woman impacts her family in any regard be it financial, educational or religious. Any disciplined and decent women spread the aroma of honesty, discipline and decency to her family (Giv and Nia,2016). Furthermore, contrary to her allies Huda Sha'arawi and Princess Nazli Fazil Ziade she was known as 'Women of letters ' and was very much engrossed in the freedom movement for women. Ziade was very much concerned about the liberation of Arabic women which was a task with so many hurdles in it both external and internal factors. She believed that a woman is basic element of any household or society and an enslaved woman can never give birth to a free child. She indeed called a meeting in 1921 with the title 'Le but de la vie' (The goal of life) where she invited Arab ladies to come out and ask for their freedom without forgetting their basic identity and purpose (Chahwan, 2021).

Feminist Politics:

Back in times the works of female authors were targeted the most by critics for a number of reasons. Many other authors including May Ziade experienced the same as being a female author it was very hard for others to accept and acknowledge her work. However, this is not only the tradition of Arabs but all over the world critics do the same with women's work like in Mary Spongbergs piece of work " politics of life writing" in connection with Mary Walstonecraft and Mary haze she focused on the certitude that although the components of autobiography were introduced in May Ziade writings but still, they were not used by many other authors of eighteenth century which she termed as "The compound nature of texts" (Kamal, 2018). The center of Mary writings was the feminist or political aspect and highlights Wolstonecraft's engrossment with female abuse and tries to bring a change in her reader's mind via her literary work. It covers three main ladies Taymur, Nassiff and Al-Yajizzi and Ziade herself (Spongberg, 2012). Ziade tried to bring back the work of previous Arab authors in order to understand how men treated women back in time and to bring their work as a source of influence and inspiration for the future generation and hoped for coming days to be better where women will be given freedom and due rights. In the beginning of twentieth century these requests were mainly of middle class educated Egyptian women and were considered to be the part of Egyptian constitution in 1923. Moreover, the upper-class ladies of Egypt joined hands with Egyptian intellectuals to get their basic political rights. This hard work led them gain their political rights in 1956 constitution. Ziade therefore emphasized more on practical work. The concept of "practical" feminist politics highlights the engrossment of females in their communities and that there are many important things in their minds that are valuable enough to be considered. Therefore, it implies that the decisions and ideas of women should be considered and appreciated by ignoring the old norms. The huge credit goes to these early authors and poets whose literary works were preserved and are a source of inspiration and motivation for many Egyptian and Arabian people (including Ziade herself). It is very obvious that from nineteenth to early twentieth century Ziade focused on many issues and discussed them openly from many dimensions without any fear of people. It is very important to note that Ziade quoted on many disputed issues in a very smooth way. Therefore, she put forward her thoughts in very decent and careful ways that have been through many analyses. Hence Ziade was called a visionary woman and she beautifully fits into the group of practical ladies. Because of such close association with reality and the conversation which she developed with other three ladies who too focuses on the same goals as May Ziade.

Constructing Lives of Women:

The literary biography of Ziade is an example of generic intersections in combining poetic narrations, life-writing and an extensive quotation, speeches and letters-based commentary of an Arab woman writer. Since, theorization of feminism is generated by life-writing of Western feminist authors but Ziade's work also contributes in contemporary intersection of feminist theory in her life-writing by presenting Arab womanhood. The writing of Ziade as contribution for feminist theory or constructing women' lives can be described through the approach of Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) who listed four modes for writing on women' lives; woman herself tells her story that can be called as an autobiography; secondly she may choose to tell her story as fiction; or a biography of woman' life by another individual and lastly the woman may write a story before living it without naming or recognizing the process. Thus, the work of Ziade can be stated as an attempt of writing lives of other women as an author of biography as representation and construction process of handling lives of Arab women. It further becomes clear in her efforts to describe the life of Hoda Elasadda' life by representing the challenges faced by Arab women. Further, Elsadda represented the life of Aisha Bint Abi Bakr, wife of Prophet Mohammad and in this biography, author described the political aspect of a woman' biography in defining the cultural identity-based issues in a postcolonial context (Kamal, 2018). In this biography two predominant stereotypes and assumptions are exposed regarding Arab womanhood; first is the traditionally produced image in the Arab world through the portrayal of woman as marginal and helpless and secondly the orientalist image of woman produced internationally, presented Arab woman as victims of oppression. That Ziade found as an alternate to represent Arab womanhood through auto-biography, where exercise of agency, empowerment and counter traditional feminist images and stereotypical roles of female are pursued by Arab women.

Unlike the oriental image of womanhood that is predominant where woman is represented as uneducated and secluded oppressed entities, the representation of women by Ziade reflects Arab woman as literate, intellectual and multilingual individuals involved in literary scene. Perhaps, Ziade consciously positioned women as individuals who are propagating equal rights along with revision of gender roles constructed by society. Additionally, biographies written by Ziade also mention that female writers and intellectuals communicate with each other in various forms like visiting each other or writing correspondence. As some of the Arab writers at times of twentieth century turn manage to overcome the distance which was preventing them to have encounters in person and they did it through exchange of letters as comment on published writings of each other as Malak Hifni and Ziade were able to meet in person. The written biography of three women by Ziade at current times emerge as a counter-

narrative to Arab women' representation by the mainstream West, a pervasive constructed narrative by accounts of colonialist and adopted by discourse of modernist (Smith & Watson, 2010). Thus, writing biographies of Arab women, Ziade contributing in constructing the lives of women by reviving the memories and asserting the contribution of personalities she chose to write about and this contribution is not only to the Arab writing history but as Arab women' writing tradition establishment.

Conclusion:

The teachings of sacred book of Muslims the Holy Quran have respected women to the utmost. In order to help women, attain their due rights, various well-known scholars have played their part in this noble cause. Jama al-Din Asad Abadi is considered to be the pioneer of this movement, followed by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh and Qasim Amin. The theory of freedom for both the genders is a recent contemplation but equality is a concept traced back to the times of ancient Arab. According to a Christian author, May Ziade, the first human in ancient person who introduced the concept of equality between males and females was the great Jesus Christ (Ziade, 1913). After this, when Islam flourished in Arab world, women succeeded to attain a more respectable position because Islam had equal rights for women in all aspects of life except the right in heritage which is given from father to daughter, sons have greater proportion as compared to daughters. Thus, Islam is considered to be a major revolution for women, which proved the derogatory statements such as death is the only better option for women or the ultimate dignity is the birth of boys and death of the girls wrong (Giv & Nia, 2016).

The findings of the literature review focused on the work of May Ziade which state that throughout her life she fought against the world for the basic rights of women and raised voice for people who were not given their desired status and respect (Grandi,2018). She wrote at times of male presiding society Ziade looked for equality for women by asking questions on cultural values and traditions. In one of her remarkable work that later became very famous she wrote:

"We sing beautiful words like phrases of freedom and emancipation to no purpose. If you the men of east keep the center of servitude in your homes illustrated by your wives and daughters the children will never live a free happy life". Ziade was a well-known advocate of women's liberation and equality for both genders. She had a very important role in bringing the term feminism into male dominating Arab world. May Ziade while stating about women's purity and honor said" A women is just like a flower ringed by spikes. These spikes are nothing else but her purity, honor and dormancy"(Ziade, 1913). Further, the liberation of men and women was suggested in the modern period but the equivalence of their rights has a huge long history. Arabs neglect women a lot in this specific case because of which many women are deprived of their privileges. Here, May

Ziade stated that the first man to deal women with goodness was Jesus who also developed equal rights between men and women (Giv and Nia,2016). Additionally, Ziade was very much concerned about the liberation of Arabic women which was a task with so many hurdles in it both external and internal factors. She believed that a woman is basic element of any household or society and an enslaved woman can never give birth to a free child. She indeed called a meeting in 1921 with the title 'Le but de la vie' (The goal of life) where she invited Arab ladies to come out and ask for their freedom without forgetting their basic identity and purpose (Chahwan,2021).

Moreover, the writing of Ziade as contribution for feminist theory or constructing women' lives has been described through the approach of Carolyn Heilbrun (1988) who listed four modes for writing on women' lives; woman herself tells her story that can be called as an autobiography; secondly she may choose to tell her story as fiction; or a biography of woman' life by another individual and lastly the woman may write a story before living it without naming or recognizing the process. Thus, the work of Ziade is stated as an attempt of writing lives of other women as an author of biography as representation and construction process of handling lives of Arab women (Kamal, 2018). Therefore, writing biographies of Arab women, Ziade contributing in constructing the lives of women by reviving the memories and asserting the contribution of personalities she chose to write about and this contribution is not only to the Arab writing history but as Arab women' writing tradition establishment.

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