



Patriotism Reflected in Deborah Ellis's Novel *Mud City*

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Abstract

The present research paper intends to explore the theme patriotism in Deborah Ellis's novel, *Mud City*, the third novel of the famous *The Breadwinner Trilogy*. Ellis's fictional works are matters of critical analysis since publication of her very first novel. The present research work aims to analyze, interpret and evaluate her novel, *Mud City*, in the light of Deborah Ellis's patriotism. Ellis's novel, *Mud City*, shows the feeling of attachment and commitment to a nation, countrymen and people. Patriotism is simply the love for a country and of its people is the major feature of Ellis's personality which is easily seen in her narrative technique, setting, plot, characterization of her novel, *Mud City*. Deborah Ellis herself confesses that in writing about patriotism, one should be highly conscious of his or her own subjectivity. The patriotism in the present novel can be seen through characters' love for their country, humanity, thinking about wellbeing for a country, traditions, culture of a country and language spoken.

Key Terms: patriotism, feeling of attachment, commitment to a nation, love and affection for a country, traditions, customs, wellbeing for a country, Research

Methodology: Analytical, interpretative and evaluative

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Introduction

The major concern of the present research paper is 'Patriotism' and not 'nationalism' reflected in Deborah Ellis's novel, *Mud City*. All the meanings of patriotism have are reflected in the novel, *Mud City*. *Mud City*, the last book of the award –winning *Breadwinner Trilogy* penned by Canadian activist and author, Deborah Ellis, tells a story of Shauzia, a 14 year- old Afghan girl,

survived by dressing as young boy, Shafiq, working to provide for her shuttered family in Taliban-controlled Kabul. Shauzia's poignant story takes her to a refugee camp in Pakistan, just beyond the Afghanistan border.

Definitions and Meanings of Patriotism

Simply patriotism is a feeling of attachment and commitment to a country or nation or political community. Patriotism is different from nationalism. Patriotism is a love for country and nationalism, loyalty to one's nation. Patriotism is first and nationalism is next to patriotism. Patriotism has its origin 2000 years ago and the rise of nationalism is in the 19th century. The Greek and Roman antiquity provide political patriotism which mean love and loyalty to patria (homeland), and the republic. It deals with love of law and common liberty and search of common good. It refers to the duty to behave justly towards one's country. For Niccolo Machiavalli, the love of common liberty enabled citizens to see their private and particular interests as a part of the common good and helped them to resist corruption and tyranny. To love the nation is to be willing to sacrifice one's own good, one's life for the protection of common liberty.

The major definitions of the term patriotism are as follows:

The standard dictionary defines patriotism as 'love of one's own country'.

Stephen Nathanson (1993, 34-35) defines patriotism as involving:

1. Special affection for one's own country
2. A sense of personal identification with the country
3. Special concern for the well-being of the country
4. Willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good

Accordingly, patriotism can be defined as love of one's country, identification with it and special concern for its well-being and that of compatriots (citizens). It includes social and political conditions that affect the patriotism and its political and cultural influence.

Many authors use the two terms patriotism and nationalism interchangeably but many make difference between the two.

In the 19th century, Lord Acton defined 'nationality' as "Our connection with the race" that is "merely natural or physical" while patriotism is the moral awareness of our duties to political community

(Action 1972, 163)

In the 20th century Elie Kedourie called nationalism as full-fledged philosophical and political doctrine about nations as basic units of humanity within which individual can find freedom and fulfillment. He defined patriotism as mere sentiment of affection for one's country.

(Kedourie 1985, 73-74)

George Orwell said "Nationalism is about power: its adherent wants to acquire as much power and prestige as possible for his nation, in which he submerges individuality...it is a devotion to a particular place and a way of life one thinks best but has no wish to impose on others (Orwell 1968,362).This indicates a double standard of form "us vs them".

The Cambridge dictionary defines patriotism as "the feeling of loving your country more than any others and being proud of it"

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines patriotism as "love for or devotion to one's country"

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines patriotism as "love of your country and willingness to defend it".

Elements of Patriotism in the Novel

The major characters of the novel have special affection for their country, Afghanistan. Mrs.Weera , a former girls' athletic teacher runs secret schools for war affected children,clinics for war affected common people of Afghanistan and publishes feminist magazines for creating feeling of affection among Afghan women. Helping to a war affected people show their affection for the people of their homeland. While conversing with Mrs.Weera , Shauzia vows as:

"I would have thought bringing comfort to your fellow Afghans in a refugee camp could be considered real work for a lifetime" (313)

In his book review, Jeffery Canton writes as:

“Returning to the camp, Shauzia slowly discovers that, like Mrs.Weera, she likes helping people and can make a difference in their lives. She doesn't give up her dreams but realizes that they can wait until she's ready for them”

A sense of personal identification with the country can be revealed through traditions, culture and language of a country. This is well reflected in the novel. Due to the Taliban rule over Afghanistan, the common people are suffered. They face many problems like shortage of food, scarcity of water. Shauzia says:

“Look at Safa's shalwar kameez. Up in high pastureland, the whole world is green like that”. There was green under the dirt of Safa's clothes. The water supply was low, and no one had been able to do laundry. (311)

Sir Charles City-County Library District Kids reviews as:

“Shauzia finally decides to leave the camp and try her luck on the streets. She is determined to earn money to buy her passage out of the country. Peshawar is dangerous and full of desperately poor and wandering children like herself, but she has Jasper, the dog who followed her down from a shepherds' camp in the mountains. And she knows how to masquerade as a boy and comb the streets for jobs. She figures she knows how to survive”.

A special concern for the well -being of the country can be explored in the present novel. Characters like Mrs.Weera, Tom, Farzana and Shauzia show concern for their country, Afghanistan by various ways.

Shauzia says to her dog, Jasper, her only companion in Peshawar:

“Let's go, she said to Jasper. Then she grinned. I'll pretend to be a mighty warrior, like that Ghengis Khan who conquered Afghanistan. I'll invade this puny city. Nothing stands in my way!” (326)

Characters in the present novel have willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good. Though Afghanistan faced war torn situations and the Taliban made restrictions on the living of Afghan children and women, the patriotic character Shauzia doesn't leave her country Afghanistan. She only wants escape from the pathetic life of refugee. Shauzia is ready to work on low wages only for the sake of giving jobs to others. She says:

“I work cheaper than the other porters,” she told Jasper one evening. “Someday, someone is going to work cheaper than me, and I won’t be able to get work there anymore. The problem is, there are so many of us. There are a lot of Afghans here, and we all need money.” (341)

Helping one another in an adverse or difficult times at one hand is a sign of humanity but on the other hand it also one kind of patriotic behavior. Many characters in the present novel help one another in their difficult situations. When Shauzia is charged of stealing and is imprisoned, an American family helps her for her escape.

While parting from her pet, Jasper, her only companion in Peshawar city, Shauzia dialogues with Farzana as:

“Take care of Jasper,” she said to Farzana. If the two of you get the sea, give him a bath in the waves with this.” She handed Farzana the bit of flowery soap from Tom and Barbara. (431)

While writing about the humanistic attitude of the characters in the novel, Karah Khalia writes in an Online Book Review Published,

“During her parting from Mrs. Weera, she gets fostered by a well-meaning American family for less than a week”.

Conclusion

In brief, the novel, *Mud City*, reveals all the features of patriotism. It is a fine document of patriotism. It shows attachment, love, affection, devotion, sacrifice, humanity to a country besides in adverse and difficult times as the Taliban, the militant and political movement captured Afghanistan. It is the patriotism that can be seen through characters’ love for their country, humanity, sense of personal identification, thinking about wellbeing for a country, traditions, culture of a country and language spoken.

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