

Najib Mahfuz's Thought: Approach to A Change of Role of Egyptian Women in Thulathiyah (Trilogy)

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Abstract

The object of this article is a novel of Najib Mahfuz entitled al-Thulathiyah by utilizing the formal object of genesis structuralism theory, which states that an article especially a masterpiece is an expression of the writers' view on the world, the human facts, the collective subject, and a historicity. This article has found that Najib Mahfuz indirectly states in his masterpiece al-Thulathiyah that the change from traditional roles of the Egyptian women into the social roles of the Egyptian new women might be based on three pillars of approaches having mutual synergy those are the evolutionary and gradual approach, the assertive and persuasive approach, and the education process approach. Applying those three approaches, Najib examines that the change and improvement of the Egyptian new women require a long process divided into three generations as follows: Bain al-Qaşrain generation (October 1917 – April 1919), Qaşr al-Shauq generation (July 1924 – August 1927), and al-Sukkariyah generation (January 1935 – 1944). Najib Mahfuz examines that the change in the Egyptian women is an absoluteness that is through a polite education. Moreover, he examines that higher education for women is life necessities for their future time. According to Najib Mahfuz, the vision of education is one bridge of change although this opportunity has not been opened yet for the third generation of Egyptian women. They think that high education is divided into four perspectives as follows: it is the life necessities, it is a prohibition although it gives opportunities, it may cause difficulties in finding a husband especially for those who are not beautiful, and it is not a must because the basic education is enough.

Keywords: Najib Mahfuz, Thulathiyah, change, evolutionary, assertive, educative

A. Introduction

Using a genesis structuralism approach, this paper will discuss a strategy of cultural change from the traditional roles of the Egyptian women into their modern roles by conducting a research on Najib Mahfuz's work entitled *al-Thulathiyah* (Trilogy). Najib Mahfuz is a great novelist who has received many awards including Nobel Prize from Swedish. The strategy of cultural change is an alternative that enables to reach a certain object of thinking or a certain target desired by Najib Mahfuz. This cultural strategy is a system because it completes each other by the three approaches mentioned above those are the evolutionary, the assertive, and the education process or the learning process. It seems that this strategy has enabled changes, like the cultural change in the Egyptian women who face the modernism flow strengthened by the demand of democracy concept and technology advance.

B. Change Using Evolutive Approach

A change is something that must be happened. On the contrary, it is impossible that there is no change at all. Najib Mahfuz views an inevitability that the cultural change in the Egyptian women from the traditional roles into the modern social ones in the Egyptian society is evolutionary because it requires a relative long period. This thought is described in his fiction society *al-Thulathiyah* in three generations those are the *Bain al-Qaşrain* generation (October 1917 – April 1919), the *Qaşr al-Shauq* generation (July 1924 – August 1927), and the *al-Sukkariyah* generation (January 1935 – 1944). The strategy of cultural change is an effort to reach the born of the Egyptian new women. The change and improvement of women in the first generation phase is a step of planning design of the strategy of change. The second generation phase is a beginning effort of the women to reach the education opportunity as a very limited enlightening due to the relative low education opportunity. This second generation is living between doubt and belief, between traditional custom and modern civilization. The inevitability of women change and improvement occurred in the third generation

phase when they have enjoyed taking the higher education opportunity.

According to Najib Mahfuz, the evolutionary change will not bring reaction, defense, or victims. He examines that the steps of process of the improvement change of the Egyptian women as described in the first generation of women in *Bain al-Qashrain* novel through a figure called Aminah, the wife of Syech Abdul Jawwad, in the first session of *al-Thulathiyah* is a step of mapping the women problems in the Egyptian society as a whole. The first step is a great design of change.¹ Najib Mahfuz opens the sheets of phenomena of women in the world of *al-Thulathiyah* Egypt by describing a figure called Aminah, who has roles as a wife and a mother of some sons and daughters. It seems that this woman figure becomes a symbol of the axis of the historical journey of the Egyptian women.²

By describing the daily life of a woman, Najib Mahfuz has shown a big obstacle faced by the Egyptian women. The obstacle of the Egyptian women's change is directly facing the husband's personality that has strength and authoritarian and dominant power. The change faces the strong tradition "wall". A husband is a symbol of power leading the household and a husband is a man having the highest power that is almost without limitation. The obedience of Aminah as a wife to her husband is viewed as the obedience to God. The woman represented by Aminah has to fully and unconditionally obedient to the husband. The description of obedience to the husband is strengthened by the values of the result of interpretation of traditional religion in which a wife must absolutely be obedient to all of the husband's order and demand and she is also attached to this interpretation.

Afterwards, according to Najib Mahfuz, the process of change into the Egyptian new women can be realized in the second

¹ Compare the article of Fatimah al-Zahra Muhammad Sa'id about *al-Thulathiyah* using the semiotic approach. She examined that the *Bain al-Qashrain* serial as an introduction to the theme of value contradictions that bring up the figures who are in confusion and the *Qasr al-Shauq* serial that has the theme of the process of confusing actualization, and the *al-Sukkariyah* serial have the theme of an effort to end the journey of confusion by bringing up new values to life and to replace *al-Ramziyah fi Adab Najib Mahfuz*,... p.113.

² Najib Mahfuz, *Bain al-Qashrain* ... p.6-11.

generation, which is portrayed especially in the two daughters of Aminah's. For Najib Mahfuz, a change becomes an inevitability although it has to face many obstacles of traditional custom and of life values and also a challenge of being isolated. The second generation life often faces two contrary things, between doubt and belief, and between old custom and modern civilization. A courage to do the antithesis to the old custom is initially shown by Khadijah, Aminah's first daughter, who inherits her father's strict and hard character, while doubt to the traditional values keeps improving to be crystallized in Kamal bin Ahmad Abdul Jawad. Even Kamal lives in one crises of mental as mostly experienced by the new generation in Najib Mahfuz era especially in the periods between the First World War and the Second World War.³

The reality and actualization of the Egyptian women's portrait change as described by Najib Mahfuz both their roles of positions can be possibly realized in the third generation. The third generation women have opportunities to determine their choice of life. Najib Mahfuz examines that the third generation is free to discuss their choice of life they believe and determine their choices. The portrait of the third generation women is actively involved in the social organizations. Even Najib Mahfuz portraits them in two main groups. The first is a group choosing the left line by believing in the basic principles of Communism, like Susan Hammad, the wife of Ahmad, Khadijah's son. The second one is those who choose the right line, like Abdul Mun'im's wife who joins the socio-religious movement *Ikhwanul Muslimin*.

Najib Mahfuz examines that a gradual change in the Egyptian women requires satisfaction in physical, cognitive, affective, and spiritual. By describing Aminah, Najib Mahfuz believes that the improving change of the Egyptian women is possible when they have the strong base. By believing in good values and moral teachings, women must absolutely build one base of change. Women absolutely have attitudes as the pillars who are strong, humble, patient, and ready to face any pressure. Even in an authoritarian condition, the personality of a pioneer is absolutely optimistic and ready to face any

³ Fauziyah al-Usmawy. *Al-Marah fi'Adab Najib Mahfuz ...* p. 40.

consequence of each action. The vision of the pioneering women make it possible to have improving change in women roles in social and political aspects in the next generation. A portrait of a woman is described in Aminah's character when she faces her husband's authority among the imbalance of communication between husband and wife that has to be obeyed unconditionally. The relationship is more based on between the authority and the one authorized or between the superior and the subordinate by threatening the women to be divorced so that women become more helpless.⁴

Najib Mahfuz also shows an evolutionary change in tradition of dressing of the Egyptian women, which seems to be based on concepts of the interpretation result on the holy book's text.⁵ Najib Mahfuz does not describe Aminah's physical beauty in *Bain al-Qaşrain* serial in the phase of change basic design. The physical portrait will invite hard spontaneous reaction especially from the traditional group. This female character used *ḥijāb*⁶ to hide her beauty. May be it is because inside the house there is Yasin, who is not her *muhrim* as he is the son of her husband's first wife. Moreover, Najib Mahfuz does not reveal how the romance relation is between Aminah and his dictator husband. Then in the second generation in *Qaşr al-Shauq* serial, Najib Mahfuz describes the dressing characteristic that has begun to be half opened, as described by Khadijah and Aisyah. The physical and non-physical aspects, like Khadijah's unbeautiful face, Aminah's beautiful face, are shown in details, so is the romance between Aishah and her husband and children. Afterwards, the evolutionary change becomes clearer in the third generation *al-Sukkariyah* in which it describes that the female characters may choose to wear open dress.⁷

⁴ Najib Mahfuz, *Bain al-Qaşraian* ... p.8

⁵ Compare with the thought of Bahisah al-Badiyah al-Iyyadi who discusses the possible alternative way of dressing. See the poem in a letter "Min Rahli al-Iskandariyah to his friend in 1227 H.

⁶ The veil covers the head and a part of women's face and also covers the chest. Compare with *al-Niqāb* or also called *al-Burqu* with a wide of head covered cloth and the Egyptian women's face is all covered except the eyes.

⁷ From the side of dress style or fashion, the cover of novel *Bain al-Qaşrain* should be the portrait of Syekh Ahmad Abdul Jawad and his wife Aminah in traditional costume and the first volume described more about the journey of life of these two characters. While the

Afterwards, Najib Mahfuz states that sometimes the opportunity of change in freedom has negative side. Najib examines that people without moral control and limitation will get failure. He pours this thought in Aishah figure who lives under the shadows of freedom *fata morgana*. As the second generation in novel *Waṣr al-Shauq*, Aishah takes the role as a young wife who is beautiful, cheerful, and ready to face her life. After her marriage, she forgets her platonic love with a military soldier; she loves her husband Khalil Shaukat who is also a soldier, who is chosen by her father; Aishah lives in material happiness with her husband. As a husband, Khalil Shaukat gives her tolerance to leave the house to visit her parents in *Bain al-Qaṣrain* region or to visit her neighbors. He is an open-minded man (*mufattiḥu al-dhihn*) who allows his wife to wear short dress and to follow the fashion in 1940 era, to dress up and cut her hair in the European style. Moreover, she is permitted to smoke and drink wine, which is on the contrary with her sister Khadijah. Because of freedom out of limitation in free lifestyle, Khadijah speaks to Aishah and she will tell their parents about Aishah's condition so they can warn her. Women in over controlled freedom is not in accordance with the education improved in the Egyptian people's house as in the family of Sayyid Abdul Jawwad.

Through his trilogy serial novel, Najib Mahfuz has a focus of attention that emphasizes more in the significant meaning and the strategy of evolutionary change of roles of the Egyptian women and emphasizes more in solving the long period problems gradually that requires a relative long time. Najib Mahfuz's thought may prove that the phase of problem mapping strategy to realize women's improvement requires shorter time although it relatively should face the custom attached to the community's life. This fact can be seen in

cover of novel *Qaṣr al-Shauq* should describe a half-body portrait of a young woman dressing with half-opened chest although still using a veil covering her hair. May be this portrait is an illustration for Aishah figure and the illustration is a description showing the character improvement of the second generation like Aishah who is growing to be a woman. The cover of *al-Sukkariyah* is decorated by a half pictured illustration in which a pair of young generation dressing in European style wearing a tie and the women wearing 'you can see' with lipstick and nail polish. This illustration seems to exactly represent the third generation that is the grandchildren of Syekh Ahmad Abdul Jawad and his wife Aminah. See also the footnote 198.

the existing period of time in novel *Bain al-Qaşrain* consisting of only nineteen months from October 1917 until April 1919. Furthermore, the phase of planning and the beginning of women change effort movement as seen in *Qaşr al-Shauq* only requires three years and one month from July 1924 until August 1927. However, the realization of the planned change implementation requires the longest time as described in novel *al-Sukkariyah* that is nine years from January 1935 until 1944.

C. Change Using Assertive and Persuasive Approach

Besides using the evolutionary approach to reach a change especially to find the new Egyptian women, Najib Mahfuz examines that this approach is absolutely synergic with the assertive and persuasive approaches despite in the condition of having pressure from the favoring cultural structure or custom. The assertive approach is the actualization of noble moral and having noble moral is an effort to purify oneself in accordance with the original creator.⁸

Najib Mahfuz emphasizes the significant meaning of the polite communication especially among the generations that enable the improvement of the Egyptian women's roles. Through Aminah figure, Najib Mahfuz shows a warm dialogue relationship between Aminah as a mother with her children although she faces an imbalance communication with her husband. From her formal education experience, Aminah is a figure who is lack of educational knowledge, but her existence in a family shows that this woman is a character who has full of affection and love and who has full of politeness and noble moral. In a family, Aminah is a goddess in the middle of her children and grandchildren. Even Aminah is a 'holy' creature; her words are heard, qualified, and influential in her children's ears.⁹

The mission of a mother according to Najib Mahfuz is educating her children by improving the noble moral. Teaching politeness in action is the proof of love to her children by creating a warm and close relationship. Aminah's relationship with her son

⁸ The word (أخلاق) is originated from a word خلق that means basic creator.

⁹ Najib Mahfuz, *Bain al-Qaşrain...*, Part. 11, 32, 34, 37 and 43.

Kamal since his childhood to his teenaged period shows warm relationship. On the other side, although he is shaking to be afraid of his father's behavior, Kamal is dare to politely reprove his father to protect his mother. Kamal's love to his mother defeats his fear of bringing his mother back home after his father has banished her. Yasin's love and honor to his father's wife as a proof of honor and love to a mother has been rooted in the children's heart. Honor and love to a mother is the value of universal humanitarian noble teachings. The mother's mission is expressed in Yasin's confession to his friends who visit him by saying: "How beautiful this woman is. God will never forgive anyone who harm her. God curses the devil that ever hurts her feelings."¹⁰

Assertiveness and politeness always face obstacles and difficulties. Najib Mahfuz describes Aminah's feelings politely trying to touch her husband's heart; her dictator husband who has high egoism illness and who has no care of his children's happiness and dreams. The "I" satisfaction in the form of egoism can be seen in his behavior. Najib Mahfuz creates a dare in Aminah's self to start a communication. A mother always teaches her children a polite communication with a father although the father is lack of politeness especially to the mother. Even Aishah relents when her father behaves rudely.¹¹

Najib Mahfuz describes an attitude of being emphatic and tolerant that is an actualization of polite attitudes in a family as the smallest unit of society. Through Khadijah figure, Najib Mahfuz describes a new woman who is trying to maintain the good custom by behaving accommodative to be obedient in free condition as not experienced by the first generation woman. However, Khadijah keeps trying to assure her children to be tolerant among the family although they apply the different *mahzab* of thinking. Fauziyah al-Usmawy states that the attitude of Khadijah has the background of Islamic education and her growing period in a house that honor difference in traditional interpretation and religious bases actualized in behavior. Khadijah familiarizes herself to talk to her son Abdul Mun'im to

¹⁰ Najib Mahfuz, *Qasr al-Shauq...*, p. 413.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

discuss religious view because he has accused his brother Ahmad an atheist or godless.¹²

According to Najib Mahfuz, the assertive and persuasive attitude and behavior are the effort to condition a process of improvement and change realization of the Egyptian new women. This process is absolutely based on a frame of balancing relationship, discussion, dialogue, using the polite and beautiful language. In a dialogue with Ahmad Shaukat her future husband, Susan Hammad uses metaphoric expressions describing a balancing relationship. Susan Hammad responds Ahmad Shaukat's ideas with cold headed and rational response. Her attitude makes Ahmad Shaukat in a condition to think and talk assertively.¹³

To reach the aim of having a change in the Egyptian women, Najib Mahfuz also offers an effort to salute other cultures outside himself using social skill. One of these is by building a relationship among the ethnics in a bond of marriage. The marriage of Khadijah who has Arabian background with Ibrahim Shaukat who is a Turkish describes an effort to meet and salute two different ethnics or cultures despite the same religion. This marriage demands an attitude of honoring someone's existence or a tolerance, because tolerance will maintain the balancing harmony of power relationship especially a relationship between husband and wife and also the cultural relationship.¹⁴

D. Change Using Educational Approach

By presenting a female figure Aminah in the first serial of novel *al-Thulathuyah*, it seems that Najib Mahfuz believes that a woman is the first character who conducts an educational process in a family as the smallest institution in the society. Aminah figure is believed to play the role as the source and also the media of delivering the idea of enlightening of the improving change of the Egyptian women.

Najib Mahfuz examines that education is a media of strategy of women's cultural change. The possibility to get an opportunity of

¹² Najib Mahfuz, *al-Sukkariyah ...*, p. 78.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

education is a fight facing a lot of risks and defense. An inevitability of bravery enables the cultural change. Aminah's bravery to leave the house when her husband is in Kairo is a breakthrough to the traditional custom that secludes the women. To conduct a change, Aminah steals her opportunity to be out of the household or social habit for educational purpose especially for her (national) children. Aminah has initiative to educate her children in planting the religious love besides for herself it is a media of process to improve her longing to God. Aminah takes the children to the *maqam* of Husein, the grandson of the Prophet of Muhammad SAW around al-Azhar, although she has an accident that hurts her physic. Moreover Aminah receives a sanction of being banished by her husband and leaves her children although she has not got *talak* or been divorced by her husband.¹⁵

Perhaps Najib Mahfuz indirectly wants to say that a change in the Egyptian women is absolutely through the educational process that is full of risks. By describing Aminah's accident on the street hit by a horse cart, Najib Mahfuz wants to show the collision of a mother/woman who is always trapped in traditions in which she is facing the dynamic outside world. At the same time Aminah is experiencing an imbalance or disconfirmation situation existing in her society. Leaving out of the house means facing the dynamic world. Dynamic world is described in a horse cart as a symbol of simple technology. A purpose of education requires no power formality. The physical imprisonment of a woman does not eliminate her spirit to educate her (national) children and to improve herself.

The educational success especially in a family is absolutely based on the exemplary process and the real example moreover the personality education. Najib Mahfuz examines that the educational success is started from an exemplary as he gets from the exemplary and real example of Aminah.¹⁶ The religious life education in a household as conducted by Khadijah is based on assertive approach by not forcing parents' desire because forcing will trouble the

¹⁵ Najib Mahfuz, *Bain al-Qasrain...*, Part. 27, 28, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35 and 37.

¹⁶ Mahfuz, Najib, *Atahaddath Ilaikum* (Ed. Jamal al-Ghitany), Beirut: Dar al-'Audah, 1977.

children. The religious education is also started by giving example to the children to perform five times praying and to encourage her children to keep performing the prayer and Ramadhan fasting.¹⁷

The opportunity to have formal education as a strategy of cultural change is described in the third generation women in *al-Sukkariyah*. At least there are four groups of women that signify the meaning of formal education especially the higher education for the Egyptian women. First, a point of view that continuing to the higher education through studying at school is a life necessity to reach the higher social status, as seen in the figure of Karima binti Yasin. Second, a point of view that sees the higher education for women is a prohibition although they have opportunity to study in the college. Like the third generation, the figure of Naimah, Aishah's daughter, is unpermitted by her grandmother to continue her study after her elementary education. She enforces Naimah to stay at home waiting for a marriage. Actually Naimah has opportunity in material to finish her education until college. At least, some of this second group view the higher education as a goal. Third, a point of view that the higher education for women will give effect on them that they will not have or will be difficult to have a husband moreover for them who feel not physically beautiful. While for them who are beautiful, they will not continue their education because they will soon get a husband. This opinion is from the low class women, like Ummu Hanafi, a servant, who sees that the higher education will make them not having a husband because they are not beautiful while the beautiful ones will soon get married. Fourth, the point of view that the elementary education for women is enough, like Aminah's opinion that agrees with the point of view of the second group that the elementary school certificate is very enough for a girl. What is more important is beauty اللحم (*al-laḥm*) and having nutrition and fat الدهن (*al-dahn*) to look sweet in the eyes of the future husband.¹⁸

¹⁷ Najib Mahfuz, *Bain al-Qaṣrain...*, Bag. 61 dan Najib Mahfuz, *Qaṣr al-Shauq...*, Bag. 1,2 dan 3.

¹⁸ It seems that the usual view of a lot of members of Egyptian society on the future wife is someone beautiful but fat. A fat woman is viewed as a symbol of wealth of a household

Based on the point of view of four groups in signifying the educational meaning especially the higher education for the Egyptian women, Najib Mahfuz is more favoring in a group saying that continuing to the higher education is a life necessity for the big roles of women's life in the future. For him, the mission of education is a bridge of change from being (cognitive, affective, mental and spiritual) uneducated to be educated. Najib Mahfuz examines that the higher education for women is a right that should be fought as a media to realize the Egyptian new women. The character of Karimah, Yasin's daughter, is the third generation woman who has opportunity to have the higher education. Karimah, who is the daughter of Yasin and Zannubah, continues her education with the support of her mother who has more experience and knowledge of life compared with Khadijah and Aishah. With her knowledge and experience, Zannubah examines that for the sake of goodness, her daughter Karimah has to continue her education until the college in order to have knowledge and skill for more useful life either for her life or for others. On the contrary, she does not agree with what Naimah has experienced by not continuing her education to the college because of obeying her family pressure that keeping the old custom. In *al-Sukkariyah*, Najib Mahfuz creates the comparative figure by bringing the figure of Naimah who ends her teenaged period in a marriage with her uncle's son Abdul Mun'im in her sixteenth years old.

Perhaps the ideal woman for Najib Mahfuz is a character who is tender, pointedly minded, actively gives benefit to her nation, has a family but also has the higher education because it is the main key for a change especially for the low middle class society.¹⁹ Fatimah al-Zahra Muhammad Sa'id says that the higher education becomes a representation to create a new society that changes the face of life in

¹⁹ It seems that novel *al-Sukkariyah* (1957) is the second fiction work that upholds the issue of colleges into the fiction after novel *al-Qahirah al-Jadidah* (1945) in the treasury of Arabian novels. Najib Mahfuz has uphold the Egyptian women to go to the college as studying at al-Jami'ah al Qahirah (University of Cairo) as the new issue and trend to be the discussion among the society. On the other side, college has been the orientation of the bourgeois class young generation. Najib Mahfuz has indirectly uphold the difficulties of the proletarian class society to go to the college. Compare with Fatimah al-Zahra Muhammad Sa'id, *Al-Ramziyah fi Adab Najib Mahfuz ...*, p. 31.

the Egyptian society and she also realizes the young generation's desire to have more improved and civilized life in the future.²⁰

The Egyptian new woman, for Najib Mahfuz, exists in the figure of Susan Hammad, a woman who is the daughter of Ahmad Shaukat,²¹ the second son of Khadijah. The figure of Susan Hammad is full of self-belief in the basis of life philosophy although she comes from a simple family as the daughter of a worker but an educated and liberal (*mutaharrir*) woman. In her own view, she has a good job as a journalist in a press. As a journalist, she is open minded to deliver her new ideas about life especially the women fighting to take more roles in the social and political area.

Through the figure of Susan Hammad, Najib Mahfuz states that to realize a view of the Egyptian new women, they should have basic principles of operational steps such as improving the social condition, increasing the prosperity and justice especially for women. Susan Hammad states that it should be based on some operational principles. The first principle, this movement has the main purpose that is increasing the human values to be better; not only in a concept that can be drawn into the cyber space (metaphysical). The second principle, it is far from worry and fear but it is close to the bravery by being ready to bear the consequences of a thought and action, like being imprisoned. The third principle, it is started from the closest person with someone, like Susan Hammad experience who assures Ahmad Shaukat as her future husband.²²

Susan Hammad seems to be the ideal woman portrait of Najib Mahfuz. This woman has a new style and way of thinking, speaks with terminology words reflecting her personality, who is educated as the direct effect and is having opportunity in college, who has commitment to the society and the working class, who urges to keep continuing her education and who works with her parents. This

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The character of Ahmad Shaukat is a representation of a tendency of Najib Mahfuz' social understanding. The meeting of Ahmad Shaukat with Adil Karim in *al-Sukkariyah*, Part. 13, has the similarity with the life experience of Najib Mahfuz, which is his first meeting with Salama Musa. What has been deal in Part 13 has been conformed either with Najib Mahfuz or with Musa. See CHalli Shukry, *al-Muntamy* ... p. 40-41.

²² Najib Mahfuz, *al-Sukkariyah*..., p. 311.

woman has never been ashamed of her father's condition. But on the contrary, she feels proud of her father's reality with all his efforts and fight. Susan Hammad's personality amazes Ahmad Shaukat who has a tendency to the socialism thought growing at the beginning of 1950s. Susan Hammad becomes the icon of revival or the evolution of the Egyptian new women.

Having a household is a woman's desire. Najib Mahfuz believes that the direct effect of education for someone especially a woman can be seen in her interpersonal attitude, such as in solving problems and making decision. In solving the plan of building a household as wished by Ahmad Shaukat, Susan Hammad responds it calmly and gives the valuation in cold headed or in rational way. The more educated attitude and ways like this have not been a necessity on the first and second generations. The attitude and knowledge of this woman makes Ahmad Shaukat worried of her love response as seen in their discussions.²³

Based on the dialogue in Susan and Ahmad Shaukat's discussions, Najib Mahfuz indirectly says that a language shows someone's nation. First, the using of soft language, the metaphoric expressions, the curiosity, the amazement and the ability to use any form of language in accordance with the message show the educational level of a woman. Second, speaking a language is an ability to show a woman's self-quality in appreciating and applying the change and the improvement of man and woman relationship. The relationship is built in one harmonious, discussing, dialogic base using beautiful language, and the sign language for the sake of thinking and planning logically together, as the respond of Susan Hammad to Ahmad Shaukat that is not like the way Khadijah refused hard on her son's plan to marry Susan Hammad. The relationship seems to show a big difference of the educational level and the emotional maturity between the two generations. Khadijah's generation as the second generation still maintains the relationship of bourgeois family in the middle class in the Egyptian society in the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s²⁴ that still maintains the

²³ Najib Mahfuz, *al-Sukkariyah...*, p. 311-314.

²⁴ The setting of time in this novel is 1917-1944.

traditions and upholds the custom especially connecting to the wife' selecting based on certain criteria, such as originating from one blood or family, having the same level with the future wife's family, having the middle education, beautiful, not working outside. On the contrary, the educated woman in the generation era of Susan Hammad or Ahmad Shaukat's wife as the third generation has given effect on the interpersonal relationship. Susan Hammad understands the marriage through the boundary of social status and even ethnic.

Afterwards, Najib Mahfuz explains more details the role of the Egyptian new women like Susan Hammad. Although she has married, she keeps continuing her social and political activities. They give precedence of the society's interest rather than their own and their family's ones. She and her husband fight hard through their membership in a socialist party active in Egypt at that period. They also decide to delay having children in order to be able to practice their political activities and their national duties well so that their goal can be realized for making changes in the society and the political order. Susan Hammad follows supporting the program of restriction on population, which is a social issue being improved to control the surge in population growth.²⁵ It seems that Najib Mahfuz realizes the meaning of education for the Egyptian women. The more educated a woman is, the higher the level of social concern she has.²⁶

Najib Mahfuz sees that writings like article or novel function as the more effective media to share the thoughts of the Egyptian new women, such as Susan Hammad's response to a question about a strategy used to reach the goal of the Egyptian new women as follows:

“The article should be open and direct. Of course it is dangerous. The spy can be among us. While a story has unlimited techniques. This is one of the art skills. The story takes a literature spread widely that can be distinguished among the literary world in a short time.”²⁷

²⁵ Najib Mahfuz, *al-Sukkariyah...*, Part. 40, 52 and 53.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 293-294.

²⁷ Najib Mahfuz, *al-Sukkariyah...*, p. 311-313.

Then she says that:

“The writing should be a media of the final goal conviction. The final goal of the writing should improve the world and help people to reach an increase over the advanced stair, the freedom and the humanity in the continuous fighting.”²⁸

It seems that Najib Mahfuz concludes that the measure of an educated woman’s success as the result of opportunity to have education until the college is when she has nobility, constancy courage, nation fighting, self-belief, and obedience to the country. Najib Mahfuz ends his work *al-Thulāthiyah* with a liberal woman character Susan Hammad who has played her roles to keep having opportunities of change and improvement as the Egyptian new woman. She fights with her husband Ahmad Shaukat and also with her brother Abdul Mun’im joining the *Ikhwanul Muslimin* movement group. Susan Hammad takes a role using her reasoning and logic by gradual, assertive, and periodical ways. Through Susan Hammad’s some last sentences, Najib Mahfuz wants to say that the Egyptian new women have noble attitude, constancy courage, fighting, self-belief, love to the country, and ability to face the reality to change for the better improvement of the Egyptian society.²⁹

E. Conclusion

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that Najib Mahfuz in his work *al-Thulāthiyah* states indirectly that the approach of change of the traditional roles into the social ones of the Egyptian new women is at least based on three pillars of synergic approach those are evolutionary and gradual approach, assertive and persuasive approach, and through the process of educational approach. In the evolutionary and gradual approach, Najib examines that the change and improvement of the Egyptian new women require the long process through three generations. The first generation is the step of planning design and strategy. Then the implementation of the change and improvement of the Egyptian women is started on the second

²⁸ Ibid., p. 209-210.

²⁹ Najib Mahfuz, *al-Sukkariyah...*, p. 315.

generation, who has started to get opportunities of relatively limited educational enlightening. The second generation is in one condition between the doubt and belief due to the interconnection of the traditional custom and the modern civilization. The real result of change and improvement of women is in the third generation after they have got opportunities of more extensive enlightening. The third generation has shown its identity to react to the old custom.

Najib Mahfuz examines that the strategy of women's role change is supported by the assertive and persuasive ways. He thinks that dialogue opportunity is a way that enables the improvement of the Egyptian new women, especially the inter-generation dialogue based on one equal using the beautiful and polite language. He also examines that women's mission is bringing love, empathy, and reward to the children. According to Najib, mother is the first character who has function to share education of love, empathy, and appreciation in her family as the smallest institution in the society. Mother takes a role as a source and also a media to deliver the enlightening ideas especially for the improvement of the Egyptian women.

Najib Mahfuz examines that the change in the Egyptian women is an absolutism that is through education. He even examines that continuing to the higher education for women is a life necessity for their future. According to him, education is a bridge of change although the Egyptian women have no free open opportunities yet. At the period of the third generation, the higher education is examined in four perspectives as follows: as the necessity of life, as a prohibition although it is promising, as a difficulty because the higher education makes women difficult to have a husband especially for those who are not beautiful, and as an unnecessary thing in which the higher education is not necessary because the basic education has been enough.

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