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**Title of the Thesis** : Social Transformation in Egypt and Saudi Arabia As Reflected in the Writings of Naguib Mahfouz and Abdul Rahman Munif

## **Abstract**

This is an attempt to study the social transformation of Egypt and Saudi Arabia through the writings of Abdul Rahman Munif and Naguib Mahfouz. These two writers have depicted the transition period of both these two countries respectively. The novels Cairo Trilogy (1957), Middaq Alley (1947), Khan al Khalili (1945) and Cairo Modern (1945) of Mahfouz and quintet of Cities of Salt (1984-89) of Abdul Rahman Munif have shown the transition of both the societies when modernity came to their country and it encountered Islam. Through these monumental works these two prominent writers of Arabic Language have noted down all those socio-political tensions and undercurrents of the society. These phenomena deserved to be studied in order to locate the problems like terrorism, fundamentalism which heralded a new era of uncertainty and disorder in the regional as well as world politics.

Social transformations in Saudi Arabia and Egypt as reflected in the works of Abdul Rahman Munif and Naguib Mahfouz have been analysed. The study did not intend to make any comparative analysis, rather it had focused on the changes in socio-political spheres of these two countries and it was tried to infer some general undercurrents in the region.

## **Findings**

Abdul Rahman Munif was a prolific writer who has written extensively regarding the socio-political issues of Arab world and its experiment with oil. His writings canvassed many issues like decolonization process in the Arab World, breaking up Ottoman Empire and famous Arab Israeli Wars. But he is widely known for his writings against the torturous process of state formation in Arab land. He raised voices of those whose voice was bluntly suppressed by the authority. He wrote about prisoners who were tortured brutally and mourned on those who lost their lands in Palestine. He raised issues of Bedouin Arabs in Saudi Arabia who were snatched of their land and were not compensated fairly. In fact he concentrated on those who were not fortunate enough to be written by official version of the history. He brought forth the agony of suppressed people by documenting the nuances of society in a symbolic terminology. He himself said in one of his interviews that “I write the history of those who do not

have a history.” When he criticized Saudi Arabia he was stripped of his nationality by the state. When he targeted Ba’athist regime’s brutality in Iraq he was barred from entering the state. After living a life of hostilities in Arabian land he took refuge in Paris where he wrote his monumental work *Mudun al Milh* Cities of Salt in 1984, which is focus of the study here. The novels shed light on the cruel realities of the society which created many tensions in the society.

In case of Egypt, Naguib Mahfouz have documented the socio-political upheavals of Egyptian society which occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly during the period of both the World Wars. It was the time when the country witnessed not only political chaos which brought two revolutions within a span of three decades but also the clash of ideas and the onslaught of modernity stirred the sensibilities of intellectuals. The debate over Islam and modernity became a root cause to choose between science and religion. As a result of this challenge posed by modernity a set of other ideologies infiltrated into the society like communism and socialism. The society, being based on Islam and its traditional values responded by attempting to revive Islam and its ethics. Apart from this, political upheavals and economic constraints created a lot of fuss both in the public and private spheres.

In this backdrop the selected novels written by Mahfouz, unearthed those undercurrents of the society in a perfect manner. Though it was not new in the case of Egypt, to write about present socio-political developments of the country, but he succeeded in proclaiming himself far ahead of his predecessors in this genre of writing. These selected novels fall in the category where Mahfouz tries to document the socio-political nuances of the time which certainly lead us to see Egypt in a transition phase or at the cross road of ideas. The famous *al Thulathiyyat* (the trilogy) by portraying a patriarchal family of Cairo brings not only the tradition and modernity to face each other but also the subjects like science and religion, ethics and morality, philosophy of Knowledge and development, and history of philosophy and key of progress all being discussed by the various characters of Mahfouz. Indeed these were the topics which were being dealt by both the colonizer and colonized intellectuals of the time having Islam and modernity in mind.