



## Investigating the lost identities of Afghan immigrants due to the stigma of nationality in the collection of stories "Dog's Eye" by Alieh Ataiee

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Received: 27/6/2021

Accepted: 10/1/2022

### Abstract

Alia Ataiee, an Iranian-Afghan writer, has used the issues and problems of Afghan immigrants living in Iran as the subject of her storytelling in the collection "Dog's Eye". Immigrants, most of whom have been harassed by the inhabitants of the host country because of their nationality, and this has had a significant impact on their behavior and social interactions. The present study seeks to investigate and describe the behavior of the characters in the stories of this series based on the principles of Goffman's thought, especially in the context of the national stigma. The results show that the behaviors and social interactions of the characters in the stories "Like Galileo", "Backyard", "Death of aunt Homa" and "Balkhi elephant" are affected by the heat of national stigma and in the story "Thirty Kilometers" are affected by the heat of physical stigma. The issue that has caused these characters to suffer from unbalanced mental states and irrational actions in the process of recovering their lost identities.

**Keywords:** *The national stigma and contemporary stories, analysis of today's stories, the lost identity of immigrants, the story of the dog's eyes by Alieh Ataiee.*

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**Extended Abstract****1. Introduction**

According to the official report, the number of Afghan immigrants living in Iran is 1,583,979. Despite the long-term association of these immigrants with Iranian citizens, some problems and concerns have always been a source of concern for them. Issues that have more to do with their ethnic and national distinctions. Art and literature can play an important role in improving the situation of Afghan immigrants by reflecting on the problems and concerns of Afghan immigrants and creating a culture that improves the attitudes of Iranian citizens towards this group. Alieh Ataiee, an Iranian-Afghan writer living in Tehran, is one of the prominent writers who has addressed these concerns in her works. The author's collection of "Dog Eyes" consists of 7 short stories, all of which focus on the situation, concerns, problems and difficulties of Afghan immigrants. The present article seeks to study and analyze the stories of this collection based on Irving Goffman's "stigma" theory, using a descriptive method with a qualitative content analysis approach.

**Research Question(s)**

- 1- What effect has national stigma on the personality behavior of Afghan immigrants in the "Dog's Eye" story series?
- 2- What effect has the visibility of the stigma or the distinctiveness of the Afghan nationality on their faces on their treatment of Iranian citizens in the "Dog's Eye" story series?

**2. Literature Review**

Stigma is one of the perspectives in sociological knowledge that considers the interaction and social interaction of individuals as a performance on the stage. According to this idea, people try to show their ideal and desired faces in their dealings and relationships with others, and when there is a gap between this ideal image and the existing realities, the person suffers a stigma. One of the hot types is the stigma of ethnicity and nationality, which is more common in minority and immigrant groups. The presence of stigma in people causes them to form a theatrical performance so that they can both hide the stigma and present an ideal image of themselves. It is this obsession that causes performers to take measures that Goffman refers to as "Impression Management" to address potential issues and problems along the way. Here are some of the theatrical terms Goffman uses:

### 1. *FRONT*

The public and visible part of social action in which people play formal or style roles.

### 2. *BACK*

The part of the stage where the play is not in the view of the spectators, and the performers there can express their true feelings and desired behaviors uncontrollably and freely with their real peace of mind.

### 3. *TEAM*

Better and more effective performance requires teamwork. Based on this, an unwritten alliance is formed between the performers and the audience who are watching the play in order to perform the play as well as possible. Goffman emphasizes that audience cooperation is essential for more effective performance.

## 3. Methodology

The present research is written by descriptive-analytical method. The author have tried to study the behavior of the characters in the "Dog's Eye" series, most of whom are Afghan immigrants, using the theory of stigma by Irving Goffman.

## Results

For most Afghan immigrants, especially the second generation who were born and raised in Iran, the ideal image is to appear as an Iranian citizen with equal rights and opportunities as other citizens. Therefore, they resort to theatrical actions to provide the background for the formation of this desirable image in the minds of their audiences. But the problem is that the formation of this favorable public image is always threatened by the real image of immigrants. Most of the characters in the "Dog's Eye" story series have this problem somehow. That is, their actual social identity threatens their potential social identity. Therefore, most of these characters can not have a healthy relationship with others.

Another important point that threatens the peace of mind of immigrants is the issue of "visibility" of stigma. Accordingly, Afghan refugees are divided into two groups; The group, which consists mostly of "Hazaras" and their physical characteristics indicate that they are Afghans, and the second group, "Pashtuns" and "Tajiks", whose appearance can not be identified as Afghans. The first group tries their best to control the negative consequences of stigma by using their strengths. But the second category, although they may not have much

trouble in everyday interactions with others; But the constant fear of their nationality being revealed puts a lot of psychological pressure on them. The issue that Goffman refers to as possible invalidation. In addition, the issue of managing the influence of characters to hide stigma or reduce its negative consequences in social relationships is an issue that has been addressed in most stories.

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