

THE PRICE OF FAITH IN ALGERIA:¹ THE NEXUS OF GENDER AND RELIGION BASED ON THE FORBIDDEN WOMEN NOVEL

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Introduction

Sultana Mudjahed had to deal with a series of events that concern her pride as a woman, her faith, her identity, her community, her government and her past. Everything is in the form of a dramatic fiction written by Malika Mokeddem in her work "The Forbidden Women". Equipped with the viewpoint of the second main character, Vincent Chauvet, a French professor of mathematics who received a kidney donation from an Algerian woman, Mokeddem attempted to build a storyline by explaining the condition of the Algerian mentality. The experience of Algerian society which was once colonized by France plus the nuances of the Arab-Islamic cultural community was displayed in conversations between the main actors.

Gender and religion have always become inseparable terms in social interactions in both the western and eastern hemispheres. The Sultana in this story plays a woman who really wants to leave her past memories by leaving her homeland forever. Nevertheless, destiny brought her back to face those memories in the form of the tragic incident of the sudden death of her ex-lover, Yacine Mediane. Sultana could have let his death and continue the enjoyment of life that she had achieved so far, but she had chosen to prioritize her nostalgia over her future. Humans cannot escape the amount of memories they leave behind. At the same time, Vincent Chauvet took his breaking period as professor to visit Algeria, and instead of finding the kidney donor woman he met with Sultana. The storyline was interesting when Vincent and Sultana talked with Dalila, a 9-10 year old girl who thinks like a philosopher. This encounter will trigger a lot of questions of life for the main characters. This essay aims to discuss the relationship between gender and religion in the Algerian society and the price that Sultana's personal beliefs have to pay based on his personal experience.

The Funeral and the Woman

The flow of the story begins with the return of Sultana to Algeria, her birthplace that she had never chosen before, after hearing the death of Yacine

¹ Book Review: The Forbidden Woman, Mokeddem Malika, Translated by: K. Melissa Marcus, University of Nebraska Press. 1998. 154 pages.