

A Utopian Aspiration: Mohamed Salmawy's *Wings of the Butterfly* in the light of the Egyptian Revolution of the 25th of January

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Mohamed Salmawy is an Egyptian prolific writer and president of the Egyptian Writers' Union. His novel, *Wings of the Butterfly* was published shortly before the Egyptian Revolution began. It is considered one of the rare novels that foresee the Revolution of the 25th of January. Salmawy's aspiration towards revolution arises not in empty space, but in the very thick atmosphere of the current reality. In *Wings of the Butterfly*, Salmawy's protagonists are the youth who are protesting against an authority they are estranged from. They express their rejection of their current reality with its gloominess, tyranny and oppression; looking forward to achieve their dream of freedom and dignity. Although *Wings of the Butterfly* is considered a critique of the current political and social climate, it is an expression of hope for sociopolitical change. It is a utopian aspiration which cannot be fully realized or presented; a yearning towards a better way of life.

In the last three decades, Egypt has witnessed economic, social and political upheavals inspired by a revolutionary spirit. This spirit is manifested in different forms, instigating change and reform. The majority of the population has linked its personal sufferings to the nature of the regime; thus, the regime became the rallying symbol of the bitterness resulting from the abuse in police stations, the corruption in the bureaucracy, the poverty and social inequities, and the suppression of free expression. Egyptian intellectuals, writers and artists are confronted by enormous social and political challenges. For years the emergency law assumed by the government severely restricted freedom of expression. The crisis reached the level of identity, with the regime offending the national pride of the Egyptians and their understanding of their selves and their role. In *Wings of the Butterfly*, there's something real-feeling which parallel at least the beginning of the revolution. In an interview with Salmawy in Al-Ahram Weekly, he stresses that "Writers cannot imprison themselves in an ivory tower. They shouldn't focus only on their craftsmanship," he extrapolates. "Our medium is the word. We cannot divorce literature from politics" because it is the task of the writer, he says, "to campaign to promote democracy, and at least try to right wrongs" (Gamal Nkrumah, Al-Ahram Weekly on line, 2006).

Salmawy is capable of capturing the present moment, and portraying a real picture of what is happening in Tahrir Square. He is an observer who has a remarkable ability to perceive the upcoming changes of Egyptian society. His creativity has gone hand in hand with his revolutionary spirit; believing that creativity is revolution. He predicts change, instigates revolt, and foresees revolution. His utopian aspiration stimulates him to carry his revolutionary seed out into the world with a depth of commitment, passion, skill, and knowledge and starts making more headway and more difference. In an interview with Jadaliyya, Sonallah Ibrahim states that Salmawy's ability to see the future is "a total vision", Sonallah Ibrahim continues:

A novel takes time. A novel might give expression to a complete vision of a historical period or era, or simply a person at a moment or the like—and then get into developing it. For instance, I might write a novel about a person in Midan al-Tahrir [Tahrir Square]. But for that novel to be a good novel, it would have to have a firm grasp of the past, the present moment, and the future—what will happen, or what might happen afterwards. All this entails having a total vision.

(Elliott Colla, Sonallah Ibrahim
interview with Jadaliyya, 2011)

Apparently, Salmawy is at heart an optimistic writer who trumpets so clearly in *Wings of the Butterfly* — his hope of the future and his aspiration of a better life. His novel is considered an example of political engagement within the frame of utopianism.

Salmawy's *Wings of the Butterfly* is best explained as utopia, a belief of hope. It is an expression of utopian desire, rather than a description of utopia. It is about utopia as a journey or process that takes place amongst multiple worlds in relation rather than in opposition. It is the journey of Doha in search of herself, the journey of Abdel Samed to fulfill his ambition, the journey of Aiman in search of his real mother, the journey of Dr. Ashrah in his search of his own country, the journey of the whole country in its search of its Egyptian entity. The novel begins with the journeys of the two principle characters; Doha's journey to Rome to participate in

the annual Spring Fashion House and the journey of Aiman to Tanta to look for his mother. The two journeys are intercepted by the Central Security Forces and the Central Security Vehicles which close the roads and stand in the face of demonstrators. The whole novel becomes a symbol of the journey of salvation from restrictions which hinder the realization of the self. Life becomes a sacred journey—a journey of change, growth, discovery, and transformation, continuously expanding the vision of what is possible, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. In his interview with Gamal Nkrumah in Al-Ahram Weekly, Salmawy emphasizes, "I've stayed. I've tried to change the course of events. I could easily have sought a career abroad and have turned down many chances to work outside Egypt. I have paid dearly for my stands, have been fired from jobs many times, and put in prison, but I am staying the course" (Gamal Nkrumah, Al-Ahram Weekly on line, 19-25 January, 2006).

In *Wings of the Butterfly*, Salmawy portrays the pre- 25th of January and presents a realistic vision of the Egyptian life. He feels that literature needs to reflect the real nature of the changes taking place and its impact on the social and political life in Egypt. He historicizes the present and documents the recent events which lead to the rise of the Egyptian revolution. The novel opens in Tahrir square where a huge number of protestors choose to group to express their freedom and their anger against oppression and tyranny, "the traffic stopped completely in the Square, and the heart of the city was entirely paralyzed. All exits from Tahrir square to the rest of the districts of Cairo were blocked, and all entries were filled with both public and private cars as if all of its engines were suddenly broken down" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 7). Phillip E. Wegner notes that utopias narrative "are influential public interventions in their own moment," (3) and therefore demand to be read in their own historical context. It can thus be seen as opening up dialogues with a contemporaneous social and political context and engaging with its concerns.

Salmawy's literary utopia is new in form and function because the author does not introduce a utopian world, instead he is responding to the social and politic conditions of his time. His utopia is not a literary form per se, but rather a critical state of mind. This means that the reader gains some critical distance or perspective about the present and past, and from this viewpoint imagines the future anew. Like Suvin's theory of estrangement, this distance makes the reader aware "that our present situation is inextricably linked to our past and that the future

depends on our choices and actions in the present" (Ruppert, 163). In his novel, Salmawy embraces a postmodern attitude of self-reflexivity. He sees the need for a critical mass to make change happen. People's hope and aspiration is regarded as the only thing which becomes the major force in face of the dictatorial regime. Jacoby explains, "What is to be done? Nothing is to be done. Yet that does not mean nothing is to be thought or imagined or dreamed. On the contrary, the effort to envision other possibilities of life and society remains urgent and constitutes the essential precondition for doing something" (Jacoby, 181). Salmawy narrative pushed the reader into new territory where social change comes out of a conflict between the reality they live and the reality they hope to attain. Ruth Levitas argues that utopia expresses "desire" - the desire for a better living in the future. In her book *The Concept of Utopia*, she emphasizes,

Utopia is the expression of the desire for a better way of being. This includes the objective, institutional approach to utopia, and the subjective, experiential concern of desalination. It allows for this desire to be realistic or unrealistic. It allows for the form, function, and content to change over time. And it reminds us that, whatever we think of particular utopias, we learn a lot about the experience of living under any set of conditions by reflecting upon the desires, which those conditions generate and yet leave unfulfilled. For that is the space which utopia occupies. (Levitas, 8)

Salmawy's personal faith and utopian novel epitomizes the spirit of Derridean deconstruction. His novel keeps the utopian impulse alive by challenging it and deconstructing it within its very pages. For Jacques Derrida, deconstruction is a passion for unlimited hope, a hope in face of uncertainty "the essence of faith par excellence, which can only ever believe in the unbelievable" (Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* 143). Derridean deconstruction plays a very important role in Salmawy's novel. It is the deconstructive theory that helps to subvert the assumptions about power and authority and offers new approaches to utopian designs. Salmawy is able to see the world in absolute clarity in which all power emanated from the people. It is self-evident that the power of the mass supersedes the power of politicians. To Salmawy, the power of the mass is the one which can

confronts the authoritarian regime and will succeed in making changes in all spheres—social, political, and intellectual.

The novel begins with Doha El Kanany, the wife of one of the important leaders of the ruling party, traveling to Milan in Rome, the city of fashion to present her recent designs in one of the famous fashion houses in the world, The Spring Salon. It is the first time to participate in such Salon, looking forward to that occasion with great expectations. To her, it is considered a turning point “which was to change her life? And make it a self-fulfilling?” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 12) Doha has a strange feeling that she has not found herself yet, and it is this journey which will help her to discover herself. Her meeting with Dr. Ashraf on the plane to Rome is just a mere chance; Dr. Ashraf remarks, “What a strange coincidence that I find my neighbor in the plane is my opponent in politics” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 25). Dr. Ashraf El Zini, is the leader of the oppositional party who is going to Palermo in Sicily to attend the International Conference of Civil Society Organizations. He is one of the professors in the Faculty of engineering and the leader of the students. He is considered one of the most important leaders of civil society, and the founder of the movement, "New Horizon", which includes large numbers of reformers and which soon wins a prominent place among international civil society organizations. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 35) He sacrifices all his life to defend a noble cause—the reform of the political system. He believes that the whole country is a corrupt. Each one has his own objectives and no one is concerned with public interest. Despite individual differences, both Doha and Dr. Ashraf set up the voyage to utopian wish fulfillment. In his novel, Salmawy produces a meditation and an interrogation of the whole idea of the realization of the self. To him, utopia is not a “natural” impulse, but as Ruth Levitas states “socially constructed response to an equally constructed gap between the needs and wants generated by a particular society and the satisfactions available to and distributed by it” (*The Concept of Utopia*, 182). Utopia shows that there is a gap between the characters’ real world and their hope and aspiration. It points out that something is missing and necessary to “inspire social transformation” (*The Concept of Utopia*, 111).

In the Spring Salon in Rome, Doha is going to present her new set of designs which are all inspired by the butterfly with its bright colors. Doha is really

impressed by the amount of transition this tiny creature undergoes. She believes that the butterfly has more than one life, it transforms from a worm locked within its cocoon to a beautiful butterfly with wings flying in the air to inhale the fragrance of flowers. In her conversation with one of her friends in Rome, Doha states that, “the butterfly, for me, is a symbol of the birth of new life,” then laughs and says, “Sometimes; I think that I have been created to be a butterfly” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 54). Doha’s identification with the butterfly is a symbol of the journey of her life. She constantly tries to hide her embarrassing past from all of her acquaintances. She does not want to reveal her failure with her husband in order to maintain her apparent social status. She engages herself with studying fashion and designs some costumes for Egyptian shops until her designs become widely accepted. Her hatred to her husband turned to indifference. She closed herself inside her cocoon fashion without hope of having wings one day like the rest of the butterflies.

In his novel, Salmawy transforms reality symbolically. To him, symbolism is not merely a method of artistic technique, but an escape from reality and a way of constructing another world. The title of the novel “Wings of the butterfly” is endowed with potential symbolic value. Overwhelmingly, in cultural myth, the butterfly is presented as a symbol of transformation because of its impressive process of metamorphosis. Salmawy integrates his symbols very effectively with the ideas and thematic content. His image of the butterfly emphasizes certain atmospheres and characteristic features of his characters. Doha, the principle character in the novel, associates herself with the butterfly in her transformation. Throughout her lifetime, her mother played an important role in her life. Her attitude towards her daughter reflects her old fashioned ways and illustrates the chain of gender and class that bind the heroine. The mother refused her daughter to go out and visit her friends because she believes that all people are beneath her social class. Moreover, she does not allow her grown daughter to make her own decisions and choose a husband, “Medhat El Safty, the nephew of Abdul Rahman El Safty, the General Secretary of the ruling party, which awaits him - as her mother told her - a big future under the care of his uncle” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 37). Doha, willingly, inherited the name and attitudes of her family and accepted her role in the society.

Her meeting with Dr. Ashraf is a moment of enlightenment. To Doha, Dr. Ashraf is one of the leaders of the oppositional party who is honest with himself and his own position. When Dr Ashraf informs her that his Italian friends Dr. Geofany and his wife are looking forward to watch her designs because they have not seen Egyptian designs before, Doha exclaims, “Who said that it is Egyptian?” she continues, “I am trying to be global so as not to differentiate between my designs and the designs of the European Fashion Houses” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 58). Doha chooses for her designs, a subject of nature, a butterfly which is the basis of all arts in every time and place. She herself greatly appreciates the value of that beautiful creature which is capable of attracting all human beings throughout the ages. Through the reasoned conversation with Dr. Ashraf, Doha’s position has been changed. She feels that “she is in a state of transformation. The moments of labor are always hard for oneself in which one feels the heaviness that carried on his back and the darkness surrounding him until he crosses the dark tunnel and comes out into the open air and light” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 87). At that moment, Doha began to confront herself in a search of an identity, especially, when she discovers a book entitled, “Egyptian butterflies”. For the first time, she feels that, “she is deprived of the Egyptian identity” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 74), and laments that she could not introduce to the Italian audience fashions inspired by the nature of Egypt or Egyptian history. Looking at the picture of the Egyptian butterfly with its fantastic colors on the cover page, Doha is dominated with the issue of identity in her fashion. She feels that her outlook for fashion should change. In addition, she begins to perceive the fact that the road to universality will not be reached by imitating the western fashions, but by having the Egyptian entity which reflects in some way the ancient civilization and the fragrant perfume of a different culture. Doha feels that the person who cares about the future must or can do change. The philosophy of change, thus established and sanctified for the sake of achieving her utopian aspiration—a change for the better.

The change in Doha’s thought has its great impact on her behavior patterns and intellectual tendencies. Salmawy has a remarkable ability to delineate the influence of change on his character and expose its ideological behavior. Doha abandons her personal stagnation and changes from a passive character to another character that begins to question her own life which has programmed to accept, naively accept what is offered to her until she is reduced to being no more than a

puppet. She feels that she has been robbed of her freedom and personal will. She has been imprisoned, first, by her strict mother, then, by her marriage which is proved to be sexually failure and consequently, deprived her of living a normal life and having children. Her feeling of change becomes the potent force which ensures the development of her personality. She states that she will no more be a worm trapped inside her cocoon and she decides to control the course of her life like “the god of the sea” who lived next to him in Rome and has been listening to the trickling of his water night after night. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 99) Her transformation has been associated with her freedom. This freedom is the creative centre from which all suggestions for the future should originate. On the personal level, Doha expresses her dissatisfaction with her marriage and asks for divorce. On the artistic level, Doha feels the trivialization of her artistic activity which is the result of amateurism and dilettantism. She takes the decision not to display her designs in Rome because the butterflies which she designed seem to her deformed, without identity. She wishes to come next year to display a distinctive designs wholly inspired from Egyptian butterflies and made of Egyptian cotton and silk. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 95) On the political level, Doha’s personal freedom takes her a few steps further—a revolutionary step-- to examine and evaluate the freedom of the whole country. She ceases to think of herself and immediately joins the protesters in Tahrir square for the sake of achieving hope and aspiration not only for herself but for all Egyptians as well. Fitting believes that “utopias do not exist simply for us to wander into and then live ‘happily ever after,’ the novel tells us; they must be built and renewed and constantly chosen again and again (Fitting “Turn” 150).

The twenty first century is characterized by its revolutionary thought which signifies “the pure creative and inventive power of the mind” (Lewis, 4). The term “revolution” means simply a change, a change for the better. This revolutionary mind has been debased by politicians for decades in an attempt to politicize man and promote psychic slavery. Man has been reduced to be an ideological puppet that has ceased to think and has been conditioned to accept naively what the ruling regime offers him. Though, in theory, it encourages man to express his personality, but in reality this personality which he expresses is the one which has been given to him by the government. At the beginning of the novel, Doha herself is an example of this ideological puppet who believes that any attempt of reform

means a clear political opportunism to jump to the seats of power. She criticized Dr. Ashraf and the oppositional party for agitating people, exploiting their suffering, and pushing them to the demonstrations and sit-ins for the sake of overthrowing the government and taking its position. Dr. Ashraf decisively explicates that it was not the oppositional party which caused people's suffering, but the government did. They only gave voice to those who did not have a voice. And they struggled to achieve freedom and democracy. He thoughtfully emphasizes, "... no one can push people to go out in demonstrations and collide with the Security Forces and be exposed to be beaten or arrested..." (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 30) unless they have a forceful motive. Doha is one of the victims of the ideology of the ruling regime which they spread via mass media. The ruling regime attempts to distort the picture of the opposing parties in order to have a grip hold on the country. Through the reasoned conversation with Dr. Ashraf, Doha is persuaded and is implicated on emotional and intellectual levels. She becomes promoter for actions that challenge the existing ideology and oppose the status quo.

On the other hand, Aiman, a young man in the prime of life, begins his search for his mother after discovering that the woman who lives with his father is his stepmother and not his real mother. Throughout all his life, Aiman believes that the woman who lives in the house is his mother. It is true that it is his father's wife and all the children in the house, he and his brother Abd Samed and his sister Basma, call her mama; though her feeling towards Aiman and Abd Samed is less than the care and compassion she shows towards their sister, she is not cruel. Both brothers discover this fact when Abd Samed is writing the name of the mother in the papers of his ID card, the father, at once, declares that this is not the name of your mother. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 18) At that moment, both Aiman and Abd Samed discover the truth of their real mother whom they do not know anything about, but her name. With the help of his friend, Aiman finds out his mother's address and begins his journey to Tanta where she lives. Aiman stresses that, "...the man who does not know his mother, has no homeland, a man with no origin.., with no roots.., with no identity" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 16). Aiman's search of his mother is linked with the search of the whole country—Egypt. His friend Hassan argues with him, "If you are looking for your mother, I am also looking for my mother, the big mother, our mother. Just as you know the name of your mother, I also know her

name, I am reading about her in newspapers and books, I am looking for her everywhere, but I could not find her” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 91). Aiman’s hope of finding his real mother is joined with his hope of finding his big mother—Egypt. To him, the two are inter-linked in the sense that it is this “painful feeling that you lost something precious in your life. It is a feeling of loss.., that you do not know who you are” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 31).

In *Wings of the Butterfly*, Salmawy develops a utopian vision of the future and attains a consciousness that look for hope, the desire for a better way of living. Both Aiman and his friend Hassan decided to join the students of Faculty of Engineering in their sit-in because the Security Forces has dissolved the Student Union whom they elected. They feel that it is not the issue of the students of Faculty of Engineering alone, but it is their cause as well. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 99) Their revolution is much more than a rebellion; it is in fact a utopian effort to reform the current state of the country.

On the other hand, Abd Samed’s journey of self-realization is primarily a journey of escapism and estrangement. He is a victim of the youth whose life is squeezed out of existence. He feels that there is no enough space to live in his country. He believes that the only way to survive is to go out of the country. He attempts to find a mean of escape from the country by finding a way to travel to Kuwait where he can fulfill his hope of marriage and wealth. This kind of escapism is constructed as an irrational impulse that undermines the realization of his hope. He deliberately made a relationship through the internet with an old wealthy widow from Kuwait for the sake of travelling, and usually for financial gain. This kind of forged relation turned to be doubly fraud—instead of deceiving her, she deceived him and took the money he borrowed to issue the visa for Kuwait and she disappeared. Abd Samed’s incentive for travel is grounded on his discontent with the current state of his homeland. He is a symbol of the youth who flees the dull circumstances of his present life in search of another place where he can attain his aspiration. He feels that all his country is contaminated by corruptions which lead to poverty, idleness and social inequality so he attempted to escape to achieve his utopian vision. Talking with his brother, Abd Samed argues that “the important thing is to go out of here [his country] and start a new life” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 69).

In his novel, Salmawy addresses a utopian enterprise on personal and communal levels. Whereas the beginning of the novel focuses on personal hope for utopia, it ends with linking all the threads of hope and aspiration to constitute the collective hope of creating new society. On the personal level, all the characters of the novel are linked together in their hope of better future and in their search of self-fulfillment. On the communal level, the novel portrays a very critical time in the life of Egypt in which the whole Egyptian community rise up to end the dictatorial regime. This happens as a result of the culmination of years of work by activists from a spectrum of pro-democracy movements, human rights groups, labor unions, and civil society organizations. It is truly inspiring to see public demonstrations is facing Central Security Forces and the protestors are ready to introduce their lives for the sake of freedom. The feeling of national pride move people away from silence, Doha emphasizes, “I am Egyptian and I feel, like all Egyptian, by the crisis the country is going through” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 132). This encouragement of collective responses against oppressive situations becomes revolutionized by utopian hope. Both individual and collective hopes are necessary for utopian desire to occur.

Salmawy’s utopian agenda of the novel is traditionally nationalistic and ultimately confirms the Egyptian ideology which is basically founded on the way the Arab Republic of Egyptian was originally conceived. Egypt is regarded as the center of the Arab nation and the core of Arab identity. The Arab Community has one culture, one history, and then one identity and Egypt is in the position of the mother for this nation. Salmawy has abiding hope that Egypt can regain its position again. His critique of the current circumstances of Egypt is invoked as a parallel to the myth of the Golden Age from which the contemporary world has degenerated. In the demonstration, Dr Ashraf addresses the protestors emphasizing the fact:

The Egyptian people made successive revolutions which turned the balance of things not only in the Arab reign but in the world as a whole. They revolted against the tyranny and occupation in 1919 and united all sects and classes of people for independence. Besides, they are the one who revolted in July 23 Revolution to achieve freedom and independence, proclaim the Republic, and nationalize the

canal...The people who recorded the greatest revolutions in history are able to arise again....[because] The era of corruption and tyranny has returned to constrain the national will.

(Wings of the Butterfly, 134-5).

To Salmawy, the Egyptian people will revolt again to stop the ruling party with its despotism and totalitarianism and the change movement will triumph on the banks of the Nile to return Egypt great and glorious as it was in the past, and “the Nile, which makes up the greatest civilizations, will return to normal again” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 114). Karl Marx states that “in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and burrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language”(15).

The twenty first century is, in Salmawy’s opinion, the period of transformation. This transformation can be seen in all spheres—social, political, intellectual and philosophical. Consciousness, personal will and freedom were taking different shape constituting an attack on authority. In Dr. Ashraf’s lecture in the conference of Civil Society Organizations in Palermo which attended by At least a thousand political activists representing the five continents of the world, He criticizes the domination of the ruling parties in third world countries and their control on the political life in these countries, explaining how much efforts exerted by the civil society in Egypt for change and demand for reform of political life by establishing the principle of alternation of power, which the practice of democracy depends upon. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 113) Despite several disappointments, Dr Ashraf remains true to his convictions. He instills a seed of utopian hope and optimism in his students, addressing them saying, “The country is looking forward to you. The whole world is following your coming out today in this demonstration; we hope not to lose its meaning for that dictatorial tyrant party, who controlled the reins of the country...” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 134). Dr. Ashraf’s speech to the demonstrators has its political, social, and historical significance in which he not only encourages the revolutionary spirit which spread all over Egypt at that time, but emphasizes the possibility of creating change as well.

In his novel, Salmawy does not offer a blueprint for social perfection; rather, it illustrates the tension inherent in such society and offers a hopeful discourse in spite of them. Salmawy is deeply moved by the social injustice of which Egyptians are all aware, the growing gap between the poor and the rich, and the political corruption which becomes a prominent example in the whole country. In *Wings of the Butterfly*, Salmawy introduces an assertive discourse which includes his hope of the future and his resistance to oppression. His protagonist, Dr Ashraf addresses the demonstrators, the best sons of this country, who express the hope and aspiration of the whole Egyptian people, saying, “The people of ancient Egyptian, who deserve a better life than this distressed life, which imposed upon them by the corrupted party..., Party of personal interests..., party of constraint and tyranny..., The party protected by the Constitution which is designed by ‘tailor of laws’ to govern their firm grip on the destiny of this nation forever” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 134). Dr. Ashraf embodies the hope of the masses in the change. As a political activist and leader of youth, he believes that it is only the hope of the future and the aspiration of better life which have the power of change because “revolutions do not usually develop among the most deprived, but among those for whom the trends of history have opened up new visions of possible worlds” (Yinger,361).

As a result of this speech, Dr. Ashraf is arrested, and thus his arrest inflames matters further. “The next day, the whole country has turned upside down. Newspapers have published the pictures of the mass demonstration at the Supreme Court, highlighting the news of the arrest, for the first time, of Dr. Ashraf Zeini, the University professor and the political activist” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 138). Consequently, a biggest demonstration has been held for the first time on the door of the People's Assembly, demanding the release of Dr. Ashraf and the realization of human rights. In the demonstration, Aiman’s fiancé, Salwa al-Alimi, a journalist in the independent daily newspaper "Sabah", met Doha amid the protesters. By asking her about the reason of the demonstration, Doha criticized the ruling party who suppresses people freedom and keeps track of all those who tried to exercise their natural right of political participation. She emphasized that the arrest of Dr. Ashraf Zaini was a big mistake the party will pay dearly for it; she continued, "If Dr. Ashraf Al Zini is not released, people will not be silenced and the party shall bear the consequences of public anger" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 142-3). The arrest of Dr. Ashraf is the climax which arouses the revolutionary spirit of

all Egyptians and brings about a new perspective that leads to either political awareness or effort. In *Wings of the Butterfly*, Salmawy foregrounds the political tension of the society, and in so doing he presents his utopian hope within the political practice of the text. In an interview with Joshua Glenn for *The Boston Globe*, Jameson explains that utopia challenges “political paralysis” (Glenn) because only when people come to realize that there is no alternative, they react against their situation and try to think of alternatives. Salmawy’s utopian hope and aspiration becomes revolutionized and invites changes in perception and behavior.

The events of the novel have developed unexpectedly, especially after the violent incidents that took place during the demonstrations. Many satellites devoted large areas of their channels to cover the attacks of the security forces on demonstrators. Their harassment of girls participated in the demonstration has been registered by the media and news agencies. Moreover, newspaper published the picture of protesters in his underwear after the security forces stripped him of his cloths. The detention of protesters, especially, Doha El Kanay, “the whole country was talking about Doha, the wife of Medhat El Safty who criticized the ruling party”. Some newspaper says, “the disappearance of Doha El Kanani in mysterious circumstances”, while others says, “unconfirmed reports about the arrest of Doha El Kanani”. Other journal issued a special topic stating, “the ruling party eats itself.., the arrest of Medhat El Safty’s wife for her national positions” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 173). Therefore, a meeting has been held by the leaders of civil society and the oppositional parties which issued a collective statement signed by the coalition of Egyptian political forces demanding the immediate release of detainees. The meeting has been joined by the various classes of people and turned to be a majestic people sit-in. As a result of rejecting to respond to the demands of people, demonstrations swept across Cairo, and moved within hours to Alexandria and then to Upper Egypt and a number of provinces until the situation have been exploded and have become difficult to control. At last, the government issued a decision of curfew which has increased the severity of disobedience and rebellion. So the party secretary-general Abdul Rahman El Safty ordered the Minister of Defense to prepare for the descent to the street, but unexpectedly, the Minister of Defense refused, giving his historical speech, “the army is here to defend the homeland against the invaders and occupiers and not to strike the Egyptians regardless of their affiliation or their actions..., History must say its word. The

army is the property of people and not one of the tools of the government or the ruling party” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 177).

The crisis is intensified when the government declared the state of emergency and banned the publication of newspapers. Further, it imposed military censorship on the dispatches issued from Egypt, and stopped some satellite channels which broadcasts from Cairo. Therefore the fight moved to the arena of electronic via the internet and mobile phone. A group of young people like Salwa and Hala volunteer to send telephone messages to help the demonstrators and connect them with the operating room. In his article “Revolutions without Revolutionaries?” David Faris says that “the Internet has important effects on authoritarian politics. It changes the balance of power between authoritarian regimes and their domestic opponents because it becomes impossible for authoritarian regimes to control their media environments in the way they have typically done in the past”. Face book and Twitter are considered to have been useful tools in mobilizing and organizing the protests. They provided alternative channels of communication in a situation where mass media was largely controlled by the regime. Bluetooth allowed the protesters in Tahrir Square to exchange messages even during the days when internet and phone lines were cut.

Dr. Ashraf’s statements have continued to be transmitted through phone messages to the masses of the people. The pictures of torture of some of the detainees have been circulating through the internet and mobile phone. The movement of civil disobedience has been continued despite the curfew decree which states that, “that anyone who refrains from performing his work in the current emergency conditions will be considered a traitor and will be prosecuted” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 179). It was becoming clear that the government had lost control when a curfew order was ignored, and the army took a semi-neutral stance on enforcing the curfew decree. At last, the security forces lost its control on the wrath of masses which began to attack the headquarters of the party, and break some of the offices of government. When the ferocious anger was raised against the rottenness of oppression and darkness, the ruling party called it chaos, yet, it was nothing but a revolution against despotism.

The 25th of January is regarded as the youths' revolution that used the latest technological methods for the sake of their revolution which has not only changed the face of Egypt but has also changed the face of life of the entire Arab world as well. Such revolution emerged from the cyber space in which an information network expands with all its modern communication tools; the most important of which are the Face book, Twitter and cell phones. This youth is modest, polite, cosmopolitan, patriotic, opposed to corruption and incompetence, and enraged by injustice and political corruption. When they called for an uprising on the 25th of January, transmitting the suffering of the citizens through the internet and camera phones, they broke the barrier of fear in criticizing what was once considered taboo and launched the phenomenon of demonstrations in protest against dynastic succession. One of the foreign newspapers declared that, “‘the cassette’ is the one which brought down the Shah in Iran in the last seventies, and it seems that mobile phone is the one which falls the ruling party in Egypt” (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 179). The youth worked in solidarity transmitting information through the internet to inform the world of everything that was happening and galvanize the discontent within the whole of society. These took the form of an intensive campaign of civil resistance supported by a very large number of people and mainly consisting of continuous mass demonstrations, where individual issues become related to the communal one.

Salmawy's novel confronts staid politics and challenges the existing system by encouragement of collective responses. He highlights what Kessler calls, “communitarian values” (17) in which the community assumes responsibility for the safety of all members. These aspects mean that individuals self-govern, and also take responsibility for the well-being of the group. The value of the community members is to help others and protect them. The members strive for consensus. When Doha decided to participate in the demonstration, her friend Moshira gave her some instructions to follow. Moshira said:

First, you have to wear black mourning clothes tomorrow ... Then take this number and save it immediately on your mobile phone. If any harm happens to you, call it immediately. “Whose number is this?” Doha asked, and Moshira responded by saying: "It's a special operations room established by civic organizations... it employs a

group of young volunteers, who know what they are doing and with whom to contact in case of emergency." Moshira added, "the second thing is to save a message on your mobile says, "I was arrested..." and you can add the name of those who arrested you or their description and send it to the operating room as well.

(*Wings of the Butterfly*, 140-141)

In this case, they will be able to inform the rest of the people, and report it to human rights organizations and to the media, whether local or foreign. This feeling of attachment melds social classes, raises consciousness of social justice.

Another evidence of "communitarian values" is that the whole members of community take Tahrir square, namely liberation, a place where they assemble together to express their hope and aspiration. Egyptian students launched huge and daring and engaged in sustained mass protests against the austerity measures imposed on the country by the corrupt, inept and ruthless regime. "The scene of students was solemn who standing and holding hands in hands are" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 92). They were chanting their slogans loudly and enthusiastically. Their chants which creatively grew cross the city gave voice to their feeling. They repeated loudly and sharply, "No more fear, no more bow down... Lastly, we hated low voice!" "alter, alter the Constitution ... before the hidden is disclosed", "The vote is false, false ... and the youth are jobless, jobless", "Where my country is, where my country is... and how can I get my child's right!" "Oh government, do say the truth...the party sold us or not" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 121). The slogans electrified Doha. She would not imagine that she could find herself one day amid this flood of people without feeling upset or fear. On the contrary, she gained power and that these protesters are the manifestation of that power, "she felt as if she rises above the masses of young people, mounted on necks like a butterfly flying in the air with no barriers or obstacles" (*Wings of the Butterfly* 133). While she echoed the slogans with the mass of people a number of times, "she felt a strange ecstasy which must be felt by the child the moment of his birth, when he came into the world" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 133). These slogans have played a prominent role in the outset of the events. It has more than a purely semantic meaning. It has created a certain blatant sense of community.

These couplet slogans, sung by the protesters in a unified clear cadence, do more than reiterate their hope and aspiration; rather it has the power to express messages that could not be articulated in other forms and composes a significant part of the action itself. Moreover, this act of chanting has a great impact on the public because it plays a galvanizing role in a revolutionary moment. It is this moment which forms Doha's national feeling, Doha comments, "Now for the first time I feel alive.. I feel that I have an entity.. I feel people around me.. I feel that I have an identity and I belong to the people of the country" (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 139).

The revolutionary spirit has developed a sense of fraternity. This concept of fraternity plays a vital role in revolutionary ideology. "Fraternity" denotes "brotherly relations between family, social groups and peoples" (Parker, 19). It embodies the emotionally empowering quality of equality and social justice. "Fraternity is not an abstract notion", on the contrary it is a concept "without which the liberty and equality reach deadlock ...and hence a key factor in the politics" (Gross, 44). This concept creates the feeling of newly reborn human nature with optimistic spirit of the newly created social order. It is considered a cure to social injustice and inequality that are symbols of the old regime.

Finally, the ruling party has to admit the power of the mass that could destroy the fetters and overcome the difficulties to achieve their hope and aspiration. The power of the mass is so overwhelming that the ruling party and the government have surrendered and at last, resigned. The news of the resignation accompanied by the release of all political detainees has been met with exhilaration by all Egyptians. In this atmosphere of triumph and excitement, Dr. Ashraf was elected as the leader of the coalition of political forces of Egypt and a Supreme National Authority was formed to run the country for three months. Then, genuine elections should be held, and a new constitution should be produced. Salmawy sees in the Revolution a beginning of a new era for Egyptian. It is the dawn of new hopes. He expresses his optimistic views of the future which is associated with the celebration of marriage of Aiman and Salwa, and Hassan and Hala which is the symbol of a new beginning. Dr. Ashraf asserted that this is not the end, but the beginning of new phase in the history of the country, seeking to achieve the hopes of the masses which broke down over the years. (*Wings of the Butterfly*, 182) Salmawy's novel both justifies and gives the historical background to what is

happening now. He amazingly provides not only the precedents for the revolt itself, but also the arguments for maintaining the people's right to rebel against tyranny.

Salmawy's *Wings of the Butterfly* is a utopian aspiration that takes on a decidedly socio-political flavor. He addresses socio-political issues in more acceptably literary ways. His aesthetic merit has been affirmed by the kind of persuasive power that only imaginative literature possesses. He gives voice to feelings and confers confidence; He sets up a zone of freedom--especially in the face of a regime that has always sought to disparage all political opposition and deny the existence of the public as well. Salmawy's novel is not about the revolution but the idea of revolution which has brought about a shift in Egyptian consciousness that the Egyptian people are part of the political life, and who, at a time of intense historical crisis; find themselves part of the creation of a new society. Salmawy expresses messages that could not be articulated in other forms; it is the great power of literature that exteriorizes the present society to the reader and provides critical material to rethink that same society. Salmawy's thought is identified with his creative instinct which passionately values both the freedom of art and the personal freedom of the individual. Though the tone of Salmawy's text is most often despondent and frustrated, his somewhat hopeful conclusion opens up future possibilities. *Wings of the Butterfly* hints at the possibility of utopian aspiration, a possibility Salmawy explores by his powerful visions of the future.

Salmawys's novel is a utopian literary form and a political discourse that goes beyond the written word to influence, incense, inspire, or incite readers to action—it provokes a response. Its value lies not in presenting perfect places but something to-come. This narrative remains unfinished projects whose political and ethical potential resides in the suspension of utopia and our ability to see just beyond the horizon.

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