

CONVERGING DOUBLE COLONIZATION: EXPLORING SUSAN ABULHAWA'S 'AGAINST THE LOVELESS WORLD' THROUGH THE LENS OF SPIVAK'S THEORY

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ABSTRACT

The present study explores the impression of intersecting double colonization in Susan Abulhawa's 'Against the Loveless World' through Gayatri Spivak's theoretical framework. This novel tells the story of the protagonist Nahr, a Palestinian woman who faces numerous troubles as she goes through personal and political struggles. By focusing on the merging of gender and national colonization, this research examines the experiences of Nahr, exploring her identity, agency and resistance within an intricate socio-political context. The study adds to have a better understanding of Abulhawa's narrative, stressing the alignment with Spivak's theoretical perspectives. The objective of the research is to highlight the intricacies and complexities of dual colonization and its magnitudes for marginalized personalities in the novel. It shows the significance of applying Spivak's framework to light up the complexities of dual colonization, presenting valuable understandings of the impact on colonized individuals in the text under research. The tentative conclusion of this research reveals the complex power dynamics and cultural influences, shedding light on the intricate interplay between gender and national oppression.

Keywords: Double colonization, Agency, Resistance, Marginalized, National oppression

INTRODUCTION

The identities which had once deep roots in the social system of one's culture had declined that had given rise to new identities (*Bibi et.al, 1*). Identity consists of experiences, memories, values and relationships that create the sense of self. Female identity is a crucial and central issue in postmodern and post colonialism (*Nancy, 2*). The impact of colonialism on the subjects, particularly on the women, has been a matter of discussion since decades. However, it is important to know the concepts of feminism and postcolonial feminism in order to better understand the concept of double colonization (*Ahmed, 1*). Feminism emerged as a movement against the inhuman remarks against the women in the late 60s of 20th century (*1*). The feminists tried to explore the reason of classifying women as second class citizen and to examine the problems such as sex, race, gender and languages in literary texts (*1*). After decolonization, feminism took a new form which is called as postcolonial feminism Postcolonial feminism that actually emerged from the gendered history of colonization, talks about imposing

western norms on colonized nations (*1*). The postcolonial feminists are of the view that the oppression and subjugation of women on the basis of class, race and ethnicity has marginalized them in postcolonial world. Furthermore, they also argue that main force behind patriarchy is basically gender difference (*1*). The systems that the colonizers used to subjugate colonized nations are identical to those strategies used by men to dominate women (*Kanuha, 3*). Hence, the link between colonization and patriarchy is close and can be seen while observing the traits of both of them.

The concept of double colonization is one of the concepts to recognize the status of people particularly women in the colonized nations. It is said that women in the colonized countries are doubly colonized i.e. first by the colonial power and second by the patriarchy (*Ahmed, 1*). Through the lens of Gayatri Spivak's 'Can the Subaltern speak' the text has been analyzed. Moreover, double colonization explores how women are subjugated by imperial power and by male-dominant society (*Ahmed, 2*). The word patriarchy comes from the Greek word; Patria means rule and Arche that stands for rule so patriarchy simply means the rule of father. Generally, patriarchy means the domination of man by using their position politically or religiously on the society (*2*).

Susan Abulhawa is a Palestinian born American writer and a social activist. As a teenager she moved to the US and graduated in biomedical science and pursued her career in it. She founded a NGO for children in July 2001 to support the right to play for the children of Palestine. She has written 'Mornings in Jenin' (2010), 'The Blue Between Sky and Water' (2015) and 'Against the Loveless World'. Her debut novel 'Morning in Jenin' is considered as the classic one in Palestinian literature as it was translated in 30 languages. She is considered as the most widely read Palestinian author of all time.

The novel 'Against the Loveless World' tells the story of a young Palestinian girl Nahr who is shown as resilient but exhausted woman that tries desperately to survive. She moves from place to place as a refugee to save herself and her family. Nahr was born in Kuwait and she describes her girlhood in a patriarchal society which was followed by arranged marriage and then immediate abandonment. She was blackmailed to be a prostitute in Kuwait. Her family then flees to Jordan after the invasion of US on Iraq. For seeking divorce, she goes to Palestine in her ancestral homeland. She was then captured by Israel soldiers and was put in prison. She was colonized not by the state but also the male-dominant society in every place she went as refugee.

1.1 Statement of Problem:

The novel 'Against the Loveless World' by Susan Abulhawa explores into the intricate dynamics of identity and dual colonization, examining the convergence of gender and national oppression. However, there is a need of comprehensive understanding of how female protagonist resist these dual forms of colonization within the novel's socio-political landscape remains vague. The present literature lacks a focused analysis utilizing Spivak's theoretical framework to reveal the intense interaction between gender and national colonization in this particular narrative. The present research addresses this gap by seeking to disclose the intricacies of power dynamics, agency, and resistance faced by female character in the face of dual colonization. By doing so, it contributes valuable insights to both literary studies and feminist theory that enhances our understanding of the impact of dual colonization on marginalized individuals.

Research Objectives:

The objectives of this research are;

- 1- To investigate the dynamics of gender and national colonization in 'Against the loveless world' by Susan Abulhawa.
- 2- To explore the response of female protagonist to dual colonization in the novel emphasizing identity and resistance.

1.3 Research Questions:

- 1- How do the dynamics of gender and national colonization unfold in 'Against the Loveless World' by Susan Abulhawa?
- 2- How does the female protagonist in the novel respond to dual colonization, with a particular focus on identity and resistance?

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A researcher should take advantage of the knowledge, information and discussion which has been collected previously on any aspect of literature which is relevant to his research. Review of the related literature is an essential aspect of every research work (Das, I). It familiarizes a researcher with the present knowledge of the field in which research is to be conducted. A study of existing researches shows that the researcher is quite familiar with what has already been done by other researchers and what is still unknown and untested (I). It enables him to start the work from the proper point that helps to avoid worthless repetition of what already has been accomplished. By keeping in mind the literature related to the present research the study of various sources like Journals, Books, Dissertations and Encyclopedias of Educational Research have been completed.

In the article '*Palestinian Woman's Identity Shift from Implicit-Being to Explicit-Becoming: A Review of Susan Abulhawa's Against the Loveless World*', the authors have discussed the novel with respect of the identity formation of the protagonist Nahr. They argue that the Palestinian have been transported from their ancestral land to the different parts of the Middle East particularly as refugees. The concerns of the characters of novels about their Palestinian identity in exile have been discussed by authors (*Bibi et.al, 1*). This exile boosted the senses of nationalism that created strong bond among the refugees and gave rise to anti-Israel sentiments. Nahr, the protagonist, faced unexpected and unwanted directions like occupation, imperialism, invasion and colonialism (*1*). Nahr's family faced numerous problems including economical as they lived on the brink of poverty and she did everything she could do in order to meet the needs of her family (*1*). Nahr is willing to face and fight with danger and is determined to find love in a loveless world. The authors have also concluded that this is the story of woman's journey from being nothing to become something, from being a victim to become powerful and determined to construct the identity of her own in a loveless world.

In another article '*Representing Resistance in Abul Hawa's Against the Loveless World*' the authors have analyzed the novel with respect to Resistance theory and postcolonial feminism. They argue that the protagonist of the novel, Nahr, experiences the violence and identity crisis in the different parts of the world. "*Nahr grows up in Kuwait, where the sizable Palestinian refugee population maintains an underground and housing is only available temporarily*" (*Saadia et. al, 8*). She shows incredible bravery and resistance in the face of unfair conditions. Exile, homelessness, refugee camps and maltreatment of women in a patriarchal society are the various reasons to arouse violence and unfair circumstances (*Saadia et.al, 1*). They further argue that the victims of these conditions suffered from inferiority complex and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (*1*). However, Nahr faces the condition bravely, stood firm and showed resistance after the terrible sexual and physical assault. The authors praised the protagonist's struggle to find a way to feed her family members amid the hard socio-economic condition around them.

In his article '*Gender Roles and Perceptions: The Refugee Experience and Political Agency in Susan Abulhawa's The Blue Between Sky and Water and Against the Loveless World*' the author compares two novels of Susan Abulhawa to see the role of women in the context of Israel-Palestine conflict. He argued that the conflict does not create problems for men only rather it does to women as well (*Ahmad, 62*). The article shows the women's experience during conflict, their loss of dignity, respect and independence and their struggle to cope with all these painful issues. He clears that the Israel-Palestine conflict has deep impacts on the Palestinian society which has disintegrated them as a whole (*63*). "*Abulhawa explores the legacy of Palestinian dispossession across continents and generations with a devastatingly clear-eyed vision of its political and personal trauma*" (*65*). Furthermore, the author suggests that living in exile is not less than violence itself. The people of Palestine are in exile without a definite identity, devoid of basic rights in their own native country and also ridiculed in the host culture by the hosts (*65*). At the end of the novel, according to author, the protagonist was a transformed girl. She became the part of resistance and took revolutionary steps to fight for her identity and freedom (*67*). She vividly depicts Palestinian life and misery under Israeli colonialism, enlightening us to the troubles of occupation as Palestinians have become stateless, evicted, and brutalized.

The author in his article "*Susan Abulhawa. Against the Loveless World: A Novel. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2020.*" claims that the protagonist symbolizes in utter certainty the way a revolution becomes irretrievable. The author identifies the struggle of Nahr and starts it from Kuwait in 1990. She marries a famous Palestinian guy Mhammad and becomes a local celebrity among the Palestinian community (*Mami, 2*). The author compares Karl Marx's concept of communism with the protagonist's choices as he says that If Karl Marx's ideas about a communist revolution, his dislike for the government and money, or his way of looking at history seem too hard to understand, Nahr's choices make it easier to grasp these complex ideas. Nahr helps people understand these abstract concepts better than even the best professor at the finest institution could (*3*). Furthermore, he adds that Nahr sees for herself how people treat

money like it's something magical or special that is called commodity fetishism. As prices rise quickly, people start thinking about communism again, almost like starting over. Even if they don't use the word communism, this short period of time breaks down the divisions between groups like Kuwaitis, Iraqis, and Palestinians (4).

This novel was previously studied in the context of identity, resistance, agency and communism. The problems, troubles and violence faced by the protagonist Nahr have been highlighted by different writers. However, the present research deals with the doubly colonization of protagonist Nahr to see how she was colonized first by the state and the by the male-dominant society. Gayatri Spivak's '*Can the subaltern speak*' has been taken as theoretical framework for this research. This research intends to apply the concepts of Spivak's doubly colonization to the text of the novel to see response of female protagonist against her dual subjugation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Antonio Gramsci was the first to use the term subalterns from his writing '*Selection from the Prison Notebooks (1971)*'. The word subaltern is a blended word that consists of sub which means under and alters i.e. other and it shows the individuals who are under representation (*Rind et.al, 3*). According to dictionary a subaltern is a person who holds a subordinate or junior rank status in British army (*Layton, 1*). Gayatri Spivak, A South-Asian writer, took the concept from Gramsci's idea of subaltern and wrote down her own version using the same word (*Rind et.al, 3*). In her essay, '*Can the Subaltern Speak*' she has spoken for the lower and subjugated class of society.

The construction of Truth:

Gayatri Spivak analyzes by using the method of deconstruction that how the truth was formulated. She gives an example in her essay of a ritual performed in India named as Sati in which "*The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it*" (*Spivak, 15*). British after taking control of India abolished this ritual and saved many women from their own society (*15*). This gives justification to British to colonized India as Indians are barbaric and ignorant (*15*). She argues that our consciousness is structured randomly and our identities are framed by others and this is what she says by truth construction (*15*).

Hegemony and Criticism on Essentialist Ideologies:

Hegemony according to Gramsci is the dominance of one social group over another through the influence of cultural and ideological foundations (*Rind et.al 3*). Spivak takes this concept and extends this to examine that how certain groups particularly women are marginalized and silences in postcolonial context. She raises concerns whether subaltern can truly have a voice in a dominant culture to speak for themselves (*Spivak, 15*).

Spivak criticized both Deleuze and Foucault for obligating epistemic violence that refers to projecting Euro-centric narrative to the colonized or third world nations (*Spivak, 7*). She is of the point of view that desire and interests are two distinct things (*7*). Spivak argued that the identity and ideologies of third world nations are not similar to that of European nations and that is why projection of Eurocentric ideas to third world nations paves the way for colonialism (*7*). Furthermore, the subalterns do not speak for themselves rather they wait for the West to talk about their rights (*7*).

Double Colonization:

Spivak presents the concept of the double colonization as a way to describe the intricate situation of some certain groups, particularly women, within postcolonial contexts. The term highlights the double oppression of individuals first politically and economically by the colonizer and secondly marginalized within their own communities because of their gender, race, color or other social factors (*Spivak, 15*). The question of

whether the subaltern or marginalized groups can talk about themselves rises important concerns. Particularly to analyze the situation of women, the challenges become more obvious (14).

Furthermore, Spivak adds that in postcolonial situations, dealing with the ongoing construction of the subaltern is complicated. The influence and impact of Western ideas rattles with changes in the under developed nations (14). Conservative and Liberals, according to her, resist focusing on class rather than race. She then elaborates that this is not just about dealing with a double displacement or finding a way to compare the experiences of women in different parts of the world. The complexity of the problem is evident in its historical, disciplinary, and practical dimensions (14).

Spivak then emphasis that it's crucial to be careful when discussing or joining efforts against bigotry for women dealing with racial or class oppression, whether in developed or under-developed countries (14). Even though collecting information in subjects like anthropology, history, sociology and political science from these marginalized areas is helpful (14). We should be cautious about assuming the thoughts and identities of these women. This type of work can involuntarily support opinions that favor imperialist ideas, causing harm to knowledge while claiming to advance education and civilization. This might mean that the voices of marginalized women “will be as mute as ever” (14).

By keeping in view the concept of Spivak’s double colonization this research finds out gender and national colonization and the response of the protagonist to the double colonization in the novel ‘*Against the Loveless World*’ by Susan Abulhawa. The present research is based on textual analysis and close reading of the text. In textual analysis we observe, find out and compile the text related to our study. There are multiple interpretations of a text and multiple meanings can be extracted from one single text (Rind et.al, 3). In textual analysis, to justify the topic, relevant chunks, quotes, sentences and sayings are stated (3). Close reading on the other hand is the main part of the text. It helps us to understand the meanings and themes within a text (3). Therefore, for this research the researcher has focused on the text of the novel ‘*Against the Loveless World*’ by Susuan Abulhawa and analyzed it in the light of selected theory of Subaltern by Gayatri Spivak.

DATA ANALYSIS

Classical colonization, that took place from the 15th century to the end of World War II, involved Western European powers occupying colonies (Asadi, 8). There was a brief period of decolonization and re-colonization. In this process, these Western powers used their official authority to impose unequal exchanges on the colonized nations (8). In the 20th century with the development of Feminism, the link between race, gender, class and heterosexuality as racialized aspects was not clearly highlighted (Lugones, 13). The focus of feminism was against the idea that women were fragile, weak and they were confined to private spaces and used as sex machine (13). However, for postcolonial feminist gender isn’t about cultural and religious issue or legal or political rights as Western feminists often claim (Salem, 3). In fact, gender inequality is seen in the context of anti-capitalism and colonialism, even in today’s time when decolonization has been observed (3).

The story of the novel ‘*Against the Loveless World*’ by Susan Abulhawa revolves around the journey of Nahr and her family from one place to another. Being displaced people they face numerous challenges in their lives. Nahr was thrown in jail with the allegations of spreading hatred and terrorism, “I feel they are colonizing me and all Arab women who are the keepers of our traditions and heritage” (Abulhawa, 9). The intersection of gender and colonization is quite apparent in this context.

Spivak in her essay ‘*Can the Subaltern Speak?*’ mentions the painful history of the ritual sati where a Hindu widow would set herself on fire on the death of her husband (Spivak, 15). After colonizing India, British abrogated this practice and called it as ‘*White man saving brown women from brown men*’ (15). They tried to justify the process of colonization with calling themselves as saviors. When Nahr was in jail she re-read one of her own books in which the justification of her prison and colonization was made by Israel, “They

claim Israel saved you and prison has given you a better life” (6). Furthermore, Nahr adds that she had been misrepresented by Israel about the condition of her life in cell, “They’re publishing pictures of you in a clean cell with a lot of books to show that Israel is a benevolent nation, even to terrorist” (6).

Abulhawa criticizes the West for spreading misinformation and propaganda for their own perks and benefits. Nahr shares strong bond with her mother after the death of her father and particularly after settling in Kuwait. Her mother though was fond of having cigarettes but she never liked this act of her. She was of the view that West has kept us in darkness for a long time about cigarettes, “I had read in a comic book how Western Companies were using tobacco to kill us slowly and take all our money and resources in the process” (12).

A postcolonial feminist analysis commences with the idea that a woman's life is influenced by various structures, and these structures aren't the same for everyone. Instead, they differ based on the particular circumstances of a specific time and context (Salem, 4). Displacement is willing or forced migration of a native from one place to another. It is one of the important aspect of colonization (Ashcroft et.al, 65). The people of Palestine have been facing this issue for a long time, “Palestinians learned the first time in 1948 that leaving to save your life meant you would lose everything and could never go back” (Abulhawa, 15).

The dynamics of gender and national colonization occurs when one group faces the impact of colonialism differently to other i.e. women often face unique and distinctive problems as a result of colonialism and patriarchal structure. Nahr and her family after the forced displacement began to live in Kuwait in a refugee area. Their problem and sufferings didn't come to an end even in Kuwait. They were even colonized there as well, “This is what Palestinian are good for. Cheap labor and cheap whores. We buy and sell people like you here” (85).

The second part of the analysis deals with the response of Nahr to her colonization across the areas and countries she lives. Being a woman she was first colonized by the state and then by the male members of society. Spivak calls this subjugation as double colonization in her essay. Nahr was continuous fight with her identity while staying in Kuwait as a refugee, “They don't like seeing Palestinian excel at anything” (18).

Abulhawa has drawn the attention of world to the pain and suffering of Palestinian as displacement has caused trauma among them “Maybe it was easier because the trauma of forced displacement was already well-known to them (97). Nahr's grandmother was tired of escaping from one colonized state to another in search for peace, identity and voice, “I'm not going anywhere. I'm tired of being chased out of whatever I am in the world. Out of Haifa, then out of Ein el-Sultan, then Jordan and now Kuwait?” (78). The impact of doubly colonization in Kuwait was painful and throbbing on Nahr, “It pained me to see my mother beg. I hated those men. Now I hated Kuwait. I hated their emirs and their people (81).

Despite being colonized by the state, Nahr was facing the issue of doubly colonization in the Kuwaiti society which was predominantly a male-dominant society. She was exploited by the male members of the society in exchange of money, “Only, I was acting, because even though I was getting paid, it felt like rape, my screams muffled by his hands” (51). Nahr was continuously grappling with her identity in Kuwait. Palestinians were not respected and recognized in Kuwait at all. They have formed stereotypes about Palestinian who had taken refuge in Kuwait, “That's what Palestinian do. You eat and then bite the hand that fed you” (85).

After travelling back to Palestine, her own hometown, Nahr's problems increased. The people of Palestine in their own land were treated as others by the colonized Israel. This left deep impact on her mind, “It shocked me how many checkpoints there were just to go from one village to next. It seemed that the Palestinians could not drive more than five minutes without having to wait at yet another”(133).

The impact of doubly colonization is quite prevalent and established on Nahr's psyche. She maps to Kuwait, Jordan and then Palestine and finds every place inhospitable and hostile. She had been exploited doubly i.e. first by the state and second by the patriarchal society, "I didn't know where I'd live or what I would do if I were back, but there was no returning to Kuwait, and no place for me in Amman. I wasn't sure there was in Palestine either," (178).

Conclusion

This research has commenced an intensive examination of the dynamics of double colonization in the novel 'Against the loveless World' by Susan Abulhawa, applying Spivak's theoretical framework. The study of the convergence of gender and national colonization has shown valuable understandings of experiences of the female protagonist Nahr. The findings of this research highlight the importance of identifying the impact of colonialism on marginalized or subjugated individuals within the narrative. The application of Spivak's theoretical lens has proven helpful in exploring the complexities of dual colonization, offering an inclusive viewpoint on the Nahr's struggles and resilience. In every place she stayed, she faced the painful impact of doubly colonization every time. It is now apparent that the novel 'Against the Loveless World' obliges as a rich work in portraying the challenges encountered by individuals at the intersection of gender and nationality.

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