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EXILE AND COLONIALISM IN THE NOVELS OF ABDULRAZAK GURNAH

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Abstract

Many things have changed in the process of colonization. It has tremendously affected and influenced the colonized world and the world after that. Many countries have gone through and faced the impacts of colonialism. It has affected the social, political, economic, psychological, educational as well as geographical conditions of the post-colonial world. Various vulnerable aspects, such as exile, displacement, and belonging, effacement of identity, war, colonialism, and broken promises of the state are acutely expounded in the writing of Abdulrazak Gurnah. In. Key words: Displacement, exile, colonialism refugee displacement, vulnerable aspects post-colonial world

Introduction

Many things have changed in the process of colonization. It has tremendously affected and influenced the colonized world and the world after that. Many countries have gone through and faced the impacts of colonialism. It has affected the social, political, economic, psychological, educational as well as geographical conditions of the post-colonial world. Various vulnerable aspects, such as exile, displacement, and belonging, effacement of identity, war, colonialism, and broken promises of the state are acutely expounded in the writing of Abdulrazak Gurnah. Tanzanian- born British author Abdulrazak Gurnah, is very well known for his writings on the effects of colonialism, the refugee experience, and displacement in the colonized world. Being a post-colonial writer, and having experienced the same situation, Gurnah describes the plight of refugees and their homesickness with the help of his acute narrative technique. His investigative works focus on post colonialism as well

as colonialism directed at Africa, The Caribbean, and India. He carefully brings out the plight of the colonial as well as postcolonial world and gives a way to the issues like exile, identity, and rootlessness of the colonized.

His books show the effects of the colonization of East Africa and the sufferings of the native inhabitants. This is seen as a reflection of his life as an immigrant, a key element that distinguishes him from other African writers of the diaspora residing in British territory. Most of his novels tell stories about people living in the developing world, affected by war and crisis, who may not be able to tell their own stories.

Much of Gurnah's work is set on the coast of East Africa and many of his novels' protagonists were born in Zanzibar. Though Gurnah has not returned to live since he left at 18, he has said that homeland, "always asserts himself in his imagination, even when he deliberately tries to set his stories elsewhere." In his works, his commitment

to the reality of his native country and his compatriots is evident and enhances the human nature of his pen and the link between his experiences and his literary work. Each story shows a context marked by the wars suffered on the continent. Abdulrazak Gurnah reveals the nature of issues the people had been through during colonial times till the present. Having the backdrop of history in his writing he deals with the issues of war, memory, migration, exile, identity, gender, race, colonialism, post-colonialism, environmental crisis, etc. The present paper examined minutely the impact of exile, displacement, and colonialism and the plight of refugees for native land, their intimidation for the effacement of identity with study to the selected novels of Nobel Laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah such as *Admiring Silence* (1996), *By The Sea* (2001), *Desertion* (2005), and *The Last Gift* (2011).

His semi-autobiographical novels recount Tanzania's struggle for independence. As a Nobel Laureate in 2021, he was honored "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and fate of the refugee in the gulf between culture and continent." Abdulrazak Gurnah recounts his 50 years before personal experience in his famous novels. In his career as a writer he has created short stories and essays, however, his novels are the one that has given him the most recognition. From 1987 to the present he has published several works in this genre. His first three works such as *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Pilgrims Way* (1988), and *Dottie* (1990)- have similar themes: they show different nuances of the experiences of immigrants in Great Britain. In 1994 he published one of his most recognized novels, *Paradise*, which was a finalist for the prestigious British Booker Prize in 2001. Gurnah considered "the voice of the displaced" - has also stood out in other novels, such as: *By The Sea* (2001), and *Desertion* (2005). *Admiring Silence* (1996) is a completely focused story of an unnamed Zanzibarian expatriate who returns home after a 20-year exile in England and poignantly evokes the cultural limbo of many émigrés. *By The Sea* (2001), tells the story of 65-year-old Saleh Omar, a merchant refugee from Zanzibar who applies for asylum in England. He

steals the identity of Latif Mahmud's father to enter the British Empire. It is compelling narrative trauma of displacement in postcolonial Africa. In his seventh novel, *Desertion* (2005)

Abdulrazak Gurnah describes the forbidden cross-cultural love affairs and their repercussions on the lovers' families. Abdulrazak Gurnah brilliantly dramatizes the personal and political consequences of colonialism, the vicissitudes of love, and the power of fiction. *The Last Gift* (2011) is a story of Abbas, who after suffering a debilitating stroke at age 63, suddenly wants to speak for the first time about the youthful decisions that drove him to leave his native Zanzibar, become a sailor, and eventually marry and settle down in England. This novel reveals the story of an East African immigrant living in a small English town as he and his family reckon with his past, which has long been shrouded in mystery.

Right from the appearance of his first novel, Abdulrazak Gurnah has succeeded in attracting comprehensive analysis and public attention. Scholars have bracketed him with those who have tirelessly spoken about migration and the issues that have been faced by the immigrants. Many critics and scholars have interpreted his work from their points of view. However, the creativity of Abdulrazak Gurnah is so immense and pioneering that still much needs to be explored. The present work intends to interpret further the fiction of Abdulrazak Gurnah, a unique literary voice of those who have been exiled, displaced, and colonized.

Abdulrazak Gurnah attention on the issues of Exile, Displacement, Colonialism, and the homesickness of refugees. As he experienced the impact of colonialism and his life was affected altogether with this. He looks at the suffering of refugees who are to be margins, suffer in their adopted country, and the social segment as the 'other'. The issues such as migration, effacement of identity, racism, and feeling of an alien in general, focusing on exile, Displacement, and Colonialism as well as the contribution and self-experience of Abdulrazak Gurnah in particular. In his novels how he interlinked his personal experiences of exile, displacement, and colonialism with the experiences of his protagonists will be shown. It will also depict

numerous obstacles faced by the protagonists in the process of exile, displacement, and colonialism. While adopting such a Refugee, the host country is doubted his identity. So, this chapter will primarily focus on the various important aspects which are related to exile, displacement, and colonialism with the observation of their process and consequences.

The paper explored the ways exile takes place in Abdulrazak Gurnah's novels. It revealed the problems faced by exiled with abundant events, incidents, and accidents that make Gurnah's exiled accounts more powerful and impressive. His semi-autobiographical novels recount Tanzania's struggle for independence, the rise of Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, a socialist, and Zanzibar's first President, Aberdeen Karume, who targeted the Arab-descended population of the former Sultanate. Gurnah is of Arab ancestry and fled into exile in England in 1968. With this type of historical event, he depicts the voluntary or forcible exile of subjects of Zanzibar. Zanzibarian government, their authorities were still on a punitive rage of all kinds against the whole population. Many people were driven away by circumstances because their parents were persecuted or imprisoned, or in some cases killed, but also sometimes simply because they were frightened. His selected novels like *The Last Gift*, *By The Sea*, and *Admiring Silence* show the voluntary or forcible exile of Abbas, Saleh Omar, and unnamed protagonists respectively. It shows how their and their inmates' lives are affected by exile. In this chapter impact of the exile, its effects, and its consequences are detailed.

The issues of displacement or migration that are powerfully depicted in these selected novels. The issues like survival, identity, refugee, and diaspora are dominantly find in the novels. Abdulrazak Gurnah reflects on his own experience of being a refugee, that of displaced people today, and 'the continuation of a colonial narrative'. 'I think it probably matters where a refugee is coming from', Gurnah says. While displacing in another country a refugee has a plight of the homeland. How his protagonists are absorbed by the memory of their homelands, and how beautifully they remember or have preserved their native place in their memory is also depicted. His protagonists such as Saleh Omar

in *By The Sea*, Abbas in *The Last Gift*, and the unnamed protagonist in *Admiring Silence* have beautifully valorized their homeland. On the contrary, the De-valorizing aspect will also be discussed in the present chapter. It shows the protagonists' longing for their homelands, and their alien feeling in another country. It discusses how historical events in Africa left the native people displaced for over a few centuries and at the present too.

The study of colonialism and its impact on colonized aspects like identity, existence, nostalgia, and diaspora motivated him to continue to explore the ongoing consequences of colonialism in his literary works and the power of literature to help us understand the plight of the 'Other'. As a Novelist, Gurnah draws from personal experiences for his almost ten novels, including *By*

The Sea, *Admiring Silence*, *Memory of Departure*, *Desertion*, *Pilgrims Way*, and the Booker Prize finalist '*Paradise*'. Gurnah criticized the "Lack of Compassion" of governments, including Britain's, that treat migrants as a problem or threat. He pointed out that the tribulations faced by migrants hadn't lessened in decades since he left his homeland. A lot of it is about the pain and trauma of colonialism. Discussing why he thought it is important to write about colonialism today, right now. Through his novels he tries to illustrate colonialism as a part of contemporary reality, it's not that colonialism has gone, colonialism and its consequences are still with us.

CONCLUSION

The study of exile, displacement, and colonialism collectively and analyzed Abdulrazak Gurnah's efforts to depict these issues with the help of his detailed and meditative narrative techniques. It focuses on how historical events led to the displacement of people from Africa. It also discusses how Gurnah's narrative strategy employs complex narrative perspectives, vivid descriptions, imagery, symbolism, and credible characterization, and how he allows the reader to read the experiences of East Africans, whether at home or in-migrant spaces, through the basic units of community, focusing on ordinary everyday lives and interactions. The paper

illustrated the different ways in which Gurnah employs a narrative strategy to depict the various avenues through which the power comes into play in diverse areas of human interactions. The author's application of multiple narrators, while serving as an effective narrative technique also creates several power points to the narration.

The dominant theme in Gurnah's novels is that of migration, of characters attempting to construct ideas of a home away from home. It also put forward the finding about exile, displacement, and colonialism in his novels. It focused on a slight comparison concerning other Postcolonial Writers' work on Exile, Displacement, and Colonialism.

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