

# **EXILE, IDENTITY AND RESISTANCE: PALESTINIAN REALITIES IN THE WORKS OF SAHAR KHALIFEH**

Thesis

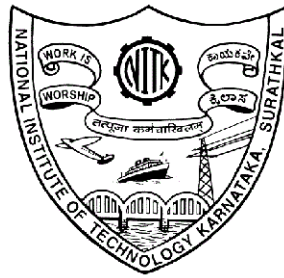
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

by

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**SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KARNATAKA,**

**SURATHKAL, MANGALORE - 575025**

December, 2017



## DECLARATION

*by the Ph.D. Research Scholar*

I hereby declare that the Research Thesis entitled, '**Exile, Identity and Resistance: Palestinian Realities in the Works of Sahar Khalifeh**' which is being submitted to the National Institute of Technology Karnataka, Surathkal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* in English Literature is a *bonafide report of the research work carried out by me*. The material contained in this Research Thesis has not been submitted to any University or Institution for the award of any degree.

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## **CERTIFICATE**

This is to *certify* that the Research Thesis entitled '**Exile, Identity and Resistance: Palestinian Realities in the Works of Sahar Khalifeh**' submitted by **Priyanka**, (Reg. No. **123023HM12F02**) as the record of the research work carried out by her is accepted as the *Research Thesis* submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature**.

**Dr. SHASHIKANTHA KOUDUR**

Research Guide

**Prof. K. B. KIRAN**

Chairman - DRPC



## **DEDICATION**

**This thesis is dedicated**

**to**

**The innocent Palestinian children from the Occupied Territories who  
are held in the state prisons deprived of normal childhood**



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## **ABSTRACT**

Sahar Khalifeh is one of the most outspoken authors from the Occupied Territories of Palestine – the West Bank. This study examines the literary works of Khalifeh in order to know the contemporary Palestinian situation through the literary prism. The socio-political and economic impact of the Occupation on the life of Palestinians has been so immense that it has become difficult for them to survive in their own homeland. Khalifeh's narratives effectively lend voice to these challenges faced by them. The Occupation spanning for nearly two generations has taught the Palestinians to resist the challenge in different ways. These multiple resistance strategies adopted by Palestinian men and women constitutes another important theme that this study seeks to unravel in the narratives of Khalifeh. Indeed, the Palestinian resistance movement is constituted of both violent and non-violent forms of resistance throughout their struggle for independence. Unfortunately, the media has sidelined the issue of civil or non-violent forms of resistance movements pursued by the Palestinians and represented the movement grossly as an act of terrorism or insurgency. The different shades of Palestinian resistance to Israeli Occupation are specifically looked into in this study.

Palestinians' life of exile under the Israeli Occupation is another core theme discussed in the literary works of Khalifeh. Simultaneously, she has written on the emerging challenges faced by the Palestinians on their return to homeland. In depicting both these issues, Khalifeh shows a departure from the previous accounts: the gendered impact. If exile has a certain impact on men, the same phenomenon has another set of impact on women; it is important to note that the latter effect has hardly been talked about by earlier Palestinian litterateurs. Further, it is also true that Khalifeh raises the issue of the effect of male exile on females in the Occupied Territories. Israeli Occupation with patriarchal oppression in their own society, renders the Palestinian women doubly challenged. The themes like Israeli Settler Colonial domination, exile, resistance and gender discrimination in the narratives of Sahar Khalifeh have been analysed taking insights from Settler Colonial theory, resistance theories and feminist readings.

**Keywords:** Palestinian Women's Literature, Occupied Territories, Israeli Occupation, Exile, Resistance, Settler Colonialism, Patriarchy, Gender Discrimination.

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## Chapter One

### Palestinian Literature: An Overview

“I’m absolutely against elitist literature, and my conviction is that literature is from the people, towards the people. And the majority of people in our society are simple and poor, and even illiterate. And you could see them frequently captured, described and moving in my novels. I admit and realize that the illiterate will never read what I write. But it matters to me that those who could read are going to read for those who can’t” (Interview, Khalifeh 2009).

#### 1.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces the topic of research, states the reason for selecting it and explains research methods and objectives of this research. It also introduces Palestinian literature and the challenges faced by the Palestinian authors in the process of writing, publishing and circulating Palestinian literature to the global market. Modern Palestinian literature as a category can be traced to the British Mandate and to the establishment of Israeli State in 1948. The War of 1967 which aggravated the situation led to the continuance of Israeli Occupation (IO). In the backdrop of these circumstances, a literature that can be identified as Palestinian has emerged and taken shape as the one lending voice to the sufferings of Palestinians. The historical and political turmoil that this small place experienced has made considerable impact on the writings of Palestinians. Indeed, because of the two wars in the twentieth century, Palestinian authors, just as any other section of the Palestinian community, have become a geographically dispersed community: Palestinian writers live in Israel, in the Occupied Territories of Palestine such as the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip or have become part of a swelling diaspora. The notable Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani coined the term “resistance literature” to the literature produced to challenge the ongoing IO in Palestine. Thus, the role of Palestinian literature has become crucial in Palestinian struggle. The present study focuses on Palestinian writer Sahar Khalifeh who is from the West Bank, one of the Occupied Territories of Palestine.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The study is devoted to the Palestinian literature in general, and the narrative produced by a Palestinian woman writer Sahar Khalifeh in specific. Palestinian literature, which is a part of Arabic literature, has been marginalised for numerous reasons in academics. Even today, the literature produced in English language, in the Western world attracts the prime focus of critics and scholars compared to the literature produced in other places. Similarly, literatures produced in other languages do not get much attention. Most of the English departments across the world including India have largely ignored and side-lined Palestinian literature in their curriculum when it comes to literature/s in translation. The research done in Palestinian literature is also very less in India compared to other areas like Commonwealth Literature, American Literature, African Literature, Indian Writing in English, Latin-American Literature, South Asian Studies etc. This research attempts to intervene into this scenario and tries to respond to Palestinian literature, specifically to the literary contribution of Sahar Khalifeh.

Anna Bernard, who took interest in the literature and culture of Israel and Palestine and who took the circulation of Arab and Hebrew literature in translation to other parts of the world, points out that since Palestine is still under IO and colonial rule, the literature of this region does not come under “Postcolonial Studies”. In her work *Rhetorics of Belonging*, she writes explicitly on the marginalisation of Palestinian literature and writers in the global scenario. The issue of Israeli-Palestine conflict is well known across the world and a scenario like the Occupation may not be seen anywhere in the world at present except in this place. Most parts of the world were under British colonial rule, some countries under French, some under Portuguese and Dutch, etc. These erstwhile colonies are now liberated, but the situation of Palestine is very peculiar. The main stream literature of such world is studied with much enthusiasm as “Postcolonial Studies”; but the literature produced in Palestine is nowhere discussed on lines of literature from South Africa or Algiers or any such country which was under colonial rule. Though the Palestinian writers like Ghassan Kanafani, Mahmod Darwish and Sahar Khalifeh produce considerable literature, they have only name recognition but they are nowhere in their literary status to that of Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie etc. Despite the practical limitations they face in creating literary and cultural works,

they produce literature of significant quality; they are marginalised by the mainstream literature of the world (Bernard 2013: 20). The renowned Middle Eastern critic, Barbara Harlow, highlights the resistance literature that has largely been excluded or ignored not only by the traditional departments of literature organised according to national criteria but even in comparative literature which tends to restrict itself to the more northern parts of the globe while seeking material for comparison (Harlow 1987: xvi). She is an ardent advocate for Palestinian cause, a scholar and author who brought the issues of human rights and Post colonialism into the classroom through her studies of African, Arab and Latin American Literature. She says “Palestinian literature, like the literatures of other cultures marginalized within the dominant version of world history, by virtue of its current historical situation and determination, is liable to uncritical consideration and identification, fated either to rejection or admission for the very fact of being Palestinian” (ibid: 67). Thus, there is a necessity to look at Palestinian literature *as* literature even as one recognises the socio-political upheavals that Palestine is caught in. In the process, if one tends to grow more sensitive to the issues of the polity and the national predicament, it is to be considered as part of an organic process of the literary studies. The current research attempts to respond to Palestinian literature with this approach.

For Sahar Khalifeh, the act of writing itself is resistance. In the process of writing, she faces many constraints. Sahar Khalifeh became an internationally recognised writer because of her Proto-feminism. Yet, she has not been received well by her own community. She not only gives the picture of the two decades of Israeli military rule and Occupation of Palestinian Territories, but also shows overarching concern towards the condition of Palestinian women under patriarchal power structures. Unfortunately, her writings are not supported by her own people – neither men nor women. In 1991, she was attacked in the streets; there was also an attempt at assassination by the Islamists. Khalifeh states, “[c]onsequences of the Intifada . . . was that the fundamentalists became stronger. In one interview I gave at that time, I spoke out against the veil saying: “[t]hey veiled her, they minimized her.” However, the fundamentalists were furious and held the comment against me. They named me at the Friday prayer at Al-Aqsa Mosque, saying that I had to be stopped. They also spoke

against me in two mosques in Nablus. I was scared” (Khalifeh 2002). Moreover, she faced issues with the publication of her novels: there was an artificial scarcity of her novels created deliberately in the market; the manuscript of her first novel, *After the Defeat* was confiscated by the Israeli authorities. Her second novel, *We are no Longer your Slaves*, which was about the IO, was kept out of print for several years. Later the novel was reprinted in Beirut in 1974 (Sabbag 1998: 141). However, Khalifeh’s outspoken criticism in her post-1994 writings on the Palestinian Authority in general and its former leader Yasser Arafat in specific, made her a controversial domestic figure, though she has a greater international profile. She effectively portrays the presence of corruption as well as lack of leadership and misuse of political power of the Palestinian Authority. Khalifeh chose to stay in Occupied Palestine, enduring the hardships of living under occupation, while she continued her writings. Thus, Khalifeh is a special writer who dared to face multiple ideological opponents – not just the Israeli power but also the Arab patriarchy of Palestine; and all this, even as she continued to live within the Occupied Territories. These are the reasons to explore her writings.

### **1.3 LITERARY REVIEW**

Sahar Khalifeh’s novels, along with literary writings of other writers, were also subject-matter of a few such studies. Though not on a large scale, general studies have been conducted on themes of Occupation, resistance, and exile in the novels of Khalifeh. While many of these works focus on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in general and impact of IO on Palestinians in particular, comparative studies of Sahar Khalifeh’s work with that of Israeli and Sri Lankan writers have been done, which involve the issues of nationalism, gender equality, etc.

Nicola Anne Robinson’s (2014) “Resisting Developments: Land and Labour in Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan Literature” discusses the issues of capitalist developments, ethno-national issues, divisive factors between Israeli and Palestinian people and hints at the role of literature in anticipating an alternative to the current world order. The narratives of Israeli writer Yosef Benny, Palestinian writer Sahar Khalifeh, Sri Lankan writer Punyakanthe Wijenaike and Ambalavaner Sivanandan have been critically analysed in this work.

Kristen Nancy Angierski in her thesis (2014) “Reclaiming the motherland: (Eco)feminism in Sahar Khalifeh’s *The Inheritance* and *The End of Spring*”, points out that these two novels of Khalifeh engage directly with feminism (and specifically with eco-feminism). These two novels emphasise the notion that patriarchal order is a hindrance to national cause because patriarchy views women and nature below men and culture. This study emphasises women’s bodily and maternal contribution to Palestinian Liberation. The notion of motherland is linked to feminism, motherhood and reproductive capabilities.

Beanne White (2013) writes “Gender and Resistance in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Woman’s Voice in the Literary Works of Sahar Khlifeh and David Grossman”. The study engages with analysing the literary voices of the Arabic and the Hebrew language which narrate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The two novels emphasise the multiplicity of experiences of the society which consists of both Israelis and Palestinians and how they are affected by the conflict. Sahar Khlifeh’s *The Inheritance* and David Grossman’s *To the End of Land* highlight the role of gender and politics in the society and how people encounter these issues. Both Sahar Khalifeh and David Grossman depict the harmful effects of conflict on the society that consists of both Palestinians and Israelis. Sahar Khalifeh highlights women’s role in a society which is under colonial occupation. David Grossman’s novel sees the society through the eyes of a mother whose son is a soldier.

Elizabeth Brooks Prestwood’s work (2003) “Paradise Lost, and Lost Again: Limitations and Realities of Palestinian Identity in Exile, Occupied Palestine and Israel”, throws light on the meaning of Palestinian national identity through the works of Ghassan Kanafani, Liana Badr, Sahar Khalifeh and Emily Habiby. These novels represent the real life struggles of Palestinians under Israeli regime and how the people resist IO all these years in innovative ways; how the Palestinian people suffer living the day-to-day exilic life and survive in extreme situations in refugee camps.

The literary review helps to find some of the research gaps found in the previous study. The study focuses on both social and political issues represented in the literary works of Sahar Khalifeh. The previous studies had analysed Khalifeh’s narratives differently

with theoretical anchoring in theories on nationalism, Eco-feminism, and the Postcolonial predicament. But the current study deviates from above mentioned theories and looks at the Settler Colonial theories as well as radical feminism to approach the writings of Khalifeh. The themes like atrocities of IO, exile, and resistance are analysed with the Settler Colonial theories. On the other hand, patriarchal oppression has been discussed under the theories of feminism. It also addresses the issues that have not been looked into in previous studies on Khalifeh's works. Also, the present research includes the novels that have not been considered in the previous studies like *The Image*, *The Icon*, and *The Covenant*, and *Of Noble Origins*.

### **1.3.1 Sahar Khalifeh's Novels**

Of her ten novels originally written in Arabic, five have been translated into English and the same have been selected for the study:

1. *Al-Subar*, 1976, *Wild Thorns* translated by Trevor LeGassick and Elizabeth Fernea in 1984.
2. *al-Mirath*, 1996, *The Inheritance* translated by Aida Bamia in 2005.
3. *Surah wa-ayqunahwa- 'ahdqadim*, 2002, *The Image, The Icon, and The Covenant* translated by Aida Bamia in 2008.
4. *Rabi' harr*, 2004, *The End of Spring*, translated by Paula Haydar in 2008.
5. *Dar al-Adab*, 2008, *Of Noble Origins*, translated by Aida Bamia in 2012.

Khalifeh's writing clearly voices issues that are political such as impact of Israeli War, Occupation, exile and the ongoing everyday resistance in the Occupied Territories of Palestine. It also includes patriarchal oppression of Palestinian women. The above novels which were written in different times in a span of more than three decades, effectively articulate these themes. Apart from these five novels, Khalifeh's interviews, excerpted parts of autobiography, essays and lectures are also considered for this study.



## **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research aims to understand the historical, social, and political issues of Palestine through the select works of Sahar Khalifeh. The study also hopes to contribute to a better understanding of Palestinian women writers and their literary engagements.

The specific research objectives are:

1. To critically examine the multiple oppressions of Palestinians under IO represented in the literary works of Sahar Khalifeh.
2. To trace the concept of resistance as a literary idea in the context of Palestine through twentieth century and its figuration in the works of Sahar Khalifeh.
3. To explore the issues of exile and return in the novels of Sahar Khalifeh.
4. To highlight the patriarchal pressures on Palestinian women and the way they respond to it.

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODS**

The present research makes use of the methods as mentioned below:

### **1.5.1 Textual Analysis**

Textual analysis is indispensable for literary texts. Textual analysis is one of the staple research methods for English studies. It focuses on the relationship between the reader and the text. The text is constructed by an author; it is the reader who gives multiple meanings to the text through numerous (re) interpretations in the reading process. Belsey emphasises the need for the researchers to consult original sources rather than rely on second hand accounts in this process (Belsey 2007). There is a difference between discourse and textual analysis. Discourse analysis is concerned with the investigation of language, both written and oral. The aim of discourse analysis is to produce an analysis or ‘explanatory critique’ of how and to what purpose language use is invested through the deployment of specific textual features – lexical, grammatical and semantic.

### **1.5.2 Autobiography**

Autobiography is a common research method used by the researchers. It gives a clear picture of the life of the author. It provides the details of their life, experience, struggles and other hidden issues. It is the most popular genre in twentieth century where authors have expressed their 'Standpoint' and made transparent their own sexuality, ethnicity and value system. The most important aspects of research for an autobiography is the establishment of the relationship between author, subject and culture (Evans 2007).

### **1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

To delineate the scope of my analysis, I have chosen the corpus of the writings of Sahar Khalifeh that have been translated into English. The representation of Khalifeh's oeuvre is limited to the extent to which it has been represented by her translators and the researcher has not 'selected' a particular work beyond this factor. Moreover, the study will not deal with Translation Theories even though it focuses on translated novels. This would also mean that the study is limited to the narratives of Khalifeh and focuses on the plights of Palestinians in her writings. The study considers Palestinian literature produced in the Occupied Territories of Palestine and excludes Palestinian authors from Israel and other diasporic countries except as a way of entering into the study in this introductory part. This research does not intend to provide a comparative study of women's and men's writings, but highlights the issues that are marginalised in the narratives of the male writers. Also, the study will not attempt any comparative study of Western and Arab feminism.

### **1.7 ARAB WOMEN'S LITERATURE**

Women's writings have been marginalised even in Arab countries just as in many other places. Arab women authors are engaged in writing about themselves in their own languages and in English as well. But the most unfortunate thing is that the majority of Arab literary critics who are men, have ignored, misinterpreted and marginalised women authors. There are many misconceptions about women writers which are furthered by Arab male critics. Male authors consider that women's writings fail to explore the major socio-political issues of the country and do not go beyond the

confined boundaries of the issues such as love, marriage, children, home, etc. Male critics tend to assume that women are intellectually and creatively less capable. Naji says “The reason for this neglect of women’s writings perhaps lies in the fact that critics and specialists in the field still consider women’s writings an immature art that has not taken its proper place in our literature, and therefore it is difficult to assess its development” (Naji 1989: 5). This idea is so strong so as to suggest some people to dismiss the category itself because of the stigma. For example, Latifa al-Zayyat, an Egyptian writer, rejects the label ‘women’s literature’, because “in both Arab and Western literary criticism the term suggests a lack of creativity and a depreciation of women’s perceived narrow concerns” (Quoted in Shaaban 2009: 1-2). She says, with the term 'Women's literature', there is “a prejudgement made on the basis of the gender of the author and not of the written text” (ibid). The male writers like Kanafani and Jabra’s narratives were recognised also because of the wider availability of their fiction translated from Arabic to English. On the other hand, the collection of short stories written by women writers such as Samira Azzam, did not receive the same kind of response.

When it came to Arabic novels in the modern period, Arab women started to write before men and the former’s contribution to the birth of Arabic novel is significant. Bouthaina Shaaban finds a total disregard to the contributions of women novelists while studying the Arabic literature. Differences of opinions are expressed by critics regarding the first modern Arabic Novel. Shaaban in her notable work *Voices Revealed: Arab Women Novelists, 1898-2000* argues in detail that Zaynab Fawwaz (1846-1914), was the first Modern Arabic novelist, who published her first novel *Husn al-Awaqib Ghada al-Zahra*<sup>1</sup>(*Good Consequences: Ghada the Radiant*) in 1899 (ibid: 22). The writers such as Jamal al-Ghitani, Abd al-Rahman Munif, and Muhammad Dakrub also ignore the writings of women novelists. The studies with regard to the origin of the Arabic novel fail to mention a single woman novelist though they have made major contributions in this genre. When Shaaban asks Dakrub why all these male studies, including his, never mentioned a single woman novelist, he answered totally frankly

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<sup>1</sup> Ghada is used in Arabic to refer to a graceful or beautiful young woman.

“[t]he only reason I can think of is that male writers (myself included) must unconsciously believe that the literature written by women is insignificant” (ibid: 34).

The Arab women writers do not enjoy their intellectual freedom. There are many Arab women writers who encounter opposition to their writings on issues such as female sexuality, politics, and religion. These writers face many challenges. For instance, Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian feminist writer. Her first work of non-fiction, *Women and Sex* deals with the taboos about female sexuality and of female genital mutilation. Her work was banned in Egypt for nearly two decades and later it was first published in 1972. She was dismissed from her post as Egypt’s director-general of health education. Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist and feminist in her work *Doing Daily Battle*, indicates the seriousness with which women’s voices are suppressed in a light-hearted manner that men use certain “terrorist tactics” to “monopolize the symbolic values of our society. . .”. She says, they “. . . stop me from expressing myself, or . . . denigrate what I say – which comes to the same thing” (Quoted in Cohen-Mor 2005: 6). The Egyptian author Salwa Bakr acknowledges her position as an Arab woman writer:

[i]t is a heavy tax on many levels, especially in a society in which most individuals are illiterate, a society which is conservative by nature, whose values are static and which does not respect women in the first place. All this makes writing seem like the task of Sisyphus, particularly if the writer stops to think for whom she is writing (Bakr 1998: 39).

Like other women writers, Arab women writers also encounter opposition to their writings within their own families. Alifa Rifaat, an Egyptian writer, was discouraged from writing first by her father and then by her husband. Her husband threatened her with a divorce. She could publish her work freely only after the death of her husband. In spite of these private and public threats, Arab women writers are engaged in creative writing. These instances prove that the act of writing for much of women has not been an easy task and their voices were continually suppressed. The modern writings of Arab women originated in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The well-known Arab women writers of the modern period are the Lebanese Wardah al-Yaziji, Zaynab Fawwaz, and the Egyptian Aishah al-Taymuriyyah and Malak Hifni Nasif who was known as Bahithat al-Badiyah. These writers began to speak within the restricted circles

like private homes or meetings of women's charitable organisations. They were also writing in newspaper like *al-Jaridah*, *Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid*, and *al-Mahrusah*. In the nineteenth century, women were not only writing but they were also establishing newspapers. Hind Nawfal, founded in Alexandria in 1892 was the first Arabic monthly for women. Miriam Cooke says "[u]rgency and the violence of the war drove [women writers] to portray some of their most intense, traumatic experiences. . . . These women's writings reflected the mood of the war and the emergence of a feminist consciousness" (Cooke 1987: 2-3). Apart from War narratives Arab women writers challenged the customs and tradition, which were part of Arab society. They have been writing on veiling, seclusion, social segregation, circumcision, and crimes of honour imposed to women through custom. Arab women authors write differently from their male counterparts. The contemporary Arab women are outspoken, visible, active and assertive in their individualistic voices and writing and no more silent, passive, and submissive, as the stereotype would have it.

It is impressive that many Arab women novelists are currently engaged with the history of their country and people through their writing. They offer a different perspective from the history relayed for decades in the Arab world. Yet, "Arab women's texts are more often interpreted not within the anticolonialist/nationalist framework, but rather within one that ascribes the worst forms of sexism to Arab Islamic culture" (Saliba and Kattan 2000: 88).

Challenging these popular and mainstream trends, Arab women writers, nevertheless, are engaged in the field of writing, publishing and translating. Although the modern writings of Arab women originated in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it is only recently these works have attracted the interest of critics and scholars. Eventually, in the twenty-first century, the Arab women writers are progressively moving from the margins to the centre in the domain of literature. Translation plays a prime role in Arabic literature. Many Arab women's writings have been translated into English and other European and non-European languages. In the 1980s and 1990s, the renowned author and critic Salma Khadra Jayyusi started the Project of Translation from Arabic (PROTA). The authors have also received international recognition by being translated into European languages.

The well-known Palestinian critic Edward Said, the famous author of *Orientalism*, which is an academic study of cultural imperialism, investigates the inseparable relationship between imperialism and Orientalist studies, literature of the West and translations of the oriental works. Said has been a central figure in contemporary understandings not only of Palestine, but also in general, of the Middle Eastern countries. Israel and many other Western countries depict Palestine as the ‘Other’ with inflated clichés that are associated with religion, nationalism, and politics (Said 1979a). The tenor of these clichés challenges the legitimacy of the Palestinian institutions, many a time, in such attempts as branding political parties as terrorist outfits. Stereotypes on these lines are produced, circulated and reproduced in the Western world through literature, official discourses and mainstream media. This is also expressed through visual media such as photos, films, and web pages. Said in his work *Covering Islam* says that it is a common tendency to reduce Islam to a handful of rules, stereotypes, and generalizations about the faith, its founder, and its entire people. Islam is projected as violent, primitive, and fundamentalist (Said 1981: xvi). The former Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon says “[w]e are confronting Terror for 120 years, we once called it Arab Terror and it is now Palestinian Terror” (Sharon 2003). Joan Peters argues in *From Time Immemorial* that “[t]errorism is the core of the new Palestinian identity that West Bank Arabs created in 1967”. Forecasting the plight of Palestine, Peters claims that a Palestinian state would be regarded as a terror state. Perhaps it gains victory through the act of terrorism all over the globe. It also implies the defeat of America in the terror War (Quoted in Bernard 2010: 350). These arguments show that Palestinians do not have positive identity and they are often generalized as terrorists, hijackers, oil suppliers and suicide bombers. Sahar Khalifeh, in her lecture “Caught between Western Prejudices and Islamic Fundamentalists” says,

A Palestinian is a synonym to a terrorist; an Arab is a synonym to a filthy, greasy sheikh with a beard and beads, a camel in the background and a dagger behind his back. We are reduced to a picture that does not change in time or seen under a different light: A Moslem Ben Laden, a Moslem fundamentalist, a Moslem terrorist, a Moslem wrapped up woman, a Moslem filthy oil-sheikh. We are fixed in one reality, one image, one picture which is considered real and true (Khalifeh 2010).

Debunking the above mentioned notions, the representation of ‘Self’ plays a critical role in Palestinian narratives. This can be achieved by justifying and legitimising their

standpoint through writings, art, literature and visual media. These factors act in themselves as resistance to a prolonged IO. Palestinian writers and artists are challenging the preconceived and prejudiced perceptions about their socio-political being. “The desire to create an alternative world, to modify or augment the real world through the act of writing (which is one motive underlying the novelistic tradition in the West) is inimical to the Islamic world view” (Said 1975: 81). Indeed, Palestinian self-narratives are playing the role of self-assertion in order to resist the hegemonic Israeli and Western narratives. “Palestinian creative practitioners have sought to counter this narrative suppression by formulating their own multi-layered accounts of Palestinian experience and identity through the mediums of film, literature, art, and criticism” (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 1). They endeavour to portray the real (as opposed to the imagined) in their works of art. Palestinian women too, have been increasingly part of such an exercise. Sahar Khalifeh claims “[n]o one has dissected this society as I did . . . I don’t think any writer has written about the Palestinian society in an accurate way and in such frankness as I did” (Nazareth 1980: 69-70).

Fatima Mernissi also echoes the thoughts of Said in her monograph *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society*, when she asserts that “in the Arab societies where seclusion and surveillance of women prevail, the implicit concept of female sexuality is an active concept arising from the assumption that woman is a powerful and dangerous being” (Mernissi 1975: 10). The Arab women writers while representing the working, educated women, who appear in public and travel alone worldwide, deconstruct the Oriental images of women as secluded and lustful and as subordinate mothers, sisters and wives.

## **1.8 ARAB-ISRAELI WARS AND PALESTINIAN LITERATURE**

The first Arab-Israeli War that started in 1948 has been the seminal event in the history of Palestinians. This War has been described in Arab historiography as *Nakba* in Arabic which means Disaster or Catastrophe. Without taking note of the consequences of 1948 War, it is difficult to know the contemporary issue of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The impact of War was not only on socio-economic and political life of Palestinians, but also on literature of the Arab writers in general. It has left its footprints on Palestinian

identity and literary community. After the catastrophe, Israel took birth as a nation-state in 1948. The foundation of the state of Israel is a new form of colonialism that replaced the old British Mandate. This War brought tremendous geographical changes in the Palestinian mapping and resulted in creating a Palestinian community without a nation-state. Many Palestinians became citizens of the newly established Israeli state. Another group of Palestinians left the country and settled in neighbouring Arab states and other countries creating a swelling diaspora over a period of time. Among the twenty-two Arab countries that thrive with Arabic literature and culture, Palestine is one. Even though Palestinian literature is a part of Arabic literature, it is distinct in many ways. Palestinian literature is a literature written by Palestinians who are geographically dispersed in different places. The post-1948 scenario posed several questions to the Palestinian literary identity, where questions such as who is a Palestinian writer; where are they located; which are the languages they write in; what is the role of translation in Palestinian literature, became pertinent and important in shaping that identity. Prior to the 1948 War, Palestinian authors were engaged in literary activities under the rule of British Mandate. At that time, Palestinian literature dealt with patriotic themes mainly published in the local magazines and newspapers. There were also other themes in literature before Zionism became an overbearing presence around them. In the view of Naser el Din al-Asad, Palestinian literature focused on love poetry, historical and religious essays, educational text books and translations. However, in due course resistance against Zionism became prominent in literary activity. *Al-Karmil* was the first Palestinian journal founded in Haifa (1908) with an intent to oppose the Zionist Colonisation. Najib Nasser, a Palestinian journalist wrote a book in Arabic, *Zionism: Its History, Objective, and Importance*. It was the first ever book in Arabic written opposing Jewish migration and settlement. Some of the notable Palestinian writers of this time were Khalil Ibrahim Baydas, Khalil al-Sakakini, and Ishaq Musa al-Husayni.

*Naksah* (setback) of 1967, a War between Israelis and Arabs is also known as ‘The Six-Day War’. Israel won the War and started occupying the territories like Gaza Strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan and the Golan Heights from Syria. Currently, these places are under Israeli military occupation. At present, Palestinian authors live in Israel, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip or as



part of an ever-growing diaspora. They are committed to depicting the Palestinian experience which is harsh and unrelenting. Though, these writers living in different parts of the globe, they are assertive as writers from Palestine and reproduce their identity as Palestinian writers. Elad-Bouskila says “. . . Israeli-Arab writing is part of Palestinian literature that has a homeland but no state, in contrast with the writing of Palestinians in the occupied territories who have no state and only a partial homeland, the writing of diaspora Palestinians who have neither” (Elad-Bouskila 1999: 28). National identity is the central theme in Palestinian literature after the two great Wars which altered Palestinians’ lives. There is a close relationship between the process of nation building and development of literature. Palestinian authors expressed their anxiety of losing a national identity and becoming refugees in their own motherland. Joe Cleary says, “[l]iterature . . . is one of the ways in which the scattered sectors of the Palestinian people can be imaginatively connected in the here and now even if actual statehood remains constantly deferred” (Cleary 2002: 86).

Majority of Palestinian writers, apart from writing, simultaneously engaged in political activism. For instance, Kanafani was the leader and spokesperson for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Emile Habibi was a founding member of the Israeli communist party in Israel. Many Palestinian writers sacrificed their lives for the sake of Palestinian national struggle. Among them was the Palestinian poet Abd al-Raheem who died fighting in 1948. Samira Azzam died of a heart attack while she was broadcasting the news of the Arab defeat. Fadwa Tuqan, Palestinian poet, acknowledges the literary achievements of Samira after her death. She says, “Samira was a dramatic character in both her life and death. Palestine was her first and deepest passion since the exodus in 1948. The Palestinian cause was at the core of her entire literary output. Palestine was always the focal point of her vision and discussions” (Tuqan 1993: 62). Tawfiq Zayyad, the poet, is removed from his position of mayor of Nazareth by Israeli authorities for his writing. Raja Shehadeh is a Palestinian lawyer, novelist, and political activist. He is the founder of *Al-Haq* an independent Palestinian non-governmental human rights organisation. Emile Habibi is both a writer and a politician. He served as a member in the Israeli parliament (Knesset) for nineteen years as the head of Rakah Party (The Israeli Communist Party).

The act of writing and sharing historical and political experiences also intertwines with personal life forming a deep literary experience. Memoirs, reminiscences, diaries, autobiographies are also part of Palestinian literature. Apart from notable Palestinian writers, other Palestinian civilians engaged in other professions do articulate their experiences of living in Occupied Territories. In 1990, Salma Khadra Jayyusi commented that: “[o]ne of the most interesting phenomena about Palestinian literature today is the abundance of personal account literature” (Jayyusi 1992: vii). Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish is a Palestinian physician and infertility expert. He has written a memoir *I Shall Not Hate* (2010). He narrates his own experiences of growing up in Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza with his parents and siblings. He shares the experiences of War, loss, privation and suffering.

The work highlights the Israeli domination, restrictions and violence on Palestinians through military rule. His three daughters were killed by Israeli soldiers in January 2009. After this great personal loss, he still expresses his hope and reconciliation: “[i]f I could know that my daughters were the last sacrifice on the road to peace between Palestinians and Israelis, then I would accept their loss” (Abuelaish 2010: 217). The Palestinian autobiographies written in English also got significant market and worthy reviews. Some notable Palestinian memoirists are Raja Shehadeh, Jean Said Makdisi, Edward Said, Suad Amiry, Muna Hamzeh, Ghada Karmi, Ramzy Baroud and Sari Nusseibeh. These memoirs depict the Palestinian struggle thickly. Moreover, “Palestinian literature is primarily about the suffering and the struggle of a particular section of humanity caught in the toils of a well-engineered political situation imposed on them without their consent and through no fault of their own” (Jayyusi 1992: 71).

## **1.9 THE GENRE OF NOVEL**

The genre of novel is the best way to express harsh realities in a profound way as many think, because of its capacity to go into much depth. An important leader of the Palestinian movement, Yasser Arafat believed that novel can bring national consciousness among Palestinians and it is a creative, aesthetic way of expressing the emotions of the Palestinians. He remarks in an interview with Mu’in Bsisu that “[o]ur Palestinian, Lebanese, and Arab poets and writers have composed odes and articles

which have become part of the siege . . . but I am waiting for more; I am waiting for the novel which will penetrate Arab public opinion and not just break the windows of the house” (Quoted in Cleary 2002: 190). Mahmoud Darwish remarked in an interview that:

[t]he form to which I most aspire to fulfil now is in the novel. There is no one in this age that I envy more than the novelists because the novel can expand to include everything. . . . In the novel you can sing, and speak poetry, prose, ideas, and practically everything (ibid).

Khalil Ibrahim Baydas is considered the father of Palestinian fiction. *Al-Warith (The Heir)* is the first Palestinian novel by Baydas. This novel set in Syria, and deals with the love between a Jewish actress and a Syrian orphan. The Palestinian literature, both poetry and prose, chronicles the historic events. The massacres of Dayr Yassin<sup>2</sup> and Kafr Qassim<sup>3</sup>, the disaster of 1948, the defeat in the War of 1967 are the main themes. It also dealt with the issues of destruction of Arab villages and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. Emile Habibi is one of the most accomplished Palestinian intellectuals in both Arab and Jewish milieus. His first novel *al-Mutasha'il (The Secret Life of Saeed the Pessoptimist)* deals with the destruction of Arab villages in the wake of the War of 1948. This novel gave him recognition throughout the Arab world. Before writing this novel Habibi had done a lot of research. He had collected the factual details about the Arab villages and population from the documents, certificates and newspaper cuttings. Further, he was a well-read man in the masterpieces of both the classical Arab and world literature. His writing condemns the war and the carnage that the state of Israel committed against Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular. Said says that it is an “epistolary novel . . . unique in Arabic tradition in that it is consistently ironic, exploring a marvellously controlled energetic style to depict the peculiarly ‘outstanding’ and ‘invisible’ condition of Palestinians inside Israel” (Said 1979b: 83).

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<sup>2</sup> Dayr Yassin massacre occurred in April 1948. It was an Israeli military attack on Palestinian civilians. Around 250 Palestinians were killed in this incident.

<sup>3</sup> In October 1956, Israeli forces imposed a curfew on Kafr Qasim village. Many Palestinian men who were working in the fields were unaware of the curfew. They were shot as they came home.

Talking about novel in an interview in 1989 with Salma Jayyusi, Fadwa Tuqan, suggested that the demands of giving expression to the Palestinian struggle called for a literary form more capacious in its scope than poetry. “I find,” she remarked:

that the poem is no longer capable of accommodating the riches of the intifada experience in all its aspects. Poetry alludes, but oblique reference does not seem to be enough at the moment. I dream of a bigger work, a work that can accommodate my vision of those great happenings more than the poem can, and I have become haunted with the idea of writing a novel that embraces all aspects of the intifada (Tuqan 1993: 203).

Ghassan Kanafani also favours the novel as an important genre. “Politics and the novel are inseparable case and I can categorically state that I became politically committed because I am a novelist, not the opposite” (Kanafani 1972: 138). Thus, litterateurs have expressed their opinions about the novel as the best genre to deal with the travails of human struggle rather than poetry or other forms of literature.

### **1.10 ISRAELI CENSORSHIP**

After the 1948 War, it became difficult for Palestinian authors to have contact with other Arab writers because of the strict censorship: Palestinian writers faced multiple constraints in the act of writing and publishing. The various forms of censorship and restrictions – especially on travel – were imposed on writers and also on the availability of their literary production to their readership. Military censorship, confiscation and banning of the books and death threats have been common experiences for Palestinian intellectuals. Palestinian writers are frequently arrested in the period that followed the two Wars. Francesca Billiani defines censorship as “an act, often coercive and forceful, that – in various ways and under different guises – blocks, manipulates and controls the establishment of cross-cultural communication [and] functions as a filter in the complex process of cross-cultural transfer encouraged by translation” (Billiani 2014: 3-4). She describes “censorship [as operating] largely according to sets of specific values and criteria which are established by a dominant body over a dominated one” (ibid). Amit-Kochavi describes the difference between sanctions and censorship. According to him “[s]anctions are . . . those particular cases where censorship is not only imposed in order to prevent the publication and dissemination of particular translated texts, but also as punishment for the attempt to do so” (Amit-Kochavi 2010: 92). In his words, sanctions

not only curb the freedom of expression but also end up in punishing the author. Forough Rahimi and Mohammad Javad Riasati, define the act for censorship exercised on translated works as “[i]nvestigating the manipulatory mechanism used as an assault on original text in order to alter their meaning and exclude the reader from the choices made in the source language” (Rahimi and Riasati 2011: 5786). Censorship can be divided into four categories roughly as self-censorship, preventive censorship, repressive censorship and structural censorship.

Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, in his article “The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation”, traces the role of Israeli military censorship on the writings of Palestinian authors. He explains how the Hashemite/Israeli rule is curbing directly and indirectly the publication of literature which is of political and social significance in the West Bank region. The occupiers through direct and indirect censorship through educational and social institutions, clubs, and ruthless political oppression tried to keep away the literature of the Palestinians from the International literary community. The censorship laws of Israeli state have been inherited from the British Mandate over Palestine (1917-1948) which applies to films, theatrical works and the literature produced originally in Hebrew or Arabic. Hence, this censorship could not be applied to the translated works. The translation of Arabic literature posed a great threat to Israeli regime. Furthermore, Ashrawi says, “[t]hese laws are neither explicitly formulated nor openly published, but in practice they are arbitrarily enforced . . .” (Ashrawi 1978: 78-79).

Apart from censorship, different kinds of sanctions were imposed by the Israeli authorities, press and the people on the publication of Arabic literature into Hebrew. Sanction or censorship is imposed on the publication and circulation of translated Arab literary works as the authorities or the public perceive the publication a threat to their socio-political system. Usually translation of literary works and the reviews are published in the literary sections of the dailies or in the literary journals. When a particular writer wins literary prize it appears in the main section of the newspapers and attracts public attention. Arabic literature is being translated into Hebrew over a century but very few are published though they have won many literary prizes. At the same time it aggravates the ongoing conflict between Israelis and Arabs. But few Israelis who admire Arab literature want a peaceful solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The well-known Arabic poetess Fadwa Tuqan was made known to the Israelis through Israeli General Moshe Dayyan who admired her poetry. Few of her poems were translated into Hebrew; only short extracts of her poems were translated and published in a literary journal, *Qesbet*. But her autobiography was published in Hebrew where she expressed her willingness to devour the liver of an Israeli. She said that it is a metaphorical expression for opposing the IO; but this became a scandal and she was condemned by all the Israelis. She was called cannibal by the Israelis. But this public censure never deterred the publication of her writings. The small radical publishing house *Mifras* never stopped publishing her books. This is an instance of public censure. But the Israeli reviewers never mentioned her liver-eating poem though they continued to appreciate her talent being an Arab woman and her writing in a situation of IO. Mohamoud Darwish, who was regarded as the national poet of Palestine, encountered a public sanction for the publication of his poem “Passing in Passing words” in the year 1988. He was well-known to Israeli readers and was well acquainted with several left wing Israeli writers whom he used to meet in literary events. He left Israel in 1970 and lived in the Soviet Union. In his poem “Identity Card”, he expressed his pride being an Arab. This poem was translated to Hebrew and was published in an academic Journal *Hamizrab be- Hadash* (The New Orient) in the year 1965. After leaving Israel in the year 1970, he played his cultural role in Palestinian Liberal Organisation which was considered a terrorist organisation by the Israeli Government and Israelis were barred from having contact with that organisation. His poem “Passing in Passing words” was published in a Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Anba’a* with his photograph and a picture of *Al-Aqsa* mosque of Jerusalem. Israelis thought it was supporting the first *Intifada* of Palestinians. The vagueness of the poem led to many Hebrew translations within a short period. These translations published in the dailies were commented and interpreted by the journalists and none of these reviewers were literary experts. This scandal led to the life-long sanction imposed on him even after his death in the year 2008.

Raymonda Tawil was arrested by Israeli authorities for her outspoken statements about the injustices of military occupation against the Palestinian population. Due to the IO it is difficult for the Arab readers to access literary works. For example, Ghassan Kanafani’s literary works have been forbidden in the Israeli-Occupied Territories of the

West Bank and Gaza. One of the poems of Darwish was opposed in Israel and not allowed to be in the Israeli school curriculum. Rashid Khalidi has noted, “[o]ften . . . permission cannot be granted for a Palestinian voice to be heard – even on matters having absolutely nothing to do with Israel – without the reassuring presence of its Israeli echo. The opposite, of course, is not true” (Khalidi 1997: 146-147). Despite the censorship, politically committed writers continued to write and publish their works because of their ability of perseverance. On the other hand, the above mentioned instances are the reflection of Israeli hegemonic cultural predisposition toward modern Palestinian literature and culture.

### **1.11 PALESTINIAN LITERATURE IN ISRAEL**

All of a sudden Palestinians became minority with the establishment of the state of Israel in the year 1948. They became Israeli citizens though they retained their Palestinian nationality. Yet, there was a transformation in Palestinian identity as refugees, Israeli-Arabs, or Israeli-Palestinians. The literature created by Palestinian community in Israel is known as Israeli-Arab writings. The Palestinian literature produced in Israel as well as in diasporic countries is known as minority literature. Palestinians are national minority in Israel and their relationship with Jewish majority is strenuous one.

The identity of these authors was problematic and a complex one. Very few Palestinian writers courageously wrote about social and political issues and criticized the authorities and represented the harsh realities faced by the minority Palestinians under the majority government. The first phase of Israeli-Arab literature of 1948 deals with the Arab defeat, the problem of the refugees, loss of land, Jewish-Arab relations, impact of exile, discrimination, racism and the status of women. Some other writers wrote about the subjects that did not antagonize the establishment. They wrote about the initiatives taken by the government in the field of agriculture, industry, and medicine and even applauded the progress made in these fields. Palestinian authors in Israel regard land as a means of livelihood and they were under the strong impression that the Israeli government was doing all that to oust the Palestinians from their land. They are attached to the land and they regard that land uplifts their spiritual life; it is the material

foundation of their collective identity, which is reflected in their literature. This belongingness to the land is one of the important and unique features of Palestinian literature. The literature of Palestinian minority in Israel expresses its resistance in steady, subtle and diverse ways to the Israeli establishment and degrades those who collaborate with the government (Taha 2000: 223). Current writing focuses on the individual experiences of growing up in Israel and exposure to Hebrew language and culture.

Mahmoud Darwish, bases his poetry mostly on the nationalist theme. It deals predominantly with Palestinian resistance and struggle. His poems greatly foster the Arab identity. The poem “Identity Card” reflects the importance of the Arab identity coded with social, economic, political, and religious identities. On the other hand, the poem confirms the need and necessity for the Arab writers to vocally announce their identity as “Arab”.

Write down:  
I am a [sic] Arab  
My I.D. number is 50,000  
My children, eight  
And the ninth is due next summer  
Does that anger you? (Darwish 1988: 199).

He describes the War of 1948 as “perplexing time”. That made him leave his village Galilee where he grew up. Later he was in exile for several years. He started to write poems at the age of sixteen years. He hopes revolutionary poetry would bring change in Arab lives. He immensely contributed to the resistance poetry that deals with oppression, occupation, resistance and liberation. His poems lament over the loss of Palestinian homeland. He published the poem “My Father” in 1966 in which he says,

My father once said:  
He who has no homeland  
Has no grave on earth (Darwish 1982: 148).

Since leaving Israel in 1970, Darwish has travelled all over the world reading his poems of resistance and residing in different places.



Samih al-Qasim is an Arab-Israeli poet who published his poems when he was eighteen years of age. His village – Rana in Galilee was bombed by Israelis after the 1948 war. He was arrested on the first day of the Six-Day War of 1967. His poems were censored before publication. But his poems have become famous and the people recite them from memory. His poems have been set to music and the singers such as Marcel Khalife took his poem “Muntasib al-qamati, amshi” to the level of anthem of a generation (Kassis 2015: 44). When his first collection of poems *Mawakib al-shams* (Processions of the Sun), was published in 1958, Israeli authorities began to pester him and thus he was sacked from his job of teaching. His books were seized, his movements were observed by the authorities. However he was firm and was regarded a sworn enemy of Zionism. He struggled through his entire life against the Israeli mission of depriving the Palestinians’ right over their native land (Kassis 2015: 45). Another of his works, *Aghani al-Durub* (*Songs of Alleys*) was under Israeli military censorship. After the censorship, nothing was left in his work except empty pages. So he refused the Israeli military censorship for his next literary work *Waiting for the Thunder bird*, in 1969. For this reason, his work was confiscated and he was arrested. He writes

They turned my wound into an inkwell,  
So I write with shrapnel  
And sing for peace (al-Qasim 1969: 121)

He was the founding member of *Al-Ard*, a cultural movement committed to the Palestinian cause.

There are some pivotal Israeli-Arab authors who opted to be bilingual. In addition to their legacy of writing in Arabic, they started writing and publishing in Hebrew. Before the birth of Israel, writers hardly wrote in Hebrew. Only a few Israeli-Arab authors write both in Arabic and Hebrew. A small number of Palestinian writers who went through the formal Israeli education system choose to write in Hebrew, the language of hegemony. These writers write for both Arab and Jewish audience. They also write for other readers outside Israel. Critics have mixed opinions about Palestinian authors writing in Hebrew. Huda Abu Mukh says:

Writing in Hebrew does not necessarily guarantee the entrance of Palestinian literature into the Israeli canon. Massive efforts are still being conducted to marginalize their literature. They are not

only marginal and exceptional writers in their natural cultural milieu, but they also do not enter the gates of Hebrew literature as proud Arab-Palestinians (Quoted in Mendelson-Maoz 2014: 25).

The trend of writing in Hebrew by Israeli-Arabs began to crystallise in the year 1960. The first author to write in Hebrew was Atallah Mansour. He is a renowned journalist who worked for Israeli newspaper *Ha'Aretz*, for many years. He wrote *In a New Light* (1966), the first Hebrew novel by an Arab writer. The other writers are Anton Shammas and Naim Arayidi. Both these writers belong to religious minority. Anton Shammas is a Christian and Naim Arayidi, a Druze<sup>4</sup>. They have contributed to both poetry and prose. In the initial stages of his literary career, Shammas published his poems both in Hebrew and Arabic. He published his anthology of poetry in Arabic, *Asir Yaqzati Wanawmi (Imprisoned in My Own Awakening and Sleep)* and in Hebrew, *Krikha Kashah (Hardcover)*. Shammas began writing in his mother tongue and later decided to write only in Hebrew. He gained his reputation after writing his quasi-autobiographical novel *Arabeskot (Arabesques)* in 1986. This novel has been translated into many languages, though not yet into Arabic. The novel mirrors the humiliation of the Arabs living as second-class citizens in Israel. The main agenda of Israeli education system is “fading out the Arab personality in Israel in the first stage, and demanding in the second stage, that faded personality to fit in the state”. The purpose was to grow “tongue-amputated people . . . with no cultural past, and no future. Just an improvised present and a loose personality” (Shammas 1981: 44-45).

Naim Arayidi elaborates, the dichotomy of being bilingual is not about learning the new language (Hebrew), but about forgetting the old language (Arabic). His poems deal with his love for the land. In his writings, he emphasises his position of being caught between the two cultures: Hebrew and Arabic. Arayidi in his interview with Caspi and Welseh gives ample reasons for writing in Hebrew. The first reason is that his education was in Hebrew. Apart from that, being a citizen of Israel he was also disconnected from the Arab tradition, language and literature. He considers writing in Hebrew gives him wider exposure to Western literary influences.

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<sup>4</sup> A religious minority of Arab descent located in Israel.

Sayed Kashua is the most prominent Arab writer in Israel. He has written many novels in Hebrew. His first work was *Aravim rokdim (Dancing Arabs)*, an autobiography. He speaks about growing up in a boarding school where he was exposed to Hebrew language, literature and culture. He says, “I wanted to tell the Israelis a story, the Palestinian story. Surely when they read it they will understand, when they read it they will change, all I have to do is write and the occupation will end” (Kashua 2014). He has expressed an optimistic point of view about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and his choice of writing in Hebrew. In this pretext, his agenda of writing in Hebrew is to tell the Palestinian story which would change the minds of the Israelis. He hopes to end the occupation through the act of writing. His corpus of novels has been translated into fifteen languages.

The Arab writers in Israel are not bothered by the Arab and Jewish critics, commenting on the choice of language. These writers are more concerned about how they define themselves in a better way and clarify their choice to articulate their sufferings and struggles as Palestinians. Shammass says, “[t]his is a conscious act of camouflage. I use Hebrew as camouflage cover. But all this is in my mind. The younger generation in the village will read it all [anyway], know what is true and what not, and will undoubtedly pursue me until my dying day” (Quoted in Bouskila 1999: 54).

### **1.12 PALESTINIAN LITERATURE IN DIASPORIC COUNTRIES**

Many Palestinians lost their home after the War and lived in the refugee camps without basic amenities. A few Palestinian authors write about the life in refugee camps. Fawaz Turki, a poet who grew up in a Beirut refugee camp, presents the pathetic condition in the camp: of hunger, poor sanitation, and hopelessness. Prominent Palestinian prose writer like Ghassan Kanafani, in his novel *Men in the Sun and All That's Left to You* and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, in *The Ship*, depict the sufferings of women and children in refugee camps. In Palestinian literature, the complex life in the refugee camp has become a living symbol of struggle. Ever since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, the story of Palestine has been a long narrative of massacres, land confiscation, dispossession, deportation and assassination. Palestinian literature elaborates the different varieties of human suffering under colonial rule.

A good number of Palestinian authors left their homeland and settled in different countries. These writers, as ‘outsiders’ started to narrate their individual experiences of exile, occupation, and identity in all respective genres. They wrote in English as well as in Arabic. The famous Palestinian writers of fiction who lived outside Palestine are Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Samira Azzam, and Ghassan Kanafani.

The poets who were in Palestine prior to the establishment of the state of Israel in the year 1948 were affected by the partition of Palestine and they feared curbing of their freedom of expression if they continued there. They were dispersed in the surrounding Arab countries, Europe and America. Many sought aid meant for refugees from United Nations and used their own resources to get higher education in foreign countries. With that education they were able to enhance their knowledge of world literature and were able to have broader themes and avenues for their writings. Some of them like Jabra, Tawfiq Sayigh, and Mucin Basisu went beyond the Palestinian experiences for their literature (Asfour 1984: 107-108).

Noami Shihab Nye is a Palestinian-American poet of Post-modernist times who subtly narrates her dual identity and “twoness” in her poems. America is a country where people of all races, cultures and backgrounds live together and they are all Americans. Duality or ‘twoness’, two warring ideals in one-body is a feature of Americanness. In Post-modernism a solution can be found for the double consciousness and duality of the Americans. It is evidently seen in the name – Noami Shihab Nye – representing her dual identity, having two surnames, one of her father who is an Arab and another of her husband. Her mother is an American and her grandparents from her mother’s side are Americans and from her father’s side, are Arabs. This is conveyed in her poem “Different ways of Prayers”. She mingles and mixes these dualities and is comfortable with her situation. In her poetry she regards her roots an asset rather than a liability. In her poem, she says. She is not offended to be called a “Palestinian-American” and to be “different” is a compliment and not an insult. This is the bottom line in Nye’s thinking. In her poem “My Father and Fig tree”, she portrays the postcolonial situation where the words suggesting ethnic and racial differences are discussed. This poem discusses the duality and the tensions arising out of it through rich metaphors. She narrates her fathers' attachment with fig trees and an indifference to other trees. Her

father is used to talk about and tell stories about fig trees. Fig tree is a symbol of Palestinians' roots. People plant fig trees in every village of Palestine. But it does not show a sense of deprivation in this poem. Her father was able to plant a tree in Dallas, Texas and her father's dream becomes a reality. Fig tree acts as a symbol of identity for Nye. She feels at home in America as well as in Palestine. She is a cosmopolitan because her identity not only cuts across American-Palestinian borders but across global lines (Alkhadra 2013: 190).

Suheir Hammad who is another well-known Palestinian-American poet, born in Jordan in the year 1973 and migrated to America when she was five years of age, with her family. She has studied in Brooklyn but never graduated, but she has won many awards for her writings. She wrote a memoir "Drops of this story" at the age of nineteen, regarding her growing up in Brooklyn as a Palestinian refugee, which was published four years later. Her poetry collections are *Born Palestinian, Born Black* (1996), *Zaatar Diva* (1996) and *Breaking Poems* (2008). Her poetry is the best illustration for "talking back" a strategy of discourse that responds to, contests, and challenges the structures of domination. Her memoir, three poetry collections strongly reflect the device of 'talking back', in response to the hegemonic domination (Oumlil 2013: 850).

Hammad's poetry "Into Egypt" deals with "Arab Spring" and reflects the diasporic dimensions through collaborative videos. Her poetic creativity exposes not only colonialism and racism but also patriarchy and sexism. Her writings rooted in Islamic metaphors as well as the metaphors drawn from her own surroundings show her status of in-between-ness. She adopts the hip-hop cultural form originated in New York in the 1970s and 1980s to access the mainstream which has become popular and includes break dance, graffiti and tagging. She applies both content and form to talk back to power where cultural forms circulate through demonstrations.

Apart from these two Palestinian-American poets, there are notable Palestinian-American novelists who have contributed immensely. The notable ones are Susan Muaddi Darraj (*The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*, 2007), Ibrahim Fawal (*On the Hills of God*, 1998), Shaw Dallah (*Scattered like Seeds*, 1998) and Susan Abulhawa (*Mornings in Jenin*, 2010 and *The Blue between Sky and Water*, 2015).

The writers who live and write from diasporic spaces have escaped the perils of IO. These writers enjoy more intellectual freedom and are free from Israeli censorship. Though they live in distant territorial context, they preserve their ethnic identity as Palestinian authors. In Palestinian-American poet and journalist, Fawaz Turki's words, "I may have lived a different life from other Palestinians, but I have, nevertheless, lived a quintessentially Palestinian life" (Turki 1994: 257).

### **1.13 PALESTINIAN WOMEN'S LITERATURE FROM THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES**

With the staunch support for Zionism and the Jewish political movement, Israel took its birth as a nation-state. This new form of colonial rule is replaced by British Mandate that ended in 1948. Israel consequently occupied the remaining territories of Palestine during the Six-Day War or *Naksa* in 1967. IO can be termed as colonial in character due to the exploitation of native land and expulsion of natives from their homeland.<sup>5</sup> The takeover of the Arab land was the main motive of Israel after being victorious in the War. To further the Zionist mission, the Jews encouraged the act of Judaisation of the Arab owned land and prevented Arabs from buying more lands. The Palestinian lands of West Bank and Gaza were permanently occupied by Israel; these regions came to be called as Occupied Territories. The literature that is produced from these territories deals with the relationship between Palestinians and Jews and the conflict among them. The literature produced from the Occupied Territories covers multiple issues such as confiscation of Palestinian lands, demolition of houses, interrogation and humiliation of Palestinians at Israeli check points, effect of internal and external exile on Palestinian community. On the whole, the brutality of IO and resistance to the same is the theme of this literature.

The writers from the Occupied Territories like Fadwa Tuqan, Raymonda Tawil, Liana Badr and Sahar Khalifeh blend nationalism and feminism in their literature for the Palestinian cause. These Palestinian women writers are not only the keen observers of political issues but also are active participants in political and cultural activism. Liana Badr worked with women's organisations in refugee camps in Beirut. In 1989, she

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<sup>5</sup> The nature of this colonial domination would be discussed in the second chapter.

founded the Women's Affairs Centre at Nablus in West Bank. Badr says in an interview, "[m]y struggle for emancipation as a Palestinian is inseparable from my struggle for genuine liberation as a woman; neither of them valid without the other" (Shaaban 1988: 164). Suad Amiry, another Palestinian writer, founded the Centre of Architectural Conservation in Ramallah (RIWAQ).

Palestinian women on the West Bank are making gigantic contribution through the act of writing. Among them Fadwa Tuqan was a pioneer poet. Her life was bound by restrictions imposed by her father. As a result, she had very limited formal education. She lived in the constraints of *harem* (Seclusion) which restricted her exposure to the public life. On the other hand, her thirst for learning was supported by her brother Ibrahim Tuqan. He was her mentor and a poet, a playwright and was a Palestinian radio director in 1941. She began her literary career by writing love poems in the late 1930s with a pseudonym Dananir<sup>6</sup>. Tuqan wrote her autobiography *A Mountainous Journey* which was published in 1985 and was translated into English in 1990. Her autobiography reflects her life as an Arab woman in a patriarchal society. She is a well-known romantic poet in Palestine. After the sudden death of her brother Ibrahim, her father urged Fadwa to write political poems. She says,

[h]ow and with what right does Father ask me to compose political poetry, when I shut up in these walls? I don't sit with the men, I don't listen to their heated discussions, nor do I participate in the turmoil of life on the outside. I'm still not acquainted with the face of my own country, since I am not allowed to travel (Tuqan 1990: 107).

In her autobiography, she says that she was not able to participate in the Palestinian national movement because of the constraints imposed on women in the Arab world. She critiques the patriarchal phallogocentric domination that imposes restrictions on women's education, travel, and participation in social and political turmoil. After the War of 1967, she joined the group of resistance poets. Further, understanding the realities of IO on West Bank, her poetry shifted from personal mode of expression to political tunes. Her poetry focuses on the theme of Palestinian struggle, and she has made significant contribution to its poetry of resistance. Both Sahar Khalifeh and

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<sup>6</sup> Dananir was a slave poet from Medina.

Raymonda Tawil are founders of the Arab Women's Union in Nablus during the 1967 invasion. The agenda of the union is to provide economic needs for the displaced villagers after the 1967 invasion. Tawil was an editor in a local Palestinian journal *Al-Awda* (Return) which was closed down by the Israeli authorities. This journal became well-known in the United States and Europe. Raymond Tawil wrote her autobiography *My Home, My Prison* in 1979, published when the author was under house detention in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Her objective of writing is to provide 'a bridge' between the Occupied Territories and the outside world. Before the IO, she formed a literary salon in her home which helped the diplomats, intellectuals and local officials to meet and debate. In her autobiography, she shares experiences of women's participation in demonstrations that were carried out against the demolition of homes by Israeli military. Both Khalifeh and Tawil convinced Israeli authorities to set up the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) ware house in order to provide basic facilities to the refugees.

Another prominent Palestinian novelist is Liana Badr who returned to the West Bank in 1994 after eleven years of exile. She represents the issues of war and female forms of resistance in her works. Her novels share the experience of subaltern women refugees. Her personal experience of diasporic dislocation is the central theme of her works. Her novels are *Bousala min Ajl 'Abbad al-Shams (A Compass for the Sunflower)*, 1989; *Nujum Ariba (The Star of Jericho)*, 1993; *Ayn al-mir'a (The Eye of the Mirror)*, 1991; and *Shurfa 'ala-l-fakihani (A Balcony over the Fakihani)*, 1983. Her novels deal with the themes such as exile, psychological trauma, physical displacement and nostalgia. Her novel *The Eye of the Mirror* depicts the devastation faced by the Palestinian inhabitants of the Tal Ezza' tar refugee camp. In this novel, the protagonist Aisha suffers a dual colonisation through her refugee status as well as through patriarchal control. Badr uses personal testimony, documentation, and oral narratives to write this novel. Badr enjoyed certain privileges living abroad, free from the life of occupation in Palestine and Israeli censorship; yet she faced problems in finding a publisher because of her constant uprooting. She has been able to find publishers in Damascus, Lebanon, Morocco, and Egypt and her books reflected her life of exile. However, she was not able to publish her books where she resided. "Whenever she



moved into another country she had to establish everything from zero” (Saliba and Kattan 2000: 101).

Suad Amiry is a prolific writer and architect who is interested in the protection of architectural heritage. She has lived a significant amount of her life under IO. She wrote her memoir *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, which is about her own experience of spending forty-two days under a curfew imposed by the Israeli military on the residents of Ramallah in 2002. Another acclaimed work of hers, *Nothing to Lose but Your Life* is about Palestinian life under IO and displacement. Her recent work *Golda Slept Here* articulates the lives of individual members of Palestinian families who were expelled from their homes in West Jerusalem. Her writings capture the regular absurdity of life under occupation and she criticises the ills within Palestinian society especially regarding violent resistance. She is a staunch supporter of non-violent way of resisting the occupation and strongly condemns the acts of suicide attacks. The contemporary Palestinian women novelists like Sahar Khalifeh, Liana Badr and Suad Amiry write about the hardships of occupation, exile and resistance in their literary works that have become the core of Palestinian literature. The growing Palestinian women’s literature has produced the authentic and varied voices of Palestinian women under IO.

#### **1.14 SAHAR KHALIFEH**

Sahar Khalifeh is a prominent Arab writer in the second half of the twentieth century. She was born in 1941 as the fifth daughter among nine children in the city of Nablus on the West Bank. As a child, she was interested in writing and painting. And she was always in a dilemma to choose between painting and writing. In the Arab world at that time, art was associated with looseness. Her father was a merchant and her mother was a home maker. She says the dominant institutions like education system, the traditions, the religion, and the mores trained women to suppress their natural feelings, sentiments and sex drives. Khalifeh’s parents put a lot of restriction on her because she was a girl. They did not encourage her to practice art and study in a university. Even restrictions were imposed on her to stay at home. Much of the Arab world was conditioned to control women’s nerves and abilities from their childhood. Immediately after her graduation from a provincial high school in Amman, Khalifeh was forcefully married

to a bank manager. After the marriage she was living in Libya and her married life was unhappy. She gave birth to two daughters. She decided to end her thirteen years of marriage and took divorce from her husband in 1972. She then determined to continue her education at the age of thirty-three. She obtained her B.A. degree at Birzeit University in Palestine. Then, she moved to United States, where she received her M.A. in literature from the University of North Carolina. She earned her doctorate in Women's Studies and American literature from the University of Iowa. After coming to her native land, apart from writing the novels, she actively participated in the Palestinian freedom movement. In 1989, she founded the Women's Affairs Centre at Nablus, a town on the West Bank. It is an organisation focusing on women's economic and political empowerment. Her most recent venture has been to produce a television series which provides entertainment through subjects such as hygiene, women's and children's health, importance of education, awareness about gender discrimination and so on. She is using electronic media to educate the mass which is very influential and effective.

Khalifeh is a recipient of numerous accolades and recognition around the globe for her remarkable contribution to literature, to women's issues and socio-political issues as well. She has received Peace Award from Women of Colour Association, Iowa in 1984, Alberto Moroccan Award of International Fiction in 1996, Award from Birzeit University for creativity and commitment to women's development in 1999, Qassim Amin medal for Women's writing in 1999, Award for Creative and Artistic Excellence, from the University of Al Cola, Spain in 2003, and award for creativity and literary commitment from Petra University, Amman, Jordan in 2005.

#### **1.14.1 Choice of Language**

Khalifeh has made a unique and major contribution to the Palestinian and women's literature. She prefers to write in Arabic rather than in English. The Arabic that Khalifeh uses differs from that of the Arab writers writing from the Arab world. She uses the colloquial language to depict the sufferings of Palestinians. She rejects the hegemonic language and its influences on her writings (Sabbagh 1998: 140). The language she chooses is significant as English is encoded with the ideology of power and dominance.

She articulates the issues of Palestine without using the language of the dominant. She continues the legacy of the Arabic writers who address the colonial question writing in classical Arabic in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as the most worthy weapon against colonialism. Her writing in Arabic runs against subordination to hegemony. It is also an attempt to preserve their mother tongue from the colonial language that may attempt to displace, rupture or perpetuate such frame of knowledge on the other.

### **1.14.2 Importance of Translation**

Edward Said argues that translated Arabic works are “an intelligent and useful thing to promote better understanding of our language, our experience, our senses of self and others” and “a resistance to the images that confined [us] to spaces designed to reduce or stunt us” (Said 2000: 12). According to him, the art of translation works as “a sign of cultural protest against discrimination” (Said 1986: 260). It is very interesting to know about how the writings of Arab women writers are received in the West. The study done by Amal al- Ayoubi, *The Reception of Arab Women Writers in the West*, throws light on the subject, selecting three Arab women writers. One of them is Sahar Khalifeh whose novel *Wild Thorns* has been analysed for this study. *Wild Thorns* was originally published by a joint Israeli-French publishing house resulting in its publication in Arabic, Hebrew and French in the year 1976. There was a general thinking that the Westerners look at the Oriental literature with prejudice. Khalifeh’s novel *Wild Thorns* was received well by the Anglo-American readers because of its political nature. The translations have taken the way to make it an “easy read”. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the predicaments of the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories and how women played their role under IO – the themes she handled subtly in her novel – are well received by the Western readers. The success of her novel owes to the effective translation of Palestinian idiom into readable English. This study observes that her other novels did not receive the reception that *Wild Thorns* got. Because of the political context of her novel, the publishers did not take interest in publishing the novels of this genre, the study says. Her other novels are discussed and analysed in the literary magazines, journals and special issues related to literature; but they did not come to the forefront of mainstream world literature. The translation of

Khalifeh's novel changed the general notion of the Americans about *Intifada* in Palestine that was in the news at that time. This novel provided a different picture of the Palestinians' struggle and threw light on various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

It is the tussle between the mainstream and the left publishing power that is responsible for the lack of reception of her other novels, the researcher opines. This researcher comes to the conclusion that the highly political nature of her first novel, and translation thereof, hindered the translation of her other novels. The publishers consider the financial aspect of publication. But her novels have been translated into many other European/Western languages other than English. Her novel *Bab al Saha* was translated into French and the French readers considered it a classic of Arab feminist literature. The Frankfurt book fair in 2004 published the translation of her novels as the main theme of the book fair was Arabic literature. *Abbad al Shams* was translated into Dutch, French and German. Her *Memoirs of an unrealistic woman* was translated into Italian and German in the year 1995. Journals devoted to women writers like *Belle Letters* focused on political and social issues raised by Sahar Khalifeh in her novels. Undoubtedly, she was well-received and analysed in the literary journals, literary festivals. Her aesthetic sense was admired and she was extolled for her portrayal of Palestinian realities (al- Ayoubi 2006: 263-270). Khalifeh views the act of translation in a positive note. In her interview with Jaber she says,

translating some of our good works could draw the attention of others to the ethical and human aspects of our culture, and it could help them understand certain dimensions to our causes and demands that they haven't been able to grasp, mainly due to our military and political shortcomings. Through translation, we learn and teach, enrich and get enriched. And through cultural exchange the distance between us and others shrinks (Jaber: 2009).

Khalifeh's novels reached the English speaking world only through the act of translation. The agencies such as PROTA have proactively translated novels by Ghassan Kanafani, Emil Habibi, Sahar Khalifeh, and Liana Badr.

### 1.14.3 Literary Contributions

Sahar Khalifeh has written novels, short stories and essays in Arabic; six of her novels have been translated into nine languages. After Palestinian writer Mahmoud Darwish, she is the most frequently translated author in Palestine. She has written political novels focusing on two major issues: the Palestinian struggle and the feminist struggle. She started her literary career by writing poetry. However, she prefers to write novels where she can effectively depict the Palestinian life situations. In her novels, Khalifeh has been writing about Israeli-Palestinian conflict and about the effect of IO on Palestinians. She throws light on the multifaceted oppression that women endure under IO.

Khalifeh's second novel, *Lam Nauda Jawari Lacoum (We Are No Longer Your Slaves)* was first published in Egypt. This novel depicts the effect of IO on Palestinian life. She wrote her third novel *Wild Thorns* while studying at the university. She took a short break from her studies and did a lot of research before writing this novel. She witnessed the drastic changes the IO brought about in Palestinian lives. She started writing novels even before 1967. However, the incident of 1967 was a landmark in her mind as an author because of the Occupation. Khalifeh wrote another novel *Abbad al-Shams (The Sunflower)* in 1980 which has not yet been translated into English. It is a sequel to the novel *Wild Thorns*. This novel strikingly deals with the difficulties and hardships faced by Palestinian women under IO. Her early writings did not however, project her feminist concerns, but she was influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's Western feministic ideology. It had a great influence on her writings. She wrote semi-autobiographical novel *Mouthakarat Imra a Ghair Wakia 'a (Memoirs of an Unrealistic Woman)* in 1986. It is translated into Italian and German. It deals with the life of married women in a conservative society.

Khalifeh's novel *Bab al-Saha (The Gate of the Square)* was published in 1990, fourteen years after the publication of *Wild Thorns*. In this novel Khalifeh portrays the political changes and new facets of Occupation. The novel celebrates the participation of women in the popular uprising by challenging the social and traditional restrictions imposed on them. The narrative revolves around the stories of four women who encounter financial

problems under Occupation. Zakiyeh is the central character in the novel, representing middle class Palestinian women's attitude towards Occupation and social traditions.

She wrote another novel, *al-Mirath (The Inheritance)* in 1997. The novel begins with the story of Zayna, the protagonist who was born in New York to an American mother and a Palestinian father. She is torn between two different cultures. She returns to the West Bank in search of her homeland, father and her identity. She comes to know that her father had married a young girl, Futna. She is a sterile woman who decides to go for artificial insemination for a male heir. The intention of Futna is to claim a large portion of land and money. The novel ends with the death of Futna at a checkpoint after giving a birth to a baby. The story not only revolves around the family struggle over inheritance, but also highlights other issues of exile, return, and identity. The novel explores the consequences of working in a foreign country for Palestinian women in order to support their family members. The character Nahleh, who returns from Kuwait, sacrifices her personal life continuously working for her family. For Nahleh, the economic exile is not a choice but a burden.

The novel, *Surah wa-ayqunahwa- 'ahdqadim (The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant)* published in 2002 is about the love between Mariam and Ibrahim who are a Christian and a Muslim respectively. They are unable to marry because of political and religious issues. Mariam becomes pregnant and raises her son Michael. Ibrahim exiles from one country to another continuously for thirty years. He returns to Ramallah in search of his beloved. On the way he meets his young son who has become a religious person. Even though the novel moves around the family saga, it covers multiple political issues related to homeland and exile.

Khalifeh's novel *Rabi' harr, (The End of Spring)* of 2004 depicts multiple issues related to the IO and domination. The novel revolves around the story of the two young brothers Majid and Ahmad, who were artists. Majid transforms himself from a singer to a revolutionary fighter. His younger brother Ahmad who is interested in painting becomes a martyr. This novel is written immediately after the end of the second *Intifada* and depicts the participation of Palestinian women and children in the mass uprising.

The novel *Dar al-Adab, (Of Noble Origins)* published in 2008 revolves around the domestic and social oppressions of the character Wedad. She was controlled by her mother, brothers and husband. Khalifeh questions the role of well-established institutions like marriage, family and religion which suppress Wedad's voice, freedom and identity. Apart from this theme Khalifeh deals with the relationship between the Arabs and the Jews living in the Occupied Territories. She highlights the cultural differences and assimilations in the novel. Khalifeh records a historical account of what actually happened in Palestine after the two Wars: *Nakba* (1948) and *Naksa* (1967). As a keen observer of IO, she depicts the life of Palestinians and Israelis without being judgemental. In the words of Miriam Cooke, women have "written themselves into postcolonial struggles in a variety of ways, sometimes through self-identified feminist struggle but also, at other times, through nationalist activity, engagement with religious discourse or other forms of cultural identification. . ." She says that the act of naming their participation in the conflicts of their people "constitutes 'a form of combat' in its own right" (Cooke 1999: 93). Khalifeh's works demonstrate an attempt to articulate the complementarity of Palestinian women's national and gender interests.

Apart from writing, Sahar Khalifeh has acted in a documentary *Fertile Memory*, by Michel Khleifi in the year 1980. The film projects personal narratives of two women living with a strong conviction in the land despite the ongoing IO. One of them, Roumia, who is an elderly woman, refuses to give up her land in Galilee, even after thirty-two years of pressure from Israel to do so. Khalifeh herself, returned from Libya after a broken marriage, and though she had encountered social stigma as a single parent, she refused to leave her hometown of Nablus because of her attachment to her native land (Ball 2012: 37).

Unfortunately, Palestinian writing does not enjoy the equal privileges of publication or circulation as other writings because of the strong ideological positions one needs to take vis-à-vis this literature. Palestinian community finds it difficult to pen down their experiences during the period of chaos or upheaval because the urgency for survival overtakes that for writing. Edward Said, writing after the 1982 Israeli assault on Beirut, says "I recall during the siege of Beirut obsessively telling friends and family there, over the phone, that they ought to record, write down their experiences. . . Naturally,

they were all far too busy for surviving. . . . The archive speaks of the depressed condition of the Palestinian narrative at present” (Said 1984: 38). Palestinian writing does not narrow down the scope of literature just to the Palestinian struggle. On the other hand, it opens up the literary canvas to a much wider frame of the play of human emotions in the context of one of the longest conflicts of a community in the modern times.

### **1.15 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

The thesis has been divided into six chapters, including introduction and conclusion. The introductory chapter presents in brief the Palestinian literature and the challenges faced by the Palestinian authors in the process of writing, publishing and circulating their literature in the global market. The second chapter makes an attempt to study Sahar Khalifeh’s writings in relation to the nuances of the IO and understand the multiple oppressions encountered by Palestinians due to the Zionist and Israeli Settler Colonial regime. The third chapter critically examines the representation of various forms of resistance to the IO in the literary works of Khalifeh. The fourth chapter discusses how Khalifeh delineates the impact of Palestinian exile and return on both men and women as a negative and demoralizing experience. The fifth chapter focuses on the oppression or subjugation of Arab women in a predominantly patriarchal society. It particularly analyses the issues like sexuality, motherhood, marriage and family as presented in the novels of Khalifeh. The sixth chapter concludes the thesis by bringing out the research findings, observations, contributions, and directions for further research.



## Chapter Two

### Breaking the Silence: Occupation and Oppression by Settlers as depicted in the Literary Works of Sahar Khalifeh

“Our life under Occupation cannot be described in one word. But, if I were to do so, I think that no word would serve so well as “tension.” Tension inside, tension outside” (Khalifeh 1984: 26).

#### 2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Sahar Khalifeh is the most outspoken writer from the West Bank – one of the Occupied Territories of Palestine. She has portrayed the harsh realities of Palestinians’ life under IO. Her narratives deal with major political issues like exile, resistance, harassment and violence that form the core of the contemporary Palestinian predicament. The origin of IO cannot be understood without understanding the British colonial rule as well as the Zionist Settler Colonisation. In other words, Israel’s Occupation of Palestinian territories as an exemplary Settler Colonial project and its contradictions are embedded in the early framing of Zionism. Before the IO, the idea of Zionism played a major role in colonising the territories of Palestine in order to establish a Jewish majority state in the occupied land. This chapter considers specific instances of the Zionist Settler Colonialism as well as the IO as represented in the literary works of Sahar Khalifeh. The traits of Settler Colonialism can be seen under the Zionist rule as well as under IO. So in the present chapter, the issue of IO is analysed using the theoretical framework of Settler Colonialism proposed by Lorenzo Veracini (2010) and Patrick Wolfe (2006). Khalifeh’s narratives are rarely discussed in the framework of Settler Colonial theory. But the features of Settler Colonial domination are clearly seen in the literary works of Khalifeh. Accordingly, the early part of the chapter deals with the theoretical overview of Settler Colonialism vis-à-vis the key historical moments linked to the Zionist rule. Later in the chapter, we examine the impact of Israeli Settler Colonial domination on the natives. This chapter demonstrates the continuing and pervasive consequences of

Settler Colonialism in the contemporary Occupied Territories of Palestine specifically – West Bank and Eastern Jerusalem, in relation to land ownership, land use, and making the natives homeless. It reflects on the ways in which the ideological implications of Settler Colonialism play out in literary representations of Khalifeh's novels. Israeli Settler Colonialism is involved in the establishment of physical colonies, forced military suppression of people, slave labour, and such other activities that are characteristic of Settler Colonialism. Israel as a settler nation assaults the indigenous people at different levels: social, political, economic, cultural, and intellectual.

## **2.2 COLONIALISM**

### **2.2.1 Metropole Colonialism**

European expansion and conquest of the territories across the world which began during sixteenth century created two types of clearly distinguishable colonialism. One was metropole colonialism, in which the European powers conquered and ruled vast territories where people did not migrate from European countries. The best example for this type is British India. Enormous amount of knowledge has been produced and is being produced on colonialism. To get into the discussion, it would suffice here to quote two theorists. Jurgen Osterhammel states colonialism as a relationship between the indigenous majority and a minority of foreign invaders. The foreign invaders make the fundamental decisions which affect the lives of the colonised people. The colonial rulers implement the policies which are defined in a distant metropolis and where the colonised are exploited in pursuit of the interest of the colonisers. The colonisers assert their supremacy and they are convinced with that and they did not make any cultural compromises with the colonised and rule them (Osterhammel 1997: 16-17). For McClintock, colonisation is directly connected with the Occupation of another geopolitical territory and appropriation of its natural resources and exploitation of the natives by using them as labourers for establishing their colonies. Colonisation also affects the culture of the natives by interference and thus causing the eradication of natives' unique culture with the intention of dominating them and displacing them (McClintock 1992: 88).

### **2.2.2 Settler Colonialism: Theoretical Overview**

The other kind of colonialism is the Settler Colonialism where the colonialists themselves settled in the conquered territories. The settlements of Europeans in America and Australia come under this category. The motive of this new kind of colonisation is to settle on the occupied territory permanently without having any intention of returning home. This type of colonialism is known as Settler Colonialism. Veracini theorises the concept of Settler Colonialism. He is the author of the monumental work *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, where he discusses four themes – population, sovereignty, consciousness and narrative associated with Settler Colonialism. He considers colonialism and Settler Colonialism as separate formations. “Colonialism and Settler Colonialism are not merely different; they are in some ways antithetical formations . . .” (Veracini 2010: 3). He warns us that it is wrong to consider all colonialism as Settler Colonialism (ibid). In the case of colonialism, the colonial rulers would go out to the colonies; occupy the land, exploit their resources and eventually return home. On the contrary, the Settler Colonialists come to the colonies to stay permanently in the Occupied Territories without having any intention of returning home. “. . . Settlers move across space and often end up permanently residing in a new locale” (ibid: 3). Another theoretician Patrick Wolfe regards Settler Colonialism not merely as an event but as a structure (Wolfe 2006: 388). Veracini and Wolfe present their arguments citing primary examples of Settler Colonial societies like Australia, the United States, Canada, South Africa and Israel.

Indeed, Palestinians share similar colonial legacy, discourses, socio-cultural, political, and economic characteristics of all the deprived, oppressed, and marginalized peoples of the third world, whether in Asia, Africa, Latin America, or elsewhere. Yet, the case of Palestinians is a unique one: while rest of the world has moved to the postcolonial condition, Palestinians are still stuck under Settler Colonial state and seemingly have to go a long way in achieving liberation and independence through struggling for survival, resisting Occupation, and fighting. The political transition in 1948, (the birth of Israel as an independent nation-state) as well as the 1967 war resulted in IO of the West Bank, Eastern Jerusalem and Gaza – collectively called as Occupied Territories. So in the present chapter, instead of looking at postcolonial theories, we would like to

view the theme of Zionist settler domination as well as IO with the theoretical insights of Settler Colonialism. Veracini says,

[t]he Palestinian experience is fundamentally shaped by displacement and by the Occupation. Settler colonial studies allows us to consider that the colonial policy of segregation that was imposed after the successful repression of the first Intifada was profoundly discontinuous with the settler colonial policy of subordinate integration Israel had previously pursued (Veracini 2015: 26).

Settler Colonialism is a practice as well as an ideology that is an amalgamation of an ongoing present as well as past. Settler Colonial theory enables us to understand the issue of IO of Palestine in a more sophisticated way which is an ongoing phenomenon and the past instances of Settler Colonisation can be traced in the context of Zionist rule. It helps in assessing the overarching power of the Settler Colonial state in its exercises such as land appropriation, causing displacement of the natives and elimination of indigenous population. Israel engages itself in building numerous settlements and checkpoints on the occupied land. Apart from this, the settler state engages in imprisonment, confinement, deportation, and ghettoisation of the Palestinians that disrupts the lives of the natives to a great extent. IO in Palestine reflects not only the characteristics of Settler Colonialism but also revises the strategies for Settler Colonisation.

### **2.3 ZIONIST SETTLER COLONIALISM**

Zionism is the national and religious movement for the establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine which is now known as Israel. Modern Zionist movement started during the late nineteenth century and Theodor Herzl gave it a political dimension. Advocates of Zionism encouraged the Jewish diaspora to return to their ancient land with support from powerful players in the international community, and thus the separate state for Jews came into existence.

Such a state cannot exist in isolation. It has to newly come into existence somewhere, affecting the people who already live there. People who establish such a state migrate from their contemporary residence to settle on this new land. Therefore, Settler Colonial phenomenon tends to develop intimate relation with migration. Yet it is wrong to

consider that all migrations are settler migrations and all colonialisms are Settler Colonialisms. Indeed, Palestinians have become the most direct victims of Zionist settler politics that started with Jewish migration. There is interrelatedness between migration and colonialism. In the words of Karl Marx and Friederich Engels the intention behind such migration is to “nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, and establish connection everywhere”. “Nestle”, “Settle”, “establish connections” are the important ingredients of colonial action in Settler Colonialism (Marx and Engels 1998: 39). The European Jews, who were the victims of holocaust, were living in various parts of Europe without having their own nation. Jewish settlers came in search of permanent residence in a new locale. It is a unique kind of migration of Jews to Palestine escaping Nazi persecution. The political ideology of Zionism united the Jews and encouraged them to migrate to Palestine as settlers of the conquered land. Jews as settlers argue that they have an affinitive connection with home. Israeli Jews believe that Palestine is homeland for the Jews and therefore it is their moral duty or responsibility to retain their homeland. The Israelis regard Zionism as a national liberation movement with a strong socialist past and they consider Palestine as their ancient homeland which is in ruins and which remained vacant since they were in exile in Europe. They were in exile for a long period – that is from the Roman time – waiting for their resettlement. But the Palestinians rather consider Zionism as the colonial movement of Israelis with the motive to expand their territory by breaking the heart of the Arab world. Gandhi says “. . . my sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and in the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after their return to Palestine. Why should they not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?” (Gandhi 1997: 137). Zionist settlers reached the shores of Palestine in the early 1880s. The first Zionist colony is founded near Jaffa in 1878. Ilan Pappé, a well-known historian, says in his monumental work *The Forgotten Palestinian*, that the Jews found the travel from Eastern Europe “quite often harsh and dangerous”. The European Jews first came to Jaffa and they were well-received by native Palestinians. They provided accommodation and advice on how to cultivate the land. The Zionist had little knowledge about cultivation of land because they had been barred for centuries from

being farmers or landowners in their home countries (Pappe 2011: 1). The Jewish settlers spread throughout Palestine, driving out indigenous population to establish a unique and permanent homeland of their own. Eventually, this was to cause the death of the natives and displacement of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland.

Settlers not only uproot the natives from their land but also erase an indigenous existence. It is a common phenomenon that settlers after occupying the territories of the native inhabitants questioned the existence of the natives. Zionist colonization of Palestine upholds the ideological construct of emptiness of land to be occupied. Frantz Fanon says “it is the settler who has brought the native into existence and who perpetuates his existence” (Fanon 1963: 36). As far as settlers are concerned, they represent themselves as the first real inhabitants of the place where they settle. In a similar way, Palestinians have been represented as non-indigenous to Palestine in settler narratives. Zionism and Israel conceptualised Palestine as a wasteland and Palestinians as “landless”. This definition is the best illustration of Settler Colonialists’ ability to disavow. Zangwill says:

Palestine is a country without a people; the Jews are a people without a country. The regeneration of the soil would bring the regeneration of the people. It is marvellous that the country should have remained comparatively empty for eighteen hundred years; but it cannot remain unexploited much longer . . . neither the Jew nor Palestine can wait longer (Quoted in Muir 2008: 53).

In 1969 the Prime Minister Golda Meir said, “[t]here was no such thing as Palestinians”. She said, “[i]t was not as though there were a Palestinian people in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian people . . . they did not exist” (Quoted in Parmenter 2004: 21). In a speech delivered at a meeting of the French Zionist Federation, Paris, 28 March 1914, Weizmann reproduced much of Zangwill’s slogan of the *Terra Nullius* (i.e. nobody’s land): “there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country. What else is necessary, then, than to fit the gem into the ring, to unite this people with this country?” (Weizmann 1983: 115-116).

## 2.4 IMPACT OF JEWISH MIGRATION

Sahar Khalifeh started her literary career writing about the IO which she had witnessed in the locale of West Bank. She says, “I began writing after the 1967 (the beginning of Occupation) invasion of the West Bank. . . . The year 1967 became a watershed year for me in a political and a personal sense. I felt that I could no longer remain an alienated housewife. I had to participate in the predicament of my people and contribute through my writings” (Sabbag 1998: 137). Almost all the novels of Khalifeh depict the living conditions of Palestinians under IO with hardly few exceptions.

Khalifeh has chronicled the colonial experience of the Palestinian people from the British Mandate of 1920 to the IO at present. Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Empire from the sixteenth century until the final campaigns of the World War I. In 1867, Ottoman law permitted foreigners to own land in Palestine. After the World War I, Britain occupied Palestine, which had until then been part of the Ottoman Empire. It established what is known as the British Mandate from 1920 until 1948 (Pappe, 2011; Khalidi, 1991). In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Khalifeh writes about the impact of multiple political domination on the natives. These dominations shattered the lives of natives, for instance – Turks have looted the wealth of Arabs, “. . . sucked their blood, taken their wealth, hanged their men, and dragged many to its wars like sheep” (Khalifeh 2012: 15)<sup>1</sup>. Later natives encouraged the British invaders as it might be a silver line in their lives for a better life. But, British as colonial masters ruled the land according to their whims and fancies. They completely disturbed the native life with their policies. Khalifeh writes:

When the British inherited what was left by the Turks to manage, to liberate, and to modernize, they handled it like owners and masters. They moved freely everywhere, disposed of things and divided the bounty, sold it and made promises to the Arabs, and then to the Jews, and then to France. Then came the Balfour Declaration and Sykes-Picot agreement, then the State, all that on top of the inheritance of a pile of orphans (ibid).

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<sup>1</sup> Of the selected novels, *Of Noble Origins* speaks of three different political dominations: firstly, the Ottoman; next, the British and thirdly, the Zionist. The other novels deal with only the last.

Khalifeh foregrounds the historical facts in a unique manner. She writes about the impact of Jewish migration on native Palestinians. The novel *Of Noble Origins*, is set in the changing phase of governance from the British Mandate to the Jewish settlers. In the novel, the gutsy but conservative protagonist Zakiyeh says that she belongs to Qahtan family (that claims to have originated from the family of Prophet Muhammad) and tells numerous real stories to her grandchildren. She narrates the life of Palestinians and the incidents which occurred inside their homeland during the British Mandate. Her mind is a storage of unforgettable, but awful memories and she passes on these reminiscences to the younger generation without omitting a single incident. Her oral narration is so effective that her grandchildren almost visualize these events. They experience it as if they are watching a movie. Apart from this talent, she believes and also persuades her grandchildren to believe that she possesses the supreme wisdom to predict future, by a unique act of looking at the moon with the help of a mirror. She reveals several secrets of the future to others. She predicts the impact of *Nakbah* before it occurs. She looks into the mirror and cries “[i]t is gone, the country is lost” (Khalifeh 2012: 3). She says Arabs have lost the war, and people are dying “as numerous as ants” and that they “sink in blood up to their knees” (ibid).

Zakiyeh’s elder son Waheed has taken the household responsibilities at a young age after the sudden death of his father. Zakiyeh advises him to start work in the flour mill which she inherited from her husband. The son sweats himself out day and night in the mill since he is the breadwinner of the family. Subsequently, his business witnesses huge financial crunch because the Jews bring modern mills with them. The settlers bring with them a higher standard of life that affect the lives of the natives adversely and deprive them of their means of livelihood. “Settlers do not discover: they carry their sovereignty and lifestyles with them. As they move towards what amounts to a representation of the world, as they transform the land into their image, they settle another place without really moving” (Quoted in Snelgrove et al., 2014: 13). Wolfe says settlers “come from somewhere else. They bring other histories with them, forged in other places, and expropriate Native territory into wider socio-economic networks” (Wolfe 2006: 273). The migrated Jewish community came from the nooks and corners of the globe and settled in the coastal regions. They relocated in the cities of Jaffa,



Safad, Ramleh, Haifa, Acre, Jerusalem and Galilee. They carried out trade activities and became successful. On the other hand, native Arabs struggle to recover from the settlers' onslaught. Waheed notices the change: poverty, unemployment, humiliation that is descending on the Arab Palestinian population; the barefooted children roaming around the streets of Haifa without food and shelter and so on.

## **2.5 SETTLER COLONIALISM AND THE IDEA OF PROGRESS**

James Belich in his book *Replenishing the Earth, Settler Revolution and Rise of the Anglo-World 1783-1939* analyses as to how settlements erupted bringing rapid changes in the migrated territories. Settlers migrated to the land they explored with modernizing ideas and dreams. They built roads, bridges, railway tracks, towns and cities for economic expansion. In this process they destroyed the indigenous culture and made psychological change among the masses. It was called "Settler Bloom" and these settlers destroyed, crippled and inundated the cultures and living ambience of the societies where they migrated and brought up new societies a rapid speed (Belich 2009: 558).

Settler Colonialism posits that two different political societies cannot exist in one place constantly. So the settlers engage in the activities of replacing the native inhabitants from their land. They disagree to live in harmony with the native inhabitants of the land. The settler views that their colonial enterprise brings development and a general progress of the indigenous population. The first president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann says "the Jews alone were capable of rebuilding Palestine and of giving it a place in the modern family of nations" (Quoted in Said 1979c: 13).

The character in the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Dr. Chaim Weizmann, is portrayed in novel as the representative of the Jewish agency. He is with a sound-alike name as that of the first president of Palestine mentioned above. Khalifeh describes scenarios where Arab women are protesting against the British policies that were in favour of the Jewish community. Weizmann comes to meet the British governor in order to know the demands of the women's delegation. He tries to influence the governor and tells him that Arab women are dangerous. They have the ability to convince the Mandate by showing their emotions. He addresses Arab women as "demons" and "they have strong

demonic traits” (Khalifeh 2012: 72). He says that Arab women are stronger than Arab men. He cautions Arthur and tells him not to believe the soft words of these women. They would fool him with their gentle words. He knows that the peasant women are stronger than their men. Weizmann has seen how the peasant women work in their villages on equal footing with men. He calls peasant women “beasts”. “They become pregnant, give birth, carry wood, dig the ground, and cut rocks but never tire. The Arab woman is a monster, a gender devoid of gentleness and femininity. The veil is only a trick, a cover for what is hidden” (ibid). The governor smiles listening to the words of Weizmann, and he questions him “what is behind it?”(ibid). Weizmann replies “[t]here is stupidity and illiteracy behind it. They are semi-beasts; there is slyness, deceit, and flattery. I know them and you do not” (ibid).

Weizmann claims that Zionist leaders have studied the situation of Palestine thoroughly in order to rule them. He also emphasizes that the Arabs do not know about themselves. So Jews have documented everything, they have conducted studies about the land. They have gathered a lot of information which could be useful for the British rule. He tells Arthur to refer to those documents. He points out that the earlier British officers such as Herbert Samuel, Sir Chancellor and Wauchope referred to these documents. Arthur dislikes the annoying comments of Weizmann and remarks that he has a set of policies and instructions.

It is evident that Weizmann wanted to take maximum advantage of the situation and tries to persuade Arthur by reminding him that they have common interests and friendship. He urges Arthur not to disagree with the Zionists as they are working for each other’s benefit. He ensures him that the country belongs to the British and it would remain with them forever. The Jews would work towards retaining it as a British colony. He says that the Jewish people would illuminate the east with the flame of the British and civilize the east by achieving progress, upholding truth and justice in the land. While listening to Weizmann, the Governor remembers what General Allenby had said before his death: that Britain is going to make the mistake of encouraging the Jews by telling them that the Jewish Brigade conquered Jerusalem, though they were slaves in the countries they have emigrated from. Now they have become masters, and cautions as to how the slave turned master behaves and becomes a savage beast.

We have noted above that the theorists of Settler Colonialism make a distinction between colonialism and Settler Colonialism and opine that the latter needs to be theorized separately from the former. However, in the context of Palestine, there is a shift from Metropole colonialism to Settler Colonialism. In this process, Zionist Settler state continued some of the legacies of the British colonial enterprise that came handy to them. The idea of bringing progress to the colonised people, colonial power as the civilizing machine of the natives, exploitation of natural as well as human resources and racial discrimination happen to be the common concerns of both colonialisms. Said observes:

. . . Zionism essentially saw Palestine as the European imperialist did as an empty territory; it allied itself . . . with the imperial powers in carrying out its plans for establishing a new Jewish state in Palestine . . . Zionism not only accepted the generic racial concepts of European culture, but also banked on the fact that Palestine was actually peopled not by an advanced but by a backward people, over which it *ought* to be dominant (Said 1979b: 81-82)<sup>2</sup>.

Israel also portrayed itself as bringing progress to the ‘uncivilized’ Palestinians. The settlers regarded the indigenous people as backward, uncivilized and uncultured and incapable of owning their own lands. They treated the natives like animals and hounded them out to waste lands and thus methodically eliminated them so as to establish the so called civilized race on the vacated territory. Palestinians “are portrayed as roaming the land, flitting nomadically among impermanent settlements, ignorant or wasteful of a colony’s natural resources, or – as in Gaza – as potential terrorists and outsiders” (Bateman and Pilkington 2011: 1).

The settlers carry the ideology of racial supremacy with them. Settlers view natives as inferior, uncivilized as well as engaged in producing and circulating stereotypes that have a greater impact on the natives. In order to eliminate and uproot the natives, they indulged in genocide. Their intention to live comfortably on the occupied land blurred their vision for the future generation. “Settler Colonialism is being unable to fill in the blanks. It is the history of a family welded together by natives and settlers. It is the logic of superiority, of primacy, of genocide. It is the colonization of memory and of events

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis in the original.

that come to be known as “History”” (Mikdashi 2012). In this context Khalifeh glaringly reflects the discrimination meted out to the natives and non-Jews.

## **2.6 ISRAELI OCCUPATION**

In addition, the second stage of colonisation – that is the war of 1967 – accelerated the influx of the Jews to the Palestinian territory and their settlement in West Bank was strengthened through their methodical policies of Occupation. The Zionist ideology with its carefully formulated policies helped them settle permanently in Palestine which may be termed as Settler Colonisation. Sahar Khalifeh’s oeuvre is not a compilation of random or general observations but it is historically and politically specific. The formation of Israeli state is conceivably a Settler colonial project which controlled and managed Palestinian inhabitants during the first two decades of Occupation. Khalifeh in the novel *Wild Thorns* consciously narrates the initial days of IO. The main objective of the IO is the exploitation of labour force and expropriation of Palestinian land and water resources in the region. Khalifeh’s literary journey closely examines the tremendous changes brought about by the Occupation in the late 1960s till the present period. Her writings witnessed Occupation which is crucial and different from the one of the past several years. Israeli military rule was never static. It implemented several novel strategies not only as to wield continuous control over the Palestinian population but also to extend the territories in order to safeguard Israeli Jews from any global threat.

The term ‘Occupation’ is a politically loaded term which involves the conquest of territories. Indeed, the term can be employed politically without reference to its general or legal meaning. Eyal Benvenisti defines Occupation as “[t]he effective control of a power (be it one or more states or an international organization, such as the United Nations) over a territory to which that power has no sovereign title, without the violation of the sovereign of that territory” (Benvenisti 1993: 5). Through enforcement of power, Occupation takes the responsibility of managing the occupied territory and it also controls the people who live in those territories. “In former times, enemy territory occupied by a belligerent was in every point considered his State Property, so that he could do what he liked with it and its inhabitants” (Oppenheim1952: 432). But the

concept of Occupation underwent fundamental change in the nineteenth century. Firstly, Israel took the responsibility of managing indigenous Palestinians; secondly, in order to normalize the IO it has taken the administration of civil institutions such as education, health care, welfare, and the financial and legal systems. Apart from political sector, the impact of Occupation is massive on the socio-economic and cultural segment. Israeli military Occupation in West Bank and Gaza Strip maintained local law and amended it through military orders. Israel instituted military rule and its policies have been subjected to a widespread political and moral critique at both domestic and international levels. IO is one of the prolonged Occupations in the world for more than fifty years. Veracini addresses Occupation of the Palestinian territories as “Israel’s recolonization” (Veracini 2013: 26).

Palestinian territories have been occupied by Israeli military forces after the two great wars of 1948 and 1967. The victory of Israel in 1967 war resulted dramatically in Israel’s Occupation of the rest of the territories of Palestine – West Bank and the Gaza Strip which were not seized in the 1948 war. Israel occupied about 68,658 sq. kms of Arab territories which fetched drastic vicissitudes not only for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories but also for Israeli Palestinians and for Israeli Jews.

## **2.7 CONFISCATION OF LAND**

The primary objective of Settler Colonisation is the encroachment of the natives’ land which has a greater value and settle permanently on the conquered land. In other words, the settlers control maximum land that belonged to the local inhabitants. Settlers enter into a new land hoping to start a new life, which naturally becomes an inevitable threat to the indigenous people. So the settlers’ invasion is a well-planned attempt to control the natives by using power. Settler Colonialism is not a simple random event.

The strategy of the Zionists to occupy land in Palestine was manifold. They set up organisations specifically for purchasing lands. They purchased lands with the political goal, considering the size of the land and its location in relation to its contiguity within the country. The Zionists received thousands of acres of state land from the British Mandate of Palestine. They also succeeded in purchasing larger tracts of agricultural lands from big Palestinian land owners who located themselves in the newly formed

state of Lebanon and found it difficult to manage their properties in Palestine (Farsoun 2004: 12-13). The state directly purchased or used violence to acquire land.

Many times, Palestinian Arabs did not have proper legal documents for their lands as prescribed by the state. So, it was quite easy for the Zionists to confiscate such property by creating false legal document. They used such lands for agriculture, industry and for the expansion of their settlements. The Zionists attempted to grab as much land as possible to expand Israel's border. The migrated Jews began to buy the land of Arabs in order to stay in the newly occupied land. Zionist leaders supported the purchase the land owned by Arabs for the sake of their community through Jewish agency. In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Khalifeh writes how the Zionist leader Weizmann appoints Mr. Kalfareski, an agricultural expert from Poland who came there forty years back, to confiscate the Arab land. Mr. Kalfareski explains in detail as to how to purchase land needed for the nursing college project. He is a clever man who purchases lands from Palestinian peasants. Ever since he immigrated to Palestine from Poland, he has been purchasing lands from the Arab peasants and making them landless. Through his land dealings he becomes an expert in dealing with the land owners and the farmers. He eats and drinks with them and thus becomes familiar with their private life and weak points, which enables him to exploit these farmers. He creates an impression among the Arabs that he is helping them by protecting them from the clutches of the native landowners. In the newly purchased land, he would build settlements for his Jewish brothers who were returning from exile. Later these settlements would be expanded to build *kibbutzim*.<sup>3</sup> He proudly says, “[h]e endured all that for the sake of the brothers returning from exile, to help them settle down. If it were not for him, the settlements would not have expanded and the *kibbutzim* built” (Khalifeh 2012: 217). He narrates an incident where the agreement for the transfer of title of the land was being signed in a village inside a tent. He pretends to feel for the Palestinian peasants who sell their land. The peasants sign the agreement singing a funeral song. The poor people lamenting and cry. Mr. Kalfareski feigns that his heart is being pierced with a knife. Though this would

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<sup>3</sup> The word *Kibbutz* in Hebrew means ‘group’. It is a communal settlement in Israel where people live and work together in the agricultural land on a non-competitive basis. The plural form of *Kibbutz* in Hebrew is *Kibbutzim*.

bother him for many years, he never stops his job. His behaviour indicates a dual personality, shedding crocodile tears for the natives. Where there were 'virgin' lands, the task would be much easier. As McClintock notes

The myth of the virgin land is also the myth of empty land, involving both a gender and a racial dispossession. Within patriarchal narratives, to be virgin is to be empty of desire and void of sexual agency. . . . Within colonial narratives, the eroticizing of "virgin" space also effects a territorial appropriation, for if the land is virgin, colonized peoples cannot claim aboriginal territorial rights . . . (McClintock 1995: 30).

They distribute fertile lands to the Jews which helped them to build *kibbutz*. Later, in the same novel, Khalifeh narrates how the confiscated Arab land had been utilized to build *kibbutz* for the Jewish community through the implementation of hybridization and scientific methods of cultivation. Waheed accompanies his wife Rasha to a *kibbutz*. There he notices the Jewish vegetation which looks extremely different from Arab vegetation. He also observes that the vegetation appears taller and stronger, bearing more produce than the Arab one. The older man in *kibbutz* says to Waheed that their trees produce the fruits throughout the year irrespective of the seasons. Meanwhile, Waheed notices olive trees which were an evidence of the Arab cultivation. The old man justifies that the olive trees are ten years old and they were planted by the Jewish workers. But Waheed cannot accept this argument because he knew the fact that the olive trees were very old and dated back to the time of Christ. The conversation turns into an argument and Waheed gets perturbed. Khalifeh desires to show that occupiers have not only confiscated the native land, but have also effectively utilised the produces. Upon the evacuation of thousands of Palestinians, the State of Israel soon began establishing Israeli civilian settlements on expropriated Palestinian lands. Israelis intensified agricultural activities in order to establish their rights on the land and modernised the method of cultivation through using fertilizers so as to grow more food for the sustenance of the migrated Jewish community. The land was appropriated among Jewish community on a socialistic basis of farming. They deliberately avoided the traditional methods of agriculture practised by the Palestinians. In the evacuated land that was owned by thousands of Palestinians, the Israelis established their own civilian settlements. Albert Memmi notes:

It is impossible for [the coloniser] not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status. . . . A foreigner, having come to a land by the accidents of history, he has succeeded not merely in creating a place for himself but also in taking away that of the inhabitant, granting himself astounding privileges to the detriment of those rightfully entitled to them. . . . He is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper. Furthermore, this is so, not only in the eyes of the colonized, but in his own as well (Memmi 1965: 8-9).

Territorial sovereignty that started during Zionist colonialism has continued to be claimed, which is the crux of the IO. By establishing settlements and checkpoints the Israelis began to claim legal rights on the land. Neve Gordon has listed how the Israelis employed seven complementary methods to seize the Arab land with their military rule. “(1) declaring land to be absentee property; (2) declaring land to be the property of a hostile state or agent; (3) confiscating land for public needs; (4) declaring land to be part of nature reserves; (5) requisitioning land for military needs; (6) declaring land to be state property; (7) helping Jewish citizens to purchase land on the free market – each method resting on a specific aspect of the legal system” (Gordon 2008:120). When all these methods are backed by the state support, it would be next to impossible for the Palestinians to counter in any practical manner.

In the novel *Wild Thorns* Usama al-Karmi, the protagonist of the novel, is a Palestinian expatriate who has returned from Kuwait. Usama meets an old man Abu Shahada, a farmer, who has stopped cultivating his land. He enquires about his orchard and the old man adamantly replies that neither he nor his son Shahada owns the land. He says that *Effendi*<sup>4</sup> is the owner of the land. Fertile agricultural land, thus, slips into the hands of the colonisers. Harlow asserts that the novel *Wild Thorns* “. . . traces the proletarianization of the Palestinian peasantry and the dissolution of the family farm and its traditional order” (Harlow 2002: 115).

The migrated Jewish settlers not only engaged themselves in purchasing the land, building the *kibbutz* but also started occupying and buying the houses that belonged to natives. In the novel, *The Image, The Icon and The Covenant*, Ibrahim returns to homeland looking for his beloved Mariam and his son and meets Jamileh in order to

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<sup>4</sup>It is the title used in the Ottoman Empire to show the respect or courtesy. It is equivalent to the English title ‘Sir’. In the novel, Palestinians addresses Israeli soldiers as *Effendi*.



seek information about Mariam. He comes to know that Mariam took shelter in the house of Jamileh during her pregnancy. Jamileh has become physically weak because of her old age. She lives alone after the death of her husband who suffered from prolonged ailment. Ibrahim decides to meet Jamileh hiding his real identity as well as his purpose of visit. He says to Jamileh that he is a returnee who is wanted to buy a house. On the other hand, Jamileh has taken the responsibility of showing her distant relative's house for the buyers. She tells Ibrahim that the owner of the house is in the old age home and her sons have gone overseas. She allows Ibrahim to inspect the house and tells him to join her in the kitchen. She is surprised because Ibrahim, being a Jerusalemite, shows interest to buy a house and live in Ramallah. She tells him that the Jews are buying plenty of houses in Jerusalem. As Jamileh is aware of the predicament of the native Palestinians' situation of homelessness, she insists him to buy a house in Jerusalem rather than in Ramallah.

Jamileh is ready to show one more house to Ibrahim which is located in Jerusalem. She tells him that the owners have migrated to Kuwait during the time of war. She describes the beauty of the house which has a lovely garden. She tells him that she will be happy if he buys a Palestinian's house instead of an Israeli's because she regards it as a great service to the homeland. Ibrahim expresses his confusion whether to buy the house which he has seen now or the other one which Jamileh promised to show him in Jerusalem. She asks him to think and decide soon as "the Israelis are buying left and right" (Khalifeh 2008b: 152). Jamileh briefs Ibrahim who was away from homeland for many years, about the happenings and the situation of the land. She stresses the importance of living in the country with strong conviction and preserving the heritage as far as possible. Jamileh is also the victim who lost her house because two young American Jews occupied her house on the upper floor. They justify their act of occupying Jamileh's house: "They were fulfilling a promise made to a chosen people to whom God wanted to give the land of Palestine" (ibid: 169). She is not the one who is privileged, so she had lost her property and she is fighting a legal battle and she has no hope of justice in the near future. Ironically she tells Ibrahim "[s]ince she was not a member of the chosen people, she lost the rights to her property and became involved in legal procedures that had a beginning but have had no end. Her case remained

pending with no solution” (ibid). Jamileh’s character shows the strong conviction and commitment of staying in the homeland despite homelessness.

## **2.8 PALESTINIAN LABOUR FORCE IN ISRAEL**

“Colonial powers do not conquer for the sake of imposing administrative rule on the indigenous population, but they end up managing the conquered inhabitants in order to facilitate the extraction of resources” (Gordon 2008: 199). Khalifeh’s writing portrays everyday life in Palestine by presenting experiences and episodes. She is the eyewitness of IO, deciding to write about working class people who endured untold miseries due to the IO. She took eight months’ break from her studies at the university in order to research before writing the novel *Wild Thorns*. She read extensively about the condition of workers and also collected statistical information about those working in Israeli factories. She put immense efforts to understand the ideology of the proletariat along with their background and beliefs. She observed the living condition of workers: “I went to see them in their houses and in their refugee camps. Most of them are from the refugee camps or from the old parts of the city in which we have the slums. There is no running water. There are shared toilets, there are very, very bad conditions” (Nazareth 1980: 76). By doing an empirical research before writing her novel, Khalifeh attempts to legitimize her work, attempting to bring it closer to the ‘real’. Moreover, on several occasions she comments on the context in which she wrote the novel, further augmenting the sense of reality.

Khalifeh emphasises the economic concerns of the Palestinians who are living inside the Occupied Territories, bringing out the economic challenges and struggles encountered by the working class. She demonstrates the way in which Israeli settlers economically oppressed the native Palestinians of the Occupied Territories in numerous ways. The native Palestinians became landless after Jewish settlers confiscated the land for multiple purposes in a myriad ways. This critical situation created new problems for the native Arabs. The stoppage of cultivation generated the problem of poverty and unemployment. Israel started numerous Industrial projects inside the Occupied Territories as well as in Israel in the beginning of the IO. The landless Palestinian farmers started to look for alternatives in order to earn their livelihood. This

transformed Palestinian economy from an agro-based one to industry-based one. On the other hand, the cheaply available labour force was being effectively utilized and exploited by the occupiers. Sayigh points out that the immense impact of the expropriation and confiscation of land and water in the Occupied Territories by Israel over the years have forced substantial proportion of the agricultural labour force out of Palestinian agriculture. (Sayigh 1986: 7). Yitzhak Rabin, Israeli Minister of Defence said in the 1980s, “[t]here will be no development in the Occupied Territories initiated by the Israeli government, and no permits will be given for expanding agriculture or industry which may compete with the State of Israel” (UNCTD 1989: 148).

In the novel, *The Image, The Icon and The Covenant*, Ibrahim, notices how Palestinians suffer from miseries like natural calamities and innumerable wars. The struggle with the Israelis for their own farming land tends to be continuous. The villagers work as labourers and construction workers by losing their land to the settlers. They suffer mentally and physically losing their self-esteem because they are made to work hard to earn their bread and butter in a degraded state of affairs as landless labourers. He observes that settlements are “. . . spreading like an epidemic in the heart of the mountain, establishing prefabricated homes that resembled dollhouses and stretched out like snails. Despite the pain and because of the poverty, the villagers worked in the settlement as day labourers and construction workers” (Khalifeh 2008b: 134-135).

Israeli bourgeoisie owns all the means of production and exploits the Palestinian working class. In her novels, Khalifeh completely excludes the impact of Occupation on Palestinian educated and elite class. In her perception, the worst victims of IO are working class and their families. Many of these worked in the construction of new settlements or expanding existing ones. About “120,000 labourers were bussed daily to work in Israel, 55% of whom work in construction, the rest in agriculture and industry. Unskilled day labour from the West Bank and Gaza represents 6.5% of the total Israeli work force” (Sabbagh 1998: 71)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Sabbagh makes this statement based on 1989 statistics.

Due to the IO there are less job opportunities left for Palestinians who live inside the Occupied Territories. There is no scope for skilled labourers like peasants, merchants, and small artisans because of the Occupation. Majority of them have become common labourers. For them it is inevitable that they work in Israeli factories to feed their dependents. For economic reasons many Arab workers started to work in Israeli factories which was a new phenomenon. These workers were condemned and accused as traitors throughout the Arab world since they worked in Israeli establishments. Lack of livelihood options drove these workers to the factories of their oppressors. Usama's cousin Adil is another important character in the novel *Wild Thorns*. Adil works day and night in an Israeli factory to provide basic facilities for his family. Zudhi, Adil's co-worker in the Israeli factory says, "[y]ou need so many things to live these days. The prices burn up like hellfire. And apart from meat, there's bread, vegetables, fruit, water, electricity and everything else" to buy (Khalifeh 1985: 77). Whatever they earn is barely sufficient for their subsistence. Their income does not bring changes in their living condition. Their life is filled with sadness, poverty, hunger, and even starvation. Majority of the Palestinian labour force worked in Israeli factories as there was no other choice. Khalifeh, in one of her interviews, says,

At that time there was a scandal in the Arab world called the Palestinian Labor in Israel – Palestinian workers going to the Israeli factories and working there. Everybody in the Arab world was pointing at those workers, condemning them and accusing them of being traitors. I knew the situation, I knew what was the cause of the work in Israel. I was a person from *inside*, not from outside (Nazareth 1980: 75)<sup>6</sup>.

Through the character of Zudhi, Khalifeh portrays the challenges faced by Palestinian labour force who have to work both inside and outside the country. They face humiliation, exploitation, insult, discrimination, inequality, and job insecurity wherever they go. In this way, IO creates a plethora of problems to Palestinians who struggle to get decent and respectful life for themselves. The characters in the novel compare their life before and after the Occupation. Before the Occupation, life was easy. Cost of living was low. Zudhi recalls that before the Occupation, they had a wage of 135 *qurush*<sup>7</sup> a

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis in the original.

<sup>7</sup> Saudi Arabian monetary unit. 20 qurushes equal a Riyal.

day which went down to 80 *qurush* a day after the war. In other words, IO exploited Palestinians physically, economically, politically and psychologically. There is inequality even in providing facilities like serving food in cafeterias – Palestinians were not entertained in the cafeteria: they had to sit on the ground to have their food. Even though Palestinian labourers are aware of these issues, they have no right to question this discrimination. On the other hand, Israelis,

. . . eat their lunch in clean rooms, sitting on chairs at tables. They're paid extra for travel and given the cost-of-living increments, and they're eligible for social security, old-age pensions and disability payments. They elect members to the Knesset. But we have no Knesset, no army, no government (Khalifeh 1985: 110).

There are many examples in the novel, which illustrate that working in Israeli factory is a tough task for Palestinian labour force. They face discrimination not just in terms of salary but all the above mentioned facilities.

Adil's fellow worker Abu Sabir meets with an accident while working in the Israeli factory. His right hand was caught in a machine and the fingers were sliced. The management refuses to give him first aid or ambulance facility because he lacks work permit issued by the Israelis. Sabir is the sole bread winner of the family and his family would starve without his earnings. He recalls the sad and painful moments of the beginning of the Occupation that made his wife beg for food from neighbouring houses.

Images flashed through his mind, memories of the first months of the occupation. The curfew. His wife doing the rounds of the neighbouring houses carrying an empty bowl to borrow some food. The charitable association. The two bars of soap and the bag of sugar. Tears spilled from his eyes and settled in the creases of his cheeks. 'We're finished, Adil. It's my right hand.' Wiping away his tears, he adds, 'you've never known the taste of hunger, my friend: you don't know what it's like to be out of work (ibid: 50).

The main reason for Palestinians to work in Israeli factories is to provide basic amenities to their families.

Settlers not only exploit the indigenous population for economic gain but also remove them systematically from their colonial space. Khalifeh addresses a plethora of economic issues that rise out of IO, along with the exploitative mechanism of Israel through economic exploitation of resources, the conquest of territory and markets. The

business activities are curtailed and Israel takes control of the Palestinian market to push its own agricultural produce. One of the peasants, says in the novel *Wild Thorns* that “Israeli aborigines have taken the market. How can we compete with them?” (ibid: 130). After the IO, Israeli goods such as rice, sugar, bread, cigarettes, *tahina*<sup>8</sup> etc. are sold inside the Occupied Territories. Israeli goods are prominently kept in front of the shops, in show room windows, and even on the pavements. These commodities are cheaper than the Palestinian goods. Majority of the Palestinians invariably consume Israeli goods because of poverty and unemployment. Gita Hariharan quotes an activist from Stop The Wall<sup>9</sup> group saying, “[i]t’s the old divide and rule colonial policy. The occupied are all hit, but in different ways so their day-to-day concerns are different. You want to hit commerce, you hit Hebron Market; you want to hit religion, hit Jerusalem; you want to hit agriculture, take away farmers’ land with roads, fences and walls” (Hariharan 2014: 24). These issues put “[t]he economy in the West Bank and Gaza is under severe strain. The prolonged effects of the occupation, the vulnerability of the economy to external shocks, and the inadequate public services have acted to depress living standards” (World Bank 1993: 7).

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Waheed takes the responsibility of supporting his family since his childhood. He marries his uncle’s daughter Rasha. His uncle starts an import business joining hands with a rich Jewish businessman – Isaac Shalom who emigrated from Iraq. After the marriage, Waheed starts working in his uncle’s business. One day, Waheed, while working in the company, was shocked to see arms and ammunitions in a box which was broken by an accident. One of the workers explains about all the concealed facts to him and tells him that Isaac Shalom is responsible for it. Even his uncle is not aware of the illegal business. Here Khalifeh shows how the innocent Arab worker Waheed gets trapped into allegations of smuggling and illegal trafficking.

In the novel *The End of Spring*, we see many young Arab men working as construction workers or sanitation workers or agricultural labourers in a Jewish settlement termed as Kiryat Shayba. Majid is a university student, who worked in the settlement of Jews

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<sup>8</sup> A thick paste made from ground sesame seeds in the Middle East.

<sup>9</sup> One of the popular grassroots movements against the Israeli Apartheid wall and the settlements.

during vacation without informing his father. Fadel al-Qassam, the father, comes to know the fact that his son is working for Jews in the settlement. He gets angry, beats him and threatens that he would publish this issue in the newspapers. He abuses his son “[w]orking for the Jews on our own land. Isn’t that wonderful! Sons of bitches!” (Khalifeh 2002: 24). Majid’s cousin Issa is an orphaned poor man who also works for the Jews. Whenever Ahmad goes out with his camera near the fence of Kiryat Shayba settlement, he finds Issa there. He always remembers the previous incidents of his father’s reaction towards Majid who worked for the Jews two years ago. At that time Fadel al-Qassam had strictly warned Ahmad not to mingle with Issa. He warned Ahmad saying, “Issa, that son of a bitch, if I ever see you talking to him, I’ll smash your head! Do you hear me?” (ibid: 25).

## **2.9 HUMILIATION AT CHECKPOINTS**

Racial discrimination and separation are the crucial factors of the Israeli colonial system through which Israeli soldiers treated and exploited Palestinian people methodically. Occupation involves subjugation of human rights of Palestinians through military power. Israeli checkpoints are a place of humiliation and abuse of the innocent civilians. *Wild Thorns* begins with the narration of the returning of Usama al-Karmi, a Palestinian expatriate, to his homeland from Kuwait as well as the Palestinians’ crossing at the Allen Bridge checkpoint. Usama, a twenty-seven year old man is interrogated and humiliated by three Israeli soldiers one after another. They repeatedly ask the same questions. The dialogue goes on like this:

“I left home to work abroad five years ago, three months after the occupation started. We were living in Tulkarm; then my father died and my mother moved to Nablus.

Why did your mother move to Shekem<sup>10</sup>?

She likes Nablus.

Why does she like Shekem?

She’s got lots of relatives in Nablus.

And why have you left the oil countries to return to Shekem?

And what are you going to do in Shekem? he asked,

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<sup>10</sup> Shekem the Hebrew name by which some Israelis refer to Nablus.

I am going to look for a job in Nablus” (Khalifeh 1985: 13).

After the 1948 war, the new State Judaised much of the occupied villages’ spatial history. “Palestine was not simply ‘baptized’ with Euro-Christian names,” as Nadia Abu El-Haj argues but also, “biblical names were understood to belong to the land itself and to be eminently present and identifiable therein (once properly deciphered)” (Abu-El-Haj 2001: 35).

The State of Israel was built by renaming all the places in the Occupied Territories and thus it tried to build collective memories and traditions. They established their own Jewish state by renaming all the earlier names denying the Palestinians the names of their places and tried to demolish even their memories of the past. The Jews changed the names of the places soon after they colonised the Palestinian territories. In this process of Judaisation, the Arabic names have been changed into Hebrew. Usama tells during interrogation that his mother moved to Nablus after the death of his father. Usama says that the name of the place is Nablus but the Israeli soldier assertively names “Nablus” as “Shekem”. The stubborn Usama is not ready to accept “Nablus” as “Shekem”, yet the Israeli soldier pressurises him to forget the old historical name of the place by uttering the new name again and again. He is encountered with prolonged interrogation; he breaks down physically and psychologically, repeating the same story. It is the tactics of the Israelis to curb the returning of the Palestinians from exile by humiliating them. One of the Israeli soldiers verbally abuses Usama, “[d]irty Arabs! We build spotless sweet-smelling toilets and you fill them with shit!” (Khalifeh 1985: 11). At checkpoints, Israeli soldiers search the luggage using electronic search equipment; they also remove the clothes of the returnees in the pretext of search. Usama gets aggressive noticing the natives being subjected to unreasonable beatings, harassment, and intimidation by Israeli soldiers. He hears the merciless slaps on a girl by Israeli soldiers at checkpoint. The girl screams vociferously, “[s]wine! You swine! You swine! Aah!” (ibid: 11). Another woman, addresses him simultaneously “*Effendi*” (ibid: 18) and requests him to reduce the custom duties on children’s clothes to five dinars from ten. The people, who have been living under Occupation, need to pay the



inflated taxes for the newly bought commodities like cloth, watch, gold, and sewing machine.

The colonial power retained its ability to control all of Palestine's borders, deciding who enters and who leaves, who does not enter and who doesn't leave. Worse still, internal travel and movement within the still very much Occupied West Bank has become progressively more restricted with the proliferation of settlements, settler-only roads and zones (Barakat 2013: 144).

The central feature of the IO that followed the 1967 war has been the extensive land confiscations in the West Bank and East Jerusalem for the construction of Israeli settlements. The roadblocks and checkpoints restrict the Palestinian's free movement and obstruct them from travelling to workplaces, schools and hospitals. Both the Israelis and the Arabs have built multiple checkpoints which have caused inconvenience and imposed severe restriction on travel. Due to these problems, many sick people have died at the checkpoint. Khalifeh writes "[s]treets were cut off from other streets and the cities were more like isolated cages than cities. Each city was a huge ghetto surrounded by soldiers, and tanks blocked the entrances with trenches and walls of dirt and checkpoints" (Khalifeh 2005:101). Bantniji et al. call the checkpoints as "indirect threats to human security" (Bantniji et al. 2009: 1138). In the novel *The Inheritance*, the Israeli soldiers at Kiryat Rahil checkpoint refuse to allow the ambulance which carries Futna. She gives birth to a baby; bleeds very heavily and is in need of immediate medical care. Futna's mother, Sitt Amira, is disappointed with Mazen, a revolutionary who accompanies them, because he fails to convince Israeli soldiers. After "a long and tiring wait", Futna dies at the checkpoint. Sitt Amira takes the new-born child and throws him into the arms of an Israeli soldier and says "thank you so much, this is your share" (Khalifeh 2005: 251). The incident conveys how the devastating effect of travelling through checkpoints controls Palestinians and provides an illustration for physical as well as psychic oppression. The writer and activist Azmi Bishara describes Palestine as the "land of checkpoints". Furthermore she says, "[t]he checkpoint takes all that man has, all his efforts, all his time, all his nerves. . . .The checkpoint is the chaos and the order, it is within the law and outside of it, operating by rationality and idiosyncrasy, through both order and disorder" (Quoted in Weizman 2007:147-148).

In the novel *The Inheritance*, Bey is a single man of sixty years who notices an increase in Jewish settlements at the military post in Kiryat Raheel. The settlers are not only building new settlements with a military camp on the hill but also checkpoints. For Bey it appears like the settlers drawing the “borders between the new boundary between the past and the present, between an occupation that had lasted years and an occupation that will last forever” (Khalifeh 2005: 183). Bey and other Palestinians who live inside the Occupied Territories are habituated with the construction of settlements and checkpoints. “. . . Kiryat Raheel settlement had been established and was surrounded by a thick fence, a checkpoint, and guards; people have grown used to the situation” (ibid: 229). Thus, majority of Palestinian population represented by Bey has accepted the norms of Occupation which made the natives powerless and helpless. There are checkpoints both on the Arab and on the Israeli side. He says that the Israelis blocked the movement because they are concerned with their security, but for the Palestinian Arabs there is no security at all. “One was concerned with security and another was preoccupied with ensuring security; in other words, we became the concern of the security, but there was no security for us” (ibid: 224).

## **2.10 SOCIETAL IMPACT OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION**

The IO does not leave the institution of marriage in Palestinian society from its clutches. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, the characters like Usama and Adil are not attracted by the idea of marriage. Usama’s mother forces him to marry his cousin Nuwar who is beautiful and young. But he is unwilling. He is shocked to see the changes in the lives of people in West Bank due to the IO. Adil, who has been frustrated by the economic burden, does not show any interest in marriage too. He is conscious about his class and also aware of the fact that nobody would be ready to marry a labourer. He says “[m]arry? . . . Me? How could I? And when? With nine mouths and the kidney machine to support? And who on earth would want to marry a labourer like me? . . . These days, social class has become an essential factor in marriage too” (Khalifeh 1985: 153). On the other hand, Adil’s sister Nuwar loves Salih al-Safadi, a revolutionary who is in an Israeli prison. Her two brothers, Adil and Basil know about her sister’s pining for Salih. But she is hesitant to disclose it to her father when he discusses the marriage alliance. She aspires to marry Salih if the Occupation ended irrespective of what one said.

Indeed, for Nuwar occupation has become a hurdle to marry the boy with whom she is in love.

Ibrahim's beloved Mariam wants to marry him. Since it is an inter-religious marriage, both know that their family members would not agree to this bonding. So she suggests Ibrahim that they elope to Israel through the Mandelbaum Gate and from there to Nazareth. As a Palestinian Christian, she also sets forth her plan of hiding for a while in Israel and later, getting married and settling in Israel. She says "[l]ife there is a paradise, life in Israel is a paradise" (Khalifeh 2008: 79). He is shocked to hear these words from Mariam. He disagrees to move to Israel because as a Palestinian Muslim he is unwilling to migrate to Israel. Moreover, Mandelbaum Gate is a checkpoint between Israel and Jordanian sector of Jerusalem which brings to him awful memories of the death of his brother Waddah and thousands of Palestinians who died earlier while entering into Jerusalem. Ibrahim responds furiously, "[d]on't you know what is Israel to us? Don't you know what Mandelbaum is! My brother Waddah, and al-Hussaini, the walls and the thousands of martyrs and those who died trying to enter Jerusalem, don't you know all that? We are at war, don't you know that!" (ibid).

Khalifeh is able to look at the Palestinian's life in a holistic way. The Occupation has changed the personal priorities of the Palestinian community which has altered their behaviour too. Khalifeh in her three novels *Wild Thorns*, *Of Noble Origins* and *The End of Spring* depicts the drastic behavioural changes of male characters after being encountered with IO of Palestine and political transformations. Usama is a romantic person and a dreamer who is interested in poetry. After undergoing training in guerrilla warfare, his personal dreams are shattered. He says "... romanticism fades and dreams die. Yes, and poetry dies, along with passion. Everything becomes a link in the chain of the 'cause' itself" (Khalifeh 1985: 6). In fact, all those indulgences of the romantic youth get suppressed. In *Of Noble Origins*, Waheed is passionate about music who likes the singing of Abd al-Wahhab<sup>11</sup>. Waheed's father was a great singer and he knew how to play the *qanun*<sup>12</sup>. Fortunately, Waheed has inherited singing from his father, but he does not know how to play *qanun*. He had no time to learn it because he was working

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<sup>11</sup> A famous singer from Egypt.

<sup>12</sup> A traditional Middle Eastern stringed musical instrument.

day and night to support the family. Finally, he was lost in the political chaos of the country.

## 2.11 EFFECTS OF ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON PALESTINIAN CHILDREN

Khalifeh not only depicts the dilemmas faced by men and women but also the problems faced by young children who are the victims of IO. The novel *The End of Spring* opens with the depiction of the situation faced by Fadel al-Qassam, a middle aged man who works as a local correspondent in the newspaper *Al-Quds*. He is a “man of principles” who writes articles on the conditions of the city of Ayn al-Mirjan, under IO. He is a bold, dynamic and fearless journalist who has witnessed numerous struggles in his life due to IO. He becomes homeless during the War of 1967 and lives in a refugee camp. He starts his career by selling newspapers on the streets to make his living. Later, with his intelligence and hard work he begins to run a small book store, continuing to sell newspapers. He has two sons named Majid and Ahmad. He compares his elder son Majid to his younger one, Ahmad and is worried for the latter, a boy of fourteen years, who is a day dreamer with stuttering disability. His father is worried about Ahmad’s innocence, sensitivity, and a weakly built personality and wonders how he would survive under IO. The elder son, Majid is an active boy and a performer who has inherited the singing talent from his mother. Majid is well-known among his fellow students also for the *dabke*<sup>13</sup> steps. Ahmad is an artist too, who paints beautifully. His father is disappointed with him who fails to respond to the harsh realities of the IO confidently. Yet, he encourages him by gifting a camera and he advises his elder son to take him around the town to understand the realities of life. Fadel al-Qassam forces his son to shed innocence in order to encounter the brutality of the Occupation. It is a way of suppressing not only the innocence of the childhood but also curbing the blossoming of imaginary trait of a child. He makes an attempt to expose his son to the harsh realities of the Occupation that may not give any space for subtle emotions and sensitive feelings which is but natural to a human being. He says, “. . . [t]o make a living, you’ve got to have *gusto*. To have a life like all these people, you’ve got to have *gusto*. To survive in a difficult and harsh town like this one, you’ve got to have *gusto*” (Khalifeh 2008a:

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<sup>13</sup> An Arab folk dance

11)<sup>14</sup>. The soft nature of his son troubles the father who frequently nudges him telling, “[y]ou’re like a girl. Come on! Move it!” (ibid: 13). On another occasion he says: “. . . stop sitting around here like a girl doing nothing” (ibid: 15). He insists on Ahmad to develop masculine traits to protect his home and country. Khalifeh shows the impact of IO on children through the character of Ahmad who belongs to the third generation of Palestinian children born and brought up under Occupation. She throws light on the predicament of these children who are conditioned and pressurised to emerge as the paragon of Palestinian resistance, sacrificing their childhood.

## 2.12 DEMOLITION OF THE HOUSES

IO exercises military power to control the natives. Indeed, searching of houses and their demolition by Israeli soldiers become an everyday experience for Palestinians. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Israeli soldiers visit Usama’s house looking for him. His mother audaciously faces the interrogation. Israeli soldier becomes perplexed by the assertive attitude of his mother. The Israeli soldier says to Usama’s mother “[m]adam, you’re acting as though you expected our visit” (Khalifeh 1985: 166). She replies “. . . who doesn’t expect your visit these days? We’re under occupation. What else should we expect?” (ibid).

In the same novel, Nuwar and Adil are arrested for two days after elongated interrogation. They are released; but in due course their family receives an official order to vacate the house. Before demolition of the house, the Israeli authorities search every nook and corner of the house using electronic devices. Adil and other members hasten to take possession of important things from the house. Meanwhile, many remind Adil to take his father’s kidney machine. He is in a dilemma regarding the machine: he knows it is an economic burden for him but a life saver for his father. “I won’t take that damned machine. Yes, I will. No, I won’t. Yes, I will” (ibid: 203). Finally, he decides not to take it. The house is blown up by Israeli authorities showing no mercy. The demolition of the Palestinian houses has been justified by Israeli military as “defence of national border” (Harlow 1992: 224). A demolition just not remains a demolition. It

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<sup>14</sup> Emphasis in the original.

is a highly stressful moment for the dwellers to decide their relationship with each and every small thing in their house in no time.

### **2.13 OCCUPATION AND THE LIFE IN PRISON**

Prison, deportation, immigration, and exile have become central issues in the contemporary Palestinian life. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Sahar Khalifeh depicts the life of prisoners who are arrested by Israelis on different charges. “Approximately 30 percent of the Palestinian population living in Israel or under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza have passed through the Israeli prison system” (Harlow 1994: 110). Prison has become a common experience for most of the Palestinian youth who are fighting for the sovereign independent Palestinian state. At a different level, the very space of Palestine has also been imagined as a prison. Said says ‘[e]very Palestinian has become a prisoner. Gaza is surrounded by an electrified wire fence on three sides; imprisoned like animals, Gazans are unable to move, unable to work, unable to sell their vegetables or fruit, unable to go to school’ (Said 2014: 36-37).

In the novel *Wild Thorns* Khalifeh portrays the miseries of Khalid, the younger son of Abu Muhammad, who is tortured by the Israeli soldiers in the prison. He narrates to Usama about the way Israelis torture his son in the prison. “They’d tortured him in every part of his body, even down there. They loosed a dog on him that went for his genitals. He may be infertile”. Once in prison, there is always a fear of a bigger danger if something goes wrong again. Abu Muhammad says, “[y]ou can still see the marks of torture on his body, but he still hasn’t learned his lesson. What I’m most afraid of is that he’ll do something stupid and then they’ll blow up our house” (Khalifeh 1985: 7).

In the novel *The End of Spring*, both Ahmad and Issa are interrogated in an Israeli prison, tortured and beaten badly. Ahmad, the soft spoken sensitive boy, changes drastically after his return from the prison. He says to his father without stuttering, “I am not a boy. I grew up in prison” (Khalifeh 2008a: 111). The physical violence perpetuated by the soldiers inside the Israeli prison has a deeper impact on Ahmad. He stops attending school. He starts working in the emergency unit for the Red Cross Organisation. He engages himself in multiple tasks. He makes friendship with two young men in Qalqilya and goes to the university every Thursday with them and attends

conferences and meetings in order to know the situation better. Apart from this, he indulges in books and journals to educate himself. Ahmad, a drop out from the school, shows keen interest in informal education and self-learning. He stops going home at regular intervals; most of the times he roams alone on the streets talking to himself. Many notice this strange behaviour of Ahmad. His parents are worried about him. So, his father requests the priest, who is the art teacher of Ahmad, to counsel him.

The priest meets Ahmad and expresses his anxiety over the change that has taken place. The priest questions Ahmad, who has now stopped painting: “[d]idn’t you used to like drawing? Where did that go?” Ahmad replies “[i]t went with the wind” (Khalifeh 2008a: 243). The priest tries to convince Ahmad that art would not go away, it might take some time to express, but if it is not practised it may become rusty like a knife. So he advises him to be patient with the happenings in his life and in his surroundings and tries to stimulate him to engage in creative activities. The priest advises Ahmad to go back to his studies and live with his parents who would look after him with love. He also suggests that he could take decisions about his future only when he grows up. The priest puts a lot of effort to convince the boy by referring to multiple instances about the good things of the world. He points out how Mira, being a Jew, protests against the construction of the wall. The priest explains the prevailing opinions about the occupiers, which is no way monolithic. He knows that Ahmad is suffering from the trauma that he witnessed at a very young age. He makes efforts to change the young mind and advises him to forgive and forget the bad incidents. The priest tells him that it is possible to end this violence with love and peace. There is no salvation through violent means. Jesus also said this. Islam also says that love and peace are the goals of the universe.

#### **2.14 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWS AND ARABS**

The racial discrimination is a key legacy of Settler Colonialism which indigenous people encounter on daily basis. The unequal social relations that are produced by Settler Colonialism are encoded and reproduced through different processes of racialization. The settler has a hostile relationship with the indigenous. According to Veracini “. . . the settler colonial situation establishes a system of relationship comprising three different agencies: the settler colonizer, the indigenous colonized, and

a variety of differently categorized exogenous alterities” (Veracini 2010: 16). The segregation practice enforced through separate laws and onerous restrictions creates enmity between colonizers and colonised for ever.

Settler Colonialism creates inequality between the settlers and the native inhabitants. The settler is different from the indigenous population in terms of language, appearance, and ethnicity. This process leads to discrimination and exploitation of the natives on the basis of race. Fanon says “. . . colonialism is separatist and regionalist” (Fanon 1963: 70). In the same way, Zionists and the IO have created a distinction between Jews and non-Jews and further discrimination into European and Oriental Jews.

Khalifeh’s novels extensively address the issue of racial discrimination perpetuated by the settlers on the natives. In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Waheed’s sister Wedad returns to her maternal home permanently because she comes to know about her husband Rashad’s numerous affairs which continued even after his marriage with her. Rashad also had relationship with Isaac Shalom’s youngest daughter – Sarah, who stayed with her mother Jefreet Shalom, in *Kibbutz*. Waheed’s wife Rasha asks her husband to meet Sarah’s mother and inform about her daughter’s affair with a married Arab man. They wanted her mother to warn Sarah to end this relationship, so that Waheed’s sister’s marriage and the family of Rasha’s brother would be saved. So both decide to visit *Kibbutz* to meet Jefreet Shalom. She runs a school inside the *Kibbutz*. He enters the school and sees Jefreet Shalom through the glass. She appears to be a European. He becomes conscious about his own skin colour and clothing which was filled with the smell of gas. He feels inferior and contemplates how and in which language to communicate with her. In utter confusion, he even thinks of returning without meeting her. After waiting for long, he decides to knock at the door. She opens the door and is surprised to see him. Waheed introduces himself and tells her his intentions to discuss the family matters and also about her husband. She does not say a single word, but she makes a gesture to him to sit on a chair beside the door. The children give a strange look to Waheed as if he is a strange creature. He understands neither the strange looks of the children, nor the attitude of Jefreet. They remain completely indifferent to him as they celebrate the birthday of a girl. Jefreet does not



even show the courtesy to offer him a piece of cake. “It was the first time in his life he had visited people while they were eating and not been invited to join them. But they were not hosts and he was not a guest. He was no more than a parasite intruder, and they too were intruders” (Khalifeh 2012: 122). Finally Jefreet Shalom leaves her office without responding to Waheed at all. Everything looked strange: “. . . the architecture of the restaurant, the utensils they used to eat food, the farming tools and the tractor, the women of the *kibbutz* – their clothes and their hair – and the children and their games” (ibid: 123).

Under IO, being an Arab Palestinian is an increasingly complex and cumbersome identity for the Palestinians to bear.

. . . the Arabs were able to see . . . a ruthless doctrine, calling for monastic self-discipline and cold detachment from environment. The Jews who gloried in the name of socialist workers interpreted brotherhood on a strictly nationalist or racial basis, for they meant brotherhood with Jew, not with Arab. As they insisted on working the soil with their own hands, since exploitation of others was anathema to them, they excluded the Arabs from their regime. . . . They believed in equality, but for themselves. They lived on Jewish bread, raised on Jewish soil that was protected by a Jewish rifle (Quoted in Waines 1971: 220).

White supremacy and Settler Colonialism are intersected. White supremacy develops the racial formation. In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, the Jewish workers’ demonstration arrives in front of the Governor’s office. Ben Gurion is the leader of Jewish labour organisation and also the representative of the Jewish agency. He invites governor Arthur to peep through the window to see how Jewish workers stand in straight lines which resembles a small army. Gurion feels proud about the Jewish workers who carry red flags and red signs. His intention is to show the difference between Arab workers and Jewish workers to Arthur. According to him Jewish workers are disciplined and sincere, unlike the Arab peasants. The Governor disagrees with the argument of Ben Gurion that there is difference between Jewish and Arab workers. Ben Gurion says, “Sir Arthur, the Arab workers are not truly proletarians. They are illiterate. In other words, they are hired hands and peasants. Not one of them knows the difference between his head and his feet” (Khalifeh 2012: 80). Arthur says Wassef is an Arab, an obedient servant and a literate who follows his orders and he is satisfied with his

performance. Both Ben Gurion and Weizmann shout in unison, “[t]hat is why he is dangerous” (ibid). After having a prolonged discussion on the same subject Ben Gurion says, “Jewish workers . . . are true workers. . . . They have skills, they know languages, and they have culture. They are very disciplined and clean. This is the difference” (ibid). Arthur agrees that there is difference between Jews and Arabs in food habits, culture and tradition, but he wanted to convey that the level of tension between these two communities is not as they say, it is less. The governor loses his patience when Ben Gurion advises him to change his assistant cum driver Wassef. He also alleges that Wassef is a spy. Arthur feels annoyed because Ben Gurion is interfering in his affairs. He argues in favour of Wassef.

“Colonial racism is built from three major ideological components: one, the gulf between the culture of the colonialist and the colonized; two, the exploitation of these differences for the benefit of the colonialist; three, the use of these supposed differences as standards of absolute fact” (Memmi 1967 : 71).

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Rosa Mayor is from California. She is the member and staunch supporter of Jewish Trotskyism<sup>15</sup>. She introduces her dream idea of a nursing college, which has been an ambitious project of hers. Her intention is to educate both Arab and Jewish girls in this college. She is the heir of Aaron Mayer who donates millions of dollars to concretize the dream of Rosa Mayor. Before the opening of this project, the late Iraqi Jew, Khaduri, had proposed a project for opening an agricultural college for both Arabs and Jewish students on equal footing. The motive behind his project was to foster learning and living together in harmony and to erase any feeling of separation or discrimination among the two communities. The project also emphasised the learning of the innovative and modern methods of cultivation with the intention of making “Palestine a paradise”. The project failed because the Jewish

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<sup>15</sup>The split in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the 1920s between the supporters of Joseph Stalin and the supporters of Leon Trotsky led to the birth of an extreme left-wing political ideology called Trotskyism. After the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, a change took place in Trotskyite position concerning Jews. The earlier positions saw Jews as one of the oppressed people of the world while the changed position always opposed Zionism.

agency divided the project into two, one for the Arabs and the other for the Jews. The financial resources were divided between the two colleges. For the Arabs, the agricultural college was established in Tulkarem and for the Jews, in Kfar Tabor. Though they are successful in establishing the colleges, the humanitarian aspiration behind the project turned futile. The ideals like co-existence, co-operation and brotherhood failed. Rosa Mayor knew about the restraints of the Khaduri project or the role played by the Jewish agency. Majority of them hoped Rosa Mayor would accomplish the goals of the Khaduri project. Colonel Kish, a former British soldier, and an appointee of Weizmann, ensures that the Khaduri project failed. Khalifeh writes ironically that Colonel Kish, “had divided the project in two and split the money in two parts. He had divided the college into two and even Khaduri after his death became two Khaduris” (Khalifeh 2012: 191). Rosa is unwilling to divide the Project. She wants to finance the project with the intention of developing a harmonious co-existence of Jews and Palestinians. She says if this is not to happen, she would take her money back and invest elsewhere. Rosa listens to Colonel Kish who argues that the Palestinian women are veiled and conservative, but the Jewish girls are emancipated and liberated. He says that the Arabs would be worried about the progressive and liberal outlook of the Jewish girls. The Arabs would not encourage their girls to mingle with the Jewish ones as they would perceive the latter as morally fallen and treat them with contempt. Lisa is a professor and an activist who lives in Jerusalem. She thinks that the Project is an opportunity for the girls to get educated. She says that there is difference between western and eastern girls; everybody knows about this and there is no use arguing about it. She questions is it advisable to let the Arab and Jewish girls remain as they are? She says that if they are going to establish a democratic country, it is important that the two groups should mingle together. It is necessary that the Arab and Jewish girls learn from each other and also that the two cultures fuse with each other. But Colonel Kish is adamant; he says that Jewish girls are from the west and should remain as westerners, speaking the language of the west. He says that the Jews lived in the west for centuries and they had served that society by producing many scholars, artists and craftsmen. On the other hand, Lisa explains, the pathetic condition of Palestinians under the colonial rule. She says that seventy percent of the Palestinian people live in rural areas and they are poor and illiterate. They are working towards eradicating poverty and illiteracy but

the Mandate is not co-operating; it is imposing taxes, imprisoning the people and there is shortage of schools. She says that the Government is supporting the mayors to keep the status quo. She says in clear words that this project is not helpful to the Palestinians as they are doing things with a partisan attitude.

In the novel, *The Image, The Icon and The Covenant*, Ibrahim goes from West Bank to Israel in search of Mariam. He reaches the covenant that is located over Nazareth in Galilee. He stays in a hotel behind the convent; meets Abu Yusef who runs the lodge. He is an old man. He narrates how he struggled and faced hardships in Southern Lebanon. In his conversation with Ibrahim, Abu Yusef expresses his anger against Russian Jews and communist principles and shares awful experiences that he had in a foreign country. In Lebanon, he worked in a farm. Soon the Jewish community settled there and transformed the farm land into a *kibbutz*. Yusef and his friend started to work in the communist *kibbutz* that believed in socialist principles. Initially, he was attracted by the communist principles and started attending the evening club in order to know more about the ideology. Few months later, they humiliated him and forced him “to drive his car across other peoples’ lands” (Khalifeh 2008b: 198). Yusef disagreed to obey the orders, yet they forced him to drive over the land to spoil the crops despite the thorny fence. He was young and had entered the country illegally and they knew it. He was afraid that they would deport him and had no other choice left; so he did obey the orders. As the vehicle drove over the farm, the farmers started throwing stones from all directions. One of the attackers was the one who was reading a book about worker’s rights, distribution of wealth and about poor people two days ago. He was shouting at him, calling him a donkey and ordering him with harsh words to drive in high speed. Yusef is unable to do it for long. The experience of Abu Yusef illustrates the compelling situation the Arab workers face and the way they are forced to act against their will. He narrates the pitiable situation of the Arabs. He says that if Arabs fail to obey the Jews they ask them to leave the place and bring Russians to get the work done.

In the novel *The End of Spring*, Khalifeh writes about a love affair between a young Arab boy, Ahmad and a Jewish girl, Mira. Mira is a pretty girl who belongs to Kiryat Shayba, and she is the daughter of a settler. She used to come crawling under the fence accompanied with her dog – Bobo to play with Ahmad. In spite of his parents’ warning

about the settlers, Ahmad frequently goes to play with Mira. He also takes with him his beautiful cat Amber. Ahmad being young, gets attracted to Mira. Slowly, he is in love with Mira. Meanwhile, Ahmad has an emotional attachment with the cat. He cherished the company of the cat. He is not ready to be away from the cat even for a minute. He feeds his cat with a lot of affection and he sleeps with his cat on the bed. He finds his cat missing all of a sudden. Filled with anxiety, he starts searching for the pet. Unfortunately, he does not find the cat. He goes near the settlement and weeps bitterly. Issa sees Ahmad sitting alone and weeping. Issa tries to console him and asks him about the reason for crying. Ahmad replies. After a long conversation with Ahmad, Issa, who worked in Mira's house, reveals that Mira has a new cat and she has caged the cat inside the barracks. He says he had heard the conversation between Mira and her mother, who planned to keep the cat for themselves. Mira's mother said "[t]he cat will get pregnant and start multiplying like Arabs" (Khalifeh 2008a: 9). So they decided to do sterilization operation on the cat in order to put an end to the cat's natural process of breeding. Ahmad starts worrying about the cat and plans to rescue the cat with the help of Issa. Ahmad thinks:

After today she would not be able to have babies, or she could die during the operation, and he would never see her eyes again. She was going to die. She's going to die. Amber's going to die! Tears streamed down his cheeks, so he wiped them with his sleeve and whispered in agony, Amber, beauty. I'm coming. I'm coming!" (ibid: 99).

Initially, Issa disagrees to help Ahmad because he knew that it was a dangerous act. He says to Ahmad ". . . the settlers are like demons. Each one has a rifle and a pistol and a machine gun. Don't you dare? Don't you dare?" (ibid: 94). Ahmad bribes Issa giving his Swiss watch and sunglasses to take him inside the settlement to rescue the cat. Issa agrees and both decide to enter the settlement during night. Inside the barracks they see many caged animals and birds. They figure the cat out and are eager to free it from the cage. But the dogs start barking at them and they are caught. They are imprisoned with the allegation that they were planting explosives and mine in the settlement of Kiryat Shayba. Thus, though the act of stealing happens from the Jewish side, innocent Arab boy lands in prison because of the mistrust and unequal power distribution among the two communities.

## 2.15 APARTHEID WALL

Israelis as settlers perpetually degrade and keep Palestinian Arabs as a separate entity paving the way to creating a new settler society constituting only Jews. Fanon says "... apartheid is simply one form of the division into compartments, of the colonial world. The first thing the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits" (Fanon 1963: 40). For apartheid wall a comprehensive segregationist regime was gradually imposed.

In the settler project, separation is the key in order to wield control over the colonised land. Israelis adopt many strategic courses to separate the indigenous people from Palestine or to eliminate them. The building of the wall is one such plan of action taken up by the Israelis which disintegrates the life of Palestinians. They do not get the basic facilities for their day-to-day life and are placed in miserable conditions. Israel decided to build a thick wall in the west bank during the year 2000. Palestinians identify this wall as an apartheid wall; Israelis called this wall a safety or security wall. This great wall restricted the movement of Palestinians in different ways and the impact has been manifold: it prevented them from availing medical facility which they could get only on the other side; it deprived them of their productive land and also the means of their livelihood; in the process of building the wall thousands of Palestinians' houses have been demolished. The Palestinians, the national and international organisations, as well as activists around the globe protested against the building of this wall in the Occupied Territories; but they did not succeed in preventing the construction. As Islah Jad writes, the construction of the Wall within the West Bank has "resulted in the creation of localized identities which acted to destroy the social fabric and undermine Palestinian unity" (Jad 2010: 150). Khalifeh in her novel *The End of Spring*, writes about the impact of the wall on the inhabitants. The wall would pass right through Ahmad's house and all the houses in that neighbourhood. Ahmad's father stands in front of the bulldozer in order to stop the demolition of the house. "The soldiers grabbed him by the neck and dragged him like a sheep as he struggled in defiance" (Khalifeh 2008a: 273). The soldiers kick him from all directions and he starts vomiting, writhing in pain. There is a peasant woman who pounds her chest and cries for the uprooting of her olive trees.

An Israeli soldier pushes the woman out of her way in front of bulldozers in order to do away with houses and trees.

The novel *The End of Spring* narrates how the Palestinians worked in Israeli settlements to earn their means of daily bread and basic needs. Ahmad lived with the day labourers; they were working in the field in Qalqilya, which was on the other side of the wall built by the Israelis. It became very difficult to reach the other side of the wall because of the restrictions laid out by the Israelis. The labourers felt as though it is a cage for them. Some opposed it and fled from there. A few young people joined Hamas and began to take revenge against the Israelis. Some displaced ones went to Nabulus and took refuge there. Some people lived in Mosques, while some lived in shops where they worked.

## **2.16 CONCLUSION**

Sahar Khalifeh's literary journey closely examines the tremendous changes brought by the Occupation from the late 1960s till the present date. Her writings record how Occupation became crucial and different from the one of the past several years. Israeli military rule is never static. It implements several novel strategies to have control over the Palestinian population as well as it extends the territories in order to safeguard Israeli Jews from global threats. Khalifeh renders a complex criticism of the problems faced by the common people and how IO is affecting their day-to-day life. The Occupation takes an altogether different shape in the present time. Consequently, it aims to bring changes in their lives and livelihood. As a result, different shades of experiences of exile continue to bother the Palestinians. Her novel promotes the need to look at Occupation and exile from the perspective of both men and women. Many academics, film makers, artists and litterateurs spoke on the theme of exile and are continuing to do so. However Khalifeh stands out as the first woman writer to raise the issue of Occupation and exile very effectively in her narratives. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Khalifeh extensively focuses on the political upheaval of 1967 and the suffering of the Palestinians. Issues related to the personal experiences of women in relation to marriage, love, motherhood, family, etc. are not the concerns here as women writers were constantly accused of indulging in. This however, would not amount to saying that Khalifeh too, belittles these issues as her male counterparts did. It is the political

compulsion of the times that elicits such a response as *Wild Thorns*. As an insider, her treatment of the political situation of her country and its people is a balanced one. Nowhere does one find any attempt at romanticisation of the issue.

The novels that we study end with a tragic note. It signifies Palestinian failure, loss of hope and passivity of Palestinian struggle to end Israeli Settler Colonial domination. In other words, Palestinian narratives focus primarily on victimisation of the natives under the Occupation. The novel *Wild Thorns* end with Usama attacking the egged bus that carries native Palestinians to work in Israeli factories. The novel *Inheritance* has a tragic end wherein Futna dies after giving birth to a child at an Israeli checkpoint. *The End of Spring* ends with the death of Ahmed who attempts to protest against the wall. *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant* ends with the unexpected Israeli attack on Palestinian civilians who are coming out after Friday's prayer. The massacre results in the death of the young boy Mahmoud. The innocent death of the natives is a part and parcel of Settler Colonialism. For both natives and settlers, the question of survival assumes primary importance.



## Chapter Three

### Popular Resistance and Armed Resistance in the Works of Sahar Khalifeh

“The West sees us in a very ugly and negative light. One minute Saddam, the next Arafat, and the next some Bedouin with a dirty lice-infested beard holding a knife behind his back” (Khalifeh 2008a: 65).

#### 3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The previous chapter analysed the impact of IO on the native Palestinians’ lives. The persistence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that started after 1948 War continues to play a dominant role in shaping and structuring not only the day-to-day life but also the long-term life of Palestinians. The Palestinians have responded to this by evolving different strategies of survival. The present chapter deals with various such strategies of Palestinians in terms of resistance to counter colonialism. Indeed, Palestinian resistance against multiple colonial dominations is one of the core themes in Khalifeh’s writings. Her writings trace the emergence and the development of Palestinian resistance movement in different phases of history. The novels depict the resistance which started against the British Mandate before 1948 and evolved in complexity to the later phase in opposition to Zionist colonialism. The contemporary resistance is to the ongoing IO. Her novels highlight the difference between men’s and women’s ways of resistance to colonial dominations. This chapter distinguishes and analyses the different modes and strategies of Palestinian resistance that are evident in the writings of Khalifeh. Her novels portray the different forms of resistance which vary from person to person and generation to generation. In their writings, James C. Scott, Michel Foucault, Frantz Fanon and Edward Said have thrown light on the nuances of resistance. In 1985 James C. Scott introduced and developed the theoretical framework of “everyday resistance”. On the other hand, Foucault argued about the unavoidable confrontation between resistance and power.

The theory of resistance put forth by the anti-colonial critic Frantz Fanon, sheds light on the necessity of armed resistance to fight against colonialism. Edward Said's writings focus on the representation and marginalisation of genuine Palestinian resistance in Western discourse and media. The various theories of resistance help us to understand the Palestinian resistance movement. Khalifeh in her novels makes several continual references to the emergence and the existence of resistance movement in Palestine and the outcome of popular struggle. Palestinian resistance movement has systematically grown and adapted itself to successive colonial dominations and political crises. It opens the multiple spaces contemplating new directions and new possibilities for fight against the colonial oppression. Indeed, Palestinian resistance movement manifests itself in different non-violent and violent ways: everyday resistance, cultural resistance, popular resistance, martyrdom operations, etc. Whereas the motive of all these modes of resistance may be one – end of IO and establishment of an independent Palestinian state – one can discern glaring disagreements between these modes, especially between the violent and the non-violent ones.

### **3.2 RESISTANCE TO SETTLER COLONIALISM**

We have earlier discussed that Palestine is an example for Settler Colonialism. Settler Colonial studies focuses not only on the on-going colonisation and dispossession of the natives but also on indigenous resistance. Settler Colonialism operates at multiple levels. It is interrelated with the issues of resistance, racism, gender, class, sexuality and capitalism. Indigenous resistance confronts with various structures of power and is aware of the oppressive strategies used by the settlers. Presumably, Palestinians have borrowed the techniques of anti-colonial movements of different countries to resist the IO.<sup>1</sup> Social and economic injustice, racial discrimination and deprivation of human rights meted out to the indigenous people made them to take to various modes of resistance. Veracini says,

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<sup>1</sup> Direct references or evidences to this, is difficult to come by. As it is evident, the statement is only a presumption based on a general observation of human nature and the argument of the chapter does not rest on this.

Resistance and survival are thus the weapons of the colonised and the settler colonised; it is resistance and survival that make certain that colonialism and settler colonialism are never ultimately triumphant. . . resistance and survival are also at all times inevitably mixed, and different people in different circumstances survive to resist and resist by surviving (Veracini 2011:3-4).

Indigenous communities resist the effects of the contemporary settler colonial assault which manifests on day-to-day basis. Each indigenous nation has its own way of articulating and asserting self-determination and freedom. Khalifeh portrays the Palestinians as not only the victims of Israeli Settler Colonial domination but also as models of heroism and resistance in her novels. Palestinian resistance movement changed its course systematically since the successive political dominations and crises from the Ottoman rule to the IO.

### **3.3 THE INEVITABILITY OF RESISTANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF PALESTINE**

Domination, oppression and harassment of a particular community under colonial rule gives birth to resistance. Resistance emerges as a struggle against entrenched power play. It seeks to challenge not only the existing power structure but also its socio-economic and political bases. There is a dialectical relationship between domination and resistance. Both are interdependent. But the idea of resistance is intimately engaged in challenging different forms of hegemonic power structures and strategies. In this matter, Michel Foucault's writing consistently employs the term 'resistance' that is juxtaposed with the term 'power'. He observes the inseparable relationship between the presence of power and resistance. Furthermore, he argues, both power and resistance have the same capacity to bring social change. One of the most well-known quotes of Foucault is,

[w]herever there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather by the same token, the latter is never external to power . . . the strictly relational character of power's connections . . . can only exist as a result of a multiplicity of points of resistance . . . These points of resistance are present everywhere in the network of power (Foucault 1981: 125-126).

In the same vein, Lila Abu-Lughod observes that "where there is resistance, there is power" (Abu-Lughod 1990: 42). According to Scott, the ". . . 'real resistance' is

organized, principled, and has revolutionary implications” (Scott 1989: 51). These thinkers consider power as a distinct and central idea which affects the intensity of the resistance. Consequently, the level of subjugation or oppression with the use of power decides the quantum of resistance. Hence, different modes of resistance to power are natural and inevitable that challenges the hegemonic or counter-hegemonic power-relations. “As soon as there is a power relation, there is the possibility of resistance” (Foucault 1989: 153). So the struggle is being conditioned constantly by the structures of social and political power. Resistance challenges the prevailing power imbalance consciously which leads to inequality and injustice. Indeed, IO has granted Israeli Jews the power to rule over the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories who have become powerless. Israel wields rigorous administrative control over the people. Further, the Israeli military regime is in control of currency, import-export trade, labour mobility and of all productive resources including land and water. Indeed, this is an enormous power imbalance that is inevitably responded to by the Palestinian resistance movement in different modes.

### **3.4 RESISTANCE LITERATURE**

Writing and articulation have been considered as the core of the Palestinian resistance movement. Under colonial rule, it is a common phenomenon to address nationalistic views in their narratives. In Jean Paul Sartre’s well-known essay “What Is Literature?” he says “literature throws you into battle. Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once you have begun, you are committed, willy-nilly” (Sartre 2001: 277). Indeed, the writing of nationalist narratives is a specific kind of intellectual practice that has the ability to question the atrocities of colonialism or occupation. The texts are produced as ‘literature of combat’, as Fanon puts it, from the perspective of writing back to the hegemonic power structures. Under these circumstances writing acts as resistance which operates on multiple levels. In the Palestinian context, literature arises along conditions of military occupation and the ongoing struggle for liberation. The literature about the circumstances of the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 articulated the notion that fighting for land and struggling against IO through resistance movements was something natural and essential too. It was not a choice of the Palestinian writers but a socio-political compulsion that made the writers

emphasise the significance of struggle in their writing. Fighting has thus become very natural for both men and women in Palestine. Struggle and militancy is ascribed to masculinity and men felt that the meaning of their being men is in fighting. Their fighting is intended not only for reclaiming the land but for reclaiming the honour they had lost, after the IO. During the circumstances of the War of 1967, the literature of Palestine had gone through a tremendous transformation from a literature expressing a sense of loss into one of revolution (Schulz and Hammer 2003: 126).

The main goal of these national narratives is not only to address the oppressions of coloniser but also to change their existing situations materially and conceptually. The responsibilities of resistance literature turn into a broader spectrum as an arena of struggle against hegemony, domination and oppression. Robert J.C. Young in his essay “The Right to Resist” addresses the resistance literature as “transtemporal” which is different from the customary practices of political and military resistance that challenges the power. Further he argues that resistance literature “will necessarily tend to be ideological or counter-hegemonic rather than a form of everyday political intervention” (Young 2011: 43).

The prominent Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani applied the term “resistance” (*muqawamah*) in the description of Palestinian literature in 1966. Kanafani’s term “Occupied Palestine” indicates the establishment of Israeli state on the Palestinian land in 1948. His work acknowledges the conditions of Palestinian literature under Israeli rule. This, he termed as Resistance Literature. Kanafani described the Palestinian literature “as an arena of struggle” (Harlow 1987: 2). Resistance is one of the most important themes in Palestinian literature both in poetry and prose. Palestinian writers are continuously engaged with the pervasive political issues. One can say that the prime concern of contemporary Palestinian literature is to represent the Palestinian realities to the rest of the world and thereby, legitimise their strife and derive moral strength. These writers tend to articulate the personal and political experiences of their life. After 1948, Palestinian writing has frequently appeared as the precursor of resistance literature. In spite of censorship, banning of books, jailing, torture, and assassinations, the Palestinian resistance succeeded in continuing the literary production. The writers in exile too, continued to produce enormous literature.

Furthermore, Palestinian Resistance literature deals with people's sufferings by portraying real life incidents of oppression or suppression of basic rights at the hands of settlers. The predicaments of Palestinians who are alienated physically and spiritually have been depicted in the literature produced by Palestinian writers portraying the realities of IO. Resistance literature is primarily concerned with the people's movement to assert cultural, historical, political and ideological identity and with the struggle to live in the colonised land which is their own land. Barbara Harlow opines that:

Resistance literature calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a political and politicized activity. The literature of resistance sees itself furthermore as immediately and directly involved in a struggle against ascendant or dominant forms of ideological and cultural production (ibid: 28-29).

The rejection of the Palestinian identity is seen in the narratives of Jewish history, and literature as well as in western discourse. At this point, it is important for Palestinian writers to resist such narratives and give voice to their own indigenous literature by resisting the settler's construction of the past. The resistance literature acts as a political activity that invokes national consciousness, creates an agency for the marginalized and oppressed and strengthens the process of identity construction. Salma Khadra Jayyusi says "[i]f Palestinians do not announce their experience to the world, surely the world is ready to forget them" (Jayyusi 1992: 69). The term 'resistance' is the movement of the mass in relation to power, which may not have any limitation or boundary. In the Palestinian context, much literature arises from conditions of military occupation and ongoing struggle for liberation.

Palestinian *Intifada* is a watershed moment and Palestinian literature about this moment has brought phenomenal changes in Israel, in Diasporas and in the Occupied Territories. During this period of Palestinian occupation, political prisoners from West Bank and Gaza produced literature in jails and detention camps. The motif of the stone appeared as a major symbol in the *Intifada* literature. Apart from this, it gave birth to the graffiti culture. Fischer and Abedi refer to graffiti as a 'minor media' (Fischer and Abedi 1990: 337). It is a cultural form of resistance which started in the late 1980s and early 1990s to communicate the political message to the various

audiences. It covered the issues of gender, religion and politics. Most importantly it emphasized on the abnormality of everyday life under IO and the mass resistance of Palestinians. These graffiti writings are humorous, threatening, and resistant to the dominant Israeli rule. In spite of the censorship, banning of books, jailing, torture, and assassinations, the Palestinian resistance succeeded in continuing the literary productions. Indeed endeavours such as creating literature in Arabic as well as in other languages, translating literature into many languages, conducting Palestinian literary festivals, publication of newspapers, magazines, and journals, etc. became the prime concern of resistance literature. Acceptance and social transformation of the Palestinians are the offshoots of the genuine endeavours of Palestinian resistance literature. Consequently, it aims at bringing changes in their lives and livelihood. According to Said, narratives are “the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Said 1994b: xiii). So these narratives have become the conscious narratives to reconstruct their history and identity.

The theme of resistance appeared in Palestinian novels and short stories of 1950s and 1960s. In this period Palestinian fiction in both these genres was dominated by the writers living in exile such as Samira Azzam in Lebanon, Ghassan Kanafani in Kuwait and Lebanon, and Jabra Ibrahim Jabra in Iraq. Khanafani carved a platform for the resistance literature that remained a powerful voice for armed struggle against IO in three of his novels *Men in the Sun* (1963), *Return to Haifa* (1969) and *April Anemones* (1972). Jabra suggests that the creative writing deals with “freedom, anxiety, protest, struggle, social progress, individual salvation, rebellion, [and] heroism” (Jabra 1980: 19). Khalifeh’s novels portray multiple resistance strategies carried out by Palestinians on Israeli settler colonial rule. Her writings talk about but never propagandize the armed resistance to resist Israeli settler colonial oppression. However, she advocates other types of peaceful resistance strategies that existed at the heart of Palestinian struggle. Like Khalifeh, Liana Badr in her narratives gives voice to the women’s role in the Palestinian resistance in her works *The Eye of the Mirror* (1991) and *A Balcony over the Fakihani* (1983).

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o argues that literature has two opposing ideals. In his article entitled “Literature in schools” he says, “[i]n literature there have been two opposing

aesthetics: the aesthetics of oppression and exploitation and of acquiescence with imperialism; and that of human struggle for total liberation (Wa Thiong'o 1981: 38). Khalifeh's writings obviously fulfil the second criteria of aesthetics. Her novels represent many kinds of oppression and exploitation by the colonizers on the one hand and on the other, resistance to the same, to achieve liberation. For Sahar Khalifeh, the act of writing itself is resistance. Living and writing continuously from within the Occupied Territories shows her conviction and courage represents an act of resistance. Khalifeh's works, therefore, are part of 'resistance literature'. In resistance literature the concept of nation remains a forerunner and a privileged form of narrative that supports the liberation from colonial domination. The Palestinian national narratives have become a necessity to maintain its identity and sustain its existence. Indeed, Khalifeh states in her interview that her writing is:

. . . national in the sense that it stresses the identity of the Palestinian, his cultural features, his language, his yearning and sufferings. On the other hand, the identity does not deny the fact that there are other identities which [Palestinians] realize and recognize. This is one point. The other is that I try to emphasize the fact that the Palestinian identity is not closed in one itself. The Palestinian nation is a part of the Arab nation, the Arab nation is a part of humanity. Every nation has its own features, its culture, its own historical experience, but then, all streams pour into the same ocean, and that is humanity (Nazareth 1980: 84-85).

Khalifeh was awarded doctorate in Women's Studies and American Literature from the University of Iowa in America. She was inspired by the first *Intifada* in 1987 and decided to return to the city of Nablus in West Bank. This was a rare decision as Palestinian intellectuals and authors, who left the country for different reasons in the wake of 1948 and 1967 Wars, hardly came back.

I left America for the West Bank to witness something hair-raising: women and children out on the streets hitting and being hit without blinking; young and old men languishing in jails, wilderness, or mountain caves . . . Woman proved to the whole world that she was not a nonentity, but the heart, the mind, the feeling, and the living conscience of the revolution (Khalifeh 2002).

This remarkable decision helped Khalifeh to observe the ongoing resistance in the Occupied Territories and write about it. Her novels actively participated in recording the history of the Palestinian people. As a writer, she has shown courage and



commitment not only to depict the impact of IO but also the corrupt political system of Palestinian officials and lack of genuinely committed leadership. In this sense, for Khalifeh, novels became an avenue for self-expression, self-assertion and resistance against political oppression of different forms. Khalifeh verbalises in her interview the importance and need for the documentation of Palestinians' sufferings through the process of writing.

She says:

. . . the volatile and transforming Palestinian situation needs an investigative eye and a critical lens to chronicle and record the despair of a small but determined population, a people of strong will and firm belief in freedom against colonialism and slavery. These phenomena need to be preserved in books, recorded in writing so that these experiences won't vanish from the Arab Palestinian memory and human memory in general. See how Jews have documented and preserved their holocaust in thousands upon thousands of written and visual texts. And because of this, their despair is made very much repeatedly visible on the global scene, sometimes to the extent of blackmail. So why don't we do the same so we or others won't forget, so those who perpetrated the crimes against us won't forget either? It's true that our political and literary language and voices are still not that heard; but through experience and learning of new techniques and means, maybe we could get our voice heard better, and maybe we, as writers, could achieve what politicians have failed to accomplish. It's been said to me times and again, with reference to my translated work, that a good, successful book can substitute a thousand political lectures and meetings (*Assafir* 2008).

### **3.5 PALESTINIAN WOMEN'S RESISTANCE**

The condition that prevailed after the establishment of Israel, as an outcome of the 1948 and 1967 Wars posed new challenges to the Palestinian women in their fight against Israeli colonial domination. Palestinian women got formal recognition to participate in resistance activities after the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organisation<sup>2</sup> which was the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in the early sixties. In the year 1964, women's participation in the PLO's first

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<sup>2</sup>The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is a civil rights movement, which emerged in 1964 in Palestine, founded by Yasser Arafat with the vision to attain national liberation and to achieve independent statehood for Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital.

conference made a powerful resolution and women expressed their willingness to struggle along with men to liberate Palestine (Cooke 1996: 171-172).

Majority of the Palestinian women are politically active and they have equally supported the national struggle. Among the Arab nations, Palestinian women deserve the credit of being in the forefront to organise themselves politically. Initially, the women-oriented activities are limited to charity in the presence of pro-feminist environment at the beginning of the century. Gradually, women's participation became evident in 1929 with the participation in the first pan-Arab women's conference. In the conference – The Arab Women's Congress of Palestine strongly recommended “the establishment of a national parliament, rejection of the Balfour Declaration, and boycott of Zionist products” (ibid: 171).

Usually, the role played by the women during the national crisis has been relegated to secondary importance in historical documents and literature without the exception of Palestine. Cooke highlights Widad Barghuthi's study on the representation of women's political role in men's poetry of the twentieth century. Barghuthi expresses her views about women's absence in the political scenario picturised in the writings of men. Specifically, she finds out that in the poetry of male writers of the twentieth century, there is hardly any representation of the socio-political status of women. For instance, even though Arab women actively participated in the Arab revolt of 1930s, a poet of importance like Ibrahim Tuqan does not make any reference to it in his poetry; instead he calls them ‘muses’. The same legacy continues even after the participation of women in resistance activities in the Wars of 1948 and 1967. There is no significant change in patriarchal attitudes in accepting and presenting women's political role. Barghuthi mentions that even the participation of women in the *Intifada* did not bring any change in accepting women's representation in men's literature (ibid: 177). On the other hand, Ilham Abu Ghazaleh analysed men's poetry composed between December 1987 and May 1989. She says that men of letters gave importance to the physical appearance of women by marginalising their actions. Although women are visible in public spaces – on the streets, men's writings portray them as waiting at home for return of their husbands. Lamentably, their roles in literature are confined to domestic space rather than to that of activism. She observes that, “[w]omen are either

totally negated by their absence, or they are depicted as incomplete being. . . . All this passivity in depiction took place at a time when women in every neighbourhood were more active than they have ever been” (paraphrased in Najjar 1992: 260-261). It indicates that male writers assigned women the traditional roles of mother, beloved, sister or wife. Commenting on the male narratives, Frances Hasso says

. . . consistent with most nationalist narratives, Palestinian male nationalist narratives have frequently valorized women as biological reproducers of the nation, analogized the land of Palestine to women’s bodies, and represented the appropriation and occupation of Palestine as the sexual violation and appropriation of women’s bodies (Hasso 1998: 442).

Khalifeh’s writings criticise the marginalisation of the contribution of Palestinian women to national struggle in the narratives of men. Khalifeh’s writings express her disappointment with the symbolic representation of Palestinian women as land-like trope, ignoring the real experience and voice of the women in Palestinian resistance movement. In her process of writing, she debunks and challenges this marginalisation; and highlights the multiple roles played by the Palestinian women throughout the different historical periods of nationalist struggle. Women have given an everlasting contribution from the initial stages of their struggle to the contemporary resistance. Yet, their levels of participation have varied in accordance with the historical development and political crisis. The nature of their participation has undergone changes from the pre-1948 fight against British colonialism to the contemporary *Intifada* in opposition to the IO. Palestinian women balance their multiple allegiances so as to negotiate with their identities in terms of culture, nation, class, and gender constantly. Unfortunately, the legacy of gendered nationalism continues as Joseph Massad argues. He says the masculine “still reigns supreme in Palestinian nationalist thought” (Massad 2006: 53). On the other hand, Abdo and Lentin say “. . . Palestinian nationalism is conceived by and for men” (Abdo and Lentin 2002: 9).

Cooke argues that Khalifeh underlines the core tension between nationalist agenda in opposition to feminist struggle. Khalifeh wrote a letter to Cooke in August 1991. In that letter Khalifeh explains the reality of Palestinian women’s willingness to participate in the struggle. She acknowledges that:

What drove all those women to do what they did at the beginning of the Intifada was not the love of Palestine, but rather the pain of losing their sons, husbands and brothers, or even the idea of losing them . . . from what I have witnessed, women are motivated (at least at this point) by their blood ties rather by conceptual, abstract, nationalist thinking (Quoted in Cooke 1996: 196-197).

Said emphasises the fact that the Arab women especially the Palestinian women play their part in struggling daily against oppression and strive to support their families. In his words she “is subordinated and victimised principally because she is a woman in Arab, Muslim society, or because she is a Palestinian” (Said 1986: 78). As sexuality and political identity are interconnected the women are marginalised doubly both in the political arena and by their own men-folk. Khalifeh subverts the Orientalist perception about the Arab or Third World women. She, in her novels, highlights the Palestinian women’s contribution towards the national struggle. She depicts the different facets of women’s participation as an active agent rather than as an object, as a mourning mother or a widow. She acknowledges and celebrates the contributions of Palestinian women by engaging themselves in multiple roles to fight against colonisation as well as patriarchal domination. In her novel, *Gate of the Courtyard*, she explicitly criticizes the idea of woman-as-symbol. Khalifeh writes, “[w]ake up, clever boy, I’m not the mother of the land or the symbol. I am a person, I eat, drink, dream, make mistakes, get lost, get agitated, suffer, and talk to the wind. I’m not a symbol, I’m a woman” (Quoted in Fayad 1995: 148).

Palestinian non-violent resistance dates back to the Ottoman and British Mandate periods during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Mrs. Rafi’a works as the principal of a girls’ school. She is the head of the Palestinian women’s delegation that decides to protest against British policies. On this occasion the women activists and protesters meet the governor of the British Mandate – Sir Arthur. Rafi’a hands over the petition and says that they protest against their government and policies. Both Arab-Christian and Arab-Muslim women joined together to question British policies. Khalifeh depicts a harmonious relationship between Muslim and Christian women in spite of their religious and cultural differences. There is one Lisa in the women’s delegation who takes active part in the political movement as a whole. In the above incident, Khalifeh furthers her opinion that the British colonial powers tried to break the communal harmony between the

Muslims and Christians by using divide-and-rule strategy. Governor Arthur praises the Arab contingent and in his argument to convince the delegation not to go on protest, brings in an element of suggestion of Lisa being a foreigner and an outsider, thereby, raising the question of legitimacy of her participation in the protests.

Khalifeh highlights Palestinian women's participation in the resistance movement within the Occupied Territories immediately after the 1967 war. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, she depicts an Arab girl who is arrested at the Israeli checkpoint when they find a coded message under her wig. Lina, another female character in the novel is subsequently arrested for her involvement in resistance activities with her male revolutionary companions. Initially, the women's participation in national struggle was limited for various reasons. In course of time, women's participation in resistance activities increased and was at the height during the first *Intifada*. The multiple roles of women to struggle against the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been reflected in Khalifeh's later novels. In her representation, she utilises the historical facts. Khalifeh highlights women's active involvement in the resistance activities in the absence of male counterparts. In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Jamileh's husband suffers from ill-health for many years and dies. She works as a nurse in St. Elias' hospital and nurtures patients and victims. She rescues the revolutionaries who escape from arrest and hide. Lynd, et al rightly remark the dual roles carried by the Palestinian women in the absence of the male. "The Palestinian woman knows that she can't count on the presence of a man. He may . . . be imprisoned, be exiled, live underground or just disappear in struggle . . . the woman had to play the male role as well as the female role" (Lynd, et al., 1994: 87). Khalifeh's women characters independently choose their way of resistance in order to support their families and communities.<sup>3</sup> This independence also gives them the necessary morale to fight the patriarchy in their society. Manasra says that "an increasing number of Palestinian women are taking up the fight not just against the Israeli occupation but also against the restrictive norms of their own society" (Manasra 1993: 18). Rita Giacaman and Penny Johnson describe the responsibility of Palestinian women in balancing both traditional and political roles. They argue:

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<sup>3</sup> In the next chapter, we shall see how the male exile exerted a lot of burden on women and how the women also played the male roles

Women, and particularly those not already originally identified with a political movement or group, have enlarged or extended their traditional role rather than adopting a completely new role . . . particularly defense of family . . . These aspects of women's roles have become a source of resistance because women have transformed their family responsibilities to encompass the entire community (Giacaman and Johnson 1989: 161).

In Khalifeh's novels, there are many small accounts of individual Palestinian women showing compassion to the resistance movement. However, Palestinians' resistance is targeted on Israeli Settler Colonial policies and not against the individual Israeli Jews. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Umma Sabir demonstrates her humanism when she witnesses the murder of an Israeli officer and consoles his wife and daughter. She uses her veil to cover the little girl who has fainted, and addresses her "my daughter". She gives solace to the widow and calls her "sister". In spite of antagonism between the two communities, she shows her compassion by helping the mother and daughter who are in pain and distress. Sabir is also very responsible: she sells her bracelets for the survival of her family while her husband is out of work.

Sitt Amira is an educated woman in *The Inheritance*, who speaks French and English fluently. Amira supports the fighters by giving sweaters knitted by her and providing medical care. Apart from this, she listens to Haykal's articles read at Sawt al-Arab radio station in the 1960's. She frequently attends the diwan gatherings and believes that these meetings make her aware of the larger socio-political scenario. She names her son Abd al-Nasser, after Nasser, a prominent Arab nationalist, indicating a strong belief in Arab nationalism. Throughout the novel, Khalifeh portrays the character Sitt Amira as an active, independent and courageous woman.

In the same novel Nahleh, a single woman, who works as a teacher in Kuwait, supports the movement by donating a golden bracelet. She laments for the injured revolutionaries and orphans. She is worried about the failure of the revolution. She perceives that her donation is meagre when compared to the fighters who are ready to give up their lives for the cause of the movement. Edward Said in his work *Culture and Imperialism* insists that the Palestinian men and women must work hand in hand to bring the change. "These changes cannot occur without the willingness of men and women to resist the pressure of colonial rule, to take up arms, to project ideas of

liberation, and to imagine . . . a new national community, to take the final plunge” (Said 1994a: 241).

### 3.6 STEADFASTNESS OR EVERYDAY RESISTANCE

In his classical essay “Everyday Forms of Resistance”, James C. Scott defines everyday techniques of resistance as “small scale” and “relatively safe”. It “promise[s] vital material gains” and “require[s] little or no *formal* coordination”. However, this form of resistance needs “*some* level of cooperation” and to move forward as “a *pattern* of resistance” it relies “on a venerable popular culture of resistance” (Scott 1989: 35-36)<sup>4</sup>. Everyday resistance is about the way in which people act in their everyday lives under difficult situations like War, colonialism, oppression or occupation. It is different from other forms of public and collective resistance such as rebellions or demonstrations. Moreover, it is difficult to recognise because it is invisible, hidden or disguised. It is based on the individual choice that is willing to cope with and continue the day to day affairs without fail. Furthermore, everyday resistance has been associated or integrated with social and economic challenges in day-to-day lives, yet without articulating publicly, and not making any political claims, not being formally organised. Scott’s depiction of everyday acts of resistance has lot of similarities with the concept of *al-sumud* in Arabic, translated as steadfastness. Steadfastness means to maintain normalcy in everyday life, even under the extraordinary political upheavals. Like everyday resistance, steadfastness involves different modes of survival techniques and strategies to maintain normalcy. It includes staying in motherland, displaying humanitarian behaviour, adhering to normal living under adverse circumstances of oppression by the colonisers or under the imposed systems. Michel de Certeau claims that everyday resistance is about the “*way of using* imposed systems” (de Certeau 1984: 18)<sup>5</sup>. He says people use “popular tactics” for their survival (ibid). Steadfastness has been embedded in attitudes and lifestyles of Palestinians.

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasis in the original.

<sup>5</sup> Emphasis in the original.

Steadfastness is a mode of resistance inextricably tied to the socio-economic aspects of survival under settler colonial rule in the case of Palestinians. It demands to fulfil social behaviours of catering to the basic amenities that are attached to more mundane goals. It challenges the difficulties penetrating everyday life of the community under colonial rule. Steadfastness encourages building cooperation within the community, reconciliation, and collective support to each other's actions. It shows the Palestinians' desire for living on the homeland by sustaining their human rights and by maintaining a never-ending yearning for survival through self-determination. *Sumud* or steadfastness "neither requires collective mobilization nor adherence to a larger ideology, but in its everydayness, it acknowledges the oft-ignored role of marginalized actors in holding the community together in desperate times" (Khalili 2007: 224). A well-known Palestinian lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh defines *sumud*, in his book *The Third Way*. "*Sumud* is watching your home turned into a prison. You, *Samid* [who practises the virtue], choose to stay in that prison, because it is your home, and because you fear that if you leave, your jailer will not allow you to return" (Shehadeh 1982: viii)<sup>6</sup>.

Steadfastness is one of the forms of resistance used by the Palestinians to challenge the IO. Khalifeh's novels mirror everyday resistance as one of the powerful forms of resistance to challenge the military domination of IO. In the novel *Wild Thorns* Usama and his cousin Adil are two different individuals who react in different ways to the IO. Usama is a revolutionary who uses violence to revolt against Israeli Occupiers. On the other hand, Adil decides to support his co-workers and attempts to organise Palestinian workers' union in Israeli factories. In this novel, Khalifeh acknowledges the survival techniques acquired by the working class in socio-economic crisis because of Israeli Settler Colonialism. It also emphasises the psychological and physical strategies of working in Israeli factories and coping with challenges to support their families. Khalifeh's characters make their own decisions and form their own movements to support each other in spite of difficult tasks imposed by the occupiers. Adil and his friends resist the occupation through individual and collective struggle supporting each other though they live in pathetic

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis in the original.



circumstances. Educated people leave Palestine in search of better living conditions. They are not bound by any regulation to stay. Therefore, even continuing to live in Occupied Territories is a form of strong resistance for working class people in a scenario when Zionism would want that all of them leave.

Scott shows everyday resistance does not necessarily need to be conducted or organised publicly, or overtly spoken. Both everyday resistance and steadfastness are considered as sacred, overwhelmingly non-violent, mostly small scale and frequently symbolic. The old generation responded to IO in many ways. Adil's old father, who depends upon artificial kidney machine for his survival, also fights against Occupation. He meets foreign journalists and talks to them regarding Occupation. Usama's mother offers silent prayer in the midst of Israeli soldiers who come in search of her son. Her response is quite evidently a classic example of steadfastness. She reaches out to the machine-gun and continues her prayer. The Israeli soldier questions Usama's mother if she is fasting during Ramadan? She replies gallantly "[y]es, I do indeed fast during Ramadan and I perform the five daily prayers and I pray to God to take you all away and relieve us of the sight of you" (Khalifeh 1985: 167). She is firmly on her land and does not even think of budging.

Many of Khalifeh's characters in the novel show strong convictions to live inside the Occupied Territories of Palestine in carrying out a daily struggle against humiliation, injustice and insecurity. According to Said, resistance means "Palestinian effort to retain contact with land and to survive furious onslaughts against the meaningful existence of Palestinian" (Said 1988: 2). In *Wild Thorns*, Adil and his friends determine to remain on that occupied land irrespective the costs of such decision. The male and female characters live supporting each other for their survival which shows Palestinians' commitment and deep attachment to their homeland. They engage consciously with the struggle for survival rather than with a heroic battle. The limitations of the everyday modes of expression do not speak as loudly as that of armed resistance.

In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Abu Yusef expresses his hardships to Ibrahim. He speaks with determination about the way he has prepared his

mind to live in the midst of Jews. The Jews want the land and are ready for anything to get the land they want. They confiscate the land and also buy the land for meagre price from the farmers through real estate agents; but Abu Yussef finds comfort in saying that they cannot take their life and heartbeat. There is no space in his mind for them, he says. This shows how he had become philosophic and finds comfort in the thought that his life and mind are his own and cannot be taken away by the Jews. The Israelis have framed their own laws, they state that the locals are absentee landlords, but it is the Israelis who are settling there are absentees, according to law, he says and he does not wish to see them. He says, "I live according to the law, the law of the present and the absentee landlords. It is an especially tailored law, they tailor it and we wear it. They say we are absentee? My mind tells me that they are absentee, according to the law, I pretend not to see them" (Khalifeh 2008b: 200). Yussef shows strong conviction and commitment living inside the Occupied Territories in spite of difficulties and challenges.

Khalifeh introduces the female character, Madame Mayor<sup>7</sup> in the novel *The End of Spring*, which is the best illustration of a character leading the life of everyday resistance. Her husband has been imprisoned for twenty years in Israeli prison for his involvement in resistance activities. In his absence she looks after her children. In order to procure the basic amenities to the family she sells her golden bracelet and brings a weaving loom. Gradually, she multiplies the number of looms and generates employment opportunities for other women as well. Madame Mayor engages in mobilising and empowering women in order to support their families in the absence of the traditional breadwinners. She is a Palestinian Florence Nightingale, who tends to the wounded Palestinian fighters and knits them clothing in her spare time. Mayor's main concern is to consider how to protect the male resistance fighters and support them in their battle against occupiers.

In the novel Khalifeh depicts the repeated invasions and bomb shelling by the Israeli forces using sophisticated weapons. The Jews attack the city of Nablus belligerently by dropping the bombs from their warplanes and by shooting rockets. The Jewish assaults are unexpected; people of Nablus become panicky, women and children start

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<sup>7</sup> Khalifeh also refers to the character in her proper name, Umm Suad.

screaming. Jews swear at Palestinians, “[p]eople of Nablus, you whores, we’re coming to screw you” (Khalifeh 2008a: 184). In this critical and terrifying situation, Mayor and the team of women engage themselves with the community kitchen, Hosh al-Atout. She perceives it as her duty to serve food to poor civilians, fighters and security officers. For her, the violent attacks of Jews have become a routine matter and she supports the civilians to cope with the terrible situation. Ahmad lands in prison for ‘stealing’ the cat. After sufficient torture, when he is released from prison, he takes shelter in Mayor’s house. He discontinues his studies and starts to work for the Red Cross in an emergency unit. Ahmad has seen a large number of casualties in the hospital due to the violent attack on the natives of Nablus. He takes break from his duty and comes to Mayor’s place. He struggles to forget the site of sufferings of the civilians in the hospital. Understanding the psyche of Ahmad, Mayor offers him food, but he refuses to have any. She consoles him, “[y]ou should eat, because you’re young. You have your whole life ahead of you. Eat so you can grow and become an adult” (ibid: 189). All of Mayor’s children migrated to different places except Suad, her own daughter, who follows the footsteps of the mother and engages with resistance activism. In many ways, these actions carry political meanings and contribute to ensuring the survival of the Palestinian cause. Thus, steadfastness is one of the strong forms of resistance used by the Palestinians to challenge the IO.

### **3.7 POPULAR RESISTANCE**

Palestinian resistance movement systematically changed its course with successive political domination from Ottoman rule to the IO. Qumsiyeh, in his work *Popular Resistance in Palestine*, traces a brief history of the emergence and development of Palestinian resistance movement since the Ottoman rule till the present day. Consequently, the popular resistance gained momentum in Occupied Territories after the outbreak of the first *Intifada* in 1987. Qumsiyeh says that popular resistance in Palestine not only emerged but also “developed indigenously, organically, naturally and beautifully” (Qumsiyeh 2011: 1). “*Muqawama Sha’biya*, the term commonly used in Palestine, is roughly translated as Popular Resistance. The word *Sha’biya* has its roots in *Sha’b* (people) and is understood by Palestinians to refer to the kinds of resistance practiced by large numbers of the population, as opposed to more narrow

armed resistance (*muqawamamusallaha*)” (ibid: 11). The *Intifada* gave new flavour to Palestinian resistance movement where all Palestinian men, women, children and old people participated actively. Throwing stones at the Israeli soldiers was only a symbolic manifestation of it. It became an obligation and commitment for everyone to fight against ongoing IO in a novel way. Indeed, popular resistance is carried out by common people, and not by a charismatic leader. It opens multiple avenues contemplating new directions and new possibilities for the fight against colonial oppression in the nationalist movement. Stones become the symbolic weapon to fight against the occupiers. It crosses the boundaries of age, class, religion and gender. Abu-Nimer, refers to the first *Intifada* as “an excellent example of a political movement in which *the masses of people were able to take control of their destiny* and bring political change into their environment by organizing themselves to fight oppression using non-violent tactics” (Abu-Nimer 2003: 180)<sup>8</sup>. During the first *Intifada* the Palestinian resistance towards the IO has been largely non-violent. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Khalifeh celebrates the participation of mother and children in the resistance. She writes, “[t]he children’s chanting and clapping rang through the empty streets, a crescendo of rhyming slogans about God, Palestine, Arab unity, the Popular Front, the Democratic Front, freedom, dedication, self-sacrifice, and Yasser Arafat” (Khalifeh 1985: 105).

### **3.8 RESISTANCE IN PRISON**

In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Khalifeh depicts the life of prisoners who are arrested by Israelis on different charges. As noted earlier, at least thirty percent of Palestinians who live in both Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza have experienced Israeli prison system (Harlow 1994: 110). The young revolutionaries do not sit with folded hands inside the jail but they actively involve themselves in subverting the Israeli power. The prisoners’ rooms are filled with activities such as clapping, whistling, delivering revolutionary speeches and shouting slogans, as well as singing their anthem. The prisoners shout the slogan in loud voices, “Revolution! Revolution until victory” (Khalifeh 1985: 119). The revolutionaries recite the poems of Kamal Nasser, a

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<sup>8</sup> Emphasis in the original.

Palestinian poet and political activist, who was assassinated in Beirut in 1972 by an Israeli hit squad. Many writers, who sacrificed their life for the sake of the country, rejuvenate and come back in the words of revolutionaries.

“Strike, executioner, we’re not afraid.  
These dark brows  
Beaded with sweat  
Are burdened with chains  
So the nation will live.  
Strike then, and have no fear!” (ibid).

The jail is portrayed as a place filled with revolutionary spirit. The prisoners start beating an empty bucket for a drum, a few men dance in traditional folk dance form. Apart from this, there are other ways in which subversion activities take place in jail. It also becomes a site of transformation of individuals. For example, two of the characters in the novel Salih and Elias engage themselves in educating the prisoners. Education plays an important role in Palestinian struggle for independence and in bringing an end to the IO. The character Zudhi is thrown in prison for attacking his friend and fellow factory worker, the Jewish-Israeli, Shlomo. He proudly tells Adil that he enters the jail as a common labourer but comes out as a comrade. The novel clearly manifests that Palestinian resistance is not homogeneous; it has different shades and colours. There are prisoners, educated students, old people, workers, outsiders, insiders, farmers, writers, and common folks. The young Basil has been arrested for his participation in a demonstration against the occupation. For Basil, Israeli prison becomes the place of learning. He participates in the political discussions, poetry competitions and evening assemblies. He articulates to his family that life in prison has exposed him to different ideologies. He says, “[t]hey thought I was a spy when I went in, but by the time I left, I was a comrade. I got educated, not only school subjects but special evening sessions too. Proletariat, capitalism, bourgeoisie, compradorism, and all that” (ibid: 176). Harlow says, “[b]y locating prisons and factories as primary sites of confrontation, *Wild Thorns* challenges not only the Zionist program of Israel but the romantic idealism of Palestinian cultural symbolism and its focus on land and peasant”(Harlow 1994: 114).

### **3.9 READING AS RESISTANCE**

Writing, reading and articulating the realities of the occupation is inevitable for the Palestinian folks in order to attack the hegemonic dominance constantly. Khalifeh stresses that making the people literate is an act of resistance among younger generation. Not only the habit of reading but also discussing the Palestinian political issues openly, have acted as methods of protest against violent oppression. Khalifeh's characters emphasize the need to inculcate a habit of reading as a necessary tool for resisting the dominant powers of the state. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Adil's younger brother, Basil and his friends fall into the category of younger generation who have found different ways of resisting IO. These youngsters read revolutionary materials and discuss political issues at home and in streets. Israel demands that the Palestinians pay for their studies on completion of their education. This is another reason for the educated Palestinians to migrate to other countries for jobs. However, educated youngsters are acutely aware of what might befall on the Palestinian community in the near future: Basil says, "[e]ducated people leave the country, and only workers and peasants remain. And that's exactly what Israel wants to happen" (Khalifeh 1985: 59). The novel shows that the youngsters are very much aware of the new Israeli policies on the construction of wall, illegal settlement, control over electricity and water supply, demolition of houses, and curfews. In their evening meetings, they talk endlessly about the political leaders like Dayan, Eshkol, Golda Meir, Sadat, and Arafat. The younger generation of Palestine conceives education itself as a tool in their national struggle.

### **3.10 CULTURAL RESISTANCE**

According to Fanon, culture is one of the important components for the expression of national consciousness. He calls national consciousness "the most elaborate form of culture". Further, Fanon argues that there is a difference between nationalism and national consciousness. Indeed, nationalism gives an international dimension to national consciousness (Fanon 1963: 247).

The very act of producing art and the participation in the cultural activities under Israeli military occupation act as resistance. The cultural forms of resistance have a

more precise catalytic effect: it encourages not only the elite group to participate but also gives voice to the subalterns. The cultural resistance voices out political messages which criticise the assumptions of the cultural supremacy on part of the colonisers. Moreover, they strive to preserve their native identities and cultural uniqueness to fight against the culture of the colonisers. Cultural resistance through music, dance, fine arts, literature and folklore helps Palestinians in the fight against IO. The visual arts like paintings, sculptures, cartoons, installations, films, photography and videos also play a key role. The production of other cultural artefacts such as poster, graffiti, play, etc. also become part of the spectacle of cultural resistance. “Culture is one of the most important elements for people's survival. Under immense constraints and in the most immoral situations, culture is the art to learn how to breathe normally . . . it is the art of celebrating life in a context still dominated by forces of death and domination” (Raheb 2006).

Khalifeh in *The Inheritance*, presents Nahleh's brother Mazen as a revolutionary, who thinks the Israelis can be defeated with cultural resources the Palestinians possess. He conducts a cultural fair and believes that cultural resistance in such form is the best way to fight against the IO. Mazen tells his cousin Zaynab “[t]hey defeated us through the war but we will defeat them with our culture. This is a cultural struggle” (Khalifeh 2005: 103). The various forms of art can be explicitly linked to a political resistance movement and it makes an artistic attempt to challenge the political hegemony. The Palestinian universities have been conducting seminars, symposia, conferences, literary festivals, and public lectures on literature, Palestinian folklore and its political milieu. Even small, day-to-day acts such as wearing traditional costumes, singing Palestinian national anthem, having traditional food and using home made products have become part of cultural resistance.

David A. McDonald in his book *My Voice is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*, argues that music plays a predominant role in Palestinian resistance movement to topple IO. He focuses on the role of music and performance in building the positive national identity in the Occupied Territories as well as in diaspora. Palestinian performers invoke nationalistic feelings by blending traditional music with the modern one. Palestinian performers have been learning new

forms of music such as hip-hop to reach out to the global audience. McDonald showcases various musical forms which act as resistance in a very dynamic and divergent way (McDonald 2013). Raheb says, “[c]ulture is the medium through which we communicate what we really want in a language that is different than the political semantics and religious formulas” (Raheb 2006).

In *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Ibrahim views the Palestinians celebrating the victory in the War of Jaffa. The street of Jerusalem is occupied with young men chanting the victory and liberation songs. The cafes broadcast through loudspeakers the revolutionary and liberation songs of Nasser. The young crowd marches carrying the pictures of Nasser and narrating the liberation stories of Jaffa and its shores. The youths sing the famous liberation songs as well as the songs of Arab unity. The young men come in cars and wave their shirts shouting the slogans “Palestine, we are coming” (Khalifeh 2008b: 83).

In the novel *The End of Spring*, Majid, the eldest son of Fadel al-Qassam. Majid is an artist who inherited singing talent from his mother. He is a multi-talented person – an amazing singer, a guitar player and famous for his *dabke* steps. His band performs in parties and concerts; he sings patriotic songs in the pop style of the west. Majid is popular but he does not directly participate in resistance movements. He knew about revolution only through the lyrics that he sang at the concerts. However, Majid transforms into a revolutionary after a couple of incidents expose him to face the harsh realities of Occupation and Khalifeh narrates, “[h]e put down his guitar and picked up a machine gun” (ibid: 106).

### **3.11 ARMED RESISTANCE**

Armed resistance is seen as an alternative or binary mode of resistance to unarmed resistance. Palestinians have organized armed resistance, both against the British occupiers and against the Jewish settlements. Armed resistance in Occupied Territories appeared four decades after the Zionist colonization. This was in response to the brutality of the Settler Colonisers. Palestinian resistance movement has been using different strategies of armed resistance to fight against IO. Some of the well-known thinkers have supported armed resistance as a powerful mode of resistance to



revolt against colonial oppression and tyranny. Sartre is one of the philosophers who have addressed the ethics of the right to resist. According to him, if the whole community is being oppressed, violent resistance must be ethically justified without any obligations. To fight against tyrannical, colonial and imperial oppression, violence has been used as a mode of resistance strategy. Armed resistance in Palestine is thus, a part of the larger revolutionary project outlined in many of Khalifeh's novels.

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Khalifeh traces the motivational roots of armed struggle by the Palestinians during the British colonisation, though such efforts did not fructify then. In the novel, the character Sayyidna al-Sheikh of Galilee believes in the armed struggle and trains people to carry out violent mission in order to achieve liberation. Amin, a budding intellectual, meets Sheikh of Galilee and verbally attacks him for instigating the innocent people to participate in violent resistance. Sheikh explains Amin the agenda of carrying out the armed resistance. He says that the British colonialism has deprived them of their homeland and their livelihood. He has lost his hope in non-violent forms of resistance which did not fetch expected results. He questions, “[h]ow can we resist? With demonstrations, conferences, petitions? I see armed struggle as the only path that will lead us to our goal. We have tried everything” (Khalifeh 2012: 129). He narrates the consequences of the British colonial rule which resulted in the sale of Palestinian lands to the Jews. They uprooted the peasants from their lands and thousands of peasants migrated to Haifa and Jaffa in search of job and livelihood. Sheikh says, “. . . we will become a nation and we will excel. Islam is our way to victory and our savior. Let's hold to the bonds of Islam” (ibid). The Islamic revolution was supported by prominent western intellectuals like Michel Foucault, Habermas and others who belonged to the Frankfurt school of critical theory. They argued that Islamic revolution [which had a give-and-take relation with the Palestinian Movement] was an important movement in subverting the western colonial domination and imperialism. Foucault addressed the revolution as “the first great insurrection” against the “global systems” of the West. Foucault says, “Islam has a good chance to become a gigantic powder keg, at the level of hundreds of millions of men” (Quoted in Janet and Kevin 2005: 4).

Sheikh of Galilee organises and encourages the younger generation to participate in the armed resistance. He makes people to be aware of the atrocities and brutalities of colonial rule. According to him, British colonial rule favoured the Jews by giving public lands which belonged to Arabs. They appointed Jewish officers to the most prestigious positions by replacing Arab officials. They have encouraged the Jewish immigration and smuggled weapons into the country. He says armed struggle is a fight for God's sake and it is not a crime. He says,

Of course I have and I would kill again. This is a fight for God's sake and it is not a crime. This is a revolution. They robbed us, they killed us. What can we do? Remain silent? Give in and write petitions and requests for mercy? They started the killing. What can we do? . . . He says an eye for an eye because they understand only one language: the language of force. Is there any other language that would serve us better? (ibid: 184-185).

Sheikh's argument resembles Fanon generalising from the Algerian revolution, who expresses the urgency of armed struggle to fight against colonial oppression. Both Sheikh and Fanon argue that the colonisers have the ability to understand only the language of force.

The existence of an armed struggle shows that the people are decided to trust to violent methods only. He of whom *they* have never stopped saying that the only language he understands is that of force, decides to give utterance by force. In fact, *as always*, the settler has shown him the way he should take if he is to become free. The argument the native chooses has been furnished by the settler, and by an ironic turning of the tables it is the native who now affirms that the colonialist understands nothing but force (Fanon 1963: 83-84)<sup>9</sup>.

### 3.12 MARTYRDOM OPERATIONS

Suicide bombings have become an important element of the Palestinian resistance movement. The second Palestinian *Intifada* that erupted in September 2000 had marked intense use of violence as a strategy for resistance. In the Palestinian context, the suicide bombings have been supported politically, culturally, and religiously as a powerful mode of resistance. Nasser Abufarha in *The Making of a Human Bomb: An Ethnography of Palestinian Resistance*, details out the several factors leading to the increased incidents of suicide bombings in the Occupied Territories of Palestine. The

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<sup>9</sup> Emphasis in the original.

incidents of suicide bombings did not occur immediately after the IO. After a long period of colonial rule, the first Palestinian suicide bombing took place in 1994 after the failure of Oslo peace process of the 1990s (Abufarha 2009: 7).

Merciless killings of Palestinian civilians and assassination of the activists or leaders encourage Palestinian youth to opt for martyrdom operations. Apart from these reasons Abufarha figures out the motivational factors to carry out martyrdom operations as such:

Mission carriers may be motivated by the history of social suffering, their own experiences with state violence, a fascination with the notion of sacrifice for the land and the symbolic, sensory meaning of sacrifice, a fascination with the concept of martyrdom and ideas about the after-life, a preference for the cultural life of the martyr over their present lives, or a commitment to or fear of the Divine (ibid 2009: 139).

The martyrdom operations have gripped the attention not only of Israel but also of the international community. It has been carried out in Palestine by Palestinian outfits against Israeli targets. 'Suicide bombings' being a western reference to the act, the Palestinians call it as *amaliyyatishhadiya* (martyrdom operation), bringing in a sense of eulogization. The martyrdom operations have been interpreted differently by other nations and they strongly criticize it as a heinous crime. The victims of colonisation consider martyrdom operations as a visible and effective means to send imperative message to the coloniser. These martyrdom operations have also been referred as "homicide bombing" by George W. Bush as well as British government officials, a term originated in the wake of the global War on terror. Nevertheless, in the western media, these martyrdom operations by Palestinians are not addressed as self-sacrificing operation. Even though self-sacrifice is evident, the core of the act of the operations has been side-lined by the mainstream media. IO has affected the younger generation intensely, who have been growing up in terrible conditions. They are adopting new and alternative strategies of resistance to challenge the atrocities committed by the occupiers. In *The End of Spring*, Khalifeh indicates an increasing number of young suicide bombers. The older generation expresses apprehension about their children who are fighters, agents, and collaborators of the resistance activities even as the children who have been witnessing the atrocities of IO prepare

themselves for physical forms of resistance. Khalifeh writes, “[t]hey were without hope, and so they sacrificed themselves, made themselves into bombs that walked around on two feet . . .” (Khalifeh 2008a: 116). Foucault eloquently captures the affiliation between body and politics when he writes, “[t]he body is directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invent it, make it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (Foucault 1979: 25).

### **3.12.1 The Ideology of Self-Sacrifice in Martyrdom Operations**

The act of martyrdom is acutely based on the performative act of the body. The perpetrators of martyrdom operations are bound by the strong ideology that their body is a symbol of devotion and submission to a nationalistic cause. Such a person who sacrifices his or her life is considered a hero or a freedom fighter in the community and is eulogised. Martyrs’ bodies have become emblematic of the Palestinian struggle for nationhood. The strategy and ideology of martyrdom differs from one group to another and the intention of undertaking the extreme act varies from one individual to another. Martyrdom operations, ironically, have become an act of self-defence for oneself and one’s community. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Usama exemplifies the armed resistance movement to revolt against IO. For Usama, resistance is born out of anger, frustration, and unhappiness caused by Israeli military domination and exploitation. According to him, the true form of resistance could be achieved through violent acts and he views violent resistance as practical and the most desirable form of resistance. He stabs an Israeli officer to death in the middle of a Nablus market. He has been trained by the Palestinian resistance movement in exile and has returned to execute operations against the Israeli occupiers. He expects people to be concerned with the collective acts of national struggle against the Israelis more than with their everyday trivialities. He completely rejects the alternative ways of resistance carried out by the working class and the educated young people. Usama justifies his way of resistance which is his readiness to sacrifice his life for the nation by carrying out his violent mission of attacking an Israeli bus carrying Palestinian workers to Israeli factory. He feels proud of his revolutionary activities and articulates, “And me, I’m a

real lion, mother; tell everyone I died a martyr, a martyr to the cause. A martyr to the land” (Khalifeh 1985: 185).

Achille Mbembe in his essay “Necropolitics”, seeks to establish a linkage between the apparently incompatible dimensions of logics such as “*the logic of martyrdom and the logic of survival*” by emphasizing the dual issues of “death and terror” and also “terror and freedom” in the context of Palestine (Mbembe 2003: 35)<sup>10</sup>. According to him, terror and death are inseparable entities. They are the two sides of the same phenomenon. The paradigm for survival under colonial rule gives scope for self-sacrifice as well as the murder of the enemy. The main intention of killing an enemy is to live and sometimes they kill themselves to live. Life and death are inextricably linked to freedom struggle. Khalifeh writes, “[k]ill in order to live, die in order to live. In other words, life and death cannot be separated when we thought about freedom” (Khalifeh 2008a: 84). The discourse of sacrifice and martyrdom challenges the usual privileging of life over death. It gives new connotation to death that is about living, not dying.

Self-sacrifice is necessary for the survival. In the novel *The End of Spring*, Khalifeh narrates the intensified seize of former President Arafat’s quarters in Ramallah by the Israeli army during the second *Intifada*. The Israeli army, before starting shelling, had cut off all the networks like airlines, antennas, cell phones in order to restrict the communication with the outer world. The authorities inside Arafat’s quarters were not even able to access water and electricity. They were attacked with bombs and missiles which came from every possible direction. One of the guards of Arafat who knew he would be dying in this attack, writes on the wall in large and bold letters “welcome sweet fragrances of heaven” (ibid: 169). Majid enters the president’s quarters and views the reactions of Arafat on the unexpected sudden seize. Arafat says to his supporters, “welcome to death for the sake of life” (ibid: 167). His followers shout the slogans, “with our souls, with our blood, we sacrifice for Palestine!” (ibid: 168).

Martyrdom operations have been the most painful and the most conspicuous form of resistance. Merciless killings of Palestinian civilians and assassination of the activists

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<sup>10</sup> Emphasis in the original.

or leaders forced Palestinian youths to contemplate these extreme operations. The novel *The End of Spring*, reaches the climax with the people carrying out anti-demolition demonstrations opposing the construction of the wall. The peasant woman pounds her chest and cries for the olive trees that are being uprooted. An Israeli soldier pushes a woman out of her way in front of bulldozers in order to destroy houses and trees. Ahmad's father stands in front of the bulldozer in order to stop the demolition of the house. The international activist, Rachel, tries to protect Ahmad's father, but she dies in the effort, crushed by the bulldozer. Ahmad's anger surmounts and he recalls the earlier atrocities committed by Israeli army. He loses control and carries out his revenge on occupiers:

Go. Go!" the young men shout. "Step on it! Go!" Ahmad steps on the gas pedal, muttering like a lunatic, "Sons of bitches!" Anger overpowers fear and the world becomes a blur through his tears ... He surges forward with all his might, like a rocket, toward the soldiers. Five, seven, ten, or more. He can't tell. His mind has gone blank. He sways. His soul flies up like a kite, like ozone (ibid: 275-276).

His father grieves for his death and accepts that he "has been martyred!" (ibid: 276). The following day, the "Terrorism" is reported in the news (ibid). Eventually, after the 9/11 incident of 'War on Terror', terrorism has been most frequently ascribed to the Arab nations and to Islam.

Indeed, the Palestinian resistance movement constitutes both violent and non-violent forms of resistance throughout their struggle for independence. Unfortunately, the mainstream media has relegated the civil or non-violent forms of resistance movements pursued by the Palestinians and highlighted and exaggerated the violent ones. This has led the Palestinian resistance to be represented generally as acts of terrorism or insurgency. Eric Walberg, a well-known journalist, in his book *Islamic Resistance to Imperialism* argues that the word "terrorism" is deceptive, which does not have legal definition in the West. It is considered always a synonym for "Islamism" or "jihadism". It is used spontaneously "by officials and the media to delegitimize the state's political opponents" (Walberg 2015: 27). "The Palestinian people rose from the ashes of each onslaught to engage in novel forms of civil resistance" (Qumsiyeh 2011: 9).

Palestinian resistance has mostly been depicted in western hegemonic powers as violence and terrorism. “Conditions for the Palestinians had deteriorated considerably with the campaign by Menachem Begin’s Likud party to treat all resistance as terrorism, and hence to justify their incursion into Palestinian areas and refugee camps as exercises to combat the ‘disease’ of terrorism” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 1999: 132). The terrorist would then be straitjacketed and represented as “[t]he mad Islamic zealot, the gratuitously violent killer of innocents, and the desperately irrational and savage primitive” (Said and Hitchens 1988: 3). Resistance however, allows for intellectual debates and discussions which try to put an end to violence. Resistance can work at many levels and in different modes. Said calls the *Intifada* as “[o]ne of the great anti-colonial insurrections of the modern period” (Said 1994a: xvii). It is a mass movement which allows everyone to take part actively. In 2012, hunger strikes were started by Palestinians in order to gain International attention for the plight of Palestinian prisoners. For example, Islamic Jihad members, Tha’er Halahleh and Bilal Diab went without food for 77 days, while Khader Adnan, another Islamic Jihad member, starved for 66 days. Abdel-Razeq Farraj, the Director of Finance and Administration at the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, who is fighting for the rights of Palestinian farmers, went on a hunger strike for 24 days in prison (Prashad 2014: 63). This significant example shows that Palestinians are using Mahatma Gandhi’s way of resisting the colonial domination through non-violent modes. Yet, Palestinians who revolt or resist the Israeli exploitation are projected stereotypically as terrorists, suicide bombers and extremists. On the other hand, Israel’s use of violence to control the multiple resistance strategies is not criticised in a similar vein. Instead, Israel has been projected as a nation in search of peace – the only democratic country in the Middle East. In spite of these challenges encountered by the Palestinians, the resistance movement has become a remarkable indication to show Israel that the Palestinian struggle is still alive. In other words, despite these series of horrors, Palestinian resistance to the IO goes unabated. A contemporary Arab-American writer Susan Abulhawa in her recent article, “The Searing Hypocrisy of the West” states,

[w]hen we take up arms and fight back, kidnap a soldier, we are terrorists of the extreme kind who have no one to blame but ourselves as Israel subjects the entire Palestinian population to

punitive collective punishment. When we engage in peaceful protests, we are rioters who deserve the live fire they send our way. When we debate, write and boycott, we are anti-Semites who should be silenced, deported, marginalised or prosecuted (Abulhawa 2014: 10).

### 3.13 LIMITATIONS OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE

Miriam Cooke makes a small observation criticising Khalifeh, “[w]riting from within the Occupied Territories, she is expected to represent her nation uncritically. Self-criticism is out” (Cooke 1996: 197). This is a misconception about the writings of Khalifeh. Khalifeh, in one of her interviews defines genuine nationalism, which is, “to know and to love the nation with its rights and its wrongs, its sweet and its bitter, because without diagnosis there can be no prescription” (Nazareth 1980: 83). Indeed, Khalifeh criticizes not only the Israeli and American imperialism but also her own Palestinian society in her writings. As an insider of the Occupied Territories, her depictions of the realities and flaws of the resistance movement are rather balanced. Khalifeh in her novels exposes how Palestinian revolution witnessed failure most of the times. According to her, the reasons for the failure of the nationalist movement are corruption, lack of support within the Palestinian community and the inability to understand the nationalist agenda. She specifies the misuse of political power by the great Palestinian leaders and the authorities. She exposes the changing political scenario under the leadership of Yasser Arafat who indulged in corrupt activities. Khalifeh’s novels provide much fodder for discussion on the failure of Palestinian resistance. Unfortunately, Palestinian national cause has neither been getting valuable support from Arab nations nor much of the International community. This is one of the main reasons for the status-quo of the Palestinian problem. The collective exile of Palestinian community that has scattered around the globe is also a reason for the failure of the resistance movement. It is difficult to organize and mobilise resistance activities effectively against IO, when the community is dispersed all over the globe.

The Palestinians who live in the Occupied Territories – the “insiders” blame the “outsiders” for the lack of support to carry out their resistance mission. In *Wild Thorns*, Adil is more concerned with supporting his family, providing for its survival and livelihood than with military resistance. For Adil, resistance would mean helping his own people who face many mundane challenges and difficulties in the wake of IO.



Strategy of his resistance is different and he always tries to cope with the existing circumstances. Adil works day and night in an Israeli factory to provide basic facilities for his family. Usama's mother says about Adil, that he is "[w]orking away day and night. He's got nine people to support . . ." (Khalifeh 1985: 31). He understands the present calamity in a different way from Usama. Usama was generally against an Arab working for an Israeli enterprise. He thought Adil worked for an Arab (Al-Karmi) family. But when he comes to know the reality, he furiously comments on that. Adil breaks into tears and retorts, ". . . [c]onvince me that what I'm doing isn't part of the struggle, that the fight has fixed ground rules . . . You can have my life, Usama, if you can only convince me that freedom means that people who can't defend themselves go hungry. And that there's happiness in hunger. Come on, convince me!" (ibid: 63). Khalifeh portrays the working class people losing their ability to resist: poverty dries the people's spirit to resist the IO. Yet, the novel indicates the two-pronged resistance that is entailed in the lives of many young Palestinians: fighting poverty and fighting occupiers simultaneously. Adil talks about Abu Sabir, one of his fellow factory workers, who met with an accident and says to Usama "[a]nd if we starve, how can we resist?" (ibid: 98). Khalifeh illustrates here that resistance, protest, or fighting for freedom are not easy tasks for the working class people.

The binary ideological difference between Mazen (insider) and Kamal (outsider) in the Palestinian resistance has been expressed in *The Inheritance*. Mazen views Palestinian rebellion very optimistically. On the other hand, Kamal judges Palestinian insurgency in a pessimistic framework. Mazen exclaims to Kamal that though Palestine has been defeated twice, they are hopeful with their dream of vanquished IO. Mazen appreciates that Palestinians are energetic enough to overcome the two defeats and achieve nationhood. He emphasises that in order to build a nation they should not stop their political commitment and endless conversations. Mazen proudly says, "[I]f life is work and commitment" (Khalifeh 2005: 189). On the contrary, Kamal disagrees with Mazen who stresses on the commitment towards political and personal lives. He attacks Mazen for the failure, for having lack of commitment neither to the family nor to the revolution, since the revolution too, seems to be a never ending one.

He despondently says, “[l]ife is commitment and it’s work; the revolution gave us nothing but theories and poetry!” (ibid).

The Palestinian resistance activism fails occasionally also because of the lack of understanding and support among individuals. In *The Inheritance*, Mazen’s father expresses his anxiety to Zayna that his son Mazen is engaged in resistance activities though all his other sons are educated and settled. He blames his son who lives in the idealistic and non-realistic image of Guevara (the Latin-American revolutionary). He says, “[h]e has to wake up and look to his own interests. Who is he counting on? He has to wake up and take care of himself. Whatever he does he is still Mazen Hamdan, not Guevara. Tell him that” (ibid: 71). Mazen’s sister Nahleh expresses her disappointment about her brother who left the university in order to become a revolutionary. Nahleh considers him a pseudo-intellectual and freedom fighter who worries about the grievances of the whole world. She complains that he wastes his time talking about revolution all the time.

Khalifeh’s novels consciously and deliberately deal with the weaknesses in Palestinian resistance strategies. Mazen’s beloved Violet, gives an account of how male revolutionaries misuse power. She says male revolutionaries are overwhelmed with their emotions, they speak about the revolution and are addicted “to hashish or morphine” (ibid: 179). Further, she articulates the sexual exploitation of women by the revolutionary leaders. She talks about how girls are seduced and then abandoned. She compares their situation to that of prostitutes, who are at least paid for their services. She says, “[t]hey were seduced the same night by a poet, a leader, or even an intruder to the revolution, and a would-be poet” (ibid). These girls happen to be the misfortune of the revolution and of the liberation movement. Here, Khalifeh is making an evident gesture that instead of focusing on women’s empowerment Palestinian resistance movement ends up with the sexual exploitation of women. Poets, leaders and would-be poets, who are the “legitimate” revolutionaries of the movement, freely exploit women, who are also participants in the very same movement.

After the end of the first *Intifada*, a sense of cynicism descended on Palestinians who were sceptical about the struggle in the Occupied Territories. As the nation has been under constant conflict, the people encountered the dilemma between the personal and the political. Ibrahim, in the novel *The Image, the Icon and the Covenant*, faces this moral predicament. He expresses disappointment that people are suffering from lack of basic amenities and extreme poverty. He wonders how people will build a nation under these critical circumstances. The different strategies of resistance have accomplished neither the public nor the private goals. Ibrahim loses hope and says, “[w]here did it get us, what did we achieve? What an unlucky country!” (Khalifeh 2008b: 133). He becomes pessimistic about the revolution which did not bring any changes in Palestinians’ lives and sufferings. He enunciates “I didn’t say revolution and change, because we had tried them all and failed” (ibid). Khalifeh’s novels echo the huge limitations of Palestinian revolution.

One of the unique aspects of Khalifeh’s *The End of Spring*, is the critique that throws light on the activities of the Palestinian Authority and its former leader Yasser Arafat. She also exposes the factual political corruption of the Palestinian Authority rampant during second *Intifada*. The young resistance fighter Majid enters Arafat’s compound which is under siege to know about the leader with much curiosity and enthusiasm. Majid comes to know that Hosni Mubarak, president of Egypt, has sent water and food to those Palestinians who are under siege with Arafat. Majid says, “Mubarak sent his heartfelt condolences, and also some bottles of water. I found out later that Mubarak had actually sent mango juice, but that Squad 17 drank it all and left us the bottles of water . . . was that why they talked about “corruption” and “a corrupt government?” (Khalifeh 2008a: 211). The hierarchal discrimination among the authorities was glaring. Bishara remarks, “[t]he PA has also been known for corruption, which was a major political issue before and during the second intifada. The PA leadership has always depended on Western powers for legitimacy and economic aid, but their dependence grew exponentially during the economic collapse of the second intifada” (Bishara 2008: 8).

The novel also delineates how the resistance fighters and political leaders enjoy political power once they become leaders instead of working for the welfare of the

nation. Majid's journey towards meeting Yasser Arafat and his transition from a singer to a resistance fighter and further, to a politician is really interesting. The transition Yasser Arafat had undergone in becoming a politician is similar to that of Majid's journey towards becoming a political leader. Majid says, "I started watching my step and the steps of politicians and leaders, calculating how to rise in the ranks. Aligning with the leader meant power, position, rank, salary. It meant becoming a cabinet director, then a cabinet minister" (Khalifeh 2008a: 216). The leaders calculate the political move considering the personal mileage. They misuse power. After becoming a leader Majid also forgets the common people. The promise which he makes as a revolutionary to the civilians while speaking on "democracy" and "the concerns of the people", promising "resurrecting the government," do not get materialised. Later, as an established leader, he is dissatisfied with the movement as a whole and says, "[t]he truth was I wasn't in touch with any of it . . . I had lost touch with the word on the street, with the pulse of the people. I knew nothing about my people" (ibid: 217). Though Khalifeh expressed disappointment about Yasser Arafat in her interview, she says "[h]e was a strange and complicated character whose aspects it would be very hard to capture and depict literary or dramatically [sic]. He was expansive and moody; tender yet violent; honest yet a liar. He was a politician who was overcome by the Arab and international circumstances of his time" (*Assafir* 2008).

In the above novel, Suad is the only daughter of Madame Mayor. She is a serious and hardworking girl like her mother. She studies biology, participates in demonstration and other resistance activities. Majid, a well-known resistant fighter, who is ambitious, proposes to her. Suad does not consent to his proposal and tells him that she would take her decision after discussing with her parents. Suad's father was just released from Israeli prison; he encourages her to marry Majid. He says, ". . . a woman needs a husband. You need to be taken care of. You're getting old and you need a husband and a home and children and a man to look after you and look after your life" (Khalifeh 2008a: 228). Suad's mother hears the conversation of father and daughter. Suad's mother later takes her to the roof and advises her not to marry him because he is a revolutionary. She tells her daughter that if she marries him, her life

would be full of agony, worries and struggles. She has to take all the responsibility. She says “. . . if you want to live a life, *your* life, a life free of grief and worry, then find someone who isn't attached to anything. That man is just like your father or may be worse because he's a commander” (ibid: 230). Her mother knows, being a wife of a revolutionary is not an easy life. In his absence, she has taken all the responsibilities of the family including the financial burden. Though she is strong enough and has handled everything successfully in the absence of her husband, she does not want her daughter to lead a similar life.

He has Palestine to worry about, and orders from the Tanzim, and he doesn't have time. Fine, but what about you? What about your heart and your body and your needs? And what about his children – who is going to look after them? And his house and his food and his needs? (ibid: 230-231).

Considering all these practical issues, she advises Suad to take a wise decision. For revolutionaries it is difficult to balance both personal and political life. Khalifeh, thus, presents the other perspectives of resistance which is not a romantic one.

The novel *The End of Spring* depicts the young characters who suffer because of the IO and the on-going resistance activities. One such character is that of a Gaza boy who is good-looking, tender-hearted and over-sensitive. He marries a beautiful seventeen-year-old bride. Unfortunately, after three days of marriage, the Palestinian Authority took him to the West Bank to join the security forces. He is cut off from his family for three years, and has not yet seen the face of the bride who resides in Gaza. In the novel, this character is introduced as “. . . the Gaza boy, the newlywed only son among seven daughters” (Khalifeh 2008a: 182). He arrives with other security officials to Madame Mayor's place under the blockade in Nablus. Madame Mayor talks to the Gaza boy and comes to know that he is scared of the Jewish attack. She comforts him by paying attention to him. She knows that he is not a brave fighter, as she observes that he is frightened of death and blood most of the time. He says to her that he has given a promise to his mother that he is not going to fight before leaving the house. He keeps that promise.

His mother brought him up a delicate boy and he could not bear the sight of blood. When he saw a man bleeding he came back to Madam Mayor, running like a

mad man, panting. “The blood. The blood,” he started shouting. “They cut off his legs and cut his stomach open” (ibid: 192). Three comrades came and said, “It’s your turn, newlywed from Gaza.” He tried to get out from there, they exchanged angry looks, but there was no time to argue. They wanted to talk to him at his level. One of them said, “The situation is good, and it’s safe at the checkpoint. All you have to do is to stand at the checkpoint and call us if you see anything. He said, “okay” and proceeded. As he was heading towards the door, Madam Mayor called him. “Stay and drink the coffee!” But he left the place, upset, and refused to come back. A few minutes later she heard a missile on the courtyard. One of the comrades went out and came back screaming, “[i]t’s the poor guy from Gaza!” She ran out barefoot, even her head uncovered, to find the body of the Gaza boy in pieces, his stomach cut open and parts strewn all over the place, in the middle of the rubbles and the glass and the mud. She began striking herself in lamentation and screaming hysterically, “[a] newlywed! With his whole life ahead of him! God help me! What a sight! Your poor mother, what grief! You poor thing!” (ibid: 193).

Khalifeh broaches three major issues in this part of the novel. Firstly, that the Palestinian authority has failed to impart the required training and motivation to the young fighters. Secondly, all Palestinian mothers are not and cannot be ready to sacrifice their children for nation’s cause. Thirdly, the Gaza boy himself is not willing to serve the nation. For him it is a forced action by the Palestinian authority to drag him without asking for his willingness. He asks Madame Mayor “[w]hich is better? . . . To be a newlywed or a soldier?” (ibid: 190). Thus, Khalifeh depicts that the issues – the personal and the political – are heavily intertwined with each other.

### **3.14 IMPLICATIONS OF THE MULTIPLE RESISTANCE STRATEGIES**

Israel has kept the Palestinians from resisting this status quo with enormous physical force. Israel established a repressive system of control using certain logics on the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to curb the spirit of the resistance movement. More specifically, Israel’s War against the Palestinians is waged at three levels. The first level involves the process what Orlando Patterson calls “social death” (Moughrabi 1992: 48). This is an effort to eliminate their sense of identity as a nation.

They purposefully try to eliminate their national sentiments by attacking the Palestinian national symbols like flag, national anthem and songs or folklore. Secondly, Israel uses what Austin Turk calls “political policing” (ibid: 49) in order to control the behaviour of Palestinians. They use the tactics of divide-and-rule policy which almost results in political death. Consequently, this situation forces them to give up the notion of independent nationhood because of the conflicting communities from within. Thirdly, they curb the economic activities of the Palestinians. At this level, they try to control the infrastructure of the Occupied Territories very logically by confiscating their lands, controlling water resources and thus making the Palestinians depend upon Israel for survival. Employing these logics, Israeli authorities deprive the Palestinians of their basic amenities.

Palestinian resistance movement in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip has been systematically controlled by Israel through excessive and disproportionate use of force, thereby inflicting violence and bloodshed. The Israeli authorities use massive forces designed specifically to create an environment of fear and coercion. It controls the national uprising by threatening of demolition, or actual demolitions, damaging the education system, confiscating the lands and properties, restricting movement through colour-coded permit system,<sup>11</sup> imposing fines, taking away work permits, ransacking civil institutions, conducting raids on houses in the night, kidnapping, arbitrary imprisonment, injuring, and killing the people. Palestinians have been punished severely after the first *Intifada* in order to deter them from their activism.

Palestinian mothers face a major challenge of deterring their children who are eager to participate in resistance activities. On the other hand, a different set of Palestinian mothers have been accused of encouraging their children to engage in resistance activities. In reality, “[d]epression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms, and symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder not only were found to be common amongst Palestinian women, but were also more intense than those experienced by their male

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<sup>11</sup> The colour-coded identity cards are issued by the Israeli military to the permanent residents and citizens. For the West Bank and Gaza Strip they issue green identification cards. Palestinians in East Jerusalem and Israel are issued blue identification cards. These cards are issued to the residents who turn sixteen.

counterparts” (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2003: 391). Many Palestinian children are the victims of harassment through beating, abuse, kidnapping, and killings by Israeli soldiers. As a result of military or political oppression, there is an increase in the killings of young children. These deaths are glorified as “holy”, “noble” and “worthy” and Palestinian mothers are acknowledged as mothers of martyrdom. The extreme violence from both sides has created fear, anxiety and insecurity among the young minds. The children have been deprived of their fun of playing in the streets, going to the schools without fear and enjoying their childhood.

### **3.15 CONCLUSION**

Khalifeh’s writing is not an idealistic one; nor is it a caricature. Khalifeh practically draws upon the challenges and weaknesses in resistance strategies while fighting against colonial oppression. She says, “. . . it’s a society rather than a symbol, a slogan, a song, or an allegorical beloved. We’re people of blood and flesh and weaknesses, as well as strengths” (Jaber 2009). The aims of Palestinian resistance is to communicate their ongoing struggle through different ways firstly to the Occupiers and secondly to the rest of the world, in order not just to express their disagreement with the IO, but also to avoid the Western and Israeli misrepresentation of Palestinian resistance movement and limiting their struggle only to terror symbols. Khalifeh portrays the collective and group violence perpetrated by both Israelis and Palestinians in the wake of resistance movement. However, in the last decade, there has been an alarming increase in the use of violence from both the sides. Zygmunt Bauman says “[i]t is a banal truth that violence breeds more violence; somewhat less banal, since not repeated enough, is the truth that victimization breeds more victimization. Victims are not guaranteed to be morally superior to their victimizers, and seldom emerge from the victimization morally ennobled” (Bauman 1992: 236). Khalifeh’s novels mirror the various ways in which the power has been exercised by colonizers and resisted by the natives. Palestinian resistance is inevitably taking new turns throughout the vicious period of colonial domination, from non-violent to violent; from community oriented to individual self-sacrifice; from Islamic to secular; from non-religious to religious. The multiple strategies of resistance articulate the unity as well as fracture among Palestinians to fight against IO in order to survive.



Khalifeh describes the relationship between occupation and resistance: “[t]he occupation meant contradictions: revolution versus debasement, collaboration versus sacrifice, vileness and depravity and espionage versus the ultimate sacrifice, blowing oneself up” (Khalifeh 2008a: 116). The main demands of the Palestinian resistance are the self-determination to put an end to the IO and conferring statehood to Palestinian. Anwar who is a leader in the Izzideen al-Qassam Brigades, remarks:

We say the message is that we are a people under occupation and this people seeks [sic] liberation. And there is a message to the West and to the Americans, in particular, through these operations that there will not be an investment or a politically stable situation in the Middle East that allows for investment or the simplest of economic investment as long as we have a problem. As long as these operations exist, there is instability in the Middle East region and the Arab and Islamic region as a whole. There is also a message to the Arab nation to give an example for them to follow so we gain their support for complete liberation. This operation proves that no one is weak (Interview in Abufarha 2009: 215).

However, transfer of natives for the Settler Colonial project remains fundamental with the Occupiers. The theory of Settler Colonialism explains the logic of dispossession and practices of appropriation as Settlers’ primary agenda. The next chapter focuses on the theme of exile or forceful transfer of the natives perpetuated by the settlers in order to live on the conquered land. The chapter also charts the challenges and dilemmas faced by the Palestinian returnees after the exile.

## Chapter Four

### To Go or Not to Go: Gendered Experiences of Exile and Return in the Narratives of Sahar Khalifeh

“Exile: a reality we experience in the heart of the motherland itself. . . Sink in the mud, Palestine, kiss the world good bye!” (Khalifeh 1985: 56).

#### 4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Exile of Palestinians under the IO is one of the core themes of Palestinian narratives. Exiles encounter multiple issues like dislocation, fragmentation of identity, separation from family and psychological anguish in their day-to-day life. Exile has always been a source of tense engagement for the Palestinian writers. They have been engaged in writing extensively on the harrowing experiences of exile. Simultaneously, they have written on the emerging challenges faced by the Palestinians on their return to homeland. In the narratives of Sahar Khalifeh, exile is a central and recurring motif. Her writings explore a number of significant issues associated with exile such as hardships of dislocation, homelessness, statelessness, alienation, and waiting for a day of return. The characters of Khalifeh suffer from isolation and the pain of displacement and they express the agonising uncertainty of living as stateless citizens and the continual fear of losing hope altogether. Exile, however is experienced differently by both men and women. Indeed, women’s experience of exile and impact of male exile on women has been marginalised in male narratives. This chapter deals with how Sahar Khalifeh delineates the impact of Palestinian exile on both men and women as a negative and demoralising experience. It also charts the burden, emotional impact as well as the challenges faced by the Palestinian women because of the male exile. It highlights multiple experiences of exile, which prove that the notion of exile is intertwined with the questions of identity, time and language as presented in the narratives of Khalifeh. The chapter specifically focuses on women who are the victims of exile and their sufferings – from subtle to the more conspicuous. It addresses a major

question of – what is the impact of exile on one’s life? Is there a difference between male and female experiences of exile? If so, what are they? Is there an impact of male exile on female? If so, what are they? Accordingly, the chapter begins with a recapitulation of the key moments in the history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict such as the two wars and the Palestinian exodus of 1948 and 1967 enforced by Israeli settlers. Then it attempts to answer the above questions through discussions based on the narratives of Khalifeh. The theme of exile has been analysed through the interpretive lens of Settler Colonial theory. Analytical insights from Edward Said and from other theories of exile have been used to understand the latter concept.

The trauma theory has not been considered for the theme of exile. Trauma theory is related mostly to holocaust, and the psychic suffering therein. Looking at the trajectory of trauma studies, one can say that it is also related to the postcolonial scenario which is somewhat at a distance from the frame used by this chapter. Frantz Fanon and Stef Craps developed the theories of “insidious trauma” and “postcolonial syndrome” and challenged western definitions of trauma. The recent studies in *The Future of Trauma Theory* and *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory* analyse the underexplored link between trauma and post colonialism and thereby suggest new avenues of research (Andermahr 2016). So, though the recent trauma theories are related to postcolonial studies, our research aims to study the multiple issues connected to exile with identity, time, and impact of exile on personal life and challenges of being an insider as well as an outsider with the framework of Settler Colonialism.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section of this chapter explores the relationship between Settlers’ act of transfer. The second section deals with experiences of men and women referring to the different shades of exilic experiences. The third section discusses the challenges and dilemmas encountered by an exile after his return to homeland. It debates and reflects predicaments of the returnees who find it difficult to cope with the situation of their homeland.

## **4.2 SETTLER COLONIALISM AND TRANSFER OF THE NATIVES**

Displacement of the natives or forced expulsion of the natives is one of the practices of Settler Colonisation. Settler Colonial theory argues that settlers not only exploit the natives after occupying the land but also engage in displacing them. The systematic transfer of population is one of the strategies used by the settlers in order to settle in the occupied land (Veracini 2010: 33). This act reduces the population of the natives in a particular locale; the settlers utilize the land, resources and properties of the indigenous people on the conquered land. This process continues in the contiguous stretches. The settlers consider the presence of natives on the lands as superfluous. The two prime objectives of Settler Colonisation is the territorialisation of the settler community as well as the necessary deterritorialisation (i.e., the transfer) of indigenous population (ibid: 81). Wolfe says “[f]or natives the issue is that, at the hands of the settlers, they face [physical and symbolic] elimination” (Wolfe 2006: 333). Settler Colonisation refers to a history in which the settlers drove indigenous population from their land in order to create their own national or ethnic communities. Wolfe explains, the settlers want the indigenous “to vanish,” through systemic exploitation at the core before they opt to exile and “other times they replace them” (Wolfe 1999: 2). Settler Colonisation believes in a winner-take-all whose dominant feature is not only the exploitation but also the replacement of the natives.

### **4.2.1 Victims of Multiple Displacements**

Zionist Settler Colonisers came not only in search of new and permanent home but also to remove the indigenous population from that space. They engaged in the ethnic transfer of the indigenous Palestinian population. Said specifies three functional meanings of being a Palestinian: firstly, it is to live through Zionism, which by acquiring the land of Palestine had formed the state of Israel., being a Palestinian secondly is to dispossess and exile [the other] Palestinian. Thirdly, it is to maintain the state of Israel, where Palestinians are treated as non-Jews and political exiles (Said 1992: 180-181). Zionists, the beginners of Settler Colonisation in Palestine focused more on the policy of displacement or forced expulsion.

It is a sad thing . . . that the Jews and Arabs, who have lived in peace for hundreds of years, have become enemies because of this Zionist ambition to have a country of their own. We have become refugees on the borders of our country to make room for other refugees from many parts of the world. The Jewish refugees should be the first to understand our persecution. We are homeless people living in these camps within sight of our rightful homes. Is it any wonder we become more bitter as each year passes with nothing done? (Anderson 1957: 23).

Dispossessing the Palestinians from their homeland is an ideological as well as a political project of Zionist leaders. The Zionist leaders make room for the immigrated Jewish population to settle in Arab houses by driving out the natives, the actual owners of the house. Joseph Weitz<sup>1</sup>, wrote in 1940: “[i]t should be clear for us that there is not room for two peoples in this country. If the Arabs leave it, there will be enough for us. . . . There is nothing else to do but to remove them all; we mustn’t leave a single village, a single tribe” (Quoted in Ahmed 2009: 6). Golda Meir denies the existence of the Palestinian people: “[t]here is no such thing as a Palestinian people . . . It is not as if we came and threw them out and took their country. They didn’t exist” (Meir 1969). Weizmann himself pointed out to the Soviet Ambassador in 1941 that “[i]f half a million Arabs could be transferred, two million Jews could be put in their place. That, of course, would be a first instalment; what might happen afterwards was a matter for history” (Quoted in Morris 2004: 50).

Later in 1948 and 1967 Israeli Settler state deliberately continued the same strategy of expelling the natives from the Occupied Territories of Palestine. The outcome of the Israeli war of 1948 was the mass “transfer” of Palestinians out of their territory and homes. Palestinians scattered and lived as displaced people in various parts of the neighbouring Middle Eastern countries like Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and in smaller numbers in other countries of the world. Edward Said has spoken on his own experience of exile in his autobiography *Out of Place*. He acknowledges the Palestinians’ collective experience of exile in his narratives. He explains in *After the Last Sky*, that the *Nakba* was an outrageous event in the modern history of the Palestinians. He states that exile has caused fragmentation, dispersal and destruction of

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<sup>1</sup>The Director of the Jewish National Fund, affiliated to the World Zionist Organization.

the Palestinian society. It has had a deep impact in transforming Palestinian identity as an exilic one.

Said states that the Palestinians' exile has been the most extraordinary one: "... to have been exiled by exiles, to relive the actual process of up-rooting at the hands of exiles" (Said 2000: 178). According to Walid Khalidi, between 714,000 and 744,000 Palestinians were forcibly vacated from their homes at the time of *Nakba*; 418 of their villages have been destroyed, depopulated or occupied; and 11 of their urban centres depopulated (Khalidi 1992: xxxii-xxxiii). Consequently, majority of the Palestinians turned homeless and took shelter in refugee camps who continue to live in refugee camps until the present day. They became homeless in their own homeland and were forced to travel from one place to another. Palestinians have been away from their family, community, and homeland. Indeed, forced migration has been an important aspect of Palestinian life and the reality of this migration is a painful one. Veracini notes, "[s]ettler colonial projects are specifically interested in turning indigenous peoples into refugees . . ." (Veracini 2010: 35). Since then, their homes, land and possessions are being systematically destroyed and their properties are being confiscated without scope for any legal process. Israel's policy of transfer can be traced back to the origins of modern Zionism. The policy of transfer conveniently became part of Israeli policy and public discourse since the creation of the state. It gained the state support through legal, military, and economic tactics. The same legacy of expropriation of the natives continued after the war of 1967 under Israeli Settler Colonisation of the Occupied Territories of Palestine. Then the Palestinians who were living in refugee camps were forced to leave the land or face banishment from their homeland. In addition to the 750,000 Palestinians who became refugees after *Nakba*, 400,000 people were displaced in the war of 1967, about half of whom were 1948 refugees displaced for a second time (Pappe 2006: 139). The Palestinians are the victims of "multiple displacement" throughout their history and have suffered for more than five decades of displacement. The collective displacements led to the division of the Palestinian

community between those who left and those who stayed within the green line<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, Sahar Khalifeh stays inside the Occupied Territories of Palestine, being an eye witness to Palestinian exile. In one of her interviews she says, “[t]he first thing they did after Occupation is they kicked the people out of the villages . . . they wanted them to leave the West Bank and all Palestinian altogether” (Nazareth 1980: 71). Since then, they have not found a permanent abode and are migrating continually suffering from displacement, loss and agony. The Occupation could be made more oppressive, brutal, and forceful; the settler colonial project could succeed by causing the indigenous population to leave. IO not only aggravated the exodus of Palestinians but also put restrictions on the movement. Barghouthi writes, “[o]ccupation prevents you from managing your affairs in your own way. It interferes in every aspect of life and of death; it interferes with longing and anger and desire and walking in the street. It interferes with going anywhere and coming back, with going to market, the emergency hospital, the beach, the bedroom or a distant capital” (Barghouthi 2000: 48).

#### **4.3 HOME AND EXILE**

Conceptually, home and exile are binary opposites. Home is associated with safety, security, and family; these attributes render home a comfortable dwelling to be in. It ascertains the stability of the self. Boym states, “[t]o feel at home is to know that things are in their places and so are you . . .” (Boym 2001: 251). Di Stefano defines, “home is not necessarily a fixed notion . . . more than a physical space, home might be understood as a familiarity and regularity of activities and structures of time” (Di Stefano 2002: 38). The term “exile” originates from the Latin word “*exilium*,” where the prefix “ex” means “out” and the root “*solum*” refers to “ground, land, or soil” (McClennen 2004: 14). Exile is the sense of homelessness; it indicates a movement beyond the familiar homeland. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines exile as “the state of being barred from one’s native country” (Pearsall 1999: 499). Indeed, exiles feel that they are moved out of home as well as away from their home country. Furthermore, due to the

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<sup>2</sup> The green line refers to the border separating pre-1967 Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territories. It is an internationally recognised border.

unavailability of home, the exiles turn to the memory to imagine home as a compensatory strategy to live away from the 'original' home. It means a painful banishment from one's homeland. In other words, an exile is someone who is prevented from returning to his or her home. It is also most often a solitary and lonely experience away from home and homeland. Salhi states that all exiles, "... keep an idealized image of home as a paradise they were forced to flee, and never manage to entirely adopt their new dwellings. As such, they share feelings of solitude, estrangement, loss, and longing" (Salhi 2006: 3). Syrine Hout proposes difference between home and exile. He says

feeling at home is associated with freedom, a sense of belonging and personal dignity, wherever and whenever these may be found and enjoyed. Exile, by contrast, is a state of cognitive and emotional dissonance whether generated by war and political/sectarian division in one's own nation or induced by physical uprootedness abroad (Hout 2006: 193).

In general, people take decision to migrate from their homeland for numerous reasons like war, genocide, political persecution or famine. Mischa Hiller says, "[e]xile can take many forms – from the logistical (due to occupation and civil war) and the political (at odds with the powers that be), to the cultural (those Americans in Paris again) and even spiritual (abandonment of faith)" (Hiller 2013: 181).

The connotations of the terms refugee, exile and expatriate are different. According to Paul Tabori, exile can be termed as 'refugee' legally. The word originates from the Latin "*refugiare*" which means to flee, run away, and escape. The status of the refugee is associated with a legal category. Among refugees, there could be exiles, but not all exiles are refugees because unlike the word refugee, which refers to a "necessary territorial displacement", exile does not constitute a legal category (McClennen 2004: 15). Palestinians are the victims of both terrible conditions of being refugees and exiles due to political upheavals. For Palestinians, exile is an endless journey in search of home, employment, and new life. McClennen draws a distinction between the exile and the expatriate in arguing that "'exile' typically refers to one who has been forced to leave one's country, while 'expatriate' suggests that the separation is voluntary" (ibid: 15).



Again, the word exile has different connotations of force and suffering that is not inherent in the word diaspora. At the heart of both terms are questions of how the home is experienced away from the home country. Exile, linguistically contains both an element of force and banishment from the homeland. Diaspora is a matter of choice and does not involve any force to leave the homeland. Nico Israel says that diaspora “indicates the dispersal or scattering of a body of people from their traditional home across foreign lands; yet, like the agricultural sowing of seeds from which the word comes to us (from the Greek *speirein*), it also suggests an anticipation of root-taking and eventual growth” (Israel 2000: 1). In the context of Palestinians’ displacement, Said disagrees to refer to the community of Palestinian exiles as a diaspora. The term diaspora originally associated with and remains strongly related to the Jewish experience of displacement. The expression diaspora was used to describe the spread of the Jewish people around the globe. He states that, “I do not like to call it a Palestinian *diaspora*: there is only an apparent symmetry between our exile and theirs . . . Our *ghurba* or *manfa* is a much different thing” (Said 1986: 115)<sup>3</sup>. The phrase *manfa* is derived from the verb *nafa*, which means “to banish or expel”, hence it refers to a literal or technical sense of exile. Hybridity is one of the essential elements of diaspora that is largely absent in exile. So, Smadar Lavie and Ted Swedenburg state, “hybridity . . . does not appear to be a viable strategy in the struggle for Palestine”; it is instead “a case of an exilic identity demanding return to its historic territory” in which “essentialism is a political necessity, particularly when the group or culture is threatened with radical effacement” (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 12).

#### **4.4 EXILE IN MALE NARRATIVES**

The largest part of Khalifeh’s corpus consists of a thematic compass on the nightmares of exile and about the exiles living outside Palestine, yearning to return to their motherland. Many Palestinian leaders, intelligentsia, professionals, writers, artists and film makers who were either expelled or exiled, have penned their painful experience of exile. Muhammad Siddiq, a notable Palestinian male writer, describes Palestine itself as a “refugee nation” (Siddiq 1995: 87). Darwish says, “[w]e travel like other people,

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<sup>3</sup> Emphasis in the original.

but we return to nowhere” (Darwish et al., 2005: 30-31). As Said rightly remarks, “[e]xile is not, after all, a matter of choice: you are born into it, or it happens to you” (Said 2000: 173). Film maker Elia Suleiman expresses,

I don't have a homeland. And since exile is the other side of having a homeland, I'm not in exile. On the other hand, at another level – a non-political level – every place is both a homeland and an exile . . . Exile is a kind of 'place' too. For me, Nazareth and New York are both simultaneously exiles and homelands . . . As far as I'm concerned, exile is a choice . . . I have travelled and lived in different countries, and this nomadic experience is a privilege. My tie to the land is not exclusive . . . In my case, land is not an element that creates desire (Quoted in Tawil 2005: 130).

The above mentioned quotes on exile suggest that the experience of exile is not the same for everyone and that it differs from person to person. For some exile is a choice but for others it is forced migration. In the opinion of Said, exile is a strange and terrible experience. It is not a matter of choice: they are born into it; or it happens to them. Ultimately, this causes deep sorrow and alienation. For Elia, there is no difference between home and exile; it is a choice or even, a 'privilege'. As Eva Karpinski writes, certain models of exile have been critiqued as distinctively individualistic and “comes very close to the fulfilment of male fantasy of the free, unencumbered, independent self” (Karpinski 1999: 21).

Apart from the above writers Raja Shehadeh, Mourid Barghouti, and Fawaz Turki, have also written extensively on their personal experiences of exile and return. However, the women's experience of exile has been largely marginalised in these narratives by the Palestinian male writers. Exile, in terms of travel, displacement, physical and mental agony, nomadic experience, usually get associated with the men's experience of exile. The works of the above writers and the pain of exile they express therein have been studied in terms of socio-political, economic ramifications of exile and in terms of return to homeland (Habib, 2013; Nasser, 2014; Mir, 2015). Notwithstanding the importance of the above issues, they have also created a vacuum in depicting the women's experience of exile. The male writer Kanafani in his short story *Men in the Sun* depicts the primary dilemma of exile faced by his male characters. He highlights the manly masculine duties and the responsibilities of the male characters as the bread winners of the family. The common tendency among the mainstream writers is to

consign female experiences of exile mostly to the realm of the metaphorical. Khalifeh, on the other hand, represents women's experiences of exile extensively, which is unprecedented. Nevertheless, she also discusses the men's experiences of the exile even as she presents a unique scenario of the impact of male exile on female. Scholars who have earlier worked on the narratives of Khalifeh have not identified and focused on this issue adequately (Mahmoud, 2014; Angierski, 2014; Alhawamdeh, 2015). Khalifeh breaks the dilemma and anxiety of exile, hitherto largely depicted in masculinist terms where woman is absent or mute. Apart from Khalifeh, Liana Badr's narratives deal exclusively with female protagonists' struggle to cope with successive displacement. Khalifeh and Badr, in contrast to the male narratives, are concerned with depicting the condition of women in exile, decentring the discourse of exile as primarily a masculine dilemma and considering the implications of exile upon women.

#### **4.5 MALE EXPERIENCE OF EXILE**

Exile is entangled with various historical, political, and socio-economic issues. It comprises of multiple binaries and the continuum in between such as physical/psychological, liberated/confined, spiritual/material, individual/collective and personal/political. Each experience of exile is distinct and varied from person to person. The effects of the Occupation on socio-political and economic life of Palestinians have been such that it has become difficult for them to survive in their own homeland. The living conditions in the West Bank have deteriorated enormously after the IO and it is one of the main reasons for the migration of Palestinians in search of a safe haven to live.

##### **4.5.1 Voluntary Exile**

More often exile is voluntary and sometimes it is non-voluntary. But in Khalifeh's novels, majority of the male characters irrespective of political reasons, take voluntary decision to migrate. Voluntary exile happens in the case of saving one's own life when the homeland is under an unending political catastrophe. Khalifeh describes vividly the multiple challenges experienced by the migrating Palestinian community. In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Ibrahim is the narrator who constantly shares his experience of exile. He works as a teacher at a convent in Jerusalem and aspires to

become a political writer. He falls in love with Mariam, yet abandons her when she becomes pregnant. His decision of exile from his homeland is voluntary in order to escape from personal responsibilities. Ibrahim is the best illustration for an expatriate who lives voluntarily in an alien country for personal or social reasons. Expatriates feel lonely and estranged but they do not suffer from being barred. Ibrahim is neither banished nor threatened by a specific political agenda, yet he chooses to live away from homeland. He has been transferred to many places as per his job requirements. He marries several times, but does not have children. His voluntary exile is loaded with melancholy. Even though his is a self-imposed exile, he is utterly lost in the tenuous atmosphere in which physical movement from one place to the other is beyond his control. Exile is a hypersensitive issue as it has deeper physical, emotional, and psychological impact on a person. “Exile is dislocation, both physical and psychic. The exile is a stranger, not seen, misperceived. The departure into absence of exile contains and will foster a will to return to presence” (Kaminsky 1992: 32).

Displacement leads to alienation which in turn, makes exiles suffer. Certainly, the condition of exile has had a direct impact on the family and emotions of an individual who is in exile. Exile shatters the personal dreams and desires of an individual. It restricts the person’s willingness to exercise his free will. Ibrahim wants to become a renowned writer. Much of his life is spent in exile than in his homeland. He feels abandoned in the politics of his country and exiled life that would not allow him to become an acclaimed writer – a condition that alienates him from writing itself. He says, “. . . the world of politics, exile, and worldly matters took me away from it. If I hadn’t lost myself in politics and wandered the world, I would have been the greatest writer in the world” (Khalifeh 2008b: 244). As Ibrahim recounts, his decision to go into exile is especially painful because he has to be away from his family. Barghouthi aptly remarks “[i]t is enough for a person to go through the first experience of uprooting, to become uprooted forever” (Barghouthi 2000: xi). Exile drains the natural sentiments and inclination of the self that are deprived from expressing itself which cause deep sorrow and alienation. Looking back at his exile, Ibrahim says, “I had lost my capacity to feel and interact, my heart was rusty, my feelings had died” (Khalifeh 2008b: 172).

In the novel *The Inheritance*, Kamal is the elder brother of Mazen, who gets a scholarship to study in Germany. He decides to flee into exile. After completion of his education, he starts his career as a civil engineer in Germany and works there for many years. The country provides him all material comforts and medical benefits. However, he never feels that he is one among them. He feels a vacuum inside his being, as he is away from his home and homeland. He prioritises his work over other things and spends his time in the laboratory with machines. Yet, he is not happy with his life in the exiled country. His life in Germany becomes tediously constant and eternally bland; he defines it as “superficial” and “rootless” (Khalifeh 2005: 188). Therefore, Kamal tries to forget the awful experience of exile because he has been cut off from his roots. Exile makes the individuals lose their voice and identity. Kamal, in the novel repeatedly narrates his awful memories of exile and homelessness. Michael Seidel states “an exile is someone who inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another” (Seidel 1986: ix).

#### **4.5.2 Bread Winner as an Exile**

In Khalifeh’s novels, majority of the male characters choose to opt for exile because of the economic challenges posed after the IO. IO created unemployment and major economic crisis for the Palestinians who stayed inside the Occupied Territories of Palestine. The settlers confiscated their lands and left them unemployed due to unavailability of land for cultivation. The natives who were unwilling to work in Israeli firms and settlements started migrating to other countries in search of employment and livelihood. Many Palestinians who sought voluntary exile, were able to overcome their economic difficulties through education and hard work.

In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Usama leaves home and country during the initial days of Occupation to work abroad for five years. He migrates immediately after the death of his father in order to fulfil the responsibilities of a bread winner. He works in the oil producing countries as translator and then in Amman, Algeria and Syria. Usama’s character is an example of self-imposed exile that is in search of better livelihood. When he is returns to Palestine, he is interrogated by an Israeli soldier around the question as

to why he was fired from his job. During interrogation when the Israeli soldier repeatedly asks him, Usama angrily retorts, because he is a Palestinian.

Zudhi, a friend of Adil tries all kinds of professions in his life – as mechanic, electrician, builder, porter, waiter and taxi driver. He emigrated more than once – to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Germany. Zudhi says to Usama, “[e]xile’s tough, old friend. You know what exile’s like! I’d wandered from country to country to earn forty five Kuwait dinars – thirty-four Jordanian” (Khalifeh 1985: 77). Though he calls exile ‘tough’, he had not felt any kind of discrimination between himself and other workers during exile. However, when he comes back to work in Israeli factories, there is harsh discrimination between the Jews and the Palestinians. The Jews enjoy all kinds of privileges like less work and more salary. There is inequality even in providing such facilities as serving food in cafeterias – for they had to sit on the ground to have their food. Even though Palestinian labourers are aware of these issues, they have no right to question this discrimination.

In the novel *The Inheritance*, Zayna’s father Hajj Muhammad Hamdan exiles from Wadi al-Rihan to New York. He sells “. . . all kinds of merchandise, regardless of its origin, as products of the Holy Land” in the streets of New York (Khalifeh 2005: 3). He also sells holy water and sand calling the places of his homeland. “Do you know Jordan, Madam? Holy water and the baptism of Jesus Christ. Is there a baptism in your family? We have many baptisms in ours, we got baptized every day” (ibid: 3-4). Furthermore, he specifically says that he belongs to Jerusalem in order to attract customers for his products. He sells Palestinian hand embroidered dress to American women. After few years of hard work, he becomes the owner of a grocery store in Brooklyn. This is the how Abu Hamdan succeeds in a migrated land. He marries an American woman and acquires a green card to become a resident of America. He tells his wife about his origin by showing the photo of his father “. . . he was a great prince, but died. A Bedouin tribe seized his emirate while I was still a young boy. I ran away to Jerusalem, then to Cairo, and later to Marrakech. From there I took a boat to America. Do you see, lady, I am a poor beggar while my father was a great prince!” (ibid: 4). He frequently tells this story to his wife and constantly remembers homeland. He compares and contrasts the life they had in Arab countries as well as in America. It

is a comparison between the east and the west. He articulates the importance of community life they had in Arab countries to his fellow Arab American friends. He feels that he is away from Arabic language and Arab culture as he is living in a country like an exile. He says that in Arab countries people help each other and if they need financial assistance they ask from their friends. There is no need to go to the bank to get loans. He feels extremely proud of his Arab origin and preserves his Arab identity during his exile which he feels, is superior to the American or western identity. He starkly contrasts life in his homeland with the exiled land: “[t]here, one really lives, brothers! There you speak Arabic, eat Arabic, drink all-Arabic coffee. Everything is Arabic! If you need help, you find a thousand hands stretched out to help you. If you need money you can take it from a friend, no banks, no checks, and no headaches” (ibid: 7). It indicates the cultural alienation witnessed by an exile in the migrated land.

Zayna describes her father as a good hearted man who had travelled a lot and had rich experience. He remembers everything and shares his experiences with others but when he hears the name of a friend living in Beirut or Damascus, he becomes emotional. His life of exile makes him feel that he is missing his friends and the Arab community, he becomes nostalgic. He narrates the life he had led in Arab countries to his Arab American friends, they like brothers in their community.

In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Mariam’s mother narrates the story of her husband, who goes on exile for more than forty years. He would be back once in two years to spend a couple of months with the family. He would return to his exile, using the pretext of his job, away from his family. Thus, the position of a bread winner could also help evade from higher responsibilities of family, by resorting to an exilic life.

However, within Occupied Territories, exiles are treated with respect and dignity in comparison with the non-exiles. Ambitious fathers aspired for the departure of their children in search of ‘greener pastures’ for the safety of their life, for earning their livelihood and for a general well-being. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Usama while returning from Kuwait to West Bank, meets Abu Muhammad, who is a fellow traveller. He shows Usama the expensive watch that he is carrying which is a gift from his elder

son to his younger one. He proudly says that in the wake of 1948 and 1967 exodus, all his five sons left the country one by one and they are working in Kuwait. He says that all of them are living like kings with a lot of money and prestige. He is worried about his last son Khalid, staying in his homeland who is arrested and tortured by Israelis in prison. He says, “[t]hey’d tortured him in every part of his body, even down there. They loosed a dog on him that went for his genitals. He may be infertile” (Khalifeh 1985: 7).

In the novel *The Inheritance*, Abu Jaber Hamdan, says that the Palestinian defeat in the war of 1967 is the prime cause of Palestinian displacement. He tells Zayna, his niece, that all his relatives are living in different parts of the globe. He expresses his happiness over the fact that his sons and a daughter are living abroad. He is disappointed about his younger son Mazen, who was without any education and a formal degree and who is still in the Occupied Territory. He is a revolutionary, a victim of a mine explosion that occurred during the time of *Intifada*. Mazen does not go on exile to earn his livelihood. Jaber calls Mazen as “the real problem” (Khalifeh 2005: 32). He feels his sons, who are living outside, have a better life when compared to the son who is the victim of Israeli violence. Mazen’s sister Nahleh degrades and considers him as jobless. Jaber discourages another of his son, Kamal, who wishes to return from Germany. Kamal writes in a letter, “[f]ather, their world is merciless” (ibid: 155). He receives an earnest reply from his father. He says, “[d]on’t make the mistake of coming back. I have enough dealing with Mazen and his problems. Here, we have unemployment and war worries. Please, please, for my sake, be wise and do not make rash decisions” (ibid). Both Abu Muhammad and Abu Jaber treat their younger sons as useless, not resorting to exile to earn their livelihood. Instead, their sons indulge in the political affairs of the homeland and suffer physical deformity. The parents feel their sons, who are living outside, have a better life when compared to their sons who are the victims of Israeli violence. Apart from their parents, the natives have strong belief that the intelligent and educated opt for exile mentioning the name Kamal. On the other hand, uneducated Mazen stays in the homeland doing nothing. “Those who have brains run away overseas, to study, work, and live, but for whom? For the others, and only the useless, the worthless, and the helpless stay in our country” (ibid: 98). Thus, there is also a stigma of ‘uselessness’ that is attached onto those who prefer to stay in the Occupied



Territories. It also works as a morale booster for those who would like to go into exile and explore foreign countries.

#### **4.6 VOICING THE FEMALE EXPERIENCES OF EXILE**

Khalifeh has written extensively about the female experience of exile in her novels, though, in her novel *Wild Thorns* she looked at exile from the male perspective. Yet, her later novels effectively represent women's experiences of exile. This is because the continuing Occupation aggravated the economic burden of the natives. This situation made the educated women to cross boundaries in order to earn their livelihood. After 1967 and with the rise of the oil-rich countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and others in the Gulf, many Palestinians found themselves working in the remote areas of these countries. Perhaps Khalifeh's depiction of women in exile is articulated most powerfully in the novel, *The Inheritance*. Nahleh, a single woman, unveils woman's experience of exile. She leaves her home at the age of eighteen to work as a teacher in Kuwait. The period of her exilic sojourn lasted for thirty years. She goes on exile in order to support her family and her brothers' education. She gets habituated to the life in Kuwait which offers an opportunity to earn her livelihood. She becomes financially independent; but her brothers communicate with her projecting pseudo affection whenever they need money and exploit her financially. She sacrifices her own personal life, and clears the family debts that had piled up. She anticipates her brothers would support her in future and take care of her. She spends her youthful days working in Kuwait. Consequently, she wonders how her exilic years slipped one after another without her being aware of it. Nahleh regrets not getting married. She feels vulnerable being alone in her life without marriage and progeny. She expresses her desire for a conjugal bond. Nahleh says, "I woke up and found myself old, without a husband, without a house, and no one to call me Mama. This is how it ended" (Khalifeh 2005: 52). She envies the prosperous marital lives of her brothers. ". . . I spent my youth for – living in exile! . . . Each one of them has a large family, one or two wives . . ." (ibid: 50-51). Nahleh's struggles to get married to fulfil her sexual desire inflict psychological anguish. The marginalisation and the discrimination she suffers inside the family after her return from exile, leads to her psychological ailment. She loses control over her emotions and becomes shopaholic: wears strange clothes, spends a lot of time applying

cosmetics and utters strange words. Nahleh stands as a metaphor for the psychological impact of exile. Van Leeuwen says, “[e]xile is a consciousness which is imposed by external forces, but which has been internalized and transformed into an emotional and intellectual disposition which affects every experience and every thought” (Van Leeuwen 1999: 268).

“One salient feature common to all experience of exile . . . could be the issue of identity, the quest of the self for its moorings, in history as well as in the immediate existential order of things” (Lahiri 2001: 1). In the novel *Inheritance* Zayna, is born in New York to a Palestinian father and an American mother. She belongs to the second generation of exiles. She is the daughter of an exile who grows up as an Arab American. She grows up listening to interesting stories narrated by her father Hajj Muhammad Hamdan about the Palestinian community and home. “Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is *contrapuntal*” (Said 2000: 186)<sup>4</sup>. She too experiences a sort of exile in America with her dual identities; she encounters cultural, linguistic, and religious alienation. Zayna, the Americanised version of Zaynab, strongly feels that she belongs nowhere. She says, “[m]y language was lost before I was lost and so was my identity. My name and address followed suit. My original name was Zaynab Hamdan, and with time it became Zayna” (ibid: 8). She encounters an identity crisis that is primarily linguistic and cultural. She consciously rejects both the Arab as well as American identity. On the other hand, her father urges her to preserve her identity as an Arab. For exiles maintaining an identity is difficult after crossing the borders. Said writes about the identity of Palestinian:

Identity – who we are, where we come from, what we are – is difficult to maintain in exile. Most other people take their identity for granted. Not the Palestinian, who is required to show proofs of identity more or less. It is not only that we are regarded as terrorists, but that our existence as native Arab inhabitants of Palestine, with primordial rights there (and not elsewhere), is either denied or challenged (Said 1986: 16).

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasis in the original.

The Palestinians who were dispersed in exile encounter the problem of preservation of the native identity. Zayna says, “[a]s Zayna I was caught between two languages and two cultures – my father’s Brooklyn and the West Bank on one side and my maternal grandmother’s American culture on the other. I was later left without any culture and lived in a vacuum” (Khalifeh 2005: 9). Hamdan wants his daughter Zayna to be away from foreign cultural influences that threatens the Arab identity. “I want my daughters to be brought up as Arabs, clear and transparent as a candle. I want them to marry Arabs and Muslims, according to the Prophet’s teaching. I want them to be impregnated by Muslims” (Khalifeh 2005: 8).

In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Mariam had fallen in love with an Italian priest. This happened before meeting Ibrahim, when she was in Brazil, where she was raised with many of her brothers. Apparently, someone had noticed Mariam and the priest kissing each other inside the premises of the church. The priest had got transferred to another convent as a punishment for his sinful act. After this incident, Mariam had been expelled from the church and was put on house arrest for some time. Later, her family members decide that she be resettled in Jerusalem with her blind mother. When Mariam develops a relation with Ibrahim in Jerusalem, she tells him the story of her exile. She misses her brothers, the nuns, and the family home. Her case strikes to Ibrahim as a strange reverse case: an exile in Jerusalem. He describes her as “a stranger in her homeland, a stranger in the other land, an only girl among seven brothers, lonely amid strangers” (Khalifeh 2008b: 42). It is apparent that for both Mariam and the priest, exile results in a severe punishment and social stigma. Said says, “[e]xile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider” (Said 2001: 181). For Mariam, exile becomes a cage and she feels a deep sense of separation, solitude, and boredom. Indeed, Mariam is not only the victim of her own exile, but that of Ibrahim’s too. In the same novel, Sarah, Ibrahim’s sister is forced to marry a man with three children. The formalities of the marriage rituals had finished over the phone.

She views her marriage as an exile. She says in an apprehensive tone that “I’ll be exiled to the desert” (Khalifeh 2008b: 24)<sup>5</sup>.

#### **4.6.1. Impact of Male Exile on Women**

Even as the male characters aspire for their sons to explore opportunities abroad, the male exile has tremendous emotional and psychological impact on women who suffer due to the exile of the male – father, husband, son, lover or brother. In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Mariam’s mother suffers a lot in her life because of the exile of her husband. She stays at home and her husband lives in exile for forty years visiting them once in two years and giving them a false assurance that he would return soon. She grows old waiting for her husband’s return. She brings up her children singlehandedly, in the absence of their father. Her children grow up, only to get into exile overseas except a son and a daughter. She narrates her sorrowful life to Ibrahim and says, “I put up with the absence of the father, but the children too! Their father lived for forty years in exile, maybe more, while I stayed home. He would be gone for two years and return for two months to visit. Every year he would say it was the last year until he died” (Khalifeh 2008b: 65). Thus, exile of men also stands for repudiation of one’s own responsibilities, thereby burdening the women of the family with higher responsibilities. This carelessness meted out is suffered by the female counterparts, who try to make up for the ignored responsibilities.

In the absence of Ibrahim, Mariam gives birth to Michael and experiences a deep sense of separation, solitude, and boredom. Mariam learns Arabic and writes a novel to express her experience of exile and motherhood in a more creative way. Yet, she is unable to celebrate her motherhood or the birth of her son Michael and is sad about it. She perceives her motherhood as burden and leads a reclusive life. She brings up her son without the support of Ibrahim. She writes “[t]hey say that motherhood is miraculous, pure love, pure affection, sacrifice, devotion, and gratefulness, but I only feel oppression and revolt, I want to run away from my heart. Why should I be the only one tied down? . . . The pressure on my head is increasing, I am oppressed, and I am lonely” (ibid: 179). Thus, Mariam remains a victim of dual exiles – her own and that of

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<sup>5</sup> More of this, in the fifth chapter.

Ibrahim's, at different points in her life. She has to bear the burden of both these exiles, when the man in exile might actually be free to carve out his own destiny even though he is in exile.

#### **4.7 FUZZY DICHOTOMY BETWEEN AN INSIDER AND AN OUTSIDER**

Exiles isolated themselves from a particular historical period and a geographical space. The exiles were lost in space between their homeland and the migrated land. Khalifeh's novels are spatially complicated by the demarcation between what is inside and what is outside. Her project is to highlight both the experiences of Palestinians living under the Occupation and those in exile. In Khalifeh's narratives Palestinians are neither contented in their homeland nor in exile. They have to struggle for their survival, both inside the Occupied Territories and also outside the borders. Speaking about her own experience of exile, Barakat says, "[t]o be honest, the cynicism I confronted in myself and others under Occupation in Palestine should have provided a kind of immunity for the cynicism of exile outside Palestine. But what I learned is that exile within is as brutal as exile outside" (Barakat 2013: 143). The life within the Occupied Territories could be likened to a kind of 'internal exile' that Palestinians might experience in their own land. Said says "[w]herever we Palestinians are, we are not in our Palestine, which no longer exists. . . . Exiles at home as well as abroad, Palestinians also still inhabit the territory of former Palestine (Israel, the West Bank, Gaza), in sadly reduced circumstances" (Said 1983: 11).

In the novel, *The Inheritance*, One of Khalifeh's characters, Mazen is an insider, a revolutionary and a staunch follower of Guevara. Kamal narrates his dreadful days of exile to Mazen many times. He used to call his brothers who are in exile as "merchants, slaves, opportunists, upstarts, and bourgeois" (Khalifeh 2005: 217). Mazen feels that living as an insider, he has balanced his life in his homeland enduring pain and suffering under IO. Mazen's beloved Violet was born and raised in Palestine who wishes to leave the country. She had already gone to Kuwait and worked with Nahleh. After her return, she feels unhappy staying inside the homeland. Now she dreams of immigrating to America. She imagines that her life in America would be extremely prosperous and peaceful in comparison with the life in her own country. From her perspective,

Westerners have more freedom and liberty to enjoy their life. On the other hand, she views her own people, especially men as conservative and patriarchal in their attitude, who try to fulfil their male fantasies through the institution of marriage. Mazen discourages her idea of migration and tries to convince her that those who are in exile, yearn for their return to their homeland. Mazen is committed to his homeland; leaving one's country is not easy and he argues that it is an offense and amounts to deserting one's duty.

However, Mazen is forced to change his perspective in the course of time. His uncle's wife Futna, who delivers a baby, struggles between life and death at the checkpoint. She bleeds heavily and is in need of immediate medical care. At this critical situation, the Israeli soldiers at Kiryat Rahil check point refuse to allow the ambulance which carries Futna. Mazen becomes helpless because his efforts to convince the Israeli soldier go in vain. After a prolonged wait, Futna dies at the checkpoint. This is a moment of remorse for Mazen as he feels guilty, pessimistic and regrets that he did not achieve anything staying inside the homeland. He says "[s]ometimes I feel as if I were suffocating and I wish I could get out of my skin and run away to Frankfurt or Berlin like Kamal, who ran off to save his skin. But I stayed inside my skin and my own skin is too tight for me" (Khalifeh 2005: 242). Khalifeh's characters express their anxieties and existential dilemmas regarding their decision to be in the homeland or to exile. They are perplexed by their own decisions. Khalifeh's characters encounter a series of oppositions, antinomies and contradictions regarding their decision to exile.

The dichotomous thoughts are expressed by Usama and Adil in the novel *Wild Thorns*. Usama, as an outsider, strongly opposes Adil and his friend working for an Israeli factory. Usama considers Adil's act as a compromise with life under IO. Usama feels it is incredible that Adil could work in an Israeli factory. He exclaims, "I don't believe it. I'll never believe it. I just don't believe you've forgotten your own country and occupation!" (Khalifeh 1985: 98). Adil, being an insider, understands the social and economic pressure imposed under the IO. Adil replies that he has not forgotten his country because he did not exile like Usama abandoning the duties and responsibilities of his country. Adil says that the Palestinians who are in exile in oil rich countries should help them build industries in the West Bank and Gaza. Then they would stop

working in Israeli factories. Adil says ironically, that nobody is ready to take the risk of investing and creating employment opportunities for insiders. Adil says, “. . . [t]he Palestinians in Kuwait, Dhahran and the Gulf? Let them help build industries in the West Bank and Gaza and we’d stop working “inside” [Israel] straight away. But they won’t do that” (ibid). Adil explains to Usama the difficulties in staying in the vulnerable regions of Occupied Territories where people are struggling to stay alive amidst chaotic circumstances.

The clash of ideas between an insider and an outsider has been presented in the novel *The End of Spring* too. Umm Suad arranges a get together at home for the release of her husband from Israeli prison. She cooks delicious food to treat her husband as well as both their friends. In the novel her husband is addressed as prison graduate. On this special occasion Umm Suad’s son Saeed comes from Amman to meet his father. Saeed is an unsuccessful lawyer in an exiled place though he graduated from a reputed law school. He expresses disappointment and frustration for his failure to earn. He takes money from his mother saying that Amman is expensive. He is dejected with his life, so whenever he gets an opportunity he comments on the Palestinians who are living inside the Occupied Territory. He carries “a know-it-all” attitude. He makes quick judgement on the people who live in the West Bank without realising the challenges faced by them. He says to the insiders, “[y]ou should do this and you should fix that” (Khalifeh 2008a: 250). The journalist Fadel al-Qassam is one of the guests who was fed up of listening to the comments made by Saeed. Saeed says “[t]he precious homeland is not for sale. But our sell-out leaders are sitting around measuring and cutting it up into pieces equal to their sizes – halves and quarters and fifths. In two or three years there won’t be anything left to sell!” (ibid: 251). The journalist agrees to the comment and he says “[t]he truth is there isn’t anything left. They’ve already taken it all. If only we had learned how to do things right and use the right tactics, it would have been possible to take something from them” (ibid). Umm Suad tries hard to lighten the moment to avoid serious discussion on politics. Yet, Saeed is bent upon bringing in the same topic. Further, Saeed blames the insiders that they are not carrying violent operations against Israeli settlers. Suad, Umm Suad’s daughter, listening to her brother’s argument says to the journalist that her brother has not read his articles,

because the newspaper *Al-Quds* is not available in Amman. This shows that Saeed is not aware of the political realities of the Occupied Territories. Though receives warnings constantly from his mother, Saeed is not ready to stop his arguments. He says,

On television we used to see you carrying weapons and carrying out military operations day after day. But now I see that you don't really care. You're sitting here eating and complementing each other and laughing together. And some of you are saying 'Let's settle for half', and others, 'Let's settle for a quarter', and we outsiders don't know who to believe. Do we believe what we see on television or the reality we see on the ground? (ibid: 252).

After listening to her son for a long time, Umm Suad breaks the silence and explains the bitter truth about those who are living inside the Occupied Territories, struggling for their survival.

Listen, Saeed. You come here from Amman all worked up, not liking anything. Look here. You listen. This man (and she pointed to Abu Majid), this man had his house demolished and his children torn away from him. And this boy (and she pointed at Ahmad), this boy lost his mind when they attacked, and since then he's been wandering about totally lost. And this man (and she pointed at her exhausted, sick husband) wasted his years and health and his youth and his nerves, and when he came out of jail he was half a human being. And this girl (and she pointed to Suad) saw death with her own eyes and did not even say 'ouch' (ibid: 256).

Outsiders express foresighted views without having experienced the hell living inside the Israeli Settler Colonial Territory. They lack knowledge of the naked reality and day-to-day struggles encountered by insiders. Khalifeh's characters like Usama, Saeed and Kamal who are outsiders fail to understand the struggles of the insiders. They highlight the point that the natives who are living inside the territories are living a compromised life. For outsiders it is an easy task to comment on the authority and about multiple resistance strategies carried out by the native residents. Khalifeh is making an important gesture of the policy of divide and rule nurtured and practised by the settlers. These instances indicate the way how Israeli settlers break the unity among the Palestinian community by dividing their identity as insiders and outsiders. Both outsiders and insiders have reached the status where they are unable to understand other's sorrows and fail to appreciate each other's struggles.



#### 4.8 THE DESIRE TO RETURN

The personal dilemmas at the individual level and collective predicaments at the community level lead the discussion into the complexity of the issue. The situation of Palestine considering its historical background makes the novelist to overlap the issue of national homeland with the personal search for a home as these issues are intertwined. The fight for a right to return to the homeland is not a mere demand for having a home but it is the fight for the historical injustices inflicted on them as the Palestinians were deprived of their nationhood with the formation of Israel (Hammer 2005: 23).

Exiles are voluntarily absent from their homeland, so they have a desire to return to their native land. Home and homeland have an integral connection between a land and its people. Khalifeh in her novels writes extensively about the Palestinian experience of exile and return that is multifaceted and individualistic. Her novels have expressed aspects of the Palestinians' return in diverse ways. Return, *al-'awda* is one of the central concepts associated with Palestinian ideology and life. The Palestinian right to return is the amalgamation of three major concerns such as international law, Palestinian demand and Israeli rejection. Palestinians do not have the freedom to return to their homeland whenever they want and they are restricted from travelling to Palestine according to the laws of Israel. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) stipulates that:

1. Everyone has a right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country (Quoted in Said 1979b: 47).

Israel has imposed severe restrictions on the free movement of Palestinians. Due to IO, Palestinians are not only forced to exile from their homeland, but have also been denied their right to return home. "More than 600,000 Palestinian refugees were refused the right of return to their homeland by Israel . . . 1.4 million of whom live in fifty-eight recognized refugee camps in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem" (Merriman 2012). Although the

United Nations has repeatedly demanded that they be allowed to return, the Israeli government has refused to budge and there is a prohibition that continues to this day. Hammid Shahidian captures the inevitable relationship between exile and return in the following words:

A mind torn asunder, pieces missing, pieces extra, memories convoluted. At times, the four walls of one's host land house becomes home, at others, not even one's legal entitlement to citizenry suffices. At times, a short poem, a collected volume of essays, and an old newspaper from home in the mother tongue become home; at other not even the solid ground of the host land under your feet suffices. Exile means the painful realization that where you live is and is not home, and that you do not live where home is (Shahidian 2000: 76).

Khalifeh's characters grapple with exile, many of them express their wish to return to their respective countries of origin. Many have not succeeded in fulfilling their wish of homecoming in their new destinations. Raja Shehadeh gives a different meaning to exile altogether. "When you are exiled from your land . . . you begin, like a pornographer, to think about it in symbols. . . . You articulate your love for your land, in its absence, and in the process you transform it into something else" (Shehadeh 1992: 86). Homeland through its symbols gets idealised and returning back, the exiles experience a different reality. In the novel *Wild Thorns*, Usama al-Karmi is a Palestinian expatriate who has returned from Kuwait for the auspicious 'family reunification program'. Usama says that he is waiting for the permission to attend the family reunion programme and to see his mother who had lost her husband. He is shocked to see the extreme changes that have happened to his beloved Palestine. He is disheartened and dejected by seeing the changes in the attitude of the people under IO. He says to his mother, "I was crying for our people, Mother, for our Country" (Khalifeh 1985: 30). He struggles to understand the harsh realities faced by Palestinians and their living conditions. Khalifeh's novel overemphasises that return is not an alternative for exile. It is a failure to heal the wounds of exile that needs to be addressed. Mahmoud Darwish pertinently expresses that return is not an easy option for exiles. On their return, they carry their baggage of awful exilic memories. They are perplexed by their decision of returning from exile to their homeland. The experience of return, most of the times, is vague and unanswerable

It is easy to say: My homeland is where I was born.  
But you have returned to the place of your birth and  
Found nothing. What does this mean? It is easy to  
Say: My homeland is the land where I shall die. But  
You can die anywhere. Possibly you will die on the  
Border between two countries (Quoted in McClennen 2002: 163).

In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Ibrahim arrives at Jerusalem, his homeland in search of his past life and his beloved Mariam. In this process, he makes an attempt to question himself on the purpose of his return from exile, which fetches nothing but the haunted and unforgettable memories of the past. He says “[s]o what if I had returned, isn’t it the right of every exile to return to his homeland after an absence? Isn’t it normal and natural for an absentee to return from exile and search for his people and his identity? Isn’t it logical and natural for a lost person to look for his past love, his memories, and his future?” (Khalifeh 2008b: 223).

Khalifeh’s novels represent different facets and interfaces of Palestinian experience of both exile and return in a highly sophisticated way. In the novel *The Inheritance*, Kamal returns with an intention to forget his horrifying exilic memories and to contribute something valuable to his motherland. He feels returning home is an overwhelming sense of belonging to the homeland and to their people. He wants to forget the nasty memories of exile. “He wanted to forget his life in exile; he wanted to do the right thing” (Khalifeh 2005: 155). He is an ambitious person, with a lot of enthusiasm to start a new project of a Sewage Company in his homeland for the benefit of the natives. His sister Nahleh’s dangerous affair with Abu Salem, leads to Nahleh’s kidnapping. This act ultimately leads Kamal to drop out of the project which leads to its eventual failure. He is disappointed and returns to Germany.

Edward Said claims “[m]uch of the exile’s life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world of rule” (Said 2001: 181). The returnees face the major challenge of fitting into the same space. They assume that they are returning to their earlier homeland as it was when they left. In the meanwhile, they create an imaginary utopian space to which the exile yearns to return. The exiles struggle to adapt to the existing circumstances of their country on return. They feel that the people and

the country have changed drastically in their absence; they struggle to adjust to the existing circumstances. Having lived in Germany for several decades, Kamal has been influenced by the Western culture and finds it difficult to adjust in Palestine. He is unable to understand what has changed people's attitudes and wonders whether amidst such extreme changes it is advisable to return home.

Zayna's father returns to homeland when his unwed daughter becomes a mother. He feels ashamed of the act that was committed by her daughter in her adolescent age. He attempts to murder her as a punishment for what she did. Zayna's grandmother saves her from Hamdan. At this juncture he decides to leave his exiled country. He returns to homeland spending his hard-earned money. He has a lot of reputation among his countrymen. The young Futna, marries, the old Hamdan with the intention of claiming the inheritance.

Zayna after becoming the chair in the department of Anthropology, returns to Palestine when she receives a letter from her uncle. She comes to Palestine in search of her father, home, and identity. Upon her return to homeland, a country to which she had never been, Zayna says "I went to the West Bank looking for him, looking for them, searching for my face in the land of exile. I wanted to know how it would look" (Khalifeh 2005: 3). Her voyage to Palestine is for a limited duration to see her paralysed father who is on his death bed. In the hospital she comes to know that her father has married Futna who is younger than herself. Futna shows several photos they have clicked during the time of engagement. Zayna notices the changes in those photographs. "He had gold-rimmed eyeglasses and straightened teeth and did not look at all a grocer, but like an important businessman, an immigrant who had returned to his country" (ibid: 42). She was amazed to see the changes in her father's appearance: ". . . saw my father wearing a hat, sunglasses, a T-shirt, white pants, and tennis shoes. He really and truly looked like a returning immigrant – in other words, he looked like me and I looked like him!" (ibid: 42-43).

Zayna's uncle wonders how his brother had wandered and worked in overseas for long durations. But ultimately, he returned to die in his homeland. "Life is so strange! My brother came and went and wandered left and right, but returned to die in his

homeland!” (ibid: 35). Zayna, as an outsider, observes Palestinian society, their tradition and cultural life under IO. After spending some time in Palestine, she returns to America.

In the same novel, Nahleh returns to her motherland after the outbreak of the Gulf war in Kuwait which resulted in the abandonment of Palestinians who had worked in Kuwait. The impacts of the Gulf war on Palestinian migrants are highlighted by Said in his text *After the Last Sky*. Said says, “. . . the work of sons or grandson or husbands in the Gulf is the most important source of income. . . . When thousands of Palestinians were thrown out of Kuwait after the Gulf war the economic situation of many families in the village was affected” (Said 1986: 57).

Nahleh had worked for many years in Kuwait to support her family. When she returns to her homeland Wadi al Rihan, no one seems to recognise or appreciate her contribution. She experiences social marginalisation. In her home, she struggles to synchronise her dynamic shift from a working woman to a home maker which appears to be quite a different space. Nahleh is conscious of her ill-treatment and marginalisation by her family after her return from exile.

As for me, I spend the whole day doing nothing, I’m not used to being at home, all my life I’ve worked and I’ve been active. Now I find myself doing nothing but housework, sweeping and cleaning, washing and making pickles! I’m about to explode, this kind of life is killing me. Am I going to stay home after having spent a lifetime working? (Khalifeh 2005: 92).

Nahleh suffers from night time hallucination. Slowly, her nostalgia grows more intense and acute. Nahleh steps into exile by breaking the boundaries of conventional patriarchy yet, returns to be caught in the web of social mores. She says regretfully, “[s]ometimes I wish Kuwait had remained what it was and I hadn’t returned here. I wish what has happened hadn’t happened” (ibid: 160).

Nahleh makes remarkable witty comments on the returnees. They seem to have a certain psyche shared by all of them. They exhibit overwhelmed sentiments when they return to their homeland which are usually romanticised and exaggerated. She remarks that the returnees exhibit artificial attachment to the land. They perform formal rituals of bending down and touching the earth with their forehead in front of cameras and

journalists. They emotionally say that the homeland is like the lap of a mother without which they are nothing. Meanwhile, the family members treat the returnees like *Sultans* and feed them with rich traditional Palestinian food. The invited returnees go to the city to analyse the market condition with the intention of purchasing land. Notably, this treatment is also patriarchal where female returnees are not reckoned in such a way.

Darwish writes about the complexity of returning home after exile. He says

home is a place where you have a memory; without memories you have no real relationship to a place. Also, it is impossible to return. Nobody crosses the same river twice . . . There is no return, because history goes on. Return is just a visit to a place of memory or to the memory of the place (Darwish 2002: 77).

This perplexity can be found in Khalifeh's characters Nahleh, Kamal and Ibrahim who are not happy with their return to home and the homeland. They are frequently haunted by the previous awful memories. Ibrahim is hopeful about his return and to have a happy family reunion. Both Mariam and her son are unwilling to accept Ibrahim who had travelled around the globe. Nahleh had enjoyed the freedom and liberty working in exile. Kamal tries to adjust or cope with staying inside his motherland but fails. These three characters returned to the home country and yet they do not feel at home. Thus, Khalifeh projects the dilemma and intricacies of the exile and return of Palestinians effectively in her novels.

#### **4.9 TIME AND EXILE**

Exile has an intricate and hostile relationship with time. The exiles struggle against the temporalities of past, present and future. Many scholars have analysed that the exiles' time is only the past and they are unable to engage with the present (Guillen, 1976; Tabori 1972; Ilie, 1980). As Paul Ilie says "time functions as a stifling force" (Ilie 1980: 62). Exiles focus more on the past which dwells in memories of nostalgic melancholy. On the other hand, the exiled person is eventually absent from the present time of his or her country. They live in the present of the migrated country. "The time of the exile is different. Or rather, the exile lives in two different times simultaneously, in the present and in the past" (McClennen 2004: 32). For exiles, time moves in an expeditious way without their being aware of it as they do not have control over its movement. The

journey of exile never ends at a certain point; it is an endless journey. Time has become a problem for Khalifeh's characters who return from exile. Palestinians try to forget those annoying experiences of exile after their return to their homeland. Unfortunately, they suffer from nostalgia and are unable to engage with the present even after return. Guillen says, "[i]n our time the most terrible of banishments will often be the exile from the present – or even worse, from the future" (Quoted in McClennen 2004: 59).

Nostalgia is thus one of the predominant issues of exile. The word nostalgia is derived from the Greek word *nostos*, which means to return home, and the word *algia*, which means longing (Boym 2001: xiiii). Stephen Legg defines nostalgia as "1. Sentimental yearning for a period of the past. 2. Regretful or wistful memory of an earlier time. 3. Severe homesickness" (Legg 2004: 100). Exiles struggle hard with a fixation on the past that prevents them from engaging not just with the present but also with the future many times. For a returnee the state of being home is a question of discontinuity between past and present. They are neither able to forget the awful memories of exile nor do they engage in the present of the homeland, thereby making the future much more difficult to tackle. For an individual both exile and return are the most difficult processes they undergo as never-ending travellers into the future without any charted course. For Palestinians it is difficult to make a choice between being at home and being in exile.

Liyana Badr writes, "[e]xile. Nothing is as painful as an exile; it stretches ahead into the future, and back into the past, and bursts through on every side at the place we've dammed up with the dry straw of memories" (Badr 1989: 74). In the novel *The Inheritance*, Nahleh leaves her home at the age of nineteen and returns at the age of fifty. For Nahleh, time moves very quickly without her being conscious of it. As an exile, she has hostile relationship with the fast moving time as she was unable to have any control on it and consequently, on her own life. She is not aware of the valuable time that she has spent working in the exiled country. There is a long gap between the exiled years and her return that brings a drastic change in her life. Her feelings of loneliness and her efforts to combat the signs of ageing make her life miserable. She feels that her youth is stolen from her by the years she spent in exile. She experiences timelessness which makes her lonely, loveless, and miserable. Zayna notes that Nahleh

“had once been beautiful, fresh, young, and full of love and feelings, then she had been hit with the realization that she was fifty, homeless, aimless, and unsatisfied” (Khalifeh 2005: 72). Kamal too, remembers his exilic past and he is unable to engage himself with the present in any manner. His past is understood in the light of the present and vice versa. The present is uncertain and he struggles hard to cope with the existing situation of his country.

In the novel *The Image, the Icon, and the Covenant*, Ibrahim regrets his decision of voluntary exile. He remembers his beloved and scribbles about his life which was spent without her. After twenty years of exile he recalls his past and his beloved Mariam. “It was my memory, my first love, and a part of history. Today I am a man without a present, without Mariam, and without history” (Khalifeh 2008b: 1). Ibrahim’s return turns no homecoming, and nostalgia literally causes him suffering. He is aware that his past life does not fetch happiness, so he tries to forget his exilic past. But he is optimistic about his future and dreams to be with them in future. He says, “. . . I began looking for the past and here I am looking for the future. Mariam was the thread of the past, and her son will be that of the future” (ibid: 157). He is eager for the reunion with his family. Ibrahim’s character is an illustration of an exile who struggles between different time zones – that of the past, present and future. Exiles have often been obsessed with recording their past life spent in exile. Ibrahim says, “I was left without a companion, without a family, and without love. My heart was sad and time was passing, I could not walk the paths of love though love was the object, the meaning of life, and all that counted in the world” (ibid: 171). Said says, “Palestinian life is scattered, discontinuous, marked by the artificial and imposed arrangements of interrupted or confined space, by the dislocations and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time” (Said 1986: 20).

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

As a writer, Sahar Khalifeh not only represents Palestinian suffering and displacement but also the Palestinian lives under momentous consequences of the IO. Every case of exile is unique. The Palestinians’ suffering under IO and exile is very glaring in Khalifeh’s texts. The IO has taken a different shape altogether in the present time. As a



result, the different shades of the experiences of exile continue to bother Palestinians. Her novel promotes the need to look at Occupation and exile from the perspective of both men and women. Many academics, filmmakers, artists, and litterateurs spoke on the theme of exile and are continuing to do so. However Khalifeh stands out as the first woman writer to raise the issue of Occupation and exile as a lived experience for a woman. Khalifeh's depiction of female and male characters reflects different contexts that provoked them to be in exile and the challenges they faced. They recall their sorrowful exilic days spontaneously from the captivation of memory. Mariam's mother, Mariam and Nahleh – all suffer from loneliness in their entire life, longing to attain the unattainable. Both Mariam and her mother suffer throughout their life because of the absence of their male counterparts. For Nahleh, both exile and return leave a deep psychological scar. Ibrahim and Kamal express a strong sense of helplessness, self-pity, cultural isolation and detachment from homeland. Mazen catches the dilemma as to where to be an exile – at home or abroad. Thus, Khalifeh represents the cruel realities of Palestinian exile which affect the characters differently: the ones who suffer exile within their homeland, the ones who suffer exile and yearn to return to homeland, the ones who return and fail to reconcile with their homeland, attempting to reconnect with time, the ones who try to make up for the absence of the males at home and the ones who long to fulfil their desires that have been deferred.

## Chapter Five

### Unveiling Patriarchy: Palestinian Women in the Narratives of Sahar Khalifeh

“It was Mother who stood against my rebellion at that time. . . . She also felt guilty for spawning a whole brood of creatures belonging to a weak and worthless sex. . . . I sensed her thoughts and they tortured me. Somehow she bore a grudge against me for seeing through her pretenses. I, too, held a grudge against her because she did not accept me for who I was” (Khalifeh 2002).

#### 5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The political predicaments of Palestinians under IO, such as Palestinian resistance movement to counter the Occupation and life in exile have been discussed in the previous chapters in detail. This chapter discusses Sahar Khalifeh’s portrayal of the oppression or subjugation of Arab women in a predominantly male-dominated society. Apart from her engagement with the issue of IO, Sahar Khalifeh focuses on issues of gender discrimination in various arenas of the society. The present chapter deploys both the Western and Arab feminist criticism to study the texts of Khalifeh. It particularly examines the issues like marriage, family, motherhood, sexuality and violence as presented in the novels of Khalifeh. It invariably looks at how Khalifeh challenges the androcentric order which happens to be the root cause of the patriarchal domination. Her novels, among other things, depict poverty and illiteracy of the Palestinians, sexual oppression by men, and life of women under the IO as well as under patriarchal order of the society.

As a feminist writer, Khalifeh portrays the traditions and customs of Arab society which act as weapons of oppression against women. She emphasises that rather than the religion, it is the customs and traditional practices imposed on them that are more oppressive. Khalifeh believes that Palestinian women suffer due to the prevailing patriarchal system which sustains these oppressive customs and traditions. Therefore,

this chapter is devoted to examine the patriarchal norms of male dominance in both public and private spheres and also to highlight the ways Palestinian women resist these sexist ideologies prevailing in their society. Thus, the study of her narratives in this chapter is two-pronged: first, to look into how male domination works, and second, to scrutinise how the women in her novels find ways to respond to the multi-level patriarchal domination. On the whole, the chapter takes up the study by the issues highlighted in Khalifeh's novels: discrimination against girl child at home, domestic burden on women and young girls, lack of educational opportunities for girls, lack of freedom, gender segregation, domestic violence, lack of inheritance or property rights for women, male control over women's bodies and sexuality, and restrictions on women's physical mobility and dress.

## **5.2 THE COURSE OF FEMINISM**

Feminism attempts to fight against gender inequality and power relations decided on the basis of sexuality. The primary aim of feminism is to gain equal rights across genders. Historically the course of development of feminism is seen in three waves. First wave feminism thrived in United Kingdom followed by United States of America. Women's suffrage, married women's property rights and custody of infants' act are the results of the activism of the feminists. Second wave of feminism has focused on the eradication of social and cultural inequalities. The period from 1960s to 1990s is regarded as second wave feminism. The second wave feminism emphasised on the aspects of their personal lives as politicised and reflecting sexist power structures this trend continued in third wave feminism also. The beginning of third wave feminism is from 1990s and it is continuing today. It began to make up for the failures of second wave and to promote the activities initiated in second wave period. It took to post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality which understands gender as outside the politics of binary maleness and femaleness (Nayar 2010: 82-89).

### **5.2.1 Radical Feminism**

Radical feminists, who belonged to the second wave, highlighted the experiences of single woman in society and considered that sexism played an important role over their oppression. The most popular slogan that radical feminists raised was "the personal is

political”. They effectively addressed issues like marriage, child care, sexuality, health and work – matters considered to be personal, but of actually political concern (Rosemarie 1989: 2). The radical feminists’ theory on patriarchy has been associated with the realms of reproduction, sexuality, and violence. Sexual exploitation of women’s body, sexual abuse, wife beating, marital rape and domestic violence are the patriarchal tactics that effectively kept women as subordinates inside the home as well as in the public sphere. The radical feminist theories of patriarchy argue that patriarchy explicitly connotes dominance over women by men. It analyses the ways how male domination is perpetuated by prevalent culture, religion, science, social norms and psychic influence or manipulation. The male-dominated societies position women as objects and not as subjects. Different radical feminists have defined patriarchy in varying ways. Hartmann defines patriarchy as “a set of social relations between men, which have a material base and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (Hartmann 1981: 14-15). Materialist feminists or socialist feminists argued that economic exploitation is the main reason for male dominance.

### **5.3 PATRIARCHY AS AN IDEOLOGY**

The term ‘patriarchy’ literally means the rule of the father who is the head of the household and the ‘patriarch’ is one who controls the entire family by exercising his power. He controls his wife, children, and other family members. In general, the term patriarchy points “to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterise a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways” (Bhasin 2006: 3). The radical second-wave feminists argued that patriarchy is the main reason for women’s oppression. Walby defines “patriarchy as a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (Walby 1990: 20). Furthermore, it upholds the ideology based on the biological determinism – “the notion that every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one” (ibid). Walby divides patriarchy into two major domains such as public and private. Private patriarchy prevails at household level, which results in women’s oppression within the four walls of the house. On the other hand, public patriarchy operates at the work place. So the feminists use the term

‘patriarchy’ to investigate the power relationship between men and women and to find out the root cause of women’s exploitation both in private and public realms (ibid).

Patriarchy as a system is the primary hindrance to women’s advancement and development. Men control socio-economic and political institutions by exercising power over women. So it is inevitable to understand how patriarchy as a system works in the process of domination and subordination of women which hampers the systematic development and empowerment of women. Patriarchal society upholds the view that men enjoy absolute priority by assigning different roles to men and women. It gives more privilege to men in all walks of life. Male domination is not constrained to public spheres and it is evident in the private spheres as well. “It implies that men hold power in all the important institutions of society and that women are deprived of access to such power” (Lerner 1989: 239).

Kate Millet in her ground breaking work *Sexual Politics*, critiques how patriarchy works as powerful mode of organizing society, culture and individuals. The patriarchal ideology has been built by exaggerating biological differences between men and women. On the basis of biological differences, different set of roles have been assigned to both men and women. Men have to be always dominant with so called masculine roles whereas women have to play the role of subordination. Men enjoy these privileges “through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men” (Millett 1977: 35). Subordination means, “[s]omething else is less important than the other thing” (Cobuild 2010: 1559). Subordination represents the situation where one is forced to stay under the control of another. Women accept this subordination because of their lack of education, economic dependency, societal norms, upbringing, religious, traditions and customs.

Eisenstein defines patriarchy as a “sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and economic privilege” (Eisenstein 1979: 17). So women are deprived of equal legal rights and freedom, opportunities on equal footing with men. Patriarchy operates in the society through different social structures. The ideologies of patriarchal system have been perpetuated by societal and cultural norms, religious teachings and

representations through media. Patriarchal norms control the institutions of marriage, family and social communities.

#### **5.4 NEOPATRIARCHY**

Hisham Sharabi exhaustively examines the factors that led to the rise of a new form of social order in Arab societies in his book *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. It is a modernized form of patriarchy. Etymologically neopatriarchy is a word to connote a new or contemporary patriarchy where dominance of men prevails in social and cultural systems or within the nuclear family. Sharabi precisely identifies the economic, political, social and cultural changes that led the Arab society not to modernity but to neopatriarchy. It could be considered as a distorted form of modernity resulting from primordial loyalties, internal economic and political structures on one hand and external (western) dependency on the other. He says that this concept refers equally to macro structures like society, the state and the economy, as well as to micro structures like family or the individual personality (Sharabi 1988: 207).

Deniz Kandiyoti, a Turkish author and researcher, analyses the complexities present in patriarchy which led to bargaining in the system of patriarchy, in her article “Bargaining with Patriarchy”. In classic patriarchy women are subservient and are subjected to male-dominance. It gives authority to men in the household. When the bride enters her husband’s household totally dispossessed, she is subservient to her mother-in-law besides her husband and father-in-law and she can establish her place only by producing a male offspring. This pattern is found in North Africa, Muslim Middle East, India and China (Kandiyoti 1988: 274).

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Zakiyeh is shown as a conservative mother who consciously discriminates among male and female children. Zakiyeh’s character is a good example for how a woman works for the inculcation of patriarchy in the family. She tries to sustain and preserve the patriarchal values in her socialising activities also. She trains her daughter Wedad to be submissive, fragile and to be a good home maker. However, she prefers her son to her daughter and thus Wedad is neglected from her childhood. She prioritises her sons because she believes that her sons would support her during old age. She feels privileged becoming the mother of male children. She

listens to her elder son Waheed and allows him to take an independent decision. Whereas, Wedad is prevented from becoming an independent woman and is forced to accept the norms of the patriarchal system. Though Zakiyeh knows that her son-in-law is a drunkard and a womaniser, she advises her daughter to accept her husband's maltreatment silently and live with him despite the adverse circumstances she has to face.

In the same novel, Zakiyeh, after the death of her husband being an elderly woman in the family, facilitates this process and in the absence of a male patriarch, acts like one. The entire process results in the marginalisation of Wedad at the hands of her mother, Zakiyeh. The latter controls all the activities of her daughter in order to preserve or to sustain the patriarchal values in the family. She controls her physical appearance and mind and restricts her free mobility. She never allows her to take an independent decision. She discourages her own daughter from accessing education by imposing restrictions on her. She moulds her daughter in such a way that she should accept the traditional role of a woman blindly. She suppresses her physical and mental growth at an early stage of her life. Wedad overtly depends on her mother emotionally, physically, psychologically and suffers from extreme domination. She internalises the patriarchal values consciously within the family system and takes control of the situation.

In an interview with Suha Sabbagh, Sahar Khalifeh discusses in detail the role of women in a patriarchal society and the means by which to achieve equal status for women within and outside it. She narrates how her mother became passive and lost purpose of her life after the death of her husband. Her mother felt that she lost her intelligence, beauty and power after her husband's death. She says that it is not the case of her mother but all the women including her sisters and herself who become the victims of the traditional society. This indicates how the women identified themselves with their husbands and depended on them, though the women take the major responsibilities of the family. Khalifeh says that in her mother's tragedy she sees the tragedy of all women, regardless of traditions, laws and cultures. A woman is born and meant to suffer – a mentality that caused her to become a feminist, she explains.

Khalifeh speaks about her family: her father was a nice person and her parents had a happy married life, though her father remarried when her brother was paralyzed in a car accident. Her father, she says, succumbed to the pressure of society to continue the name of the family through a male heir. There is no concern for the feelings of a woman and her mother suffered immense agony due to this second marriage. The suffering of her mother naturally impacted on the daughters. Society mockingly called her “mother of daughters”. Though her sisters accepted the status quo, Khalifeh compellingly felt a sense of strong resentment (Sabbagh 1998: 137-138).

### **5.5 MARRIAGE AS PATRIARCHAL INSTITUTION**

The norms of marriage are oppressive to female counterparts as well as to those who do not participate in the institution of marriage. The pressure on women to get married is more compared to that on men. Women are not treated well if they remain unmarried beyond the age of marriage. Marriage enforces moral standing. The Arab traditions and customs have given enormous power to a husband who acts as the controller of a woman’s destiny. Through the institution of marriage an Arab woman can have access to sex. Premarital, extramarital relations are severely forbidden for girls in Arab societies. Khalifeh tackles the subject of marriage in all her novels deliberately and critiques the male chauvinism evident in Arab society. Khalifeh comments on the imposition of the well-defined sexual roles on both men and women. This enables men to view women as inferior ones. Many of Khalifeh’s female characters try to break away from different forms of oppression and struggle to assert their individuality. Khalifeh consciously attacks the prevalent gender discrimination and treatment of women as second class citizen.

Father exerts power on a young daughter and that power would be transferred from father to husband after marriage. Patriarchy imposes not only prescribed rules on women but expects women to obey the regulations prevalent in the society. In Arab societies the decision-making in marriage for a girl is still largely an affair of a family as a whole and predominately that of a father. The authority of the father over his daughter is absolute both socially and legally. In the absence of the father the uncle or the elder son takes the authority. The marriage is planned not on the personal interests



of spouses but on the basis of family contract. Feminists have been criticizing the institution of marriage which is considered as the fundamental site of women's oppression. The marriage in a patriarchal system tends to reinforce division of labour on the basis of gender. Women are the domestic labour force inside the home; on the other hand, men work outside the sphere of home. Naturally, they earn the label of the breadwinners of the family and in turn, gain more power. On the other hand, women earn less because of various other responsibilities like child bearing and rearing; they are less independent than men.

The institution of marriage prescribes different norms for men and women. Patriarchal and heterosexual marriage expects husband and wife to follow their gender roles which is an inseparable part of this institution. It works in a hierarchy. Even though law treats wives equal to their husbands in all the walks of life, marriage remains an institution rooted in the subordination of women. It is based on the idea of masculine and feminine principles. Masculinity or maleness carries the traits of a master, of strength, determination, taking initiatives and boldness. On the other hand, feminine qualities are the absolutely opposite ones such as passivity, obedience, sacrifice and subservience.

Khalifeh condemns the hypocrisy of the institution of traditional marriage that oppresses women in Arab society. Majority of the times women participate in this institution because of societal and parental pressures. She has no freedom in the selection of a husband or to opt out of marriage. In the novel *The Image, The Icon, and The Covenant*, Ibrahim's sister Sarah, who is thirty-five years old is forced to marry a man with three children. Her father Ismail plans her marriage without asking for her consent. Sarah's father meets her fiance in one of his trips and through conversations with him, he finds out that he is a widower with three children. He describes his daughter: "a good girl, a little old, she is thirty-five years old, but mature. She would be ideal to raise three children and take care of you. She has everything and comes from a good family, a respectable family. She is an accomplished housewife; she sews and cooks very well" (Khalifeh 2008b: 23). Ismail assures him that his daughter will be an obedient wife. She is older and mature enough to take the responsibility of three children leading a normal domestic life. Yet the person expresses his anxiety about marrying his daughter because he describes his children as "devils". Ismail replies that,

“she is a devil herself” (ibid). He builds the image of Sarah as quintessentially a ‘good’ woman; at the very next moment he describes her as a “devil”. Eventually, he confirms the engagement and the marriage through the exchange of the photos. The wedding rituals are performed over the phone; bridegroom’s friend gives the proxy in the absence of the groom. Sarah rejects the marriage proposal of marrying a man with three children. Her father tells her, “[y]ou’re getting older, do you have an alternative?” (ibid: 24). Further her father tries to convince her by exaggerating his economic position as well as his family background. “A photo in exchange for another photo!” (ibid: 25). Sara’s brother Ibrahim questions her acceptance of getting married to a man whom she has not seen. He questions her, “[d]o you want to live your life based on a photo? She answers sarcastically, “[w]ho among us is living his life?” (ibid). She comes to the conclusion that there is no chance left to lead a life she wants. She has to acquiesce to the decision of her father. Ismail convinces Sarah to yield in such a way that she felt that she does not have any better alternative than marrying the person of her father’s choice.

Whereas Sarah becomes the victim of forced arranged marriage, her brother Ibrahim escapes from the pressures of his uncle who wants him to marry one of his daughters. After refusing to marry his uncle’s daughter, he moves to the outskirts of Jerusalem hunting for a new job. Ibrahim enjoys the freedom to take his own decision and refuses to be trapped in an arranged marriage, in complete contradiction to his sister’s position.

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Zakiyeh expresses her happiness when she receives a mutual marriage proposal for her children from her brother Rasheed. Rasheed is rich and has attained success in business. She convinces her daughter Wedad to marry her uncle’s son Rashad. At the same time influences her elder son Waheed to marry his cousin Rasha who has a speech defect. Zakiyeh discusses with her son Waheed before giving approval to her brother. On the other hand, Zakiyeh never considers that her daughter’s consent for the marriage is equally essential. She exaggerates the amount of wealth possessed and the economic prosperity attained by her brother to Wedad. She tells Wedad “. . . [y]ou will soon live like a queen and drown in wealth” (Khalifeh 2012: 22). Rasheed arranges a picnic for the family before the marriage. He invites his friend Isaac Shalom and his daughters for this picnic. Wedad observes the behaviour of

Rashad and learns that he is a womaniser. He commits excesses while interacting with Sarah, one of the daughters of Shalom, touching her body. After returning from the trip, Wedad expresses her wish to break the marriage contract. Her mother threatens her telling, “. . . no girl in the family broke her katb al-kitab” (ibid: 54). She also says if Wedad breaks her engagement, it would be considered as divorce. Wedad’s efforts fail to break the engagement because her brother and mother have given approval to finalize the dates of marriage. Wedad becomes passive, stops taking food, and does not show any interest in doing domestic work. She does not show her interest in material things such as precious jewellery or engagement gifts. She is completely lost worrying about her marriage which is forced upon her tyrannically. Her mother neglects her; she becomes physically weak and dejected. Wedad marries at the age of fifteen and greatly suffers in a loveless marriage. Wedad lives alone at the house completely isolated from the outside world without any love and care from her husband. She wants to run away from her marital life. She considers her married life is “. . . like a prison and her husband a jailer” (ibid: 58). She always looks for the alternatives in order to escape from the prison. Every morning she observes the activities going on in the harbour. She gazes at the sea shore, observes the boats, perceives the voices of the fishermen, and desires to go to the sea in order to escape from her sorrowful marital life. She dreams of mingling with fishermen catching fish and selling them, so with that money she can “. . . buy a ticket to go to Beirut, to Cyprus, or even to hell, to escape the prison she lived in” (ibid: 57-58). Even though her husband is away from home most of the times, spending most of his nights in dance clubs and bars, she feels, “. . . as if he were the hunter and she a bird in a cage, both during his presence and in his absence” (ibid: 58). She feels like a destitute and homeless in her husband’s house. She becomes suicidal,

[w]hat if she stood on the balcony and threw herself from the height? What if she went to the shore and threw herself to the bottom of the sea? Who would remember her if she died? Most certainly, not her husband. What about her mother, brother, her family and relatives? None of them would remember her, and if they did it would be for a few days, during the mourning period, then they would forget her and she would become a memory (ibid).

Wedad runs away from the house and meets Lisa in Jerusalem with the hope of getting solution for her unhappy married life. Lisa encourages Wedad to participate in the women’s demonstration with the perspective of changing her mind-set. She observes

the other women surrounded by her who are totally different from her. She becomes aware of the Palestinian issues and notices the women participate in the protest against the British mandate and the Balfour declaration. She forgets all her personal worries and awful memories of her marriage and her pregnancy. She notices people talk about the sacrifices of young men who died for the sake of the country in the national struggle movement. She believes that dying for the national cause is a noble death rather than dying for marriage. She says “[h]ow sweet it was to suffer for the homeland, how beautiful was martyrdom, while to die for a bogus marriage and a despicable husband was meaningless and draining. It transformed a woman into a mummy addicted to grief” (ibid: 64). She gets emancipated after meeting Lisa and the fellow women activists who participated in the demonstration against British mandate. She finds an alternative more meaningful, even worth sacrificing the life for. Wedad rebels against the bad treatment at the hands of her husband and decides to abandon her marital relationship and returns to her mother.

Patriarchy sets the age for marriage for women, not for men. In Arab culture the chances of young girl getting married is much easier than the aged ones. For men, age does not matter; economic status and earning capability are considered important criteria. In the novel *The Inheritance*, Nahleh, a single woman, expresses her desire to marry. She spends her youthful days working and earning for her family as a teacher in Kuwait. She migrates to Kuwait at the age of eighteen, returns home at the age of fifty-five, because of the Gulf War. She becomes the bread winner of the family, economically supporting a large family. She clears the loan of the family, funds for her brothers’ education. She sacrifices her personal life, living as a single woman. She anticipates that her brothers would support her and take care of her in future. But, her brothers become selfish neglecting Nahleh who wishes to marry and to have happy family life. Her father and brothers view that she has crossed the age of marriage. Unfortunately, nobody in the family thinks about her marriage. They feel that at the age of fifty-five it is impossible for her to find a suitable match. The narrator of the novel *Zayna*, describes Nahleh as “. . . a schoolteacher who began her life a radiant woman and ended a spinster. A spinster? A spinster! A flat word that conjures selfish personal worries and a barren woman, one like the fallow land, unappealing and uninspiring, like a land without rain”

(Khalifeh 2005: 47). She wonders how her exilic years slipped one after another without her realizing it. She regrets not being a married woman. She feels vulnerable being alone in her life without marriage and children. She expresses her desire to have conjugal bond. Nahleh says, “I woke up and found myself old, without a husband, without a house, and no one to call me Mama. This is how it ended” (ibid: 52). The impact of exile and negligence of the family members regarding the marriage of Nahleh ultimately leads her to psychological sufferings. She is the indirect victim of IO that forced many young Palestinians to leave their country in search of better livelihood. The economic crisis and lack of job opportunities inside the occupied territories push Nahleh and others to exile. On the other hand, the norms of patriarchal society never allow Nahleh to take an independent decision or making a choice regarding her marriage despite becoming the breadwinner of the family. It discourages such freedom where Nahleh could take initiative and marry anyone whom she liked with or without considering the approval of the family members.

### **5.5.1 Polygamy**

Sourat El Nissa<sup>1</sup>: “[m]arry as many women as you wish, two or three or four. If you fear not to treat them equally, marry only one. Indeed you will not be able to be just between your wives even if you try” (Quoted in El Saadawi 1980: 292). Polygamy has increased the burden of a married woman with children because the sole responsibility of looking after the children fell upon the woman. In a polygamous marriage practically it is impossible for a man to treat all wives on equal footing. It is observed that in polygamy, husbands neglect their older wives, they shower more care, affection, and love towards the new, younger wives. It is difficult for an Arab woman to get access to the rights in a marriage and divorce as the Arab man does (ibid).

In the novel *The Image, The Icon, and The Covenant*, Ismail loses his younger son who joins al-Hussaini’s liberation army and dies at the outskirts of Jerusalem. After the death of a young son Ismail’s wife suffers from strange illnesses that result in the miscarriage of all her pregnancies. Ismail has a small family consisting of a son and a daughter unlike “. . . an Arab man who wanted a good stock and many heirs” (Khalifeh 2008b:

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<sup>1</sup> The fourth chapter of Quran Verse three.

20). Instead of providing moral and emotional support to his wife, he abandons her, by marrying again. She carries the burden of looking after the two children without the support of her husband. She suffers not only from her illness, and unexpected death of her younger son, but also from the abandonment by her husband. Her husband marries a woman who is twenty years younger to him. Even though Ismail has another son Ibrahim, Ismail repeatedly says, "I want a woman who gives birth to men" (ibid).

Ismail's son Ibrahim develops a relation with Mariam. But he decides to escape from the responsibility when Mariam becomes pregnant before the marriage. He decides to exile in order to grow professionally as a political writer, practically abandoning Mariam. In an exiled country, he marries several times from different descents of women. He marries an American activist who works for the anti-Vietnam War movement. That marriage ends after two years without any children being born. Yet, this marriage helps him to get a green card. Later he moves to Austria, he marries an Austrian woman, a raunchy relationship that ends after one year. He goes on marrying one after the other, "[t]hen there were Eva, Evelyn, and Suzy; then I married an Arab woman and moved to Saudi Arabia" (ibid: 91).

The laws regulating marriage and divorce in Arab societies are in fact one of the legal remnants of feudalism and the patriarchal system where the woman becomes like a piece of land owned by the man, who is permitted to do as he wishes, to exploit her, to beat her, to sell her at any time via divorce, or to buy over her head a second, third, or fourth wife (El Saadawi 2007: 300).

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Wedad's schoolmate Alay comes to meet Wedad. Alay invites Wedad for her father's wedding. Alay reveals that her father Abu Laban is a dairy merchant who divorces her mother because she fails to give a second child after Alay. After her parents' divorce, Alay lived with her mother in Damascus. Her father, who takes second wife, fails to have children and that relationship also ends without children. She reaches puberty; then her father becomes her custodian; she returns from Damascus and begins to live with her father and step mother. Indeed, now he is ready for his third marriage with a very young girl of his daughter's age. He expects that his son will be his heir to inherit his dairy business and family name.

## **5.6 VIOLENCE ON WOMEN**

Gender discrimination and the gender based violence is a significant social problem that affects many societies around the globe. Since the early 1970s the feminist movement has given enormous importance to address this issue seriously. Many people have ignored the consequences of gender based violence that occurs inside the marital relationship. Feminists have observed that violence against women includes marital rape, sexual harassment, reproductive coercion, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection, obstetric violence and mob violence. There are harmful customary or traditional forms of violence such as honour killing, dowry violence, female genital mutilation, marriage by abduction and forced marriage. Indeed, gender based violence cannot be understood in isolation; it has become a part of unequal gender relations in a patriarchal society. Wife abuse is a severe social problem that is used by a husband who has a powerful tool to dominate and control women. The official United Nations definition of domestic violence against women (DVAW) is, “[a]ny act of gender based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (United Nations 1993).

### **5.6.1 Honour Killing**

The World Health Organisation defines honour killing, as an incident where a “girl or woman [is] being killed by a male or female family member for an actual or assumed sexual or behavioural transgression, including adultery, sexual intercourse or pregnancy outside marriage—or even for being raped” (World Health Organisation 2012: 2). A girl who fails to preserve her virginity is severely punished with physical or moral death. The girl’s father or brother/ cousin/ maternal or paternal uncle decide to kill that girl. It upholds the patriarchal ideology that having sex or losing virginity before marriage is crime or a sin. It ensures that the preservation or the protection of the honour of a girl is the responsibility of the family. If a girl loses her virginity, it brings shame or bad reputation to the family. So, it is the responsibility of the family members to ‘wipe’ the shame ‘out in blood’, a common Arab expression.

The honour killing creates fear among young girls and they do not dare to violate sexual moral code imposed on them. According to the World Health Organisation, the rates of honour killing have been steadily increasing: “there are an estimated 5,000 murders in the name of ‘honour’ each year worldwide. . . .These killings occur mainly in parts of the Middle East and South Asia, but also among some migrant communities” (ibid). Moreover, honour killings are crimes which are deeply rooted in societal traditions rather than in religions. None of the religions justify the killing of women in the name of honour. Korteweg observes, even though religion plays a crucial role whenever there is a discussion on honour killing, there is no significant relationship between religion and honour killing. He explains:

Religion plays a specific role as a source of meaning in discussions of honour-related violence. There is no direct link between religion and honour-related violence, and people of different faiths enact it. At the same time, individuals or families involved in committing crimes will at times cite their interpretations of religion as reinforcing their understandings of honour, regardless of their faith (Korteweg 2014: 144).

Furthermore, Korteweg points out that “[h]onour killing is often linked to Islam but there are no references in the Quran that justify these kinds of murders or other forms of violence in these types of circumstances” (ibid). Zuhur also expresses similar views that Islam is not responsible for the honour killings committed in its name: “numerous Muslim authorities have stated that honour crimes are ‘not Islamic’ or cannot be blamed on Islam” (Zuhur 2009: 6). However, majority of the people use Islam in order to justify the honour killings they have committed.

In Arab society, when the fundamental question of safeguarding the virginity arises, the strict moral code applies only to the girls. Woman’s virtue has been determined by her sexual practice and interests. Abu-Odeh explains that the moral sexual behaviour of the Arab women have been controlled and supervised by the males: “to be a man is to engage in daily practices, an important part of which is to assure the virginity of the women in your family. In Arab culture, a man is that person whose sister’s virginity is a social question for him” (Abu-Odeh 1996: 13). In this context, the conceptualization of honour killing naturally grants the male members of the family the power on the life



of a woman who transgresses the sexual boundary. However, such crimes are motivated by cultural codes of a society as well.

Chastity and virginity are considered essential for a woman, whereas men can enjoy sexual freedom. The female characters Hoda, Zayna in Khalifeh's novel *The Inheritance*, survive honour killing attempts. The sexual behaviour of these three characters transgresses the traditional framework; therefore, their behaviour is avenged by men, who would like to constrict all behaviours within the 'accepted' frame. Zayna recalls the incident of another Palestinian girl Hoda, who lives in America, who has become pregnant in her teenage. Hoda runs away from home in order to escape from death in the hands of her father. Zayna, describes the scene ". . . we all saw her father run after her in the street like a raging bull, carrying his longest knife. My father tried to stop him, but couldn't. Finally, with the help of two neighbours they were able to prevent him from killing her" (Khalifeh 2005: 6). Hoda escapes from honour killing and decides to take refuge in her American grandmother's house. However, different rumours spread about Hoda who was not found in her hometown. The community around Hoda's place concludes that Hoda's father is not a man enough who fails to cleanse ". . . his honour in her blood" (ibid). On the other hand, Muhammad Hamdan regrets for his decision of rescuing Hoda from her father. He says, "[h]e should have killed her, she sullied his name, stained his honour, and humiliated him among his people. Had I been in his place I would have gone after her to hell" (ibid). Zayna knew her father's reaction to Hoda's incident. Zayna becomes pregnant before marriage at the age of fifteen. She knows that her father would kill her, and decides to move to her grandmother's house in Washington D.C. Muhammad Hamdan, who is the protector of his daughter's honor, comes to know about Zayna's pregnancy and attempts to kill her. He beats Zayna severely despite her grandmother—Deborah's attempts to save her granddaughter. He loses his control over his mind and shouts at Deborah not to interfere in the affairs of his daughter. He says, "Zaynab has committed a blunder; so it is moral responsibility to wash away my shame and hers" (ibid: 13). He violently attacks her without having any mercy. Zayna says "[h]e dragged me into the kitchen, my body covered with pieces of glass, jam, and blood. He pulled my hair and shouted at the top of his voice, "[d]aughter of a dog, by God I will suck your blood!" (ibid: 14). He

constantly, attacks her. She says, “I closed my eyes tightly and felt his kicks to my chest, while waiting for his knife to fall” (ibid). Deborah rescues Zayna from an impending death in the hands of her father. She successfully prevents the father from stabbing Zayna by threatening to shoot him by the “hunting rifle” (ibid). Deborah who is aware of the cultural ethos Arab society tells Muhammad Hamdan “[y]ou can go to your people and tell them that you acted like a man and killed her” (ibid: 15). He is unable to counter the warnings of Deborah, decides to depart away from his daughter. Hamdan, a victim of tradition, leaves Zayna under the custody of her grandmother.

### **5.6.2 Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is the patriarchal violence against women like wife beating, verbal abuse, etc. Domestic violence is not narrowed down to male violence against women; it also includes same sex violence, and adult violence against children. Unfortunately, patriarchal violence committed inside the home is sanctioned and accepted by the inner circle and usually not known outside. Women are beaten and murdered within the four walls than outside. Wife-beating is inextricably linked to attempts to dominate and control women. The issue of domestic violence is generally considered a private matter and viewed as a matter to be settled within the families. In patriarchal societies, men believe that a husband has the right to beat his wife if she disobeyed him. This violence has been explicitly decriminalized, largely ignored and treated as common. Consequently, women justify wife beating as a way of correcting the misconduct of a woman by a man. In the family system, due to economic dependency on men, threats related to divorce make women suffer silently many a time.

Astbury and Cabral define domestic violence as a, “chronic syndrome characterized not only by episodes of violence but by the emotional and psychological abuse used by men to control their female partners” (Astbury and Cabral 2000: 67). The World Health Organization defines domestic violence as

the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (World Health Organisation 2002: 38).

The women's subordination and subjection differs from society to society. Culture and religious views play majorly in shaping the gender roles of the society. The patriarchy as a system of values is one of the major causes for domestic violence against women in society. Domestic violence and wife beating are often normalised in Arab societies as a common phenomenon. If a wife disobeys to fulfil the traditional roles of wife and mother, the husband could beat her and sometimes, beat mercilessly. If a wife fails to give birth to a boy she could be beaten. There are mainly two types of abuse – physical and psychological. Beating is one of the physical forms of abuse which has been considered as a family issue rather than a social and legal problem.

In the novel, *The Image, The Icon and The Covenant*, Ibrahim's son Michael practices reiki<sup>2</sup>. Sakineh is a client of Michael's. She reveals her agonies of domestic violence perpetrated by her husband. She shows her obedience and submission to the husband, paying attention to the sole responsibility of domestic affairs. Yet, Sakineh's mother-in-law complains about her daughter-in-law as soon as Sakineh's husband returns from work. Her mother-in-law complains that Sakineh neglects her household responsibilities and occupies herself in talking to the neighbours. She provokes his son endlessly blaming Sakineh for everything she does. She says about her husband that he "... holds me by my hair and beats me with his leather belt. He kicks me everywhere until I am about to die" (Khalifeh 2008b: 137). Sakineh is passive about the aggression of her husband; she never questions it. Being the victim of domestic violence, she searches for a realistic solution. On the other hand, Michael uses the techniques of healing to convince her that she is joyful in her life. He says, "[y]ou are calm and without problems, you are happy" (ibid). Sakineh is an innocent victim of double oppression. Her husband physically abuses her frequently though she fulfils the traditional expectations of a wife's role. She is unable to revolt against the physical domination because of her economic dependency on her husband. On the other hand, Michael takes the advantage of innocent, illiterate Sakineh by assuring a false hope of happiness. Thus, she becomes the victim of both physical and psychological violence.

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<sup>2</sup> Reiki is a Japanese technique for stress reduction, relaxation and healing.

## 5.7 SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION AND MALE GAZE

Sexual objectification means that women are primarily seen as the object of sex to satisfy male sexual and sensual desires. The cultural practices of sexuality, the traditional gender roles, heterosexuality, and sexist thinking play an important role in such objectification of women. Originally, Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts found the theory of objectification. This theory explains the excessive efforts and common tendency to equate women with their bodies. Objectification often occurs on women's bodies rather than that of men. Hence, the bodily being – object or a commodity – becomes more important than the individual inhabiting the body: a distinct human being. Precisely, sexual objectification views women's body or parts of their body as separate entities from her as a person and they are seen primarily as a physical object to satisfy male pleasure and sexual desires. This theory also presents the negative impact of sexual objectification of women's body leading them to psychological suffering. The consequences of objectification are mental health risks like eating disorders, unipolar depression and sexual dysfunction. These mental issues are common in early adolescence and late middle age of the women.

Sexual objectification plays out most obviously in two arenas: interpersonal or social encounters and media exposure. "Interpersonal or social encounters include catcalls, checking out/staring at, or gazing at women's bodies, sexual comments, and harassment. Media exposure spotlights women's bodies and body parts while depicting women as the target of a non-reciprocated male gaze" (Calogero et al., 2011: 6). Women are largely viewed as body in order to seek sexual pleasure through "checking out" and through "looks" by men. Feminist theory focuses more precisely on the impact of objectification on female psyche. The second wave feminists in 1970's gave their voice to the issue of how women are represented in mainstream media as the sexual objects of a male gaze.<sup>3</sup>

The females who are subjected to sexual objectification, suffer from mental health problems. On the other hand, the chances of indirect victimization of sexual objectification are common among women through internalization of self-

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<sup>3</sup> However, we are not looking into the media aspect here.

objectification. Self-objectification means how an individual person thinks about and values his/her body from her/his own perspective rather than the way others look at his/her body. It is a peculiar way of looking at body as well at self. According to Calogero, “[s]elf-objectification occurs when the objectifying gaze is turned inward, such that women view themselves through the perspective of an observer and engage in chronic self-surveillance” (Calogero 2013: 312). In other words, female self-objectification can be defined as “regular exposure to objectifying experiences that socialize girls and women to engage in self-objectification, whereby they come to internalize this view of themselves as an object or collection of body parts” (Kroon Van Diest & Perez, 2013: 16). Objectification theory emphasises that self-objectification leads to the feeling of shame about one’s own body. They suffer emotionally and psychologically as they engage in evaluating themselves through the internalization of cultural benchmarks of beauty. Darwin specifies the impact of the internalization of men’s gaze in relation to the experience of shame: “[i]t is not the simple act of reflecting on our own appearance, but the thinking what others think of us, which excites a blush” (Darwin 1965: 325). The feeling of shame about the body is associated with the negative way of self-evaluation that leads to trauma of the mind and body. The constant process of objectification of a female body dehumanizes women.

Sexual objectification not only impacts women’s lives but also creates problems with regard to the aesthetics of beauty. So majority of women try to manage or cope with the expectations of such glorification of female bodies. The female bodies are evaluated by their physical appearance setting unrealistic standards of beauty through traditional or cultural norms. Fredrickson and Roberts state that

[w]omen’s ongoing efforts to change their body and appearance through diet, exercise, fashion, beauty products, and perhaps most dangerously, surgery and eating disorders, reveal what may be a perpetual and hardly adaptive body-based shame, which results from a fusion of negative self-evaluation with the potential for social exposure (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997: 181).

Nahleh in the novel *The Inheritance* psychologically suffers from self-objectification for treating her as an object to be looked at and evaluated on the basis of appearance. The young girl maintains the youthfulness of her body for a long time and continues to fulfil the functions for which her husband married her until his old age. The Arab men

look upon their women as bodies which must remain youthful forever. The youthfulness of Nahleh deteriorates with age. Nahleh is the victim of self-objectification. Nahleh becomes the victim of external pressures to enhance her physical beauty by using cosmetics to cover her age and to fit herself to the unrealistic standards of beauty. Nahleh instead of breaking traditional gender roles imposed on her by patriarchal society, unfortunately becomes the victim of self-objectification and suffers tremendously. She undergoes the emotional and behavioural abnormalities as a result of self-objectification. She tries to combat her ageing by becoming shopaholic. She starts monitoring her body's outward appearance standing in front of the mirror during night and gives voice to her strange feelings.

She started using make up, taking small, timid steps, and secretively applying small amounts of eyeliner. She used blush and put rollers in her hair every night. She started going to Nablus every Thursday and returning with piles of clothes and trinkets. She would spend hours in her room, trying on the dresses, the mascara, the eye shadow, the lipstick, the various creams for her skin, moisturizer, cleansing products, anti-wrinkle, and neck and eye creams. . . . She would spend hours in her room, trying on her clothes in front of the mirror, exercising to lose weight . . . (Khalifeh 2005: 72).

Nahleh becomes over-conscious of her age. At the age of fifty-five she yearns to enhance her beauty. She applies body creams and moisturiser to keep her skin fair and to cover up her age. She has an extra marital affair with her cousin who is married with several children. She waits for his calls and enjoys sex with him. She wears "tight skirt" which reveals her body parts with the intention of arousing sexual desire. He touches her body, "the silky and velvety skin of her legs, that velvety feel she had worked to create with the products made with the perfume vendor's stone" (ibid: 76). As a middle aged woman she gives a lot of importance to her appearance because of the fear in her mind that she may get rejected by her cousin. She takes a traditional role and adopts feminine personality traits afresh. She internalizes the cultural practices of sexual objectification adapts her body to the male gaze.

Patriarchal ideologies differentiate and divide the women's body in terms of age, size, colour and their appearance. The concept of beauty is judged on similar basis, whose degrees may change depending on the cultural norms of the society. The female body is always moulded in such a way that satisfies the desires of men. Again, young age is

considered the criteria to decide on the beauty factor. The body politics plays a dominant role in male-dominated societies. In such circumstances, the subject of male gaze happens to be a woman for whom the active resistance of male gaze is not an easy task. Women passively suffer under the male gaze and participate involuntarily in the objectification of their own body. Patriarchy privileges men to enforce power and authority, as well as to have possession of the female body.

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Wedad's body and body parts are objectified and criticized by many. Her mother Zakiyeh views that her daughter lacks the beauty and attractiveness that society expects from a female body. Her mother frequently criticises her big feet, telling her that her feet resembles that of her father. Listening to those comments frequently, Wedad hides her shoes in a cupboard without using it, keeping them there until they become too small for her feet. Wedad believes that "big feet" is not a sign of beauty and it is a symbol of vulgarity and malformation. After reaching puberty, her mother worries about her marriage that demands physical beauty of the girl, a major criterion for marriage. Zakiyeh is disappointed when the village hammam says that Wedad's marriage is difficult considering the appearance of her body. He says that the girl looks pale and she has flat chest and hips. Zakiyeh feels happy when her brother sends marriage proposal for Wedad. Before finalizing the marriage the Sheikh has to confirm the age of bride considering the physical development. The maturity of body is considered an important criteria for marriage by side-lining the growth of mind according to their age. Wedad wears high heels in order to look tall and her brassiere is stuffed to make her bosom sizeable. On the other hand Wedad's cousin Rasha who is older than Wedad, stands straight and confidently allows the Sheikh to gaze her body. She does not need padding as her breast size is big. Both Wedad and Rasha cover their faces with veil and they allow gazing their body parts to confirm the age of legal marriage. Both Rasha and Wedad are reduced to mere bodies in this dastardly ritual of male gaze. Wedad's brother Waheed raises the veil of Rasha to examine her beauty. He looks at her face and regards her fair complexion "as cream" and her dark attractive eyes make him speechless. Later he gazes at her breasts that look "like marble", her face looks "like a full moon", and describes her "buttocks that could drive a flourmill" (Khalifeh 2012: 24). Her body parts stimulate Waheed's sexual drive and he becomes

eager to touch her body. Rasha has speech defect, but looking at her extreme beauty, he compromises with this defect and agrees to marry her. When Rashad unveils Wedad to see her face he becomes dejected. Although her breasts are stuffed they look saggy. Her face was expressionless, dull and pale, even though it was decked with makeup. He becomes disappointed at her physical appearance; she neither attracts him nor meets his standard of beauty for a young bride. Berger notes, “[m]en look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at” (Berger 1972: 47). The objectified woman is treated merely as a body without any identity as such.

Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, and Thompson have observed that “western societies tend to objectify people in general, treating them as if they are things, or commodities, because westernized societies are saturated with heterosexuality, whereby gender acts as a pervasive organizer of culture” (Calogero et al., 2011: 4). The objectification of a woman’s body is common in Arab societies that are largely patriarchal and compulsorily heterosexual. Khalifeh writes about the hypocrisy and double standards of Arab men in her novel *Of Noble Origins*. Rashad is a son of rich merchant who does export business with Jews and other foreigners. He is a drunkard who spends his evening in Sultaneh’s night club. The club is run by a Moroccan Jew. He lives like a play boy and spends his nights with club dancers. He spends his father’s money lavishly for women and alcohol. He is always surrounded by Jewish girls; he lures them from his money and jokes. He likes young Jewish girls who are extremely beautiful and bold in their attitudes. They wear such dresses so that their body parts are visible. Rashad finds pleasure in such erotic indulgence. He says “[t]o be honest, the girls were like Turkish delight, like cream and butter. A shining light emanated from their thighs and their breasts, causing the distinguished guests to shout, “God is great!”” (Khalifeh 2012: 92). According to MacKinnon “. . . [m]en have been conditioned to find women’s subordination sexy, and women have been conditioned to find a particular male version of female sexuality as erotic — one in which they are defined from a male point of view” (MacKinnon 1989: 140).

Rashad is neither handsome nor attractive. He has big nose; despite his ugliness, girls pounce on him for his money. Rashad believes in the stereotypes that Jewish girls are characterless, lack sexual morality and decency. He views them as objects to fulfil his



erotic desires. Rashad maintains temporary relationships with Jewish women. He sees them as sexist objects and not fit for marriage and motherhood. Like him, majority of the Arab men yearn for Jewish women. They keep their affair undisclosed, accommodating them in an apartment. They shower their love for these women and enjoy sex with them. Jewish women take advantage of the weaknesses of the Arab men who are ready to spend money on them for temporary relationship. They are not ready to marry the Arabs because of the purported superiority of the race which they belong to. When it comes to marriage, Arab men decide to marry their paternal or maternal cousins, and not their Jewish counterparts. Khalifeh writes “[a]n Arab was also a flirt. He used the woman and then got rid of her, or took a second wife and kept her only to look after the children, nothing else” (Khalifeh 2012: 96).

Rigid and orthodox teaching imposes restrictions on the exposure of the female body. Wedad is forced to cover her hair and her body, and hide her entire body debarring her from seductiveness. Girls are supervised strictly and placed under the continuous vigilance of their families and they are accompanied by a male whenever they go out. Wedad is deprived of any real knowledge about her body and herself right from her early stages of childhood through adolescence and youth. Wedad was brought up in an environment of darkness and silence about everything related to the body and its functions. Wedad feels impure about herself and she thinks she must remain invisible. Or in other words, for her the female body becomes an obscenity that should be hidden carefully. After reaching puberty, the only command she hears is “[c]over up, cover up”, from all her family members. Khalifeh writes,

[i]f the doorbell rang her mother would tell her, “Cover up, cover up.” When she went up on the roof to unfold the laundry, Waheed would tell her, “Cover up, cover up,” . . . as if the garbage collector was about to devour her, as if people’s eyes were ravenous beasts and she their prey (ibid: 50).

Khalifeh’s essay “Who Is Hidden beneath the Burqa?: An Appeal to the West” is where she opines that Western imperialism is indirectly responsible for the return of long established traditions of mandatory wearing of headscarf and imposing restrictions on women’s free movement in the society. Khalifeh gives the illustration of her own mother who refused to wear headscarf even during the Occupation of most parts of

Palestine in 1948. This Occupation brought about a political and economic catastrophe disturbing the lives of women. This Occupation directly affected the economic situation of thousands of families. The families suffered financial crisis as men were involved in War, became homeless and lost their lands. As a result, women were forced to move out of domestic environment and set forth to get jobs or to study in order to sustain their livelihood. All of a sudden these women became the breadwinners of the families; innumerable educated Palestinian girls began to travel abroad without a headscarf, living on their own modestly, leading an independent life. The women financed for their brothers' education and supported the family by taking up jobs abroad in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world. But this situation of emancipation of women was not to be the feature for a long period as the political scenario changed in Palestine. The new wave of Socialist and liberal thought emerging in the Arab world invoked hostility towards Western influence and modernization. Consequently, the west encouraged the Islamist fundamentalists who enforced traditional Islamic norms in Arab countries including Palestine. Thus, the women's free movements were restricted and this became an obstacle on their way of emancipation. The thinkers and intellectuals fell into the arms of the Soviet Camp and Socialism, but they failed to influence the masses, this made the reactionaries get an upper hand of the situation in Palestine.

It was Abdul Nasser, Egyptian President in 1950s and 1960s, who waged the greatest campaign against the west and its ally Israel. By making stirring speeches Nasser created an atmosphere of anger against the west among the masses and with the nationalization of Suez Canal the rage of the Great Britain and France reached a climax in 1956. In turn, these two states conducted a military campaign against Nasser to overthrow and destroy him but the assault failed and made him more influential and stronger. But the western media plotted against Nasser and depicted him as a new Arab Hitler, accusing him as fascist and ascribing many other provocative and terrible characteristics on him later during 1967 War. This War was considered the defeat not only of Nasser but also of the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, those who had called for economic and political renewal were also defeated and emancipation of women took a back seat. After the defeat of Nasser and the failure

of the Arab intellectuals to influence the masses, the reactionary forces acted according to the American agenda. American agenda encouraged the Islamic fundamentalists against the liberals who followed the socialistic ideals. Exploiting this critical situation, the reactionary wing welcomed new ideas and suggestions from the West. Absurdly, USA and its allies supported and even financed the Islamists regimes which forced women back into the age of the harem and made the veil obligatory. Khalifeh's narrative encapsulates the frailty of human condition prevalent in a brutal society which is surrounded by War and violence (Khalifeh 2011).

### **5.7.1 Sexual Harassment**

In an incident in the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Rashad sexually exploits Shalom's daughter, Sarah. Rashad meets Sarah in the picnic organized by his father. He starts flirting with her in the presence of his fiancée. Sarah expresses her wish to ride on a decorated donkey. Sarah sits on the donkey for a ride; Rashad holds her body in the excuse of helping her and thus clinches an opportunity to feel her body. He starts touching her arms, waist and all parts of the body. Sarah is excited in enjoying the donkey ride without noticing the manoeuvrings of Rashad. Sarah's elder sister Esther observes the behaviour of Rashad who is moving his hands in all possible directions on Sarah's body and enjoying it. Esther brings a stop to this and asks Sarah to get down from the donkey and requests Rashad to leave her. Esther says, "[I]leave the girl alone," Yet, "[h]e did not let go but started laughing loudly, amused by the situation. He found it a good opportunity to cling to a girl's body" (ibid: 52). In spite of repeated alerts by Esther, Rashad does not stop his actions; he gropes his hands below the waist. Esther finally gives him a karate blow, making him fall on the ground.

## **5.8 FEMINIST THEORIZATION OF MOTHERHOOD**

Assertion of women's rights is at the core of feminism which in turn is linked to motherhood and reproduction from the beginning of feminist theorization. First and second wave feminists argued in favour of abortion, public recognition of motherhood and use of contraceptives to limit the family size. One of the issues often discussed with different perspectives in feminist discourse is the issue of motherhood. This has caused a major split in the feminist movement. Feminism has given an essential contribution

in understanding motherhood from biological and social perspectives. A large body of feminist research acknowledges that there is a link between motherhood and nature which was historically, socially, legally, politically, and philosophically established (Okin 1979; Badinter 1981; Bock and Thane 1991; Fineman 1995). Twentieth century witnessed scientific development in the field of maternity which helped women to make use of alternative methods with regard to reproduction or maternity. The mainstream feminist discourse expressed a critical approach to motherhood till the end of mid 1980s. They argued for the rejection of motherhood as a pre-requisite for vanquishing women's subordination and to achieve equality. Changing laws and institutions, or even changing the whole social context, would not suffice to change the conditions and the consequences of motherhood for women.

Women are subjected to oppression in a patriarchal system because of the biological factor of reproduction and motherhood and they are obliged to beget children and raise them as a familial as well as cultural necessity. Motherhood is inextricably linked with sexuality and reproduction for women. In patriarchal society, motherhood, child rearing and caring are considered as the sole responsibility of the mother or a woman. On the contrary, it demands the birth of the male child in order to continue the family legacy. Khalifeh stresses the fact that marriage and motherhood have become central institutions for the oppression of women. These institutions discriminate between the two sexes denying equality and freedom to women. Khalifeh in her novels highlights how the social perception of motherhood is constructed and circulated among the people. This circulation is so powerful that majority of women accept these roles without questioning. She never oversimplifies the notion of motherhood in the patriarchal system. She challenges the stereotypical representative role of women solely as mothers and nurturers. Barbara Katz Rothman addresses her views on motherhood in the context of the American society. She links motherhood to three important factors such as an ideology of patriarchy, an ideology of technology and an ideology of capitalism. She links the patriarchal ideology with the fabric of motherhood which has been controlled and manipulated by family. She explains patriarchal kinship as the central focus of patriarchy; and the idea of paternity, the core factor in a social relationship. In a patriarchal system it is accepted that man contribute the "seed"

through penetration into the female body. That seed becomes a new life within the bodies of women. Through this patriarchal notion, men control women's motherhood in order to maintain and continue the legacy of patriarchy. Seed is considered as an essential source for the reproduction and women as nurturers of men's seed. This is a common, accepted perception about procreation in patriarchal system. She writes “. . . men use women to have their children. A man can use this woman or that woman to have his children” (Rothma 1994: 143). She says, “. . . the ultimate meaning of patriarchy for mothers: seeds are precious; mothers are fungible” (ibid: 144).

### **5.8.1 Motherhood as Patriarchal Ideology**

Andrea O'Reilly in her essay “Feminist Mothering” makes the distinction between the term motherhood and mothering. According to her “[t]he term motherhood refers to the patriarchal institution of motherhood which is male-defined and controlled and is deeply oppressive to women” (O'Reilly 2007: 794). The concept of motherhood can be theorized from three perspectives such as: motherhood as experience/role, motherhood as institution/ideology and motherhood as identity/subjectivity. Motherhood in the dominant patriarchal ideology is seen simply as a private entity. O' Reilly, identifies eight inter-related “rules of good motherhood” which has been the outcome of contemporary patriarchal ideology. They are as follows,

(1)[c]hildren can only be properly cared for by the biological mother; (2) this mothering must be provided 24/7; (3) the mother must always put children's need before her own; (4) mothers must turn to the experts for instruction; (5) the mother must be fully satisfied, fulfilled, completed and compose in motherhood; (6) mothers must lavish excessive amounts of time, energy, and money in the rearing of their children; (7) the mother has full responsibility but no power from which to mother; (8) motherwork, and childrearing more specifically, are regarded as personal, private undertakings with no political import (ibid: 801).

As noted earlier, in Arab society and culture, motherhood before marriage or outside marriage is considered as sin. In the novel *The Image, The Icon, and The Covenant*, Ibrahim's beloved Mariam becomes pregnant before marriage. She attempts to terminate her pregnancy by taking pills but she is not successful; they do not have money for abortion as well. In this crucial situation, Ibrahim not only disagrees to marry Mariam but also suspects her pregnancy. He decides to abandon her to escape from the

paternal responsibilities by migrating from his homeland. The villagers start critiquing Mariam for carrying an illegitimate child. She decides to migrate to another village. An old woman Jamileh provides shelter to Mariam. She never rejoices the process of her pregnancy and the baby she carries in her womb becomes a burden for her. Mariam learns Arabic and she expresses in writing the frustration of motherhood she has undergone. She questions the patriarchal glorification of motherhood as “[t]hey say that motherhood is miraculous, pure love, pure affection, sacrifice, devotion, and gratefulness, but I only feel oppression and revolt, I want to run away from my heart” (Khalifeh 2008b: 179). She gives shape to her experiences of motherhood. She views her motherhood as exploitation on her physical body that controls and limits her from enjoying her personal life. She feels that motherhood is terrible, hostile and oppressive. She writes “[t]he pressure on my head is increasing, I am oppressed, I am lonely” (ibid). Mariam has been frustrated with her motherhood as a single parent whereas Ibrahim living in exile, never loses his freedom; he indulges in love affairs; marries many women. He conveniently forgets Mariam for the next forty years and Mariam takes care of his child in his absence.

The biological and psychological burden of motherhood is trivialised by men in a family. Sahar Khalifeh has written many odes in which she depicts how women suffer at multifarious levels. Khalifeh’s novels, take the issue of motherhood on a larger canvas to argue from a woman’s perspective. The choice with regard to motherhood – whether to become a mother or not, is evidently not available for majority of women under patriarchal system. Apparently, there is close link between women’s capacity for childbearing and lactation and majority of the times women have to accept these roles without having any choice. This is the same of a mother in Arab society.

Our bodies may be ours, but given the ideology of patriarchy, the bodies of mothers are not highly valued. The bodies are just the space in which genetic material matures into babies. In a patriarchal system, even if women own their bodies, it may not give them any real control in pregnancy. Women may simply be seen to own the space in which the foetuses are housed (Rothma 1994: 151).

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Wedad becomes mother at a very young age without having any choice to escape from it. She abandons her loveless maternal life. She thinks

of aborting the baby by drinking cumin juice. When she senses the physical presence of the baby during the initial months of her pregnancy she drops the idea of abortion. She starts imagining positive things about the baby. She feels happy and views the brighter side of life. She tries to forget her sorrow by developing a deep attachment with the infant. Later in the novel, she comes to know the fact that her husband has divorced her and taken a second wife. From then onwards, Wedad develops negative feelings about her motherhood. She questions herself,

[w]hat kind of dignity would a divorced, abandoned woman have? What kind of dignity would a woman without an education and a degree have? What kind of dignity was there for a woman who had no work, no income, no profession, and was unable to make a decision? (Khalifeh 2012: 206).

She acknowledges that her motherhood has become a burden for her because of her economic dependency and lack of education. She says, “[p]regnancy was a prison, a baby was a prison, and femininity was a prison” (ibid).

### **5.8.2 The Role of Mothering**

According to O’Reilly, “mothering refers to women’s experiences of mothering which are female-defined and centred and potentially empowering to women” (O’Reilly 2007: 794). In other words mothering refers to the physical and psychological involvement of giving birth to and rearing children. There can be a variety of mothering experiences: married mothers, single mothers (who are either divorced or never married), step-mothers, adoptive mothers, lesbian mothers, foster mothers, surrogate mothers and so on. Often, derogatory adjectives are used to refer to a childless woman – “infertile”, “barren”, “sterile” or “childless”. There is no equal term for the men counterparts. The patriarchal ideology demands the subordination and sacrifice of a mother’s needs and desires which are regarded as the unique characteristics of a mother. If biological mother neglects her duties and responsibilities towards the offspring, the society condemns her severely. On the other hand, the same is not true for a father. It is a compulsion for women to sacrifice anything and everything when they become mothers.

This idea is quite pervasive and has become part of our common sense. For example, Sharon Hays explains in “The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood”, that

[t]he model of intensive mothering tells us that children are innocent and priceless, that their rearing should be carried out primarily by individual mothers and that it should be centered on children's needs, with methods that are informed by experts, labor intensive and costly (Hays 1996: 21).

Thus, constantly the motherhood is glorified in our formal and informal exchanges. The earlier traditional child development theory supported the view that children need parenting from a single person that is inevitably the mother. The recent theory has been challenging the earlier notions that highlighted the importance of the biological feeding connected with personality formation. The common notion that prevails in the patriarchal system is that mothers feel fulfilment in their role of mothering through breastfeeding. In the essay "Mothering and Feminism" Patrice DiQuinzio says,

[s]ome women do not want to be mothers and never do so; some women do not want to become mothers but nonetheless do; some women want to be mother but are unable to do so for a variety of reasons; some women find great satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment in mothering; some women become mothers in circumstances that prevent their experiencing such satisfaction in mothering; and some women regret having become mothers (DiQuinzio 2007: 543).

In the novel *The Image, The Icon, and The Covenant*, Mariam feels that she has been trapped in the childbearing function. She shows her disinterest in the practice of mothering. She becomes overwhelmingly emotional when struggling with mothering. She is more conscious, aware of the derogation for being an unwed mother and confinement of women in maternal practice. The whole process of pregnancy, childbirth, and the daily activities of mothering make her feel that she has lost control over her personal life. Therefore she views that mothering has become a main hurdle in her life. In order to be free from the clutches of mothering for a night on the eve of Charismas, Mariam decides to spend some valuable time in the company of American friends. She leaves the baby under the supervision of Jamileh. She decides to forget the responsibilities of mothering by merry making. Yet she is not able to come out of the web of motherhood. The following day when she comes out of the party mood, she realizes that she misses her baby terribly. She expresses her sense of anxiety, feels guilty about herself and cries hysterically. Her friends console her saying that her son will grow soon and look after her in future. Mariam is confused and says, "[b]ut what about me. . .? My needs and my deeds? Should I dance or write or look after the baby? I borrow books and return them, and I look for a job, but what do I want? What



Shall I do?” (Khalifeh 2008b: 180). She encounters myriad maternal dilemmas constantly like whether to fulfil her dreams or to be just the nurturer of the baby. Apart from mothering roles, she has been struggling for a new identity outside the halo of motherhood. Mariam suffers emotionally and psychologically with the burden of mothering. Even Jamileh fails to understand the feelings of Mariam; she condemns Mariam for her lack of commitment in the maternal practices. Mariam expresses maternal contradiction in her writings “[h]e laughs, plays, crawls, and walks. I adore him, he is my life. . . . This creature is a source of pain for me (ibid: 180). Khalifeh’s novels represent women’s mothering not as a choice but as an inevitable exercise for women to go through. The mother suffers physically, emotionally and psychologically in silence and views the process of reproduction and mothering as a burden.

In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Wedad is shown as not having intense attachment or love towards her child. She is frustrated with child bearing and rearing activities. She feels breast-feeding and childcare have become a routine part of her life. The role of mothering has given a new identity for her as “a reproducer, a breast-feeder, and a servant for the baby, her nature bounded by reproduction and its limitations” (Khalifeh 2012: 206). She undergoes tension between motherhood and her own individual self. She also surfaces in the seeming split screen between our cultural fascination with babies and the less articulated desire to care for them. Wedad tries to achieve and sustain a selfhood outside the realm of reproduction and mothering. Sara Ruddick in her essay “Maternal Thinking” argues that maternal practices revolve around preservation, growth and acceptability of the baby. She highlights the fact that maternal thinking arises because of child-caring practices; it exists among all the women in a radically different way than men (Ruddick 2007: 107). Neither Wedad nor Mariam express the desire to have a child which they view as burden. They are also overburdened with the sole responsibility of mothering in the absence of their respective male partner. Mariam and Wedad persistently critique motherhood as well as mothering as a site of oppression on female body. They not only question the non-involvement of men in sharing the responsibilities of the child but also critique the sexist thought that prevails in the Arab society. Mariam revolts against motherhood and questions “[w]hy should I be the only one tied down?” (Khalifeh 2008b: 179). In the process of motherhood she has been

constantly haunted by loneliness. Consequently, she says “I am oppressed. The baby is getting on my nerves, loneliness is killing me . . .” (ibid: 178-179). For Mariam, motherhood has become the stifling confinement to home and family. She expresses her annoyances and frustration which she felt in the course of rearing her child. Many women experience the agonizing losses that mothering entails and the lack of control over the circumstances of their mothering. Khalifeh’s female characters belonging to younger generation break the stereotype of the idea of mother as an all-giving and self-sacrificing individual, an ideal that is imposed on mothers through patriarchal ideology.

### **5.8.3 Empowered Mothering**

Feminist mothering refers to a particular style of mothering in which resistance to patriarchy is developed from and expressed through a feminist identification or consciousness. According to Andrea O’ Reilly the primary aim of feminist mothering is to empower mothers. Feminist mothering is not only beneficial for mothers but also for children. Empowerment of mothers equips them to beget children without sex. Feminist mothering means to do away with traditional roles of women as society expects them to play the role of mothers on the criteria of their gender. Feminist mothering thus seeks to transform both the patriarchal role of motherhood and that of child bearing (O’ Reilly 2007: 800).

On the other hand, empowered motherhood puts forward a general resistance to patriarchal motherhood. Empowered mothering allows a non-feminist woman who resists patriarchy in her practice to be regarded as an empowered mother. The resistance to patriarchy need not arise from a feminist consciousness. “Empowered mothering thus calls into question the dictates of patriarchal motherhood. Empowered mothers do not regard childcare as the sole responsibility of the biological mother nor do they regard 24/7 mothering as necessary for children” (ibid: 798). In the novels of Khalifeh, young mothers view motherhood from a different perspective. Though older generation try to impose instant mothering, the young mothers resist the conventional mothering as well as motherhood. In this way the young mothers move from instant mothering to empowered mothering. “Empowered mothering utilizes resistance as a strategy to

decipher the dominant discourse and provides alternative discourses through a sense of personal agency” (Horowitz 2004: 54).

In the novel *The Image, The Icon, and The Covenant*, Mariam abandons the sole responsibility of mothering and later feels a deep sense of attachment towards her son. She leaves Jamileh’s house and decides to stay with her aunt Sister Eugenie at the church in Nazareth. She becomes a nun in the convent, dedicates her life in the service of God and people. She finds her inner peace by living in the premises of church. In the novel *Of Noble Origins*, Wedad faces failure in personal life and she feels disgusted in life. She attempts suicide before delivering a baby. She swallows a whole box of aspirin. Fortunately it does not cause any harm to Wedad. The doctor saves her life and advises the young girl that she should not attempt to die. After the delivery of the baby Wedad gets the wonderful opportunity to join the nursing course at the hospital. The doctor encourages her to join the course where Wedad gains knowledge in English, Arabic, chemistry, and biology apart from nursing. She learns other skills required for the nursing profession such as dressing the wounds and administering injections. The doctor plans to start a project called ‘Shelen project’. The purpose of his project is to establish a private maternity hospital in order to serve the people. It is a non-profit project where doctors and nurses offer free service. Wedad engages enthusiastically in the learning process in the morning and she works for the Shelen project in the evening. This brings a new ray of hope in the life of Wedad and involves totally in the learning process. She attentively listens to the discussions of the doctors who discuss various issues on culture, politics, illiteracy, creationism, and on changing the system. She listens to the discussions carefully, and memorizes expressions and words used in the discussions. She grows up learning many new significant things which contribute to her intellectual enrichment. She shares this knowledge with her mother after returning from work. Wedad’s resistance entails making different choices about how one wants to practice mothering. She comes out of the shackles of motherhood which she thought was a burden for her. Discarding the instant mothering roles, Wedad focuses on her education and career by taking support of her mother to nurture the child. She challenges the notions of essential mothering which stressed that mother demanded 24/7 time for child care.

In the novel *The Inheritance*, Zayna conceives before marriage, and she takes refuge in her grandmother's house in Washington D.C. She gives birth to a son and decides to give him to an adoption agency. Her grandmother advises “. . . [m]ake success your aim because if you fail, people will feel sorry for you, but they won't respect you or befriend you. If you want to keep your son, take him only if you are able to support him” (Khalifeh 2005: 15-16). Zayna achieves academic excellence at a very young age because of her hard work and dedication. She receives an award for the research which is valued as best at the University. She becomes the chairperson of the anthropology department. She emerges as successful not only in academics but also in the field of sports. Initially, she feels whatever success she achieves is not for her sake, but for her son. She thinks that she can bring her son back from the adoption agency after being a successful woman. However her desire for success never ends at any point in time and it changes her life completely. “The more successful I became, the more I wanted to succeed. Success meant proving myself, but it made me lose touch with the rest of the world” (ibid: 16). Even though she becomes a successful woman in her career she becomes lonely and depressed. She controls her emotions and feelings. She reveals the secret behind her success, “. . . I never cried in the public. This was the secret of my success — I was strong, and I neither cried nor broke down” (ibid: 20). Deborah observes the change in Zayna's behaviour and advises her to consult a psychologist. The doctor identifies it as homesickness which is normal for a young mother. Then her grandmother takes her to visit her son who is in the adoption agency. No change in Zayna is found even after her meeting her son. Who tells “I feel nothing at all” (ibid: 18). Her grandmother tries to impose motherly feelings on her that being an emotionless mother is not normal; she should feel something which is normal for a mother. Zayna thinks “. . . whether that child felt something or felt nothing. If a child can feel, what does he feel – is it boredom? Love? Fear? Is he homesick? Does he recognize his mother on his own or is he taught to recognize her? Does he know that I don't feel?” (ibid). As a mother, Zayna neither sacrifices her dreams nor was deeply attached to any motherly duties. As the novel progresses, Zayna takes a strong decision to visit her homeland – West Bank leaving all her responsibilities. She realizes her childhood dream of going back to the roots of her origin. Amy Tiemann rightly remarks “all women need to continue to grow as individuals, not just as Moms” (Tiemann 2009: xvi).

In the same novel Futna enjoys the privilege of right to choose maternity of artificial mothering. She subverts the patriarchal ideology of motherhood as the nurturer of man's seed. Futna marries Hajj Muhammad Hamdan who is a rich old man as old as her father. He returns from America after becoming a millionaire working for many years overseas. Futna becomes his new wife who hopes to claim the larger portion of property by giving birth to a male heir. She declares about her pregnancy immediately after the death of her husband. She knows that her chance of becoming a biological mother naturally is impossible because of her husband's illness and age. She maintains the secrecy and opts for artificial insemination at the Hadassa, a Jewish hospital. Amireh writes of *The Inheritance*, "Khalifeh's men in the novel are either sexually impotent, physically repulsive . . . On the other hand the women's bodies are sexually frustrated, exploited, or, in the case of Futna, penetrated by the enemy" (Amireh 2013: 765). Futna's mother – Sitt Amira worries when she reveals the truth about her pregnancy. Futna tries to convince her mother explaining the simple procedure of artificial insemination. Her mother passively listens to her daughter's explanation and finds justification in her choice.

Futna's decision has been disdained not only by her mother but also by Mazen, Nahleh and other relatives. In spite of everyone's comment and gossip about the choice of motherhood, she remains strong until she gives birth to a son. It is important to note that she chooses artificial motherhood and not a 'natural', biological motherhood. By resorting to artificial motherhood, she challenges and subverts the heterosexual or patriarchal ideologies which insist practice of compulsory motherhood inside the marriage. It is also important to note that she avails the advanced medical facility in a Jewish hospital. Futna enjoys the reproductive rights which her contemporary society does not grant to women. Khalifeh presents a changed role of the mother in families which have been fragmented in a society torn apart by conflict. Zayna, Wedad and Mariam fail to find the experience of fulfilment and happiness in mothering.

## **5.9. CHALLENGES OF A PALESTINIAN MOTHER**

Recent theory is challenging the traditional notions of child rearing that highlighted the importance of the biological relationship in personality formation. The contemporary

feminist movements argue that an infant requires equal parenting. The child raising activities are not only the exclusive responsibility of the mother, but also the responsibility of the father who has to participate equally in this process. This helps the children's adaptation to appropriate gender roles on the basis of equality. bell hooks in her essay "Revolutionary Parenting", elaborates the importance of equal parenting in the upbringing of the child. She views that child caring is a responsibility that has to be shared equally among the parents. This very notion of equal parenting is considered revolutionary in the society. She stresses the need for men to take the role of fatherhood and equally share the responsibility in the upbringing of the child. She exhorts that men should develop the willingness of nurturing the child. But on the other hand, the general belief is that men cannot parent effectively and should not even attempt to do. Going as per this belief, the physiological experience of motherhood is glorified and motherhood is considered as an arena of social life in which women can exert power and control. With this, mass media and other communication systems also overemphasize and reinforce the notion that women play the role of child rearing better than men. Moreover, there is a need to rethink the nature of mother's well-being and to make motherhood neither a compulsory experience for women nor an exploitative or oppressive one. bell hooks concludes elimination of sexism is the solution to the problem of men's unequal participation in child care (hooks 2007: 148). A shared responsibility for child care such as community based child care centres or public child care centres helps in the overall development of the child. More than ever before, there is a need to revolutionize women's consciousness and ensure that all children would be raised in best possible social frameworks and with equal parenting, so that women would not be the sole or primary child rearers (ibid : 154-155). Julie Shields argues, "*the best alternative of parenting by mother is parenting by father*" (Shields 2002: 17).<sup>4</sup>

Khalifeh addresses the issue of single parenting experienced by women under the circumstances of colonial domination that resulted in excessive burden on them when husband opts for exile, divorce, or polygamy. Often, mother suffers physically, emotionally and psychologically and views the process of reproduction as burden. In Palestinian society the concept of equal parenting cannot be easy not just because of

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<sup>4</sup> Emphasis in the original.

patriarchal oppression but also because of colonial domination. The consequences of IO led many Palestinian women raise children singlehandedly without the support of their husbands. When the fathers are mostly absent from their homes because of exile, or imprisonment, or their participation in resistance activities, women are pushed to take complete responsibility of the family.

In the novel *The End of Spring*, Suad's father is imprisoned in Ramallah prison for his participation in resistance activities, when Suad was still an infant. Suad's mother became strong when her husband went behind the bars; the situation changed her life. Saud's mother was living like other women before her husband's imprisonment. She was doing her household chores like cooking, looking after her children, getting pregnant and having babies every year. There being one baby in her lap, one clinging to her knees and the other on the way in her belly. Thus every corner of the house was filled with children. But the situation changed when her husband was imprisoned by the Israelis.

The above incident is narrated metaphorically in the novel, "[t]hey took the prize rooster and left the hen and her chicks behind" (Khalifeh 2008a: 177). Suad's mother had to face this disastrous situation; she had to feed and rear the children. She had to work hard to look after the large family. Her travails are portrayed like this, "[s]he sold her heavy bracelet and bought a weaving loom, then another, and another, until the house filled with the machines" (ibid). Saud's mother took the responsibility of bringing up all the children: Saeed, Aziz, Marwan, Mahmoud, Jameel, Imad, and Suad. It is evident in this narrative as to how she suffered in both circumstances, irrespective of whether her husband was imprisoned or was free. Her condition represents the status of most women in Palestine. They suffer under patriarchy when their husbands are with them and they suffer because of additional responsibility when their husbands are away or are imprisoned. Thus the changed scenario of IO affected the women and they suffered under either circumstances because of their being women.

## **5.10 CONCLUSION**

Khalifeh in her interview with Suha Sabbagh critiques the glorification of the role of mother in male narratives. Her primary task is to portray women as they are, in a

realistic way and to refute the image nurtured by male writers. In the political poems and novels of male writers women appear as a symbol of land, procreation and for their unconditional and never ending love. Khalifeh speaks about the hyped image of a mother: “[t]he woman is a mother, she is the beacon lighting the darkness for ships in the night and a shoulder for the tired to rest on” (Sabbagh 1998: 139). Their images are poetically presented, but the reality is different. Motherhood has become a cult in Palestinian culture and it is being reflected in literature also. The symbols used in literature are gilded frames which encourage and preserve the role of women which is accepted in a patriarchal society. She emphasises these factors and urges the committed authors to take an axe to dismantle these frames and put an end to these stereotyped portrayals of women in literature. She exhorts the women authors to portray the real vibrant women who can relate to men on an equal footing. Khalifeh wants the real role played by women be presented in literature (ibid).

Khalifeh challenges the patriarchal oppression of women that is rooted in family, community and society. Khalifeh consciously explores the issue of patriarchal domination to disclose the power or authority enjoyed by men as the heads of the household who oppress women in all walks of life. Khalifeh questions the well-established institutions like marriage and family. She challenges the norms and structures of the society that oppress women through these institutions. This chapter has discussed the issues like marriage, family, motherhood and sexuality as presented in the novels of Khalifeh with support from theoretical discussions around these issues. She challenges the victimization of Palestinian women at home and in public. More importantly, the chapter discusses how women perceive the experience of motherhood in the context of the Arab-Jew conflict.

The issue of gender discrimination has been consciously highlighted in all the novels of Khalifeh. She discusses the socio-religious codes imposed on women in Palestinian society which affect the women there. Her approach to gender discrimination is serious with the goal of bringing gender awareness among her community. She feels that it is the most important task to transform the society. Khalifeh questions the imposition of the stringent gender roles on both men and women and treatment of women as second



class citizen. Thus, Khalifeh's novels manifest a strong desire to liberate women not only from the clutches of the IO but also from patriarchal domination.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

#### **6.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW**

This concluding chapter highlights and summarises the research findings and tries to throw light in the direction of future research. It explores the issues discussed in the novels of Sahar Khalifeh. The present study makes an attempt to understand the circumstances of the Palestinian struggle, through the literary narratives of Sahar Khalifeh. Khalifeh writes extensively about the colonial domination of her native land. Her writings are the mouth piece of the Palestinian community, a community which continuously suffers because of the extreme violence inflicted upon it by the occupiers. She depicts the denial of basic human rights to the Palestinians by the occupiers. She never narrows down or limits her writings only to the colonial exploitation; she effectively represents the burden inflicted on the Palestinian women who suffer doubly, under colonial rule and patriarchal domination.

#### **6.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

The present study has taken up the marginalised and less-discussed research area of Palestinian literature which is in the periphery of mainstream literature. The introductory chapter explains the reasons for taking up the present study and briefly outlines the objectives of this study. It also sets the background for the study in building a historical backdrop and introducing the areas of Arab Women's Literature, Arab-Israeli Wars, Palestinian Literature, Israeli Censorship, etc. Sahar Khalifeh's writing seeks to demonstrate the collective and cross-cultural impact of the various modern forms of oppressions starting from British colonial rule to the present Zionist rule and Occupation of their land.

The second chapter briefly traces the impact of colonial domination on Palestinians in all walks of life. This chapter explains the implications of IO on agriculture; on Palestinian society, economic activities and all important walks of life. It also deals

with the relationship between Arabs and Jews, and the humiliation experienced by the Palestinians at checkpoints. The current research throws light on the impact of IO on Palestinians in detail and the problems that arose with the Occupation such as exile and confiscation of Palestinians' land. The various forms of resistance movements of the Palestinians against IO and the life and status of Palestinian women under the colonial and patriarchal order which is a less explored area of research is dealt with in this study. The present study is multi-disciplinary in nature as it sheds light on socio-economic, historical, political and cultural factors depicting the plights of Palestinians.

Sahar Khalifeh's works are highly political. She takes clear political stand while depicting the multiple issues related to Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Her narratives view Jewish community as the 'Other'. The negative image of Jews appears frequently in her narratives. The inhuman behaviour of the Israeli soldier towards Palestinians at checkpoints have been highlighted in her works. The aggression at the checkpoint stands as a metaphor for all Zionist violence on Palestinians. Khalifeh has shown the traits of graciousness in Palestinian characters who help or console the Jews at difficult times without any bias or hostility. However, sometimes the narratives of Khalifeh also run the risk of stereotyping Jewish characters. In other words, the pro-Palestinian Jewish characters are few in the works of Sahar Khalifeh. Mira, a little Jewish girl, participates in the demonstration against the construction of the apartheid wall, when she becomes an adult. She raises her voice against her own community. But she happens to be instrumental in the arrest of an Arab boy Ahmad for no fault of his. Here, Mira's gesture does not show any positive approach to Palestinians. The other Israeli characters like, Rosa Mayor and Khaduri in the novel *Of Noble Origins*, are ready to invest in projects to start colleges for both Jewish and Arab students in an effort to bring the two communities together. This is an evidence of their effort to bring harmony, togetherness and mutual co-existence of Palestinians and Jews. But their endeavour fails because of the intervention of a Jewish agency. Rosa Mayor and Khaduri are the two Jewish characters we can see in the novels of Sahar Khalifeh who stand out from other Jewish characters. But the efforts from these characters do not find a logical end. In other words, Khalifeh's refusal to show any positive Jewish characters beyond this stage also

reflects the actuality where the situation has not changed at the ground level despite the presence of ‘good’ Jews.

The third chapter examines different modes of resistance strategies adopted by Palestinians to fight against the ongoing IO. The crux of the chapter is how resistance strategies differ from generation to generation. Many of the earlier commentaries on Khalifeh’s works have not looked at multiple forms of resistance figuring therein. This study aims at identifying and analysing the multiple strategies of resistance adopted by Palestinians not only for their survival on their homeland, but also in their fight to put an end to the Occupation. The impact of Palestinian resistance, the participation of women and children in resistance activities have been highlighted in this chapter. Along with these issues, the loopholes of the resistance movements or reasons for the failure of Palestinian resistance have been discussed under the big umbrella of resistance. Khalifeh in her narratives overemphasises the form of masculine anti-settler colonial resistance.

The fourth chapter explores the experiences of both men and women who are subjected to live under exile. Exile, in the context of Palestine is a unique issue altogether. Exile has always been seen from male perspective: how it affects livelihoods, freedom, and identity – all from male experience. The experiences of women exiles have not been penned down in the writings of men. Khalifeh is the first writer who has given equal importance to the experiences of exiled men and women. Indeed, the impact of exile on men which reflected detrimentally in their attitude towards women, have been hardly discussed either in fiction or in non-fiction. This research focuses on the efforts of women in confronting the life of exile and the impact of men’s exile on them resulting in oppression, burden and suffering. This chapter highlights how Khalifeh amplifies the unheard voices of gender specific experiences of Palestinians who live in exile or are returnees. For Palestinians, returning to homeland is not an easy task; the tale of their struggle to cope with the existing situations of the country after returning from exile has been one of the core points of the study.

The fifth chapter focuses on the plight of Palestinian women under IO which is much different from that of men. It argues that Khalifeh has enlarged the canvas on which to

depict the sufferings of Palestinians by making it more inclusive. Apart from mirroring the domination of Israelis, Khalifeh focuses on women's problems also, taking up the issues of gender discrimination in various arenas of the society. This chapter specifically addresses the issues like marriage, family, motherhood and sexuality in the novels of Khalifeh. It invariably, looks at how Khalifeh challenges the androcentric order which happens to be the root cause of domination. This chapter not only focuses on understanding the patriarchal norms of male dominance in the public and private spheres but also highlights how the Palestinian women resist the sexist ideology which prevails in Palestinian society.

### **6.3 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research makes an attempt to understand the key issues of Palestinian struggle such as living under IO, day-to-day resistance movements, exile, and patriarchal domination of Palestinian woman. This research took into consideration a female writer from the Occupied Territories. It would be productive too to make a comparative study of the same topics with the literature of a writer in exile. It could provide certain clues to the continuously persisting problems of Palestinians and the fractured views of the global Palestinian community that is partly responsible for the status quo. At a time when solidarity movements for a free Palestine is consolidating, it is important for the literary voices too, to come together. In such a scenario, comparative studies of the above mentioned nature is of good value.

Secondly, the present study did not look at the issue of resistance from the nationalist perspective. The study here took the help of resistance theories to peruse multiple resistance strategies. However, nationalism too, provides a mainstay to examine much of Palestinian literature. The difference between other Asian nationalisms and Arab nationalism or specifically Palestinian nationalism could be analysed by looking into those respective literatures. The present international scenario has thrown up conservative reactionary forces to the fore at different parts of the globe. At a juncture like this, an evaluation of nationalism as expressed in different arenas of life would assume importance since there is a necessity to rescue progressive nationalism from the reactionary one by dissecting the trends and traits in creative areas like literature.

Meanwhile, there is also the necessity of preventing the agenda of free Palestine from falling into the trap of ultra-nationalist Jihadis, who would not have pro-people and inclusive agendas. Thus, the linkage between nationalism and religion could be analysed using the corpus of literature available.

At a different level, psychoanalytic studies of Khalifeh's novels could also be taken up. The man-woman relationship under the conditions of a continuous Occupation and violence of different nature, for about two generations, can be subject to substantial modification. Khalifeh's fiction, among others', can provide raw materials for such a study. Such an interdisciplinary enquiry as psychoanalysis of fiction can throw some new light on the changed behavioural patterns in terms of recasting gender. On the whole, it can be said that there is a dearth of critical work on Palestinian literature. Such works need to be encouraged not only to provide a better visibility to the Palestinian cause, but also to genuinely produce interest in the minds of people towards an interesting category of literature as literature per se.

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## **Appendix I**

### **First International Youth Camp: Two Glimpses from My Voyage to Palestine**

It was a wonderful opportunity for me to participate in the First International Youth Camp organised by the Higher Council for Youth and Sports in Jericho, on the West Bank, Palestine from 27 November to 4 December 2016. More than 160 participants from different countries attended this International Youth Camp. Palestinian youth also participated in this camp. Each participant had their unique story to tell and had different purpose in attending that camp. Many participants belonged to the third generation of Palestinians who had left the country during the wars of 1948 and 1967. It was an opportunity for them to visit their country of origin. We participated in debates and cultural programmes. We were enthusiastic to listen to the first-hand accounts of the experiences of Palestinian youth living under Israeli Occupation, encountering the challenges and coping with the vulnerable situation. They shared their experiences of the Occupation and expressed their views on the on-going conflict. This event was an effort in promoting cultural resistance and bringing awareness among youth about the realities of Israeli Occupation. When I received a confirmation call from the Palestinian Embassy, New Delhi to travel to Palestine, I experienced mixed feelings. It was really a pleasant surprise because I got an opportunity to visit and see the land which I knew only through my readings. I was a bit anxious when I thought of the potential dangers of visiting such a place and was worried about my safety. As I had read sufficiently about the life of Palestinians in the occupied territories in newspapers apart from the accounts of Sahar Khalifeh, I was in fact, scared. I was in a dilemma whether to utilise this opportunity or not. Eventually, I made up my mind to attend the camp shunting out all my fears. Having attended the camp, I am of the opinion that it was an enriching experience. The two memorable experiences that haunted me even after my return to India: one was the experience at the checkpoint while crossing the Allenby Bridge which is also known as King

Hussein Bridge to reach the West Bank; another was visiting Salfet village and meeting the only Palestinian family living in the midst of Jewish settlements. On the flip side, not being able to meet the subject of my research, Sahar Khalifeh, bothered me too.

We started our journey from the Queen Alia International Airport, Amman, to reach West Bank. Our team leader Saurabh Kumar Shahi, told all the delegates to be careful while crossing the bridge. He also advised us to be humble if any Jewish officer interrogated us while crossing the bridge. Our bag and baggage were scanned through their machines separately at security checkpoints. After placing our belongings there, we entered the hall holding passport and other documents. The hall was crowded with the tourists from around the globe (bound for Jerusalem) since Christmas was approaching. There were many counters to check our passports where we had to wait in a queue. We were anxious about the questions they would ask regarding the purpose of visit. As I knew through my readings that crossing the border was a tricky task sometime. I was tensed with regard to my encountering the checking formalities. But I was prepared to face the procedures of checking. Our teammates were scattered in different counters to get their passports verified by the authorities. One of the female organizers had accompanied us. She was not only helping us but also talking to the Jewish officers in case any participant got stuck at the counter. I was standing in the queue waiting for my turn and also observing the way how our fellow delegates moved from one booth to another. I sensed not everything would be alright in my case. Finally, my turn came, I was about to handover my passport to the man in the counter, then there was a change inside the counter and a new officer arrived there replacing the earlier one. I waited for him to settle down. Then, I gave my passport; he began to examine the details in the passport meticulously. He neither showed any reaction nor asked any question related to my visit. I waited near the counter patiently. But the organizer who was standing beside me started to enquire about the delay in Hebrew language. I was unable to understand the conversation between them. I simply stood there observing their conversation. He waited for me to speak, but I avoided any conversation with him.

He was looking here and there purposely without doing anything; I felt the officer was intentionally wasting time. After twenty minutes of waiting at the counter, he handed over my passport to the higher officer who was roaming outside the counter. They instructed me to sit on the bench leaving the queue. The organiser was upset and she also sat with me. Though she was worried, she was trying to console me. She was worried because she knew that two Argentine delegates were not allowed to participate in the International camp on the previous day. They were asked to leave and were sent back to their country. She was anxious to know about the status of verification of my passport. Meanwhile all my friends moved from the counters and were anxiously waiting for me. Though I was listening to her conversation with me, my mind went blank for a few seconds. On the other side of the bench three young Palestinians sitting there, were looking at me. I looked at them and thought that they were there for interrogation from the authorities. For the first time in my life I experienced a sense of helplessness and humiliation too with doubts cast on my identity and purpose of entry. I came to know that the details in the passport are confusing for them. I carry a name which does not have any surname and my father's name is a common Muslim name, Mohammad Nisar Ahmed. But my mother carried a non-Muslim name; she does not tag my father's surname either. My passport details became a puzzle for them. Israelis are extremely good at surveillance. Later, the senior officer came and returned my passport and gave me permission to proceed. I came out and joined my friends who were anxiously waiting for me. I related the details of what I had faced at the counter and they consoled me. I saw an Israeli officer checking the baggage of a Palestinian Muslim woman by removing stuffs from the bag and shouting at her. This scene again disturbed me, but we were helpless and speechless about the incident taking place there. That moment, I recalled the episode in Sahar Khalifeh's novel *Wild Thorns* where Usama was humiliated at the checkpoint that deeply disturbed him. I had earlier read about the routine humiliation of the Palestinians at the checkpoints from the beginning of the occupation; the feeling that I experienced something similar at the checkpoint, was eerie. I wondered how long this would continue to affect people and hoped for an early resolution.



### **A visit to the Hani Amer Family**

Another incident I would like to narrate is our visit to Mr. Hani Amer, who lives with his wife and six children in the village of Mas'ha in Qalqilya district. Amer's is the only Muslim Palestinian family living near the illegal Jewish settlement of Elkana. I was excited to see the family and interested to know about their saga. It is mandatory to take prior permission from Israeli officials to visit and interact with the family. Hence, the organizers had to take permission by providing the schedule of our visit. Amer's house is closely guarded and is excessively fortified by the Israeli military. One has to pass through several gates to reach his house. The first gate with heavy metal bars two metres tall, which had barbed wire on the top. It completely blocked the road. The Israeli army was the only one which had the key to this gate earlier.

A second gate was locked which was four metres away from the first gate which blocked the road. This time we saw a solid, one meter tall metal gate. On the gate we saw a red sign painted in yellow with a white hand that signalled us to stop. The gate was abutted by a wall, upon which there was metal fencing with sensors. Right behind the gate was a mud-road that is swept every day, so as to enable the Israeli military to identify the latest foot prints. The wall is built on Amer's land at less than twenty metres from his house. Amer's family could see nothing but the walls surrounding his house on all sides. By the time we reached his house, the man of the family had opened the gate. He welcomed us with warm smile on his face. We all assembled in front of his house to listen to him. He spoke in Arabic; there was a translator, who translated him into English. He said that since the 1970s, Israel has confiscated eighty per cent of the land of Mas'ha, to build Jewish settlement of Elkana which is illegal. When occupiers decided to construct a wall, many Palestinians lost their land as well as their means of livelihood. The army evacuated the Palestinian families, but Hani Amer refused to leave. He was firm, determined to stay there without having any neighbours and Relatives.



A high metal gate with a stop signal

Initially the Israeli government tried to get Hani Amer's cooperation, offering excessive amount of money for his property. He not only refused all offers but also resisted all attempts by the Israeli military and settlers for which he had faced many challenges and adverse consequences. Hani Amer owned a restaurant, poultry and nursery, but all his business establishments were destroyed by 2004. He expressed his gratitude towards various national and international organizations which supported him in protesting against the construction of the wall in the year 2007. He became very glad whenever people from all over the country came and visited him. While he was spontaneously narrating the way his family struggled every day, a green military Jeep full of Israeli soldiers with their guns came to take rounds. The Jeep stopped for a while. All the participants panicked, I didn't dare to turn my face back to see them. Though their visit was unexpected, it was evident that they came there to arouse fear and anxiety among us.



Hani Amer opens the gate to welcome the participants

On the other hand, I began to feel that one needs to think twice before visiting Palestine. But Hani Amer did not stop his narration; in a way, this narration had become a routine for him. His wife distributed biscuits and tea to all participants above 160 in number. The generous nature of hospitality from Amer's family was praiseworthy.

Meeting the subject of my research, Sahar Khalifeh was a sub-agenda. I explored the possibility of a tete-a-tete with Sahar Khalifeh; but at that moment, I could not get any information on her whereabouts, which I considered unfortunate. We tasted the

Palestinian dessert Kanfeh that was served to us in the camp; it was familiar to me through my reading. I saw the Palestinian folk dance – *dabke*. We purchased olive oil, olive soaps, tea, spices, etc., but we consciously avoided Israeli goods. Our intention was to support Palestinian economy. Returning from Palestine, I hoped the occupation would end soon. I wished that the two communities would live in peace, without any bias over religion, race, cult, creed or gender. We visited several other places in Palestine such as the grave of Yasser Arafat in Ramallah, Birzeit University, Hebron streets and Mosque, Bethlehem, Church of the Nativity and refugee camps.



Hani Amer and his wife Munira Amer in front of the house.

Israeli authorities denied permission to the participants from Gaza to attend the International Youth Camp without giving any specific reasons. We also visited Jerusalem where native Palestinian participants were not allowed to visit the mosque Al-Aqsa. I carried back with me a bundle of memories, with a desire to visit the country again.

## **Appendix II**

### **Bio-Data:**

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### List of Publications based on PhD Research Work

S. No.	Title of the Paper	Authors (in the same order as in the paper. Underline the Research Scholar's name)	Name of the Journal/Conference/Symposium, Vol., No., Pages	Month & Year of Publication	Category *
01	Israeli Occupation and Palestinian Resistance in the Novel Wild Thorns by Sahar Khalifeh	<u>Priyanka</u> & Shashikantha Koudur	International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies, Volume 3, 1435-1447	September, 2016	1
02	Exiled in the Homeland: Palestinian Experience as in Sahar Khalifeh	<u>Priyanka</u> & Shashikantha Koudur	The IACLALS Journal, Volume 2, 96-102	2016	1
03	The Multiple Resistance Strategies for Survival under Israeli Occupation in the Novels of Sahar Khalifeh	<u>Priyanka</u> & Shashikantha Koudur	Khazar Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences	Accepted	1
04	To Go, or Not to Go: The Palestinian Realities of Exile in the Works of Sahar Khalifeh	<u>Priyanka</u> & Shashikantha Koudur	Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Volume 26 (1)	Accepted March, 2018	1

\*Category:           1: Journal paper, full paper reviewed

2: Journal paper, Abstract reviewed

3: Conference/Symposium paper, full paper reviewed

4: Conference/Symposium paper, abstract reviewed

5: others (including papers in Workshops, NITK Research  
Bulletins, Short notes etc.)

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