

## The Psychological Plight of the Colonized in Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North*

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### Abstract

This study investigates postcolonial suffering of people in Sudan as portrayed by Tayeb Salih in his novella *Season of Migration to the North* (1966). Relationship with the colonizer renders the colonized psychologically, emotionally and mentally disturbed. In response to their pain, victims resort to different mechanisms like repression, isolation, and violence. Colonial abuses affect men and women. After spending long years pursuing higher education in Britain, two major male characters in Salih's novella find themselves stunned to realize they were no more than tools used by the colonizer. With a mind spurning out of control, one of them finds himself incapable of digesting his heart-wrenching fiasco. As a result, he puts an end to his life. The other one seems also to have contemplated committing suicide, but he changes his mind at the last moment. As for women, getting accustomed to losses and violence, a helpless mother appears devoid of emotion at her only son's departure and leaving her alone with a possibility of not seeing him again. Another one, to the shock of everyone, a widow forced to marry an old man, kills her husband and commits suicide at her wedding night. Salih uses certain literary techniques to convey the intolerable wretchedness of the colonized and the failure of communication between colonizer and colonized. These techniques include an unnamed narrator, stream of consciousness, personification of the natural landscape as well as intertwining fictional and historical elements. Society as a whole seems plagued by a sense of loss, aimlessness, and

worthlessness. In brief, Salih's portrayal of the conditions of the colonized reflects a deep awareness of their psychological plight.

**Key Words:** World literature; Psychological plight; *Season of Migration to the North*; Tayeb Salih; Postcolonial literature; Arabic literature.

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### INTRODUCTION

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* (1966; Trans., 1978) embodies postcolonial suffering in Sudan, and exposes colonial policies that sap the energy and will of the colonized. The novella represents the psychological pain the colonized experience in their daily life and their attempts to avenge their suffering. Salih once told Arabic press, "I have redefined the so-called east-west relationship as essentially one of conflict, while it had previously been treated in romantic terms" (Flood, 2009). Throughout the novella, colonialism creates troubled space wherein complicated encounters and interactions take place. Action focuses on the experience of Mustafa Said, a smart Sudanese student who seeks self-fulfillment by studying and working in Britain for years. Said and students like him are usually expected to learn a lot from contacting a different culture. They can also be seen as models representing successful communication among people of distinct civilizations. However, Said relates a different story. His academic success, romance with English women, marrying an English woman and working at well-known universities never make him fully integrated into Western society. He rather remains

an outsider. At the same time, his engagement with the colonizer makes his native fellows eye him suspiciously. As a result, Said returns home choosing to live unknown in a small village, and ends up committing suicide. His disappointment and confusion reflect the burdensome legacy of colonialism which seems to cast a shadow over individuals as well as society as a whole in postcolonial Sudan.

At first, a stark difference appears in the mood of colonizers and colonized. Connecting themselves with technology, civilization, and gentle manners, colonizers usually create an aura of superiority around their culture and its concomitants. This aura makes them high-spirited. By contrast, the colonized face different internal and external challenges, including illiteracy, poverty, corruption, and feelings of inferiority. The colonized find it difficult to accept their reality as insignificant helpless victims under such conditions. The colonized "become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world" (Fanon, 2008, p.111). Hence, they develop various strategies to cope with their weaknesses. From a psychoanalytic perspective, a defense mechanism develops when "the ego seeks to avoid pain. Instinctual drives are warded off to avoid anxiety or guilt by certain characteristic processes (defense mechanisms). In addition, the ego attempts to avoid feelings of guilt and anxiety" (Kline, 1972, p.200). Related to this point, Billig (2004) argues that there are two kinds of unconscious thought. The first one is the ordinary thoughts which exist in the human mind but are hidden or latent into unconsciousness; when the person needs them they are pushed into the consciousness and become conscious. The second type is the unconscious beliefs which cannot be conscious because a certain force opposes them as they are shocking and painful, so something stops them from completing their journey (pp.15-16). Keeping frustrations and undesirable emotions hidden develops techniques like denial, repression and avoidance which are common reactions usually seen as a sort of psychological defense intended to relieve the effects of unpleasant situations and their devastating impact. Such techniques suggest victims' tendency to hide, negate, and keep uncomfortable moods under control. However, such methods may result in annoying and harmful psychological conditions. For example, avoidance may cause feelings of emotional numbness, feelings of depression, losing interest in past activity, hopelessness about the future and difficulty maintaining close relationships. A victim of such negative feelings also avoids places, people, thinking and talking about his past experience or reduction in one's awareness of one's surrounding (Doctor & Shiromoto, 2010, p.2). In fact, characters in *Season of Migration to the North* use different defense mechanisms to handle their psychological, mental and emotional burdens. For example, they have a strong desire to keep their feelings

as a secret or even deny them. Thus, being subjected to overwhelming stress or unbearable pain, the helpless colonized may develop a technique of repression. Reaction to the oppression of colonization may also appear as an apparently inexplicable lust for revenge. Many colonized people have a desire to take revenge on their oppressors in order to cure themselves or find a way to cushion the effects of psychological pain on their psyche. Thus, oppression is harmful for the human psyche since victims may turn vindictive.

Colonialism may also affect society as a whole. New values introduced by the colonizer can pose challenges to the long established cultural and social values of the colonized. Failure to deal with the arising challenges can lead to social unrest, conflicts, uncertainty, and alienation as people do not tend to change their values for light reasons. Moreover, it is possible to find political institutions indulged in corruption. The colonized lose trust in politics, and they consider it as a way to trick them. Most political institutions in the colonized countries are expanded to serve the colonial interests. These institutions propagate the colonizers' thought, frightening the colonized from the colonizers and maintaining the colonizers' presence even after the colonized gain political independence. The natives are aware of this fact, so they try to avoid them, considering anyone who works with these institutions as a traitor. Said, a major character in the novella, is accused of playing an important role "in the plottings of the English in the Sudan during the late thirties" (Salih, 1978, p.56). The people who know him think that he is a very rich man living as a millionaire in the English countryside, occupying "the highest positions" (Ibid, p.55) and playing "a considerable role in furthering this if he had not been transformed into a buffoon at the hand of a small group of idiotic Englishmen" (Ibid, p.59) but reality is different. Said has left everything to live a simple life in a small village where he finally puts an end to his life.

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## 1. THE FRAGMENTED PSYCHE OF A CENTRAL CHARACTER

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As a victim of colonialism, Mustafa Said suffers from psychic fragmentation. He suffers both psychically and physically. His tragedy comes as no surprise considering his vulnerability from the moment of his birth. He was born as an orphan. Lacking adequate family protection in a country that suffered from colonization intensifies his suffering. He has had no one to support him or give him a hand to overcome his difficult life. His relation to his mother is tough. The mother has lost her feeling, like most oppressed people who suffer from colonization. Leading a life full of fear and losses, she finds herself incapable of expressing her feelings. What is striking about Mustafa's mother is that nothing seems to emotionally move this

widow, including her only son's travelling abroad and leaving her alone. She lets him go and choose his own way showing no emotion with "something on her face like a mask". For Mustafa, this mask is like "the surface of the sea... it possessed not a single colour but a multitude, appearing and disappearing and intermingling" (Ibid, p.19). Lindeman claims that people who suffer from acute grief and loss of a relative and other kinds of violence show some symptoms of "an empty feeling of the abdomen, loss of warmth in relation to others and heightened irritability and anger along with a desire to socially withdraw" (Qtd in Maghalseh, 2003, p.52). Experiencing psychological pain over long periods of time affects its victims' daily life and may even render them incapable of expressing their feeling or performing easy routine tasks. According to Barlow, "Chronic tensions serve to block the free flow of energy and emotions in the individual" (1983, p.97). Fear and tension caused by colonial policies deprive the colonized of a normal psychic well-being.

The loss of warmth is very clear in the relation between the mother and her child. Women in the colonized countries lost the feeling of motherhood as a result of killing. This emotional damage is linked to great losses. Those women become incapable of showing their feelings toward their children. Sending their children out of their countries may seem the best way to keep them safe regardless of the challenges they may face. Such mothers seem to be convinced that whatever happens to their children abroad is more merciful than staying in their homeland. According to Gross and John (2002), "Emotions both help and hinder functioning" (p.297). Mother's fear and helplessness make her resign herself to her loss with an unexpected quiescence. This dead rapport between mother and son is replaced by another relationship with a mother figure, the one between Mustafa and Mrs. Robinson who waits for him to embrace him. He finds in her everything that a child wants, she keeps calling him "dear child" (Salih, 1978, p.25) providing him with the care and tenderness he is in need of. This relation between Mrs Robinson and Mustafa represents colonizer-colonized relationship; the colonizer steals everything from them, kills them and torments those who stay alive. The colonizer also compels the colonized to leave their countries, devastates them and their psyche. However, at the end, the colonizer embraces the colonized, shows them that the colonizers are civilized and ready to have direct contact with them to "build a bridge between north and south" (p.68). They seem to have the justice that the colonized lack. Salih considers this kind of justice "like the laws of combat and neutrality in the war. This is the cruelty that wears the mask of mercy" (Ibid.). Everything around is an illusion like "a half-truth amidst a world filled with lies" (p.69). For Mustafa nothing is clear. He is confused as he starts to realize that his life has been no more than a big lie.

The attraction between Mustafa and Mrs. Robinson may justify his desire toward having sexual relations with women. Playing tricks on them seems to give him pleasure as he deems this behavior as an achievement or victory worthy of celebration. Billig (2004) quotes Freud's claim that "the origins of adult neuroses are to be found in the desires of childhood" (p.106). Mustafa Said represses the sexual desire he has toward Mrs. Robinson whom he thinks of as a real mother. He feels jealous of her husband and at the same time has sexual attraction to her, which represents the attraction between east and west. He loses the mother's love, but he finds Mrs. Robinson as a substitution to retrieve the mother loves. According to Freud, "Boys concentrate their sexual wishes upon their mother and develop hostile impulses against their father as being a rival" (1925/2010, p.4212). Freud also claims that the repressed emotions are "regular and very important factor in child's mental life" (Qtd in Billig, 2004, p.107). The emotional attachment that Said lost in his early years, makes him thirsty for any relation with women. Oedipal desire toward his mother is the same as colonized people's desire for their lands. They like the lands and have hostile feelings toward anyone who thinks about controlling or dominating them. When the colonizers attack or dominate any country, the colonized people have inner feeling to rid their country of the colonizers. During colonization, the colonized try to hide this desire with great fear in order to evade punishment. But at the same time, they find themselves attracted to the colonizers and their way of living, thinking and even domination over others.

Mrs. Robinson, who seems to provide the love Mustafa lacks in his real mother, starts to gain a special place in the orphaned boy's heart and mind. Similarly, the colonized may have the feeling that their colonizers provide what their own native country lacks. Thus, the colonized get to a position similar to that of little children torn between their mother and their babysitters. In other words, the colonized get stuck emotionally; the feeling of fear and being inferior causes anxiety, and such feelings repeat themselves in their victims' psyche. So, it is not always possible that such victims can grow up emotionally and overcome past worries .

From his childhood, Said recognizes that he has a great mental capacity that distinguishes him from his peers. It is like a "sharp knife" (Ibid, p.26) that can cut everything. He celebrates his mind which makes him eager to learn and thirsty for knowledge. He manages to absorb colonial culture and ideology. The colonizers support him. He becomes a lecturer in many Western universities and the author of many books. At the same time, he suffers from extreme confusion and insecurity. As a result of colonization, he suffers from an overwhelming amount of stress. The West offers him support, adopts him, teaches him and gives him a helping hand at every stage, but Said shows no feeling of gratitude. He takes their help as a kind

of duty. The relationship between colonizer and colonized is only skin-deep. The colonizers come to the land of the colonized to poison their present and their future. The trial makes Said aware of this shocking reality as he recognizes that he is not important for the West; "it was not I who was important but the case" (Ibid, p.93).

The colonizers associate the colonized with feminine qualities. In fact, Said represents a "combination of strength and weakness" (Salih, 1978, p.8), the strength of living in Europe and the weakness of being a colored man. In the novella, Jean Morris thinks that he is a very weak person who can do nothing except talking, promising and warning. She knows very well that his weakness prevents him from taking action; "you're not the kind of men that kills" (Ibid, p.159) when she destroys the most valuable things that he has. She keeps telling him that the only thing he can do be to sit on his bed and cry; "I don't think you'd do anything. You'd sit on the edge of the bed and cry" (p.162). When Said kills her she looks at him with great surprise in her eyes because she has never thought that he would be able to do it. She tells him; "I thought you would never do this. I almost gave up hope of you" (Ibid, p.164).

Said suffers from self-rejection, and he has an extremely painful feeling of being the "other." Musa Al-Halool (2008) claims that "colonialism damages the self-image of the colonized native and expresses metaphorically his desire to be his own master" (p.31). Said rejects the stereotypical image at the end: "I am not Othello, Othello was a lie" (Salih, 1978, p.95) and he admits that he is "a lie". Feelings of being the "other" puts the colonized "in a shaky position, to be always on guard, ready to be rejected and... unconsciously doing everything needed to bring about exactly this catastrophe" (Fanon, 1967, p.55). Neither his native country nor the West offers Said a good place to live in, which makes him suffer from dislocation and exile. According to Dixon (2002), "Group membership promotes the development of personal identity and provides individuals with a sense of security and belonging based on their cultural, ethnic, and linguistic context" (p.81). Said remains deprived of such assets of belonging to a group. Thus, the hollowness he experiences in his troubled childhood culminates in the north where his feelings die.

The colonized usually experience violence and feelings of inferiority which make them think of revenge in order to make other people suffer. Fanon (2008) explains, "I will make someone else suffer, and desertion by me will be the direct expression of my need for revenge" (p.54). During the trial, Said's bitterness makes him feel his body like a dead corpse. He does not feel that the lawyers are defending him. He rather feels that they "were fighting over my body"(Salih, p.93). Despite Mustafa's education and interaction with educated Western circles, Professor Maxwell tells him "you, Mr. Sa'eed, are the best example

of the fact that our civilizing mission in Africa is of no avail. After all the efforts we've made to educate you, it's as if you'd come out of jungle for the first time" (Ibid, p.94). Professor Maxwell's remark suggests Said's failure to be up to colonial expectations. Such remark may make him feel inferior, humiliated and guilty as he appears to have failed to take advantage of the education offered to him by the West. This failure means that Said has fallen behind and missed the opportunity of entering the civilized Western world. The professor's remark brings to mind binary opposition distinguishing colonizer from colonized. The colonizers are educated and civilized while the colonized are ignorant and primitive. Such classifications assert the backwardness and inferiority of the colonized who may lose self-confidence and experience low self-esteem and negative self-image problems.

Said is also viewed by the colonizers as a machine or a thing. His Western acquaintances do not trust his judgement. For them, he is no more than a little idiot. They think that he is like a calculator which deals with numbers and quantifiable objects, which reflects their conception of the colonized as empty and hollow. In his homeland, Said is considered as a traitor for his engagement with the West and its institutions. His condition does not seem better in Britain where he suffers from racism as he is separated from real life experience. According to Fanon (1967), the colonizers "repudiate the one whom they have shaped into their own image" (p.46). Absence of trust, gratitude and appreciation marks colonizer-colonized relationship, echoing a sense of loss and failure.

Said's returning to his native land and for farming can be held as a quest for self. He seems unable to cope with his turbulent past reality. A history of violence and trial haunts him. His ego tries to defend him against his troublesome past which causes him anxiety by distancing himself from his awareness of unpleasant colonial thoughts and feelings. This management of unfavourable conditions illustrates the mechanism of repression. Freud (1915) asserts that "the motive and purpose of repression have nothing else than avoidance of unpleasure" (1915/2010, p.2983). The colonizers' behavior affects Said badly, so as a victim, he tries to cope with the stressful events that he has faced. Freud states that "The ego—the 'I'—sits at the center of some pretty powerful forces: reality; society, as represented by the superego; biology, as represented by the Id." (Qtd in Mcleod, 2009). Ego's attempts to protect victims from an upsetting past may fail as it may collapse under the threat of reality and society, causing the feeling of anxiety (Ibid). According to Freud, "anxiety attack may consist of the feeling of anxiety, alone, without any associated idea, or accompanied by the interpretation that is nearest to hand, such as ideas of extinction of life, or of a stroke, or of a threat of madness" (1895/2010, p.330). Said suffers from anxiety and fear. His anxiety even makes his laugh



predominated by weakness. A clear sign of his anxiety shows when he returns to the narrator to correct his image after the drinking session.

To deal with his problems, Said employs defence mechanisms during the trial, which makes him feel that they are talking about somebody else. He projects the hatred that he has suffered from for a long time on Western women by dealing with them aggressively; he has no consideration to their feelings. He does not sympathize with them although most of them commit suicide after he breaks up with them. His desire for revenge leads him to kill his British wife. After the trial he comes back to Sudan. He seems to have no sense of belonging to the place where he was born and brought up or anything that may remind him of his past. Thus, he chooses to live as a stranger in one of the villages. His option could have served "to permit the gratification of repressed impulses by projection or displacement" (Kline, 1972, p.186). Projection, according to Freud, is "reproach on to another person without any alteration in its content and therefore without any consideration for reality becomes manifest as the process of forming delusions" (1905[1901]/ 2010, p.1373), which means trying to justify one's own unwanted feeling to the others. Said wants to avoid any acquaintances and hides everything about his past. He also tries to forget his annoying experience. However, according to Freud, "what seems to be forgotten is, in real sense, still remembered: Conscious forgetting is accompanied by unconscious remembering" (Qtd in Billig, 2004, p.147). He hides his education, pretending to be ignorant. But soon these hidden things surface when he meets a person who shares similar conditions and life experience. The need for telling his painful experiences makes Said go to the narrator's house to tell him about himself, leaving the key of his secret room where he keeps his diaries, photos and his books to look at; "I did not have long to wait, for Mustafa came to see me that very same evening...will you come to my house tomorrow evening? He said to me. I'd like to talk to you" (Salih, 1978, p.17). Connections between the two men develop as they share the experience of being exposed to Western culture. At first, Said finds himself unable to tell the narrator about his past, giving the narrator hints like "it's long story, but I won't tell you everything" (Ibid, p.19). His psychological pain keeps him from revealing all the details about his past. In other words, Said seems controlled by a wish to keep certain elements of his life hidden. Freud says: "The theory of repression,..., asserts that these repressed wishes still exist- though there is a simultaneous inhibition which holds them down" (1900/2010, p.714). Telling the narrator about his painful past memories could have healed Said, but unfortunately his inner pain seems to be insurmountable.

Said suffers from melancholic depression. According to Kerr (2016), melancholic depression is seen by the

American Psychiatric Association as a mental illness and is characterized as an intense feeling of sadness and hopelessness. Kerr (2016) explains that Melancholic Depression Disorder (MDD) has a strong effect on a person's life such as "work, school, and relationships. It may also impact mood and behavior as well as various physical functions, such as appetite and sleep. People with MDD often lose interest in activities they once enjoyed and have trouble getting through the day. Occasionally, they may also feel as if life isn't worth living" (para.2). Like people who suffer from melancholic depression disorder, Said feels hopeless; when he kills Jean Morris he feels as if "the universe, with its past, present and future, was gathered together into a single point before and after which nothing existed" (Salih, 1978, p.165). During the trial, he has a desire to shout that "this is untrue, a fabrication. It was I who killed them. I am the desert of thirst. I am no Othello. I am a lie. Why don't you sentence me to be hanged and so kill the lie?" (Ibid, p.33). This quote clearly shows that he does not mind being executed, and he himself later ends his life by committing suicide as he becomes sick of it.

Psychological pain caused by violence leaves emotional scars and can lead to neurosis (Caruth, 1996, pp.59-60). Said's behavior is neurotic. He suffers from "ignominy, loneliness and loss" (Salih, 1978, p.195), and he admits that he lost his feeling; he says: "I felt no sadness-it was as though the matter was of absolutely no concern to me" (Ibid, p.195). At the same time he contradicts himself by hysterical weeping, "I remembered this and wept from deep within my heart. I wept so much I thought I would never stop" (Ibid, p.159). Said is emotionally abused by the colonizers, and he is also troubled by the violence he himself commits in Britain which causes the death of three women and the killing of his own wife, Jean Morris. The trial also causes him great pain. During the trial, he realizes that he and all the colonized people do not exist in the Western mind; colonizers just consider colonization as a civilizing mission that they have done for the "barbaric" people who are insignificant.

Victims physically live in the present, but the past haunts them psychologically and makes them suffer continuously. In the village where Said settles after leaving Britain, he keeps a small room in his house full of photos, paintings, diaries and Oriental items similar to those he used to have while living in Britain. But in a drinking session when he is unconscious, he recites an English poem. What he says while being unconscious suggests that he is caught up in his past. Readers realize that he is a product of the Western people who consider themselves the guardians of civilization, and their mission is to civilize the colonized. So, they adopt him at an early age and educate him. He absorbs the white culture and ideology as he wants to be part of it. At the same time,

he is aware that the West wants the colonized just to say yes; "the schools were started so as to teach us how to say yes in their language" (Ibid, p.95). According to Said (1977), "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (p.18). The West also stereotypes a strange image about residents of places they colonized. For example, "the Negroes of Congo and some other parts, exhibit the most disgusting moral as well as physical portrait of man" (Teltscher, 1998, p.89). A common image of the Orient is that of a place where the desert dominates the scene with its camels and where the people are primitive running after animals or living the luxury and pomp of lascivious Caliphs and Sultans. In addition, Said (1977) considers the Orient as one of the west's "deepest and most recurring images of the other" (p.19). The west creates an image about the east which makes the West fascinated by it. This image also enhances the superiority of the West. Fanon (1967) shows that the colonizers are "not satisfied with simply ignoring the Negro of the colonies, repudiate the one whom they have shaped into their own image" (p.46). The incense of Orient, Persian carpets, and Arabian Nights maids enhance the fascination with the Orient. This stereotypical image that the West constructs in Westerners' mind has social and political implications boosting notions about the backwardness of the East as well as its people and their incapability of managing their affairs. The Oriental image is incorporated in the novella to represent character suffering. The image of Said's room indicates the hollowness of his life as he becomes obsessed with taking revenge for his people by attacking the West in their land. He awakens the curiosity of the Western women's minds about the Orient, seduces the European women to liberate himself; "they imported to us the germ of the greatest European violence,..., the like of which the world has never previously known, the germ of a deadly disease that struck them more than a thousand years ago" (Salih, 1978, p.59). He acknowledges his intentions to take revenge on the colonizers in "yes, my dear sirs. I came as an invader into your very homes: A drop of the poison which you have injected into the veins of history" (Ibid, p.59). Fanon (1967) emphasizes the fact that the black man "wants to go to bed with a white woman. In the latter there is clearly a wish to be white. A lust for revenge" (p.6); and Fanon considers the relation between the black man and the white women as a desire to be part of their civilization: "When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine" (p.45). Fanon sets forth the desire to possess and control elements of the Western civilization for the purpose of attaining prestige. He also considers it as an attempt to handle the inferiority complex the colonized usually experience as a result of colonialism. Such negative feelings affect an individual's

mental potential. Such connection between emotional state and mental processes and activities is expressed by researchers in the field of psychology like Innes-Ker and Niedenthal (2002) who call attention to "a large literature that claims to provide evidence of effects of emotional states and moods on cognitive processes" (p.804). The tragic shift in Said's fortunes reflects the extent to which his mind has deteriorated as a result of his feelings of alienation.

British authorities do not blame Said for killing Jean Morris, and they do not consider the suicide committed by the English girls as his fault. They rather consider it as a cultural gap. The colonizers consider the colonized as barbaric, savage and primitive people, assuming that the colonizers' mission is to civilize them. Said tells the narrator that, "this sort of European is no less evil than the madmen who believe in the supremacy of the white man in South Africa and in the southern states of America" (Salih, 1978, p.59). Addressing Said, Jean Morris says, "You're a savage bull that does not wary of the chase... I am tired of your pursuing me and of my running before you" (Ibid, p.157). Fanon (2008) claims that "There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect" (p.3). The colonizers want to convince Said that they consider him one of them; "Look how tolerant and liberal we are! This African is just like one of us! He has married a daughter of ours and works with us on an equal footing" (Salih, 1978, p. 59), but at the same time they say that he has a thick head. He cannot think in a proper way. And they cannot rely on him, his "statistics were not to be trusted". For them, Mustafa is an instrument and a machine that "has no value" and he is not "an economist not to be trusted" (Ibid, p.58). According to Lopez (2001), "even those colonial subjects who most sincerely and earnestly attempt to emulate the white ideal, however skilled their performance or astonishing their transformation, learning to speak the colonizer's tongue, to dress, walk, even think "white," can never really attain it" (p.94). Colonial policies give the impression that the colonized can be fully integrated into Western culture, while reality attests to a crisis of confidence between the two sides. Social and psychological integrity of individuals is likely to be shaken under such circumstances of uncertainty.

In brief, Said's migration to the north to fulfil his dreams and ambitions of a better life turns out a mere journey of broken dreams. In England, he keeps a room similar to an Arabian Nights one. The smell of burning sandalwood and incense attracts the white women who live in the imaginary world which the West constructs in their minds. He responds to colonial violence by seducing Western women and having fake romances with them. According to Ṭarābīshī, *Season of Migration to the*

*North* is one of the novels that “demonstrate gendered relationships that boast of Eastern masculine dominance to make up for the unequal power relations between the two cultures” (Qtd in Al-Malik, 2014, p.34). Thus, Said’s migration to the north becomes a means to retaliate against his colonizers in their homeland. He also rejects colonial policies intended to make him a passive recipient of orders, and against those who want to deform him by teaching him to “say yes in their language” (Salih, 1978, p.59). Fanon (2008) emphasizes this fact by quoting Jean Veneuse:

The majority of them, including those of lighter skin who often go to the extreme of denying both their countries and their mothers, tend to marry in Europe...So that without my knowledge. I am attempting to revenge myself on European woman for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on mine throughout the centuries. (p.50)

These intentions of revenge reflect the irrationality and helplessness of the oppressed who are deprived of the opportunity to express or represent themselves. According to Leeper, “emotions ‘arouse, sustain, and direct activity’” (Qtd in Mayer, 2002, pp.xii-xiii). As peaceful communication fails, the oppressed may come to the conclusion that revenge is the only way to deal with their superiors. Thus, revenge in this case becomes a desperate means of self-assertion in an environment where fair means are absent. When injustice and marginalization control the scene, there is no guarantee that logic and common sense would prevail.

## 2. OTHER EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED CHARACTERS IN SEASON OF MIGRATION TO THE NORTH

Different characters seem emotionally disturbed including the narrator who digs about Mustafa Said’s past. He thinks that he is like Said, “a lie” made by the colonizers. After returning to his homeland, he thinks that he is better than his people. He does not answer Mahjoub’s question about the West because in his conceit he was afraid Mahjoub “would not understand” (Salih, 1978, p.4). Similar to Said, the narrator seems to have had certain disappointments as a result of exposure to Western culture. Thus, he tries to uncover Said’s reality to heal himself. Said’s death allows the reader to enter his private life and know a lot of details about his past. The confused narrator also tries to commit suicide to escape his intolerable psychic pain. However, unlike Said, the narrator reconsiders his decision before it is too late. The survival of the narrator should not exclude the notion that both characters attest to the misery caused by the colonial legacy.

Furthermore, the novel addresses issues of troubled female characters. According to Spivak, women in colonized countries experience “double silencing”

(1999/2006, p.32) exercised by native patriarchy and foreign masculine imperial ideology. Women suffer from isolation and muting. In the novella, they try to find a voice. Women are perceived as no more than objects for men’s pleasure. Most men are polygamous seeking women for having sexual pleasure which will be later related in their entertaining evening tales. Women are positioned between human and animal. To gain some value, some women imitate men to be socially significant. Bint Majzoub holds the stage as, “Men and women alike were eager to listen to her conversation which was daring and uninhibited. She used to smoke, drink and swear on oath of divorce like a man” (Saleh, 1978, p.76). Against social traditions, the woman engages in social gatherings involving men openly talking about their sexual desire. This woman’s drinking and joining men’s sessions may be seen as a rejection of her role as a woman as well as a covert appeal for granting women more rights and freedom.

While men are given the freedom to express themselves, women did not have the right to make life choices including choosing their husbands. Hosna bint Mahjob is married to a stranger. She does not have any special feeling toward her husband. She refers to him as a father of her children. After her husband’s death, she was married off to a man who is twice her age. Her rejection of this marriage and asking the narrator to marry her officially are seen, within her cultural context, as unnatural and immoral. Her self-expression is considered as a shameful thing and a crime she deserves to be punished for. The colonized people exaggerate the feeling of shame, and they project their behavior on women. Fanon considers “the effects of European colonialism on the psychology and behavior of colonized people” (Qtd in Williams, 2012, p.3) as the main cause for internalized oppression. Internalized oppression appears in the behavior of Hosna’s father and brother who force her to marry again after the death of her first husband.

Hosna rebels against the traditions of her society that force her to get married against her will. Unfortunately, she could do nothing to stop the marriage. The only way she finds to express her disagreement is to kill her husband and commit suicide, an act perceived by the village people as very strange and scandalous. Everyone in the village wants to hide this crime and bury it with Hosna’s body. The incident of killing concurs with another similar one in another village. Readers become aware of such unexpected behavior of women while the narrator is travelling from his village to the capital. He sees a police patrol on his way heading to a village to arrest a woman who has killed her husband. Salih’s portrayal of the tragedy can be seen as an attempt to draw attention to women’s struggle for their rights as a noteworthy social phenomenon.

### 3. SALIH'S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES OF PORTRAYING POST-COLONIAL SUFFERING

The novel aptly conveys the painful experiences of the colonized. Salih utilizes various narrative techniques to convey characters' stress and other manifestations of emotional disorders. These techniques include using an unnamed narrator, stream of consciousness, portrayal of the landscape, and combining fictional and historical elements. This section sheds light on these techniques which combine with other fictional elements to bring about a multifaceted image of a nation exhausted by various internal and external challenges.

The novel is narrated by an unnamed narrator from the first person point of view to make it more personal and to attract the reader's attention. The reader enters Mustafa's psyche and lives the painful experience and the conflict he suffers from while living in the West and the reality that he wants to hide. The unknown narrator unmasks Mustafa's reality a little by little, especially after his mysterious disappearance. Most of the novel's characters are vaguely representing the mysterious life of the colonized. Salih resorts to stream of consciousness to achieve his goal. The narrator keeps going backward and forward with his memory. The past seems to haunt the present of characters affected by colonialism. Shunning chronological order in the plot development helps convey the behavior of disoriented characters with their inconsistencies and lack of solidarity. Getting hints here and there about action strongly alerts readers to the fragmentation that people suffer from. It is striking that the protagonist Mustafa Said disappears at the beginning of the novel, but he leaves signs for the narrator who keeps digging to unravel his secret as he himself and Mustafa both seem to be victims of colonial experience. The narrator reaches the epiphany that he is also a lie. As a product of colonization, he is a myth. He seems to doubt the fact that he has existed. All the pride he has had in himself turns out to be an illusion. The colonized, including the narrator and Mustafa, are formed according to the will and desire of the colonizer. Awareness of being no more than tools manipulated by their oppressors generates feelings of helplessness and hopelessness which can lead victims to find the sole solution for their suffering in committing suicide.

Salih's skill of showing the plight of the colonized is also noticed in his portrayal of the landscape which is very poor as its people. Invading social and personal lives of the oppressed, the threat of colonialism further overhangs their surrounding natural landscape. The Nile, which flows north, seems to represent those colonized people who long to travel to the north. This desire becomes like a germ of infection. Mustafa expresses to the narrator his unwillingness to let his son do what he has done, to travel to the west: "How sad it would be if either or both of my

sons grew up with the germ of this inflection in them, the wanderlust" (p.67). Salih (1978) shows the river Nile flowing from the south toward the north, trying to avoid everything in its way, fighting against nature, turning left or right to make its way to the north. Similarly, Mustafa tends to view cities or towns as mountains where he could stay for a while, and then pass them to reach his goal and to continue his journey to the north. Mustafa becomes aware of this desire, and he takes revenge for himself and his people by killing Jean Morris and the other women, settling in a small village and ending his life there. Strangely and unexpectedly, the Nile floods over in one of the hottest summer evenings. The narrator relates the seemingly uncanny phenomenon by saying "the height of summer in the month of fateful July; the indifferent river has flooded as never before in thirty years" (Ibid.). Nature seems to identify with the colonized, and consequently join their protest against colonization. It revolts against its laws and does something unexpected by flooding in a hot summer evening.

Finally, by intertwining fact and fiction, Salih imbues action with significant historical associations, revealing the plight of the colonized. For example, the date of birth of Mustafa Said, a character epitomizing postcolonial experience in Sudan, is revelatory. He was born in 1898, the same year when "The massacre of the arm of Sudanese Dervishes" (Shonfield, 1998) occurred and the British army defeated al Mahdi's army in Omdurman Battle, putting Sudan under British control (Ibid). This event marks a turning point in the Sudanese history, and Mustafa Said's birth in that year can be considered as the beginning of defeat and loss. From its starting point, his life seems to be marked by subjection, degeneration as well as losses, both sentimental and material. With his emotional state growing worse and his bitterness building up, Mustafa Said ends up being a psychopath.

### CONCLUSION

Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* reflects the harmful influence of colonialism upon the colonized that appear emotionally and mentally unbalanced. Men and women become victims of colonial policies which create spaces and relationships triggered and nurtured by power inequities. Salih insightfully conveys the rupture colonialism causes in the life of the colonized. Of special significance is the damage that occurs in one of the strongest human relationships, mother-child relationship. Getting accustomed to losses and inferiority makes a widowed mother incapable of expressing any compassion, concerns or sadness when her only son decides to leave her alone to pursue his studies abroad. The son also seems devoid of emotions in a parting scene expected to be highly emotional. This emotional dryness reflects the way colonial exploitation ruins the relationship between the



colonized and their homeland. Poverty, corruption and injustice are among the illnesses the colonized nations usually suffer from despite colonial claims about their civilizing missions. Under such conditions, the colonized start to seek a satisfactory life away from home just like an orphaned child seeking in vain maternal love and protection away from his/her real mother. In fact, Mustafa Said's journey of loss and misery starts the moment he decides to leave his mother and homeland. Salih points out other disruptions illustrating the suffering of colonized women. Hosna, a widow forced to marry an old man twice her age, turns a presumably happy event into a tragedy by killing her husband and committing suicide at her wedding night, a shocking incident reflecting the misery of the colonized. Instead of investigating the reasons behind the tragedy, people of the village rather focus on condemning the crime and burying its secrets with the dead body of its perpetrator. This approach to problems is unlikely to bring any change for the better in the life of the oppressed that remain encompassed in a state of shock and shame.

Furthermore, through the characters of Mustafa Said and the narrator, Salih highlights the experience of Sudanese students who travel to study in Western countries that seem unwilling to accept them. They find themselves marginalized and stuck in a social and cultural gap between East and West. To deal with feelings of inferiority and rejection, they chase and seduce Western women. For example, as a student and professor, Mustafa Said is acquainted with Western culture. The colonizer adopts him, educates him and allows him to marry a European woman. However, his academic success and apparent integration into Western society do not make him a full man in the colonizers' eyes. They rather deem him inferior and ignorant. Such colonial abuses make Said's hatred for the Europeans take the form of a vindictive desire for breaking the hearts of British women or killing them. In fact, Said kills his British wife who used to betray him. Leaving Britain and starting a new life in Sudan do not erase the past from his mind; although he marries a Sudanese woman and has two kids, he remains haunted by his painful past memories. Unable to overcome his grief and disappointment, he commits suicide. Said's self-destructive act can be attributed to his negative emotions and attitudes. As for the narrator, he also seems to have his own concerns and apprehensions that make him think of committing suicide by drowning himself in the Nile. Fortunately, he changes his mind and struggles to save his own life at the last moment. The experiences of Said and the narrator could be seen as two sides of the outcome of frustrations resulting from the relationship between colonizer and colonized. The troubled colonized victims seem to be at a disadvantage. On the one hand, like Said, they may get so overwhelmed by their mental and emotional burdens that they find no relief except in death.

On the other hand, like the narrator, other people may take a different option and choose to live. Despite the apparent difference between the final outcome of options taken by Said and the narrator, their experience strongly attests to the detrimental effects of colonial injustice.

Different narrative techniques figure throughout the novella. Using an unnamed first person narrator imbues action with a sense of both mystery and tenability. Stream of consciousness also reflects the complexity of the colonial experience and the fragmentation as well as confusion it creates in the life of the colonized. Furthermore, their psychological plight appears in personifications of natural phenomena like the Nile's bursting its banks and flooding. River flooding can be seen as a sign of protest against colonial abuses. Finally, indirect connections between fiction and history render the literary masterpiece highly revelatory. Thus, the losses and psychological pain of the colonized are conveyed not only through characters' action and language, but also through myriad social, historical and cultural associations.

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