

# Juxtaposition of Memories and Moments to Expose the Concealed Realities of Palestine Refugees: An Analysis of the novel *Returning to Haifa*

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## ABSTRACT

In modern times, the most famous Arabian Palestine novelist is undoubtedly gazzan khanafani. Through his writings he exposed the hidden agonies of the exile life. The displacement of Palestinians to the neighboring borders after nakaba, the reaction of Palestinians, and unending endurance caused by those compulsory evictions etc have filled his pages. The origin of exile literature is traced back to before centuries when the colonial powers started to take over the control on upon Arabian soil. The patriotic fervor, humanistic values, the quest to foot back to the homeland etc constituted the features of exile literature. Gazzan kanafani discovered a new light through this newer field of writing. He speaks volumes about the multifaceted issues of refugees through his works *Men in Sun*, *Ummu Sa'd*, *All That's Left to You* and *Return to Haifa*. This article specifically points the quest of a refugee couple to get back to the homeland and chaos they encountered upon reaching over there in the novel *Returning to Haifa*.

**Key words:** exile life and crisis, unparalleled patriotic string, identity crisis

## INTRODUCTION

Gazzan kanafani was born in 1936 to a middle class Palestinian family in the city of acre (akka). He is an unquestionable persona in Palestine literature and an influential member of PFLP (popular front for liberation of Palestine). His homeland was under British Mandate when he was born. He is the third son of his lawyer father. The outbreak of Arab – Israel war in 1948 also affected his hometown. Thus he was forced into exile as its consequence. His family had to settle at Damascus in Syria as a Palestinian refugee. This life changing incident played a crucial role in his writing. He was imprisoned for several times for opposing Jewish occupation to Arabian land. In 1952, he was enrolled as a student of Arabic literature in Damascus university of Syria. Following yer he met Dr. George Habash, who has introduced him to politics. His political inclination to MAN (Movement of Arab Nationalists) caused his expulsion from the University. Thus in 1956, he moved to Kuwait with his sister Haifa Khanafani. He worked as a journalist for Al Hurriya, Al Muharrir, Al Anwar etc. he followed Marxist Leninist ideology in politics. So people called him 'Comrade'.

GK adopted literature as a tool to reach his anti- Zionist ideology to the masses. Its GK who have popularized the genre of Resistant Literature in the realms of Arabic Literature. He persuaded the Palestinians to raise the voice against Israel occupation in Palestine with his pen. His works rose as the Voice of the Voiceless people that could be heard far beyond the restrains of Israel confinement. The rapid spread of his popularity scared the Israel government thus led to his murder in 1972 in a car bomb.

## DISCUSSION

The return to Haifa is a famous novel by gazzan kanafani in 1970 which was translated by Barbara Harlow and Carren Riley (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner publishers, 2000).

It recounts the story of a Palestine middle aged couple Said S and Safiyya who are now in their way back to their homeland Haifa (now occupied by Israel) in search of their lost infant son in the Naqaba of 1948 before 20 years. The return journey became a completely shattered encounter when they realized their lost son Khaldun is brought up as a Jew by a Jewish family and is now adamant to refuse Said S and Safiyya. The story revolves around the thread of social political tensions between Jews and the Arabs in the name of Holy Land that has plunged the relationships far wider than the expectation.

The novel speaks much about the patriotic strings of an Arab origin with the character Said and his wife Safiyya. They were forced not to return to their place for twenty years due to the tensions between warmongering Israel with Palestine. The love they hold towards their country is undeniably leading us to think about the identity crisis they have faced once they got out of their homes. The beauty and grandeur of the landscape is portrayed in an astonishing way through the stream of consciousness way. The choked emotions welled up in their mind is heart touching. It's obvious from their talk when they cherish the memorable days in Haifa. It was so well in tune with their nature and their love to be a part of Haifa is infact a proud moment to them. Their long kept desire and love to be a part is undoubtedly visible in their enthusiastic out bursting when they re-entered the border of Haifa after 20 years of separation. "this is Haifa , Safiyya"(p.2). The voice of cry and laughter can be equally measured with his homesickness. The way they spoke endlessly about how it used to be once with single sights gives the readers a special comprehension of their longing to be with their homeland. But the bitter truth of reality is concealed under their lurking mind when Said S says "I know this Haifa, but it refuses to acknowledge me" ( p. 3). This struck of thought is a self-humiliating bother for them. The love of the country is a way of distant relief until they reached at the entrance of Haifa. The homesickness, the emotion of to be reunited with their country

is paralleled with the intensity of their reunion with their lost son. The intense desire of their get together with Haifa is as just as their get together with the lost son. The parallel reading of these two sides; the family reunion and the reunion with the homeland are equally given importance through the words of Ghazani GK.

The novel's realistic depiction of harshness of Palestine- Israel war is heartbreaking. Not only the socio political issues but the mental trauma of the inhabitants of the conflicting areas is starkly rendered. The bitterness, harshness, the breaking relationships, devastated children, isolated families etc are but a common picture of these peoples' life. The attacks and counter attacks made their days dumbstruck. The grief stricken faces and swollen eyes of mothers are common view for them. The victimization of children is in fact an irrefutable question here. The infant boy who was born to the Arab family was devastated entirely from the roots but was happened to be with a Jewish family. The uprooted boys link to the real family is erased absolutely until the parents came back to reclaim their son after 20 years. However 20 years is not a simple time to reclaim the lost identity of the boy. The long lost 20 years of the child is undeniably has nothing to do with the real parents that has led him to refuse them unreservedly. He no longer feels any tie even towards the mother. Things turned out in a way that the then young boy Khaldun is now working in Israel army against Palestine army where he is originally meant to belong. He is waging against the army where his own brother works as a Palestine soldier. Unknowingly the kith and kin become the alien parties to each other with much fire and fury. The identity of both people is skewed as an aftermath of the war.

Author has tried to bring out a new phase of thinking by manipulating an Optimistic idea in Pessimism to envisage beyond the limit. Though the story seemed to be a pro -Palestine novel, it doesn't mean for the suffering of these people alone. The novel takes both sides almost equally when it deals with suffering and humanity. The humanitarian concept is a far reaching concern throughout the novel. The life story of Miriam details the suffering of Jewish people before German Army. The final words of Khaldun of the open ended novel gives much room for thinking. He says to his father "You shouldn't have left Haifa. If that wasn't possible, then no matter what it too, you shouldn't have left an infant in its crib. ... Don't tell me you spent twenty years crying! Tears won't bring back the missing or the lost. Tears won't work miracles! All the tears in the world won't carry a small boat holding two parents searching for their lost child. So you spent twenty years crying. That's what you tell me now? Is this your dull, worn out weapon?" (p50). The words of Khaldun are really a sharp arrow to the readers especially to those who left their country behind. Amidst of many twitching experience these words strike the thought. It not only empathises with the refugees but also lending a hopeful invoice to rise in the conflict to fight back against the powerful regimes that are now controlling the mind too. The physical invasion may no longer controls their mental stirring that may lead to a confirmed strength to stand in the way to fight back against their loss than retreating as silent sufferers.

## Conclusion

The novel *Returning to Haifa* unreservedly deals with the tool of memories of a rich past to showcase the intense reality of the present moment with the pungent portrayal of the refugee crisis.

## Reference

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