

Mustafa Sa'eed, A Psychopath or A Victim of his Circumstances; in the novel *Mawsim al-Hijra ila al-Shamal* (1967), or *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih

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Abstract

This research paper is an in-depth study of the character of Mustafa Sa'eed, the protagonist of Tayeb Salih's *Seasons of Immigration to North*. Mustafa is a dubious character who has been portrayed as a constantly changing character in the novel. At first he is a fatherless poor child, then he becomes an intelligent promising young schoolboy, after that suffers from Oedipus complex when he develops weird sensual attraction towards his mentor's wife a British elderly lady who loves him like a mother, later evolving as a psychopath lover entrapping young British ladies who get enmeshed by emotional relationship and commit suicide after being abandoned by him. Eventually he turns out to be a murderer of his European wife Jean Morris, and finally transforms into a responsible farmer, an enigma in narrator's village Wad Hamid. The aim of this paper is to understand whether the character of Mustafa Sa'eed should be considered as a psychopath or a man full of hatred towards Colonialism, which makes him take revenge from European women.

In order to reach to the conclusion, the researcher did in-depth study of the negative impact of the colonialism on the native Africans and compared it with the political and social situation of Sudan depicted in the novel *Seasons of Immigration to North* by Tayeb Salih. The egoistic and sadistic behavior of the protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed towards British women has been analyzed in the wake of his loveless childhood due to his widow mother's agony. The researcher has linked the British women with the motherland of Sudan and tried to establish the fact that Mustafa is not a psychopath rather a snake born out of the vices of Colonial rule.

Key Words: Colonialism, manipulative, murderer, psychopath, stone-hearted, slavery.

Introduction:

Season of Migration to the North, a novel written by Tayeb Salih is a protest against colonialism. Its original title is *Mawsim al-Hijra ila ash-Shamal* written in Arabic later translated in English by Denys Johnson-Davis. The writer has presented the view of masses against the vices of the colonial rule making Mustafa Sa'eed as his mouthpiece. The protagonist of the novel Mustafa Sa'eed is an extraordinarily brainy person but lacks emotions. He is brought up by a single parent

(his mother), who has become like a stone after the death of her husband. Being a child of Colonial Africa, he develops negative feelings towards Imperialism. With his excellent English and intelligence, he gets an entry in England resultantly impressing everyone with his intellect. His obsession for East and repugnance towards Colonialism makes him vindictive. He entices the white women and deserts them as a symbol of revenge from Occident. He says, "I would read poetry, talk of religion and philosophy, discuss paintings, and say things about the spirituality of the East. I would do everything possible to entice a woman to my bed. Then I would go after some new prey" (Salih 30). His statement shows that he does not have any respect for fair sex rather they are just the victims for his sexual gratification. But it is contrary to the later part of his disposition when he marries Hosna, a Sudanese Muslim woman. Thus, proving that his sadistic behavior is culture based.

Tayeb Salih (12 July 1929 – 18 February 2009) was born in Karmakal, near the village of Al Dabbah in the Northern Province of Sudan, he graduated from the University of Khartoum with a Bachelor of Science before leaving for the University of London in England. Coming from a background of small farmers and religious teachers, his original intention was to work as agriculturist. However, excluding a brief spell as a schoolmaster before coming to England, his working life was in broadcasting.

Methodology: The researcher studied the negative impact of the colonialism on the native Africans and the reaction of masses towards it with special reference to Mustafa Sa'eed the protagonist of the novel *Seasons of Immigration to North* by Tayeb Salih. During Colonial era people were forced to slavery and the country was stripped off her natural resources. Since 1899, Sudan was ruled by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. Although in real sense Egypt was a puppet under British Rule. According to an article in Sudan Tribune the policy of Britishers have been described as "divide and rule" policy.

Trying to control half of the world at the time, the British did not have the force to occupy Sudan. Like in other colonies across Africa, they had to institute the "divide-and-rule" policy in Sudan. They wanted Sudanese to distrust, fear, and fight each other, instead of their colonizers. ("Roots Of Sudanese Conflict Are In The British Colonial Policies - Sudan Tribune: Plural News And Views On Sudan")

In the novel Mustafa Sa'eed holds colonial rule culpable for all the sufferings of his compatriots and his mother as well. He has seen his mother as cold as ice and devoid of emotions resultantly Mustafa too becomes ruthless. His mind becomes a battlefield of Europeans and Africans and he decides to take vengeance on Britishers by migrating to England.

Discussion:

To understand the implacable nature of Mustafa Sa'eed, a detail and depth knowledge of the impact of colonialism on African society is required. The basic idea about colonialism in Africa is well conveyed in the following excerpt from an essay on *Colonization in Africa* in the online magazine *Africana Age*:

Between the 1870s and 1900, Africa faced European imperialist aggression, diplomatic pressures, military invasions, and eventual conquest and colonization. At the same time, African societies put up various forms of resistance against the attempt to colonize their countries and impose foreign domination. By the early twentieth century, however, much of Africa, except Ethiopia and Liberia, had been colonized by European powers.

The European imperialist push into Africa was motivated by three main factors, economic, political, and social. It developed in the nineteenth century following the collapse of the profitability of the slave trade, its abolition, and suppression, as well as the expansion of the European capitalist Industrial Revolution. The imperatives of capitalist industrialization—including the demand for assured sources of raw materials, the search for guaranteed markets and profitable investment outlets—spurred the European scramble and the partition and eventual conquest of Africa. Thus, the primary motivation for European intrusion was economic. ("The Colonization Of Africa")

Keeping in consideration the above information, the imprint of the adversities of colonialism on the mind of a fatherless child might have been damaging. Mustafa lost his father and had seen his mother, a slave by origin as an emotionless woman who apparently hides her feelings under a thick mask. It seems he never got emotional caring from his mother because he always saw her in a stern look. Even while sending him to Cairo to study in English Middle School his mother didn't show any sign of parting pain at the time of farewell, no tears, and no hugging, rather she just told him, "Had your father lived, he would not have chosen for you differently from what you have chosen for yourself" (Salih 23).

His childhood was devoid of parental affection, so he doesn't have an emotional attachment to anyone. When he reaches Cairo, he stays with a childless British couple, Mr. & Mrs. Robinson who took care of him as their own son. Mrs. Robinson often told him, "Mr. Sa'eed, you're a person devoid of a sense of fun. Can't you forget your intellect?" (Salih 25). Instead of having motherly affection towards her Mustafa develops sensual feelings for Mrs. Robinson. He has the ability to memorize quickly, perhaps that's why the childhood memories of his past are embedded in his head. He is like blue blazes, who appears to be an emotionless stone-hearted person but, he is a monster burning inside to take revenge from the Occident.

Europe expanded its territory in search of a new market for trade and commerce. During the process, they discovered new lands and resources. Due to Social Darwinism, the Europeans tried to prove their superiority and succeeded to a great extent.

Social Darwinists believe in “survival of the fittest”—the idea that certain people become powerful in society because they are innately better. Social Darwinism has been used to justify imperialism, racism, eugenics and social inequality at various times over the past century and a half. (“Social Darwinism”)

They started feeling that it's their duty to uplift the backward races of the society. In the process of transforming and uplifting the natives of other countries which were not developed, the oppression began. According to the theory of Social Darwinism, it was an act of obligation in the beginning which later became Chauvinistic Nationalism. Native people were forced to abandon their culture, custom, dresses, and religion as well. Missionaries were sent to spread Christianity. Slavery started in Africa with the expansion of trade by the Colonial countries. The natives felt robbed of their natural resources, culture, customs, and morality.

Mustafa goes to London to acquire the knowledge of Economics, Engineering, and English on one hand and aesthetic art like poetry and drawing on the other hand. He settles as an agriculturist in narrator's village Wad Hamid on the Nile River after buying a farm, building a house for himself, and getting married to Mahmoud's daughter Hosna. He is considered as a calm, composed, and respectable person in the village. The narrator describes him as, “a man of medium height, of around fifty or slightly older, his hair thick and growing grey, beardless and with a mustache slightly smaller than those worn by men in the village: a handsome man” (Salih 2). He regularly attends Friday prayer and leads a gentle life.

No one can think even in their farthest dreams that he is a murderer of his cruel British wife Jean Morris and the reason behind the suicide of his three European girlfriends named Ann Hammond, Sheila Greenwood, and Isabella Seymour. The writer has presented a clear contrast in his personality, like that of Dr. Henry Jekyll and his alternate personality, Mr. Edward Hyde, a fictional character in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1886 novella *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Mustafa the dubious man whose all relationships ended in tragedy, who faced murder trial in England and was sentenced to seven years prison becomes so very agreeable in his later phase of life.

It seems that he doesn't have any remorse for the crime that he had committed in England. The researcher reaches the conclusion that it is not right to call him a psychopath because his sadistic behavior is only towards Europeans in general and British women in particular. He is a good husband when it comes to his second marriage with Hosna, a Sudanese Muslim woman. He is a protector and supporter of the religious beliefs and rituals of his community. He is in fact a child of hatred towards colonialism. His motive is to enter the house of his enemy and even the score. He

takes English education, gets a job in London, becomes a British citizen, lures British women, and makes them his slaves with his captivating tête-à-têtes. All this seems to be a part of the strategic plan of a clever person not of a psychopath. He did the same what Europeans did in Colonial Era. They entered in his country, got control over the natural resources, made people their slaves (either for manual work or mentally by giving them basic teachings of English so that they can work for them), despised their customs, and tried to convert them by showing the supremacy of their religion and race. Mustafa did the same with British women presuming them as the representative of colonialism thus gratifying his old hidden chip on the shoulder.

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