

COLONIAL LEGACIES AND ECOFEMINIST RESISTANCE IN ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S NOVELS

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Abstract:

Colonial exploitations, wars, deforestation, and socioeconomic destitution of many of the world's women challenge all who hope for a more humane world. Increased violence during colonial and post-colonial third-world countries, ecological crises, and gender concerns draw the attention of some recent academics. Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian-born author, is known for his insightful exploration of post-colonial themes and his focus on the experiences of marginalized individuals. Gurnah aims to give these marginalized groups a voice and reevaluate historical events and cultural productions from his perspective. While Gurnah's works touch on various aspects of post-colonialism, including identity, migration, and displacement, ecofeminism also emerges as a significant motif in his novels. Ecofeminism is an ideology that examines the intersection of feminism and environmentalism, highlighting the ways in which the oppression of women and the degradation of the environment are interconnected. In Gurnah's novels, the portrayal of female characters and their relationship with nature often reflects the ecofeminist perspective. His female characters navigate the challenges of a changing world while maintaining the connection to their culture and the natural environment. In *Paradise*, *Afterlives* and *Gravel Heart* Gurnah portrays the female characters' relationship with the natural environment and the intersecting themes of power, gender, and the environment. This essay projects the resilience and agency of women in the face of adversity. It aligns with ecofeminist principles that emphasize the potential for women to be agents of change and advocate for a sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature.

INTRODUCTION

Colonial legacies refer to the enduring effects and consequences of colonialism. It was the process by which powerful nations established and maintained control over other territories and people for economic, political, and cultural purposes. These legacies encompass various social, cultural, economic, and political aspects that continue to shape societies despite the termination of colonial empire. Considering the inescapable impact of colonial heritage renowned philosopher and theorist, Edward Said asserts, "Westerners may have physically left their old colonies in Africa and Asia, but they retained them not only as markets but as locales on the ideological map over which they continued to rule morally and intellectually" (1993, 27). Abdulrazak Gurnah, an East African writer who spent his childhood in colonial Zanzibar and later relocated to London at eighteen, explores the themes of colonial legacies, post colonialism, and the experiences of marginalized individuals and communities in his novels. Through his works, Gurnah surveys how colonialism has shaped and continues to shape various aspects of postcolonial life. When Gurnah was awarded the Noble Prize in Literature in 2021, the Swedish Academy perfectly captured the contribution of his literary work: "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents" ("Abdulrazak Gurnah", 2021). His novels, such as *Paradise*, *Gravel Heart*, *Afterlives*, *Admiring Silence*, and *Desertion* depict the historical and ongoing exploitation of land and natural resources in postcolonial contexts. He explores how colonial powers extracted resources and imposed exploitative systems that continue to impact local communities.

This examination aligns with ecofeminist concerns about the interconnectedness of gendered oppression and environmental degradation resulting from colonial legacies. Gurnah explores how gendered power dynamics intersect with social, economic, and environmental issues. The portrayal of the degraded and oppressed condition of East African women in post-colonial society becomes a part of many of his novels. Considering the importance of ecofeminism in demonstrating existing social discrimination and domination Pronami Bhattacharyya (2022, 22) opines that "ecofeminism proves helpful in incorporating the natural with the human order while insisting on the fact

that environmental concerns are closely connected with the feminine/women's experience". Ecofeminism highlights the relationship between the marginalization of women and environmental destruction, underscoring the combined efforts needed for both gender and ecological justice. Emphasizing the intimate relation between women and nature and their joint exploitation Janis Birkeland (1993, 18) defines "Ecofeminism as a value system, a social movement, and a practice, but it also offers a political analysis that explores the links between androcentric and environmental destruction." Thus, nature's exploitation is intricately connected to Western attitudes toward women. Gurnah's writing incorporates ecological themes and symbolism such as land, sea, and forest, often depicted as sources of solace, resistance, and connection to heritage. The destructive practices associated with the pursuit of wealth and power, such as seaport exploitation, land grabbing, and environmental degradation directly affect the lives and well-being of both women and the nature they inhabit. Besides criticizing colonial exploitation Gurnah posits how his female characters endure such degradation and how they silently raise their voice against these circumstances. The Chipko Movement in India in 1970 and the Green Belt Movement in Africa demonstrate that ecofeminism is an "intellectual and social movement that relates ecology to women" (Wiyatmi; Suryaman; Swatikasari 2019, 517) which has a profound effect on modern literature. The initiative of the rural women of India to save trees by hugging them was a unique strategy to save the country from deforestation. Though many men were involved in the movement it is known as the ecofeminist movement as women are the most affected by rampant deforestation. The strategic movement of Kenyan women to save the environment as a prerequisite to saving women's rights is reflected in the Green Belt Movement. To address the challenges of aridity and deforestation, the Green Belt Movement (GBM) engaged women in collective efforts to cultivate seedlings and plant trees. These activities aimed to stabilize the soil, conserve rainwater, ensure the availability of food and firewood, and provided participants with a modest financial remuneration for their labor. Both the initiatives taken by the Third World women to preserve the environment exhibit their common interest.

As a transnational and diasporic writer Gurnah's novels center around the plight of the refugees and their homesickness. While depicting the disadvantages of colonial exercise Gurnah pays particular attention to the degraded condition of the female characters in his book. Like women, nature is also dominated due to colonial exploitation. Such an intimate relationship between women and ecological systems in his novels gets special attention. The issue of post-colonial ecocriticism in the novels of Abdulrazak is something innovative and a very promising field of study. Though post-colonial ecocriticism and ecofeminism have been considered Euro-American concepts it becomes a leading field in third-world literature. This paper seeks to explore Gurnah's critical depiction of colonialism's effects on East African women, examining the relationship between women and their environment through a gendered lens. The chapter focuses on three main theoretical frameworks: the intersection of women and the environment in both colonial and ecofeminist thought, and the portrayal of ecofeminist perspectives in Gurnah's fiction.

Colonial Heritage and Global Development: A Theoretical Approach

Gurnah's novels encompass a wide range of African, particularly East African history. The coastal region of East Africa was frequently encountered by foreign powers due to its topographical importance. Zanzibar, Gurnah's homeland, is an island located in the Indian Ocean, approximately 22 miles (35 km) off the east-central coast of Africa. Thanks to its advanced communication and transportation networks, it emerged as a key regional trading hub. This strategic importance attracted merchants from early historical periods. The growth of trade in the 19th century accelerated the arrival of Arab settlers and encouraged Indian traders to live among the local Swahili-speaking, predominantly Muslim, Black population along the East African coast. The British government became involved in Zanzibar primarily to safeguard the western frontier of its Indian empire, and throughout the 20th century, it continued to treat East Africa as an extension of British India. Since the early colonial history, the colonizer exploited the natural resources of the native land and subjugated the marginalized community. Consumption of natural resources of the native land by the colonial power was necessary for global development. Colonial expansion and its practice were the prerequisites of the Industrial Revolution and capital accumulation. The inevitable exploitation of natural resources of the native lands is highlighted by Vandana Shiva: "colonialism is a constant, necessary condition for capitalist growth: without colonies, capital accumulation would grind to a halt" (1988, 1). Shiva explores the historical connection between capitalism and colonial expansion. The exploitation of natural resources of the occupied territory and suppression of the marginalized people are the key sources of capital raising and global development. In newly independent countries the commercialization of the uses of natural resources is required for economic development which creates "internal colonies" (Shiva 1988, 74). Addressing this new group as the "nationalist bourgeoisie" who often rule their own country in the same sort of despotic way Frantz Fanon opines that "The national bourgeoisie increasingly turns its back on the interior, on the realities of a country gone to waste, looks toward the former metropolis and the foreign capitalists who secure its services" (1961, 111). Gurnah frequently depicts the enduring

power dynamics established during the colonial period. These hierarchies often persist and influence the relationships between characters, reflecting the lasting effects of colonialism on social structures.

In the name of development, such exploitation of natural resources and marginalized communities is very much Western ideology. Shiva calls this type of development a “patriarchal Western concept of development” (2014, 75). In the Western concept of development colonialism is a prerequisite condition. Without colonies, capital accumulation is not possible. Economic development relies on the exploitation of natural resources and the unequal allocation of national wealth. As such, development becomes a continuation of colonial practices, extracting resources from the very populations that are most in need of them. It is no longer the colonizer, but rather the national elites who exploit the underprivileged community. According to Karen J. Warren, such unjustified domination of the marginalized community (women, people of color, children, and the poor) is well connected to the unjustified domination of nature (2000, 1) as nature is considered a “feminist issue” (2000, 1). To highlight the close connection between women and nature, Warren asserts “According to ecofeminists, trees, water, food production, animals, toxins, and, more generally, naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nonhuman nature) are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the interconnections among the dominations of women and other subordinated groups of humans” (2000, 2). Women’s natural, cultural, and ideological connections with nature show their interdependence. Thus, the exploitation of nature and women during the colonial era in the name of development is also closely connected.

Feminism and Environmental Exploitation:

The extension of the imperial defiance has been mentioned in Gayatri Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak.” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, an Indian postcolonial theorist, and feminist scholar has made significant contributions to the understanding of colonial legacies and their impact on marginalized communities. In *Can the Subaltern Speak* she addresses the marginalized and oppressed groups as the ‘subaltern’. Spivak highlights the epistemic violence inflicted upon the subaltern by the dominant colonial powers. As women are identified as “second sex” by Simone de Beauvoir, (1949) they also belong to the marginalized “subaltern” group. Spivak argues that colonialism not only involves physical violence and political subjugation but also produces knowledge systems that erase the perspective and experiences of the subaltern. The dominant narratives and discourses of colonialism legitimized the subordination and exploitation of the colonized, while simultaneously silencing their voices and histories. As a victim of British and German colonial history, Gurnah experiences its unpleasant consequences and closely observes the exploitation. In his novels, not only the dominant ruling government they are also the victims of the patriarchic social system manipulates the female characters. On the one hand, they are deprived of all political and social rights and on the other; they face discrimination even in their own family. In *Paradise* and *Gravel Heart*, such exploitations are vividly expressed. As a result, these women lose their identity, become physically, and psychologically disoriented. Such disruption of identity and culture and political and economic exploitation refers to the lasting impact of colonialism on societies and environments. The domination of European nations during the era of imperialism not only exerted dominance over colonized regions, but also exploited their resources and imposed the colonizer’s own cultural, economic, and political systems. This resulted in significant social, economic, and environmental changes that continue to shape today’s world.

As women are more responsive to the environment than men any environmental change affects them vigorously. □ The association between women and the ecological world is identified as both “spiritual and cultural” by Celia Nyamweru in her essay “Women and Sacred Groves in Coastal Kenya: A Contribution to the Ecofeminist Debate” (2003, 42). Because of such a deep-rooted connection, “women suffer more from environmental degradation than men do, are quicker to perceive its effects, and are the first to protest against it” (Eaton 2003, 16). Vandana Shiva further illustrates the relationship between women and nature. In her book, *Ecofeminism*, she asserts “At one level nature is symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is nurtured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance (2014, 37). Greta Gaard mentions several connections between the oppression of women and nature such as the Western concept of “devaluing whatever is associated with women, emotions, animals, nature, and the body” (1993, 5). Another connection is the effects of environmental pollution and degradation (toxic pesticides, chemical wastes, etc) on the lives of women and animals. According to her “ecofeminists can demonstrate that sexism, racism, classism, species, and naturalism (the oppression of nature) are mutually reinforcing systems of oppression” (1993, 5). Thus, ecofeminism does not revolve around a single issue; rather, it is grounded in the principle that all forms of oppression must be addressed collectively. The extractive logic of colonialism has significantly contributed to the continued subjugation of women and the destruction of the natural environment. Vandana Shiva highlights how colonial powers, through their extractive and exploitative practices, imposed a worldview separating humans from nature and devaluing indigenous knowledge systems and women’s roles in traditional societies. Ecofeminism, as articulated by Vandana Shiva, acknowledges the interconnectedness of women’s subjugation and environmental exploitation. She contends that colonial systems have commodified both women and nature, reducing

them to expendable assets.. Thus, the suppression of women during the colonial age and its legacies are interlinked with the oppression of women as a minority class.

In most of his novels, Abdulrazak Gurnah shows how colonial expansion disrupts the social and cultural life of the people of East Africa. The effects are so penetrating that it gives rise to a new class in society that started playing the role of the colonizer. In his novels, women are viewed as passive and subordinate to the dominant patriarchal and capitalist society. During the colonial period and even after the independence women as representatives of Mother Nature were dominated and tortured. As a result, they lose their financial freedom, ancestral comfort, and self-identity. Socially and politically deprived women of the African community do not get the chance of proper education. Due to lack of food, malnutrition is their constant companion. As a result, they suffer from various diseases. Moreover, they are humiliated and sexually violated even by their near ones. In *Paradise*, *Gravel Heart*, *Afterlives* Gurnah painstakingly portrays the degraded condition of the women in the community. This essay projects the resilience and agency of East African women in the face of adversity. It will exhibit how the issues of identity, memory, and displacement dominate the female characters in some of the novels of Abdulrazak Gurnah and how the legacies of colonialism shape them. It aligns with ecofeminist principles that emphasize the potential for women to be agents of change and advocate for a sustainable and harmonious relationship with nature.

The Representation of the Ecofeminist Approach in Postcolonial Society: (i) *Paradise*:

Paradise encompasses three phases of the colonial history of East Africa: the Omani Empire, Sultanat of Zanzibar, and the German invasion. It is an extended history of exploitation of land, water, and other natural resources. This form of exploitation is closely intertwined with the manipulation of the community, especially the marginalized community. The novel integrates postcolonial ecocriticism and ecofeminism within a unified analytical framework, revealing how the degradation of the environment and the marginalization of women are deeply intertwined with issues of class, race, and colonial legacy.

The Arabs of the sultan of Zanzibar, once ran the city called Kawa. They came to expand their kingdom the way their ancestors came from Muscat to Zanzibar. They went to the deepest forest, crossed rivers, and occupied the best lands. They extracted valuable objects from nature by exploiting the native people. In this way, they became rich and built beautiful palaces for them as a token of their authority. Their oppression became more brutal as they sent out women from everywhere and made them their mistresses. Thus, the domination of nature and women during the Omani period paved the way for future oppressions.

The Europeans also came to make a profit. With this mission, they encroach on lands. The nature of their colonial expansion is revealed by the conversation among many travelers who accompanied Aziz, *tajiri makubwa* (a renowned merchant on the journey to the interior for business purposes. Emphasizing the greed of the Europeans on land as Edward Said realized, Hussain said to Hamid, “You’d be a fool to think they’re here to do anything good. It isn’t trade they’re after, but the land itself. And everything in it...us” (1994, 86). The colonial extortion is further expressed in the words of Kalasinga, their guide to the interior “it is only the gold and the diamonds that make it worthwhile killing all the people there and taking the land” (1994, 86-87) Encroachment violence, extraction, and murder create the background of colonial rule.

Uncle Aziz is a representative of the capitalist society who is engaged in different types of business. He started his business when the Omanis ruled the land. He extends his business “from the ocean to mountains, to the lakes and forests, and across the dry plains and the bare rocky hills of the interior” (1994, 3) to the deepest part of East Africa. Yousuf’s father runs a hotel business in the small town of Kawa. The city became a boomtown when the Germans came there to build a railway line to go to the interior. Like Yousuf’s father, many people came from different parts of the world to become a part of colonial development. They worked as *vibarua* for the Germans on the line construction gangs. However, the payment was not adequate and the Germans treated them badly. The female members had to take part in family finances. Like Yousuf’s mother, they had to participate in the family business and worked hard all day but without any remuneration.

The sufferings of the women intensified when they were separated from their children for poverty. Merchants like Uncle Aziz used to lend money to the poor and when they failed to repay the loan, they took the younger children of the family to work in his business without any payment until their parents could repay the loan. In this way, Aziz separated Yousuf and Khalil from their family. The agony and pain of both mothers due to their separation from their children is expressed by Khali’s mother who considered a cruel person like Aziz as a “son of a devil and was now possessed by the daughter of Iblis, or afreet or worse. That he was a dog and a son of a dog...that he did magic and other things” (1994, 202). Such crazy exasperation reflects the sufferings of women who are victims of the capitalist society.

The garden and palace of Aziz is a symbolic presentation of Gurnah’s exposition of the suppression of women and nature. Both of them are subjected to patriarchal tyranny, which is an extension of colonial atrocities. The garden is

very well organized and beautiful. But nothing is naturally born and grown. Nature has been controlled and dominated in the garden. It becomes a symbolic representation of a prison. The irony is that it becomes a prison for Hamdani (a servant of Aziz's mistress), Amina, and Aziz's mistress. Amina, who was once taken by Aziz as her father's *rehani*, is initially treated as a mistress of him. She becomes a prisoner in Aziz's palace when she is supposed to play and sing like a free bird. Though she was married to Aziz she never got the status of a wife. Rather, she acted as an attendant of Aziz's first wife. Thus, the garden, which was once considered as heaven, turns into hell. In her utter despair, she asserts, "If there is hell on earth, then it is here" (1994, 229).

Thus, women, as representatives of Mother Nature are oppressed and exploited by the patriarchal society. Moreover, the exploitation of natural resources such as land, forests, and rivers affects them more than their male partners. As Karren J Warren mentions "According to the ecofeminists, trees, water, food production, animals, toxins, and more generally, naturism (i.e. the unjustified domination of nonhuman nature) are feminist issues because understanding them helps one understand the interconnections among the domination of women and other subordinated groups of humans" (Warren 2000, 1-2). Being suppressed for many years they forget the real nature of liberty and do not even want to be free from the subdued status of their lives. They became servants of their nature. The devastating effects of long-time colonial rule and its effects on women and nature are also observed in Gurnah's *Afterlives* which is a historical novel.

(ii) *Afterlives*:

"In the thirty years or so that they have occupied this land, the Germans have killed so many people that the country is littered with skulls and bones and soggy with blood." (Gurnah 2020, 41)

Afterlives encompasses the early colonial phase of German invaders, the clash between different colonial powers, and the uprising of various local revolutionary activities. It demonstrates "imperial mastery, white Europeans over black Africans" and "the discrepancy between the official 'idea' of empire and the remarkably disorienting actuality of Africa" (Said 1993, 33).

Though written many years after the publication of *Paradise*, *Afterlives* showcases an intricate and dark side of human nature through the complex relationship between the realms of the oppressor and the oppressed. In this book, Gurnah takes us to the reign of the German Colonial Period of East Africa - Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya and their struggle with other colonial powers such as Britain in the early twentieth century. Such a long colonial history has a profound effect on its people especially on women and nature as both belong to the marginalized group.

As a part of their invasion, the Germans occupied the best lands "Good land was taken over as more German settlers arrived (Gurnah 2020,16)". In the name of development, the Germans occupied lands and created more roads and highways to expand their territory. With this mission, they created job opportunities. However, such economic development does not project the real condition of women, children, and the environment. As they are forced to leave their homes and lands, they are deprived of their rights. Poor women like Khalifa's mother in the novel used to grow vegetables to meet their daily necessities (Gurnah 2020, 6). Such small domestic economic support helped her a lot. But because of the loss of land, she is deprived of such minor help. Such dispossession augments the ecological degradation and depravity. As Vandana Shiva asserts in her book in the name of economic development, the colonizers deprived the natives especially the minority group:

Economic growth was a new colonialism, draining resources away from those who most needed them. But now, it was not the old colonial powers but a new national elite that masterminded the exploitation on grounds of 'national interest' and growing GNPs, and it was accomplished by more powerful technologies of appropriation and destruction. (2014, 74)

Thirty years of colonial practice gave rise to a new capitalist community that continued the same destruction and barbarism in their own countries. Emphasizing the continuation of colonial practices Edward Said posits that "although that era had an identity all its own, the meaning of the imperial past is not contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology, and policy still exercises tremendous force" (Said 1994, 11). Representatives of that community who exercise colonial practices are the merchant Amur Biashara and his son Nassar Biashara. Nassar is educated in a German school. Both father and son occupy themselves in illegal business. Like Uncle Aziz in *Paradise*, they exploit native people and natural resources. They lend money to the poor in high interest and when they fail to pay the due, they encroach on their property. Under these circumstances, the female members of the community suffer the most as they belong to the minority group. Gurnah projects the sufferings of the female community because of the invasion of landed property in the novel. As they lose good land areas, they fail to produce crops to feed themselves. Lack of nutrition causes many diseases. The women suffer most because of lack of nutrition. In the novel, the early death of Khalifa's mother is also the cause of malnutrition. Moreover, the destruction of natural forests and unhygienic drainage

system caused malaria in epidemic form. Women and children as the “other human” (Warren 2000, 1) group suffer from malnutrition.

Gurnah portrays the political unrest of East Africa as different European countries occupied the region. At the same time, there was the uprising of different revolutionary ideas and activities such as the al-Bushiri uprising and the Maji Maji uprising. To strengthen their authority the Germans employed the ‘schutztruppe’ (volunteer commissioned and non-commissioned officers) and ‘askari’ (the army of African mercenaries). With the help of the schutztruppe and askari, the Germans brutally subdued the revolutionary activities and voice of opposition. The nature of their oppression is brilliantly portrayed:

The German command saw that the revolt could not be defeated by military means alone and proceeded to starve the people into submission. In the regions that had risen, the schutztruppe treated everyone as combatants. They burned villages and trampled fields and plundered food stores. African bodies were left hanging on roadside gibbets in a scorched and terrorized landscape. (Gurnah 2020,15)

Besides such destructive activities, the colonizers do not provide a proper education system, particularly for women. As a result, they remained in the darkness of illiteracy. When Khalifa’s wife Asha was suffering from several miscarriages, she was persuaded by neighbors to consult an herbalist, a *maganga* (2020, 18). There was no proper hospital or certified doctors around to consult. Such hardship and lack of opportunity create social and political unrest and force the marginalized to revolt and form their government. Gurnah’s next novel *Gravel Heart* concentrates how the “nationalist bourgeoisie” also dominates women and nature.

(iii) *Gravel Heart*

Gravel Heart is written on the backdrop of post-World War II. It narrates the war of independence of Zanzibar and the post-war situation of the country. As a result, it brings into view the colonial atrocities and at the same time the leadership of local government. *Gravel Heart* represents a complex and evolving intersection of environmentalism, feminism, and the legacy of colonialism. It seeks to address and challenge the historical and ongoing injustices faced by women and the environment in the wake of colonialism while also recognizing the unique cultural and ecological dynamics of Zanzibar. The interconnection between nature and woman emerges from the second wave of ecocriticism. In this work, Gurnah illustrates that environmental degradation and the subjugation of women are closely linked to the dynamics of class, race, colonialism, and neocolonial power structures.

According to the ecofeminist theory, the subjugation of women and the degradation of nature are closely interconnected, both stemming from patriarchal ideologies and masculinist approaches. In the third-world colonial society, the colonizer as perceived in both Paradise and Afterlives subjugated both women and nature. In neocolonialism, they are again exploited in the name of development by the nationalist colonizers. This domination of women and nature by the capitalist patriarchy is highlighted in *Gravel Heart*. This novel contributes significantly to East African history as it portrays the colonial period, the War of Independence, and the post-colonial status of the territory.

Gurnah deliberately constructs the plot of the novel as he demonstrates the domination of women and nature during the colonial and War of Independence periods and the domination of the same in post-war situations. For this, he selects two generations: Saida (the mother of the protagonist of the novel) mother, who along with her family suffers during the War of Independence, and Saida, who suffers from the nationalist bourgeoisie after the war.

Saida’s father, Ahmed Musa Ibrahim, was an educated and well-off community member. He used to talk of justice, liberty, and “hovered on the fringes of a group of anticolonial intellectuals” (23). He also attended local meetings and “participated in the organization of the rallies, which simultaneously offered a raucous challenge to the colonial order and taunted political rivals” (25). As a result, he became a target of the British Empire and was killed during the revolution. The family suffered a lot because of Saida’s father’s revolutionary activities. They lived in a house with landed areas. People connected to the sultan’s government occupied that part of the town. When Musa Ibrahim was arrested “The family land and the house were confiscated and become state property, to be given away to a zealot or a functionary of the revolution, or to his mistress or cousin” (2017, 26). The news of the confiscation was very shocking and frightening to Saida’s mother. She had to go through innumerable difficulties and scarcity. As a woman, it became difficult for her to maintain her family while her children were quite young. She had to take shelter under her poor aunty and found herself quite helpless. Like her, many other women had to share the same destiny because of colonial atrocities. Gurnah depicts the suffering of homeless people, particularly women and children as he states: “Thousands of people were forced to leave because they had no work or money, and had no choice but to throw themselves on the mercy of a brother or a cousin living in a more fortunate place, further up the coast or across the ocean” (2017, 30).

The sufferings of women in the novel know no bounds when they become homeless. The utter helplessness of women is described in Fanon's words as he asserts, "The women are then left to find ways of keeping the children from starving to death" (Fanon 1965, 99). Fanon speculates on the helpless condition of women due to the political turmoil. The colonial exploitation of land and other natural resources along with the degradation of marginalized communities do not subside with its official extermination. It continues its cruelty and maltreatment through the rise of a new generation known as "bourgeois nationalists" or "elite nationalists". Amir and Halim appear as new "nationalist colonizers". Both of their physical descriptions differentiate them from the rest. Their personality and arrogance prove their superiority and help them dominate the others. Saida along with her son Salim become the victims of their atrocities.

Saida loses her chastity and home. She is not forced but is trapped in such a way that she willingly goes to Hakim to satisfy his greed. Physical exploitation of Saida, a respectable woman is a perfect embodiment of the exploitation of mother nature. Saida is also separated from her only son to provide a better opportunity to Hakim, a representative of a newly bourgeoisie society. Aamir also does not hesitate to exploit his sister for his well-being.

This type of exploitation of nature (the encroachment of land by the colonizers) and human beings is viewed as historically and socially constructed. Thus, the relationship between humans and nature is grounded not in the personal but in the political sphere (Kaur 2016, 82). The relationships between women and nature are steeped in "social, material, and political realities" (2016, 82). Saida becomes an embodiment of a society where women are subjected to capitalist patriarchy. No space is given for her to grow as a person or to demonstrate initiative. She takes her place in "the vast network of domestic traditions" (Fanon 106). The death of Saida is because of a lack of proper diagnosis and treatment, which is also because of the negligence of patriarchal society.

Thus, Gurnah presents that androcentric attitude that becomes the cause of the sufferings of women and nature in postcolonial society. He recognizes that women's experiences are shaped not only by gender but also by factors such as class, race, colonialism, and neocolonialism. Their experiences merge them within the broader ecological narrative, women's unique histories, identities, and roles are often erased.

CONCLUSION

Abdulrazak Gurnah is not only finely interweaving various colonial, postcolonial, and ecofeminist theories in his novels, but also seeking possibilities and subsequent solutions for women's empowerment. He presents before us the irreversible aftermaths that can germinate from the oppression of women and nature and spread to the future like an epidemic, which can put the whole development and technology into question. He also suggests that we can contribute to the well-being and overall empowerment of the whole ecology system by changing our relationship and activities towards sustainability.

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