



CIRCULATING EXILE: TRANSLATION, IDENTITY, AND BELONGING IN IQBAL AND MAHMOUD DARWISH

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the Postcolonial elements in the Selected poems of Iqbal and Darwish. Specifically, it intends to analyze the postcolonial themes of exile, displacement, belonging, homelessness and consequences the sub-themes as sadness, loss and Identity crises in the Selected poems of two national poets of Pakistan and Palestine. Despite the different historical and cultural contexts, the chosen poems have expressed a recurrent discourse of exile, which links the experiences of colonized Muslim populations across national borders. The study highlights the quest of the oppressed Muslims of subcontinent and Palestine for home and identity. Edward Said's concepts are used as a theoretical framework and methodology for the analysis of the poems. The research is qualitative in nature, moreover, textual analysis is used as a method of analysis.

Key Words: Post colonialism, Exile, Homelessness, Displacement, Iqbal, Darwish.

INTRODUCTION

The paper critically analyzes the postcolonial understanding of exile, displacement, belonging, and homelessness in some chosen poems by Mahmoud Darwish and Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Instead of considering exile as a localized or isolated phenomenon, the paper foregrounds exile as a circulating literary phenomenon that is produced in various colonial settings and historical conditions. The study, through juxtaposing the work of a Palestinian and a South Asian Muslim poet, points out that such affective reactions as nostalgia, loss, separation, and identity crisis take place in quite different geographical locations but ideologically intertwined through the influences of colonialism and imperialism.

Poetry, in itself, has a universal emotional resonance, and can be used to describe experiences that transcend their immediate cultural and national contexts. Although the national poets usually record the hardships, sacrifice and hopes of the citizens of a nation, their works are often more humanistic than national and usually cut across the national borders. In this regard, the poetry of Iqbal and Darwish is not simply a national recording, but is involved in a more global world-literary conversation where exile is a collective postcolonial phenomenon. The experiences of struggle, defeat, and identity crisis due to the colony rule in Palestine and the Indian sub-continent are similarly conveyed in their poetry.

Mahmoud Darwish is at the centre stage of the Palestinian literature, and is commonly known as a poet of exile. He is deeply influenced in his poetry by his own experience of displacement during Israeli occupation and a long-term feeling of loss, alienation as well as longing to the motherland. Home, belonging, memory, dislocation is some of the themes that re-occur in his poetic corpus and exile is not just a political state, but also an existential one (Darwish, 2001; Eid, 2016). By these depictions, Darwish is able to evoke the trauma of the Palestinian people as a group but also place the Palestinian experience in a larger human context of being displaced.



Likewise, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who is a writer in the colonial world of British India, addresses the state of exile metaphorically, philosophically, and politically. Though not literally physically driven out like Darwish, Iqbal is the voice of Muslims in India as being internally displaced- aliens in their homeland under the British imperial authority. His poems are filled with a desire to find identity, independence, as well as a sense of belonging, yet at the same time there is a feeling of hope of cultural and political rejuvenation (Yahya, 2013). Through it, exile in the poems of Iqbal disseminates as a mental and ideological state generated by colonial oppression and not the literal exile only.

The very phenomenon of exile itself has a rather rich cultural and literary tradition, which is frequently dated back to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. According to Buruma (2001), exile is an irreparable break of human people with their native habitat, which produces persistent accounts of loss and desire. Throughout the literary history, exile was rearranged by authors and poets of different cultures several times, and this fact proves the fact of its importance as the common human experience. This paper thus makes comparisons between Indian and Palestinian poetic versions of exile to show how displacement and homelessness are used as circulating postcolonial tropes with far reaching psychological and emotional effects.

Research Objectives:

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine how exile, displacement, belonging and identity are represented as postcolonial concerns in the selected poems of Iqbal and Mahmoud Darwish
- To analyze how exile circulates as a shared literary condition across different colonial contexts, linking the experiences of Muslims in British India and Palestine.

Research Questions:

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. How do Iqbal and Mahmoud Darwish represent exile, memory, and belonging in their poetry within distinct colonial contexts??
2. In what ways does exile emerge as a circulating postcolonial discourse that connects the experiences of Indian and Palestinian Muslims beyond national and geographical boundaries?

Significance of the study:

This work holds importance because it adds to the domain of World Literature in exploring exile as a transnational, cultural and geographical circulating postcolonial condition. The juxtaposition of the works of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Mahmoud Darwish, authors to whom the context of the colonization by the two countries was distinct, helps the research to illustrate that similar themes of displacement, loss, and a sense of belonging are echoed in other contexts determined by the urgency of imperial domination. By so doing, the study transcends the strictly national or regional understanding of the exile and places it in a wider world-literary context.

The study also shows the way that literary exile articulates a universal human wish to be at home and belong to something, but is still very much entrenched in the particular historical reality. The psychological and emotional consequences of colonial displacement of Muslim communities in British India and Palestine are illuminated by the study through an analysis of poetic expressions of homelessness, nostalgia and identity crisis. Those mutual experiences of affection emphasize exile as not only a physical situation but also a lasting emotional and ideological one.



Methodology and Theoretical Framework:

The study is qualitative in nature and postcolonial theory is used as a theory in general as a theoretical framework of the research. Moreover, the concept of Said presented in his essay *Reflections on Exile* is used for the textual analysis of the selected poems of Iqbal and Darwish. Close reading is used as a method for analyzing the meanings, symbols and metaphors in the text of the poems. Edward Said was a Palestinian born American political activist and a renowned theorist of postcolonial literature mostly famous for his work *Orientalism*. This work mainly deals with the representations and misrepresentations of the East and West. This study mainly deals with his ideas on exile that resulted in a longing for a home and consequently, presents the traumatic experiences of the margins. The main ideas are taken from his essay titled *Reflections on Exile* which is a part of an anthology of essays of the same title. He starts his essay by saying. “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place” amid a person and its true home and its despair is unfathomable. And though exile is depicted as romantic, splendid and heroic in history and literature when achievements stories are formed of exiles yet the sadness of alienation and separation is difficult to overcome (Said, 2013).

He further states that the modern culture represents the estrangement and alienation of man and a critic George Steiner is of the view that the whole literature of the twentieth century is “extraterritorial literature” which is the literature by and about exiles, and represents the age of the refugees (Said, 2013). According to said exile is the major phenomena of modern age owing to imperialism and it inflicts pain and sufferings on colonized by the colonizer. Said observes that exile is created by one group for other group and that, “it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography?” (Said, 2013). Said states that one cannot really understand what exile actually means without having firsthand experience of the exile. He says in his essay that the exiled individuals tend to look at those who have decided to stay in their native country with a degree of resentment because non-exiles have an undisputed sense of belonging to the world around them. The exile, on the contrary, experiences a chronic sense of displacement, incapable of asserting a stable sense of being of a place. The exiled subject cannot attain the security of being born, being alive, and being permanently attached to a homeland (Said, 2013). Said also made distinctions between the terms exile, refugees and expatriates. The word exile has its roots in ancient times which designates the practice of banishment and once banished the exile become an outsider.

While refugee is the term of twentieth century which represents the large scale of innocent and helpless people depending on international assistance. Then he mentions that “Expatriates voluntarily live in an alien country, usually for personal or social reasons” (Said, 2013). They suffer the pain of estrangement yet their case is different from exiles. Sometimes choice of leaving a country is possible as in the case of “Colonial officials, missionaries, technical experts, mercenaries, and military advisers “they lived in an exile though not in banishment. Likewise, white settlers in the different parts of the world may once have been exiled but as considered pioneer lost their labels of being in exile (Said, 2013). He further states in this essay that exile writers use their writings to give voice to their issues related to exile and usually appear that they are very unpleasant and stubborn writers. The paper in this manner explores the manner in which Iqbal and Darwish has portrayed the exiles in their poems.



REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section deals with the existing literature on the poets Darwish and Iqbal as well as on the postcolonial theory presented in their works. It also deals with the theoretical perspective of the paper.

The article Narratives of Diaspora and Exile in Arabic and Palestinian Poetry by Saddik M. Gohar offers a valuable source to analyzing the exile as a major theme in Palestinian literature. According to Gohar (2011), the exile means not only physical distance to the homeland, but also continuously living in psychological pain and traumas. He divides Palestinian poets into those who write in exile in the foreign country, and those who write under the occupation of the Israel where poets like Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim and Tawfiq Zayyad are considered to be at the centre of resistance poetry. The work by Gohar does show the role of exile as a community phenomenon according to which the Palestinian literary identity is formed; nevertheless, it does not expand its analysis to comparative and transnational situations.

Edward Said is able to elaborate a wider political and cultural interpretation of Palestinian displacement, especially in *The Edward Said Reader*. Said (2000) addresses the Palestinians circumstances after 1949, the periphery, isolation and silence, as the characteristic features of the life under the displacement. His observations view exile as a sustainable state as opposed to a transitional one, which provides a theoretical way the state of exile can be interpreted as a permanent condition of loss and non-belonging. The work by Said provides the foundations of the study of postcolonial exile but is approached with the help of political and cultural criticism, not of comparative literary analysis.

The Urdu poetry (especially Allama Muhammad Iqbal) is the subject of scholarship that predicts nationalism and identity formation in the context of the colonial rule. According to Yahya (2013), Urdu poetry was instrumental in enlisting nationalist and patriotic feelings during the struggle to get Indian freedom. He asserts that the poetry of Iqbal was transformed into Pan-Islamism after territorial nationalism as came to represent the common dream of Muslims in India in the face of the British imperialism. Although Yahya study brings to fore the importance of political consciousness and identity formation, it does not clearly present the work of Iqbal in the context of exile or displacement and gives room to more exploration.

Yousef and Al-Rub (1984) build postcolonial and subaltern approaches to the poetry of Darwish by analysing some of her poems in the context of the subaltern theory proposed by Spivak. According to them, the themes of exile, resistance, martyrdom, and identity are brought forth through the imagery and symbolism used by Darwish enabling the subaltern voice of the Palestinians to be heard locally and internationally. Their work highlights how Darwish has been circulated all over the world through his poetic voice yet it concentrates more on resistance than the relative circulation of the exile as a common situation.

On the same note, Al-Areqi (2014) pays an attention to the themes of home, homelessness and identity in poetry of Darwish, showing that exile causes not only personal but also national identity crisis. In his close reads of the poems like *Identity Card* and *Who Am I without Exile*, Al-Areqi shows how Darwish longs to be in the homeland. Although this work provides a good understanding of emotional aspect of exile, it is still limited to one literary tradition.

Though there is a lot of literature about Darwish in Arab and Palestinian literature and Iqbal in Urdu and Persian literature studies, most works discuss these two poets in their respective national and cultural context. There have been limited efforts to decipher their works comparatively to study the issue of exile as a circulating postcolonial discourse within



the unique colonial context. The gap that is filled by the current study is the the bringing together of poetry by Iqbal and Darwish to discuss how exile, loss, and identity move throughout South Asian and Palestinian settings and adds to the world-literary knowledge of displacement during colonialism.

ANALYSIS

This part examines how exile, displacement, and belonging have been depicted concerning post colonialism in the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish and Allama Muhammad Iqbal. Being national poets affected by colonial and imperial experiences, both authors reveal the general pain of their people, at the same time converting the local experiences of being displaced to become a viral literary voice. Based on the thoughts of Edward Said in his exile, the paper will explore how exile becomes a general postcolonial experience in both Palestinian and South Asian experience.

Modern literature, especially in the twentieth century, has been highly dominated by the issue of exile due to colonial domination, political violence, and displacement. Exile is not only literally a separation with motherland, but also a psychological one and emotional trauma. Memory, nostalgia, and symbolic landscapes are some of the ways in which writers can express these experiences, including poems by Darwish and Iqbal (Chakraborty and Das, 2017).

Exile and Belonging in Mahmoud Darwish's I Belong There:

Darwish (2001) expresses the theme of exile powerfully as a state of memory, loss and unresolved belonging. In *I Belong There*, emotion of attachment to homeland is also predetermined through personal images of the family and the place:

I belong there. I have many memories. I was born as everyone is born.

I have a mother, a house with many windows, brothers, friends, and a prison cell

with a chilly window! I have a wave snatched by seagulls, a panorama of my own.

I have a saturated meadow.

In these lines the word “there” denotes his homeland Palestine and also denotes his sense of identity related to his home when he says “belong”. Then he refers how his world, his home was just like any happy home he has memories of his beloved mother, brothers and friends. He has a house like any common person then, he talks about “prison cell with chilly widows” which denotes his exile like the exile of Adam and eve from his paradise. Seagulls metaphorically refer to the treachery of Israelis who have snatched Palestinians garden of Eden which includes birds, olive trees and moon. Birds, trees and moon signifies mother nature which symbolizes loss of motherland. He then tells the readers “I have lived on the land long before swords turned man into prey/ I belong there” (Darwish, 2001). This line indicates poets’ happy days before the genocide started. Israeli’s became the Satan’s allies and they have to live in exile. and the Being devastated in exile he remembers his golden days at his homeland. He is torn between past memories and present predicament. Exiled individuals always remain in the state of in betweenness, they remain in their memories and unable to accept the new reality as Said maintains that the exiled subject is placed in a halfway state, neither quite assimilated to the new world nor completely removed by the past. The partial attachments and incomplete separations that are characteristic of this state are combined with sentiments of nostalgia and the sentimental and adaptive strategies of imitation or silent marginalization (2013).



The last lines of the poem I belong There marks the catastrophe when Darwish (2001) says:

To break the rules,
I have learned all the words needed for a trial by blood
I have learned and dismantled all the words in order to draw from them
a single word: Home

Darwish as a poet suffered from exile at a very young age and till the end his life is a tale of a man who wanted to return home. As Abu Eid says: "Return became his daily bread: the return to the place, the return to time, the return from the temporary to the permanent, the return from the present to both the past and the future. Thus, Palestine became the opposite of everything else, and became a lost paradise"

Said's Concept of Exile and Palestinian Displacement:

Said in his essay Reflections on Exile says in the state of exile nothing is secure, he calls it a jealous state as it gives rise to the emotions of solidarity. In the situation of exile one group separates themselves from the other which create exaggerated sense of unity among the same group and a passionate hostility for the other group, even if they are facing the same predicaments as them. He then mentions the conflict between Zionist Jews and Arab Palestinians. He maintains "Palestinians feel that they have been turned into exiles by the proverbial people of exile, the Jews" (Said 2013). Though, Palestinians themselves are aware of the fact that their own sense of national identity is created in the condition of exile, where every person except blood brother or sister is considered an enemy or unfriendly. Said further says: "Perhaps this is the most extraordinary of exile's fates: to have been exiled by exiles to relive the actual process of up-rooting at the hands of exiles (Said 2013)". In the summer of 1982, Palestinians were forced to think that what urged Israel to expel them from their exiled homes even displaced once in 1948. They were again displaced in spite of the fact that they are already struggling from forty-six years for a national identity.

Internal Exile in Iqbal's The Bird's Complaint:

Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's poetry shows the conflict between his personality and society. He is a genuine poet and his poetry is not only for one nation and society but can also expands to other societies. His notions outlived the times it was delivered in. he is the visionary poet who showed the map to the Muslims of Asia to germinate, prosper and grow. He is acknowledged as the "poet of the east", hence struggled as an eastern poet through his poetry against the it's binary opponent of west. As we see in Said's Orientalism in which he says that western people do not have the real image of eastern, they have their perception of an eastern as presented by the western intellectuals therefore west views east through the eyes of Orientalists, who presented a conceptual view of the East that was made by the colonial authorities during colonialism.

This paper analyses his poem "The Bird's Complaint" that talks about the feeling of estrangement while living in exile. On the surface level the poem is about a caged bird who is separated from his homeland and longs for returning home. But, on a deeper level, the bird symbolizes the Muslims of India at the time of Iqbal. He says:

I am constantly reminded of the bygone times
Those garden's springs, those chorus of chimes
Gone are the freedoms of our own nests
Where we could come and go at our own pleasure.

The bird who metaphorically represents Muslims of India is facing the situation of being in exile, being away from his home, his national identity (Azaad, 2015). Being nostalgic, he



gives vivid description of his beautiful home as a garden like the garden of paradise. Like Darwish, he also talks about his home, family and friends with whom he has spent the golden days of his life. The memories of home give him solace and comfort in displaced situation. He laments that he cannot move freely anywhere as he is in cage it symbolizes the colonized situation of Indian Muslims under British colonialism. After the victory of Britain in 1857 over India, India was treated as one of the provinces of Great Britain. In colonized India, any attempt in the form of nationalist, religious and revivalist movements for gaining solidarity was crushed by Britain. The British tried to completely wiped out the Muslims of India, firstly, because previously they were ruling in India and secondly, they were resisting the colonizers. The anguish and helplessness of Muslims are shown through the metaphor of a caged bird. He further says in this poem:

How unfortunate I am, tantalized for my abode I am
My companions are in the home-land, in the prison I am
Spring has arrived, the flower buds are laughing
On my misfortune in this dark house I am wailing
O God, To whom should I relate my tale of woe?
I fear lest I die in this cage with this woe!

Under colonialism, Muslims homeland is like a cage, they have become other's in their own country. The bird or Muslims feel themselves unfortunate by seeing others who are enjoying the comforts of their homeland as Said in his essay *Reflections on Exile* asserts "Exiles look at non exiles with resentment. They belong in their surroundings, you feel, whereas an exile is always out of place. What is it like to be born in a place, to stay and live there, to know that you are of it, more or less forever?" (Said, 2013). This shows the dilemma of Muslims living under British rule. In the last lines of the poem the poet shows the sorrow and pain of Muslims stems from their disposition and displacement. He says:

Since separation from the garden the condition of my heart is such

My heart is waxing the grief, my grief is waxing the heart
O Listeners, considering this music do not be happy
This call is the wailing of my wounded heart
O the one who confined me make me free
A silent prisoner I am, earn my blessings free.

These lines indicate the sense of grief of separation from one's home caused by colonialism and imperialism. The caged bird is desperately crying for his home and belonging. Said maintains on matter what or where one is "exiles are always eccentrics who feel their difference (even as they frequently exploit it as a kind of orphan hood.)"

Circulating Exile across Contexts:

The poems of Darwish and Iqbal do show very strong similarities in the representation of exile, even though their historical and geographical backgrounds differ. Both the poets portray exile as a state, characterized by memory, loss, identity crisis and homesickness. The physical exile of Darwish and the internal exile of Iqbal spread as two sides of the same postcolonial state proving the fact that exile can cross national borders and become a common literary phenomenon of world literature.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper has discussed the theme of exile, displacement, belonging, and identity as presented in the two poems of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Mahmoud Darwish and the analysis has shown that exile is not a site-specific phenomenon, but a mobile postcolonial phenomenon. Although the two poems are placed in different geographical locations,



language and historical context, both poets express very similar forms of emotions to the colonial domination; loss, nostalgia, alienation and a continuous yearning to go back home. Exile is a common denominator that is developed through poetic memory and symbolic imagery as the experience of the Indian and the Palestinian Muslim under the rule of the imperialists and colonialism.

Darwish poems represent exile as a material and actual displacement created through occupation and forced migration to other lands, whereas Iqbal is the embodiment of exile as a psychological and internal condition created due to cultural and political oppression on the territory of the native country. However, in both the instances, exile disrupts the identity and creates a sense of nonbelonging that transcends national borders. Through reading these poets in comparison, the paper will show that exile spreads across different colonial settings as a cyclical form of affectivity, as opposed to being captured by one historical or local story.

Based on the thoughts of Edward Said on the subject of exile, the study has revealed that exile is not a transient state of being but a lasting state of dislocation that defines subjectivity, memory and identity of a group (Said, 2013). The idea of exile as the unhealable rift presented by Said can serve as a theoretical tool to interpret the poetry of both Iqbal and Darwish as the expression of long-term postcolonial trauma. Their voice poetry takes personal and collective misery and turns it into literary expression that transcends their immediate cultures.

In the context of World Literature in Translation, this analysis has placed Iqbal and Darwish as authors whose texts are spread around the world in translation so that their exile representations can be read, interpreted and experienced on the other side of the language and culture. Although this study is not concerned with the analysis of translation, it recognizes translation as a mediating process that makes the themes, effects, and postcolonial experiences move through the world-literary space. In this respect, exile is made readable as a universal human experience, developed under the influence of certain historical experiences but readable through a world literary discourse.

To sum up, the comparative reading of Iqbal and Darwish shows that the concept of exile is not limited to the country, language, or political phenomenon. It rather permeates through the histories of colonies in the form of a strong and consistent motif of the world literature, which expresses the longing of home, identity, and belonging. Following these lines of association, the current paper can make its contribution to postcolonial and world literary studies by showing how poetry can become the place where localized sense of displacement can be transformed into the globally speaking stories of loss and promise.

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