The Circulation of Experience and the Limits of Everyday Action in Umm Saʿd: the Narrator's Mediation, Work, And Care in Spaces of Refuge

Shahida Abdul Kadir[1] , Dr. Noushad PM[2]

[1]Assistant Professor, Ansar Women's College – Perumpilavu& Research Scholar, Maharaja's College

[2]Assistant Professor, Maharaja's College, Ernakulam

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how experiences of daily life under colonization especially in refugee camp are organized and circulated in the novel Umm Saʿd, and how this relates to the reconstruction of the past, care, everyday activities, and its limits. It applies a close reading of the text and internal comparison, based on Genette's approach to Determine the attribution and temporal arrangement of narrative events, and on Halbwachs's theory to explore the social nature of memory and draws on Ryan's framework to differentiate between adaptation and resistance. It critically analyses the report, its mediator, and its recipient, It distinguishes the actual performance of an act from its initial proposal and its eventual outcome." Another comparison reveals multiple directions of knowledge: memory leads to a task whose execution is not shown, collecting iron precedes its narration, and solidarity with another worker involves a material concession already accomplished. Some relations of recognition change without poverty disappearing, while rising opens a vast area that exceeds the narrated outcome. The contribution lies in explaining the unevenness of agency within a critical discussion that has addressed motherhood, memory, and resistance.

Keywords: Umm Saʿd, circulation of experience, narrative mediation, memory, work, care.

INTRODUCTION

Arab society especially the people of Palestine undergone for several better experiences and hurdles in their day to day life. The established Palestinian resistant writer Ghassan Kanafani's novel Umm Saʿd, published in 1969, brings together the life of refugees, work, and their patriotic thoughts and actions through a mother's encounters with a narrator who conveys and explains her speech. The explanation enables the readers to understand the survival of a mother and sacrificed motherhood in relation to Palestinian history, through out the passage they also raise a question about the construction of knowledge: who possesses the experience, who transmits it, who grants it meaning, and when does it become a basis for action? These positions are not equal, even when the narrators are politically or emotionally close.

The crucial problem arises from the possibility of narrowing the gap between recalling the past and interpreting it, between declaring solidarity to the survival people and practicing the same, and between the symbol and the outcome presented by the narrative. To understand the importance of motherhood does not need to measure all her actions and statements to prove it, or the complete act she performs and constitutes for resistance in the same notion and intention. As the narrator is studying continuously about the situation through narrating and setting the story. While this study addresses arises some important questions: How does the novel 'Ummu Saad' organize the sources of experience and the directions of their circulation, and how does the connection of circulation to the interpretation of the past, work, care, and accomplished or proposed action vary? While reading the novel a hypothesis may arise in a reader that the assumption of experience may change the assessment of relationships and responsibilities, and the novel represents the knowledge in different ways. This paper tries to

compare source of knowledge and changes in response like conversations, grape vine, road and tent. We can see the differences and limits in each comparison while articulating the scenes. The conversation always tries to differentiate between patriotism, essential needs, and anxiety about their future and homeland. The novel does not consider the mother in 'Ummu saad' as the representation for whole mothers in Palestine.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Previous studies have analysed motherhood, sufferings, trauma, memory, work, and symbols from interrelating the attitudes in different situations; hence, we cannot detect common objective gap is established in these matters. Neimneh combines the archetype of the mother and land with postcolonial criticism, connecting the peasant woman to severe displacement and class oppression, and highlighting her role in educating the narrator through her conversations throughout the novel(Neimneh, 2021, pp. 687–688). He highlights the comparison of Umm Saʿd((أم سعدand Ma Tabaqqa Lakum((ما تبقى لكمthese two novels od Ghasaan Kanafani extends to portrayal of motherhood and the close attachment with homeland; he adopts a thematic approach to recurring and universal imagery, and places the modernist narrative structure outside the scope of that study (Neimneh, 2022, p. 498). This is ounteracted by the concern of Yahi in the interaction of the character's realism and her symbolic formation, highlighting exhaustion throughout the novel, weeping, and the human dimension, not heroism alone (Yahi, 2022, pp. 386–387).

Everyday agency and activity for defence is very clear in this literature: Neimneh analysis the collecting of metal fragments to prevent the harm for children after an air raid, the hardships of the camp, and Abu Saad's confidence about the revolution and transformation, every day act of resistance then the solidarity of the two women workers and the concession of wages, where Ummu Saad helps the coworker when she quits her job(Neimneh, 2021, pp. 693–694; Neimneh, 2022, p. 505). Akay reads the vileness of work and competition among female workers within a semiotic analysis employing Saussure and Peirce to interpret religious symbols (Akay, 2026, pp. 14, 19). Ummu Saad also addresses the camp, the house, the letter which acts a bridge which connects between past and present, memory, the veil, and the grapevine, connecting the past to the present; thus it is not correct to deny her interest in memory or place (Akay, 2026, pp. 15–17, 20–21).

The present reading starts from this overlap and differs in prioritizing comparison between the source of the report, its mediation, its timing, the state of the act, and its outcome. It does not assume the absence of narrative observations: Neimneh noted the narrator's changing description of the mother (Neimneh, 2021, p. 693). Hence, this paper combines the above mentioned elements to test the differing function of storytelling between remembering, initiative, and the Consequential decision, and to regulate the gap between symbolic interpretation and the real event. This is an interpretive contribution within an existing discussion, limited by the incompleteness of examining additional literature, and it does not claim comprehensive precedence.

Problem of the Study

This study offers a different way of reading the novel 'Ummu Saad' which focuses clearly on memory, class, patriotism and motherhood. This study tries to be aware of the society to focus on knowledge and how it circulates. The study distinguishes the act of resistance from knowledge because according to this novel reading an article and interpreting it and acting on the behalf of the knowledge are entirely different ankles. This study highlights the role of the narrator, as the narrator is not just a simple character in the story, and upholds the power to shape the theme of the novel. This study demonstrates the picture of life in the refugee camp and their sacrifices. This study proves that not all characters demonstrated in the same way, some acts are accomplished, some are suggested while the others are only heard. Depending on Halbwachs how past of the victims is portrayed and recalled in the present scenario. This helps the reader to understand how memories in the novel is crucial and interconnected with the social situations.

This study distinguishes adaptation and challenging oppression using Ryan's theory and tries bring the whole story in harsh reality instead of romantics. This study also brings out the caring and support shared between women characters, which against the theories of colonial readings and existing feministic thoughts . This study also opens a door to future studies, by comparing source, materials and class.

Objectives of the study

To analyse how women experience is organized and circulated in the novel

To distinguish between the actions whether happened or proposed

To study the significance of the narrator as the narrator plays an important role in the novel.

To avoid overgeneralization, as the study directly not aims to treat 'Ummu Saad' as pure representation of Palestinian mother.

To contribute to existing studies about memory, motherhood, and resilience in 'Ummu Saad'

To Study about the care& work and how these acts shaped the characters of the novel

Significance of the Study

This study is very significant because of various reasons, as the study addresses the Palestinian issue through theoretical, methodological and critical frameworks. While previous studies give much concentration in typical motherhood, nationalism and class. This study shifted the focus from conventional studies to analysing the transformation of characters tracking source, time and resilience. This study identifies the difference between fulfilled actions, proposed interventions and narrated memories. By drawing distinction between these categories which prevents romantic theme from day to day life filled with obstacles. This study emphasizes the role of the narrator mere than a passive listener to an active intermediate. Through this approach the reader can rectify the specialities of the narrator and the resilient and hard working mother. Depending on Rayan's theory the study identity the difference between adaptation and resilience. This study rebuilt the past relying upon present situation drawing on Halbwachs theory of collective memory. This proves how memory is affected the lives of suffered people. Based on the explanation of Akay and Neimneh the study explains how memory and action is interrelated. This study highlights a misconception about generalization, it denies the comparison of women to the all Palestinian mothers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

"Circulation of experience" is a framework we use to identify how information is transferred between characters in novels. We do comparative close reading in a novel by identifying the source, mediator, recipient, the memory, etc. We use Genette's idea to correctly order based on the order by which the events happen not the way it are presented (Genette, 1980, pp. 35, 186, 213). Same way, the way the author explaining something about the mother doesn't have to be from her perspective itself. So we use focalization to determine this first-person point of view, and how much this character's point of view shapes the novel. Analyzing The breadth of storytelling is not enough to tell anything about mupltiple narrative levels, instead it is about the depth of it. Like it's about how stories are placed inside other stories (Genette, 1980, pp. 228–229).

Halbwachs in his study sheds light on the variation of circumstances and conditions changing when the stand and perspectives of persons differ in group they live with and he also restores the past memories with the contemporary conditions.(Halbwachs, 1980, pp. 48, 69). He articulates here the importance of living in the present admist of obstacles and problems they confront. This is the notable and best way of living in the present scenario.

Palestinian people try to adapt their life with the situation they live in, Ryan in her study tries to examine this context in his study and proves that they are living in the present life filled with oppression and unbearable political conditions. (Ryan, 2015, p. 313). Her first – hand- research in the West Bank, (famous city in Palestine) about sufferings of oppressed people under the colonial subjugation is a comparative tool and it is not about the situation in the year of 1969, in the same year Kanafani wrote the novel (Ryan, 2015, p. 301). Here the fulfilment

of the actions and the confidence they uphold are counted than giving priority to the expectations and conditions. This proves the outcome are not the proof about the efforts they took.

Between Listening and Interpretation: The Distribution of Knowledge and the Reformulation of Care:-

In this novel, the knowledge flow is not just one direction like from the mother to the scholar. In the Mukhtar's story, Umm Saʿd thinks independently and questions judgments. But we can't assume, that Saʿd's position came there only because of her (Kanafani, 2013, pp. 16–17). Even though the narrator predicts about Sa'd by looking the hands as sadness, even the narrator gets confused because of the way she talks: “and I doubted whether they were truly mourning” (Kanafani, 2013, p. 24).

The novel coneys about care indirectly by character's conversation and decisions. Even though Umm Sa'd wants to cook food for the fighters, she can't forget about her two children and cook for the fighters. Then the narrator conveys in the novel that her advice about son was an attempt to keep him away from the danger. And because of this, she changes her thoughts towards respecting her own son's decision (Kanafani, 2013, pp. 25–26).

Umm Sa'd tells the narrator that she is still trying to understand some parts of what happened by telling the narrator about what her son told her about his experience of hiding(Kanafani, 2013, p. 35).

From the News of Captivity to the Memory of Exploitation: Recalling the Past and the Limits of Intervention:-

There is a chapter in ‘Ummu Saad’ titled ‘letter’ which starts explaining about a poor peasant called ‘fadl’. The novel tries to uncover the present situations which differ from the order of events and remembrance to the order of narration. The letter was written by Saad and Hassan read it Ummu Saad and the narrator was passively hearing it.(Kanafani, 2013, pp. 47–50). The letter uncovers the improvement of Layth and the role of Abd al-Mawla’s mediation in the same. Layth threatens Saad’s family if they try for mediation. We cannot see the evidence for the threat but the mother’s remembrance about Fadl when they read Abd al- Mawla in the letter. The long thirty two years represents the collection of memories and connects the past experiences to the present situation.

Depending upon Akay’s opinion the identification of the narrator distinguishes the content of the letter and the experience it occurred. (Akay, 2026, p. 17). Its value exceeds referential correction to clarifying the source of new insights : ‘ Ummu Saad Remembers Fadl from circumstances “no land and no hundred,” and distinguishes him from an owner of land who employs poor peasants and benifits from the leadership position. (Kanafani, 2013, p. 51). Halbwachs explains this connection as the reconstruction of the past from a present position, without cancelling the difference of individual memory.

The mother thinks about an idea to inform Ummu Layth about the mediation, she is not sure about the family’s attitude whether they seek a mediator or not. The narrator assumes that Sa’ad’s pure intention was to save Layth from Fadl’s fate.The narrator also thinks deeply about Fadl’s past and his actions and the narrator is ready to change his views (Kanafani, 2013, pp. 54–56).

Conditions of Action and Its Cost: Between Removing Obstacles and Conceding Wages:-

Umm Saʿd was intentionally read to accept the pathetic conditions she was bearing for years, saying: “I do not want to die here, in the mud and the filth of kitchens” (Kanafani, 2013, p. 29). She faced bravely the flood and continued her work to preserve the life. Saʿd tried to remember her the mud will once bury them together, but the mother here upholds the confidence still the anxiety is existing in her actions(Kanafani, 2013, pp. 30–32). This actions of bravery and her tendency to refuse the worse situation makes the mother to stand and support for the nation.

When they undergone to raid her daily routines and duties also changed. She shifted from cleaning the windows, floors, and carpets of others’ houses, then supporting the family; to clear the road, as she founds pieces of iron that may puncture the tires of their cars and vehicles, and also she motivated the women over there and the

children too amidst amidst of dangerous situations(Kanafani, 2013, pp. 42–44). The practical knowledge leads to the action and the collective actions leads to possession towards the oppression in an active method.

Protection and Recognition in the Family and the Camp: Positional Transformations and an Unaccomplished Horizon:-

The situation changes from the cost of action to the atmosphere where protection from relations counts. When the officer (effendi) asks the questions to Ummu Sa'ad about Sa'ad she concealed his picture under her chest. Thus action cannot save Sa'ad, but she was not ready to show his picture in front of the officers. (Kanafani, 2013, pp. 63–64). The veil(hijab) in the novel does not represent just a covering or a cloth, it is a symbol of protection for her motherhood. Ummu Sa'ad asks her neighbor's son to make safe a bullet which was leftover by Sa'ad once by removing the gunpowder from it and wearing it as an identity of resilience and power. (Kanafani, 2013, p. 66). Her interests and actions of the thing are proven, not its actual efficacy in protection; nor is it sufficient to decide her final abandonment of belief.

In the novel Abu Sa'ad is not directly involved in the defence, still he uses some words which Sa'ad uses in the battle field like ' Kalash' which means rifle. Here the younger generation influences the older generation.(Kanafani, 2013, pp. 69–70).

DISCUSSION& CONCLUSION

This research offers a comprehensive description and logically justified and methodologically inventive reading of famous Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani's 'Ummu Sa'ad'. This study attempts to change the concern from traditional reading which prompts the reader to shift from normal reading of the novel to transformational reading. This transformation givesa pioneering input to Palestine literature. This paper sought to inhibit from considering all situations equally. Genette's theory is used to distinguish between feeling and perspective. On the other hand Halbwach's approach is effectively demonstrated to implement how mother's memories are implemented and how it has the enough power to reconstruct the present situations.

Ryan's tool is applied in the paper to separate between mere adaptation and active resistance. Neimneh took a critical step in the research by converting a typical mother to a resisting power.

The paper opposes treating the characters survival mere as a passive oppression but picturized to an active resistance.

This paper is not just a reading of 'Ummu Saad' but a significant intervention how we read Palatine literature and view Palestinian political conditions. This paper asserts that the knowledge mere not guide directly to the action and the action will not directly lead to independence and liberation.

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